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WHY CREATE SOCIOECONOMIC PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

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In 2010, USDA Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell stated that “building a forest restoration economy will create new jobs in rural communities and help diversify the forest products industry to support the sustainability of local communities.” However, the Forest Service’s performance accountability system lacks measures of the socioeconomic impacts of restoration. We discuss why these measures are necessary to help the Forest Service better document the impacts of restoration.

Existing socioeconomic performance measures are largely output-oriented and unrelated to watershed restoration

Currently, the Forest Service tracks about 300 items in the Performance Accountability System (PAS). Only a small percentage of these performance measures track social and economic outputs. For example, the Forest Service reports on the ethnic, racial, and gender diversity of its workforce, and on contracts awarded to minority- and tribal-owned businesses. The Forest Service reports output measures related to timber and grazing. The PAS does not document outcomes of restoration investments such as job creation, collaboration, business capacity, and partnership health.

Socioeconomic measures could help the Forest Service tell the story of its impact to Congress and the public

Given sustained pressure to shrink the federal government, agencies need to make persuasive arguments about the value of their work. For many communities located near public lands, restoration can be an important driver of economic activity. When the Forest Service employs people directly

or hires local contractors, it helps provide local jobs and support business vitality. However, the lack of socioeconomic performance measures makes it difficult for the Forest Service to tell the story of their impacts and to build support for sustained investments.

Forest Service land management law and policy have socioeconomic objectives

From its founding, the Forest Service has had social and economic goals for land management. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 and several other laws also include economic and social objectives. The agency has legal obligations to provide employment, contracting, recreation, and other opportunities to diverse populations. More recently, stewardship contracting authorities, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, appropriations language during the 2000s, and other legislation have also asked the Forest Service to consider local community benefit when conducting restoration. These goals are increasingly mirrored in agency and departmental strategic plans, memoranda and directives, and key speeches.



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Forest Service success depends on external relationships and resources as well as internal capacity

The Forest Service has to solve management problems that cross boundaries and jurisdictions, and to leverage financial and human resources to solve complex problems. The Forest Service's land management capacity depends in part on relationships and networks with external entities, such as other government agencies, tribes, contractors, non-governmental organizations, and private citizens. Further, the agency's actions (and inactions) greatly affect business health and community resources.

This is particularly true in places with social vulnerability or low community capacity. Tracking the health of its relationships with organizations and businesses can help improve the efficacy of its management over time.

For additional information, see Moseley, C., and E.J. Davis. 2012. *Developing socioeconomic performance measures for the Watershed Condition Framework*. Ecosystem Workforce Program Working Paper 36. University of Oregon. ewp.uoregon.edu/publications/working.

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