

Shared Stewardship: An Outcome-Based Investment Strategy

U.S. Forest Service Talking Points

- Good morning, Madam Chair and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today regarding the Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement and how it relates to the work of this committee. I plan to address the broader background of the Shared Stewardship Strategy and then hand it off to my state colleague, DCNR Deputy Director Dominique Etchegoyhen, to share more of the specifics regarding the Nevada agreement.
- In the summer of 2019, Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen released “Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes: An Outcome-Based Investment Strategy.”
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/toward-shared-stewardship.pdf>
- The strategy described the tremendous and growing challenges we face in land management across the United States, whether as federal, state, tribal, county, municipal, or private landowners. These include substantial burnable landscape, insect and disease mortality, watershed and habitat degradation, and drought severity. An example in Nevada is the same challenge that led the Nevada State Legislature to establish this committee – the increasing risk of severe wildfire, and the resultant impacts on our communities, rangelands, industries and economy, wildlife habitat and other shared values.
- To address these challenges, the Shared Stewardship Strategy calls for the Forest Service to approach our work differently than we’ve done in the past. Shared Stewardship envisions that rather than engaging in isolated restoration efforts solely on federal lands, U.S. Forest Service, states and others will work together to prioritize landscape-scale stewardship actions that can produce outcomes at a more impactful scale.
- The strategy recognizes that the scale of the challenge is too great not to act and our opportunity is now. From the Forest Service perspective, we have a positive authorizing environment, advanced science and mapping tools, growing recognition of our shared challenges and the will to act.
- Shared Stewardship is an invitation at its essence, a call to action to share priority setting to determine land management needs at the state level and at large scales across boundaries. Shared Stewardship is about working together in an integrated way to make decisions and take actions on the land. It’s about doing the right work in the right places at the right scale.
- Elements of Shared Stewardship include:
 - Integrated decision-making
 - Working with states and other partners
 - Landscape-scale priority-setting

- Targeted treatments for the highest payoffs
 - Applying the best science
- To accomplish the work, the Forest Service is capitalizing on new and updated authorities provided by Congress, including expanded Good Neighbor Authorities. We are changing our internal processes to get more work done on the ground by improving the efficiency of our environmental analysis processes under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- Nationwide, Shared Stewardship means that the U.S. Forest Service is working more closely with state governor's offices and agencies to determine land management needs at the state level. This requires shared decision-making around which areas to target for treatment, and what actions to take. Every state has a forest action plan that can provide guidelines for coordinating fuels and forest health treatments across jurisdictional boundaries. States are also uniquely positioned to convene stakeholders to set priorities for investments that will bring the most bang for the buck.
- As the Forest Service has moved forward with Shared Stewardship agreements with its partner states, we've recognized that every state is different. Not surprisingly, states in the western U.S. largely have focused on reducing wildfire risk through strategically placed treatments. However, Shared Stewardship priorities are whatever the state and the Forest Service agree. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/shared-stewardship>
- Here in Nevada, the Forest Service engaged in discussions about what Shared Stewardship might look like beginning in the later summer/early fall of 2019, primarily with Nevada State Forester Kacey KC. We knew from the beginning that we wanted to broaden our approach and include additional federal and state agencies in our collaboration and were the first state to do so. We have a well-established tradition of collaboration in Nevada, and we wanted to respect that and build upon it.
- In September 2018, the Forest Service convened a Leaders' Intent meeting regarding the Shared Stewardship with the Governor's office, key state agencies and BLM. At that meeting, federal and state partners decided to move forward with an agreement and made the decision to focus on reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire due to the overwhelming threat posed to our shared values.
- <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/shared-stewardship>
- With that background and with your permission, I'd like to turn the presentation over to Dominique to share more about how federal and state partners are implementing this strategy in Nevada.

Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement (DCNR):

- Governor Steve Sisolak signed the Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, BLM, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in November 2019. The agreement focuses on working together to achieve landscapes that are more resistant and resilient to wildfire and other disturbances for the benefit of Nevada's citizens and wildlife.
- Appropriately, the signing of the agreement occurred as the culmination of a weeklong summit to revise the Nevada Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, a state-specific strategy for implementing the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.
- The agreement established two primary commitments: identifying a list of priority projects and completing two of them by the end of 2021; and increasing acres treated across all jurisdictions by 2025.
- To oversee progress toward the two commitments, the agreement establishes an executive committee comprised of federal agency leadership and leadership from the Nevada Department of Agriculture, Nevada Department of Wildlife and Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.
- At its initial meeting on January 29, 2020, the executive committee decided to meet quarterly, agreed to invite NRCS to participate (the agency has accepted), established a technical advisory committee and agreed to adopt the Nevada Native Seed Strategy as one of the strategies and plans to achieve Shared Stewardship referenced in the agreement.
- The technical advisory committee is assisting the executive committee in identifying priority projects by developing a map that shows agency programs of work (current and planned), results of previous prioritization exercises and layers showing values at risk. Values at risk would include communities, rangeland, wildlife habitat, and watersheds, for example. NDF's draft revised Forest Action Plan has been the basis for that work.
- NDF Deputy Director for Operations John Christopherson and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest vegetation program manager Duncan Leao are chairing the Technical Advisory Committee, and Jordan Hosmer-Henner from the Governor's office and Cheva Gabor are organizing and facilitating executive committee meetings.
- The next executive committee meeting is scheduled for June 4, and the focus will be reviewing potential priority landscapes that will provide the biggest return on investment in terms of reducing wildfire risk to preserve shared values.
- Engaging agency staff at the local level, as well as tribal governments, other stakeholders and partners, will be critical as we move forward to identify and implement projects and monitor for results.

- As we face an active wildlife season, we look forward to making quick progress in addressing our future risk. We'll keep you updated as this work moves forward.

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