

USDA Forest Service Partnerships

A Report Generated for the National Partnership Office

November 2012

Project Overview

This report presents findings from a research project on USDA Forest Service partnerships. Opinions of agency personnel were assessed using on-line surveys. Previous study findings illustrated that the contribution of time and energy to promote and sustain partnerships require extra effort beyond ordinary duties, and that this effort is not always accounted for or rewarded. The purpose of the project is to improve the knowledge of current partnership conditions as well as increase the agency's ability to develop successful partnerships. This report provides an overview of results from thirteen participating national forests.



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This project was funded by the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. For information, contact Lee Cerveny. (lcerveny@fs.fed.us).

We thank the study participants for taking time to share their ideas about the agency's partnership culture.

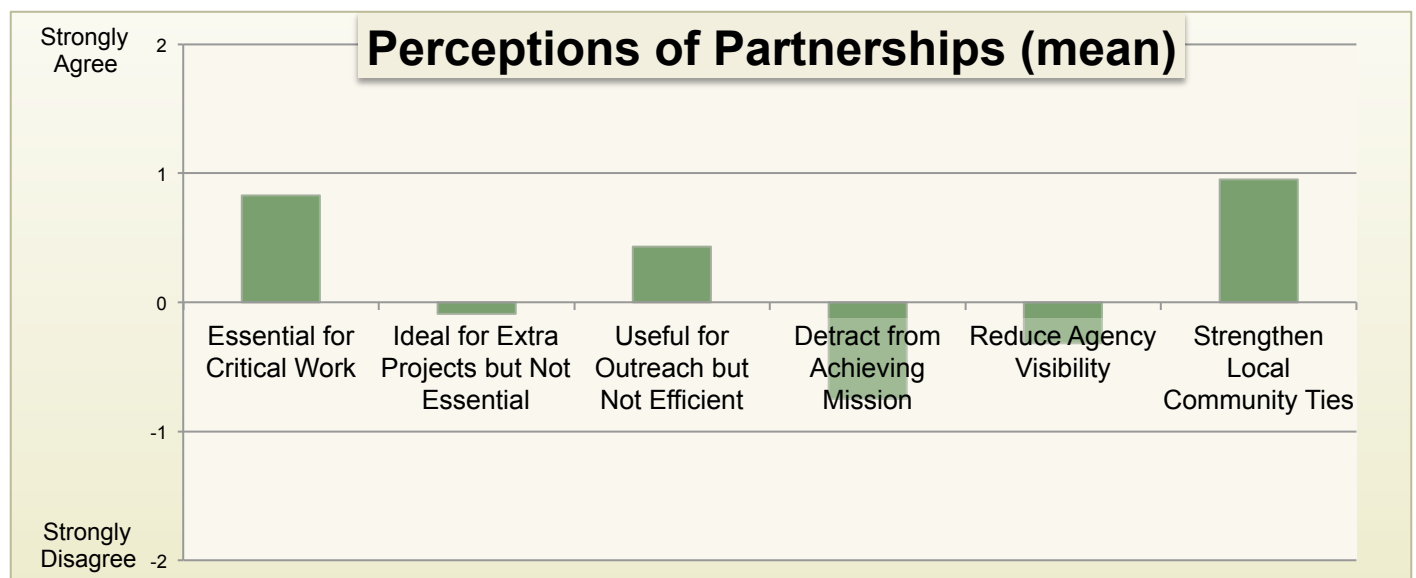
Most agency employees (85%) work with partners. However, only half of employees surveyed (47%) reported prior experience working with partners.

Within Administrative Units:

Partnership Emphasis

% Agree or Strongly Agree

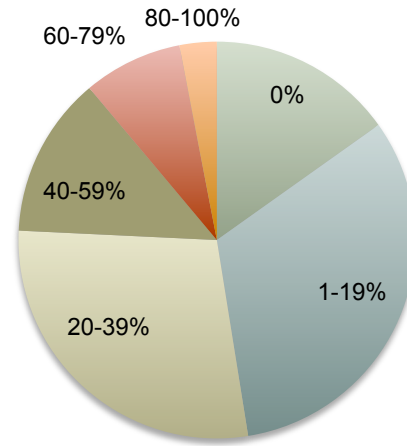
Leadership places a high priority on partnerships	72%
Partnerships are strongly encouraged; they are everyday business	66%
Individual initiative drives partnerships more than management directive	58%



Partnership Work by Functional Area (%)

Recreation, Wilderness, Heritage	44%
Restoration	38%
Vegetation & Watershed	36%
Wildlife & Fisheries	29%
Inventory & Monitoring	27%
Land Management Planning	26%
Forest Products	18%
Law Enforcement	16%
Grazing	14%
Landownership	12%
Minerals & Geology	8%

Percent of Time Spent Working with Partners (%)



Partnership Work by Types of Partners (%)

Other government agencies	70%
Private contractors, concessionaires, permit holders, consultants	60%
Individual volunteers (incl. campground host)	54%
Schools, universities, outdoor ed. Groups	50%
Local non-profit groups (e.g., env. groups, rec/outing clubs, "Friends-of")	49%
Government sponsored programs (e.g., JobCorps, YCC, AmeriCorps)	42%
Private, corporate, nonprofit foundations, trusts, or granting institutions	40%
National non-profit organizations (e.g., land trusts, env org, trail assoc.)	39%
Agency or university researchers	33%
Neighborhood or homeowner's associations	26%
Prisoners, probationers, community service	25%
Inter-agency coalition	24%
Forest Service enterprise team or similar governmental entity	24%
Local or regional corporations (e.g., forest products, utilities, ranching)	24%
Religious organizations, youth groups (e.g., scouts), camps, teams	23%
Historical societies, museums, cultural centers, or interpretive assoc.	21%
Planning meeting or watershed groups	21%
Local civic groups (e.g., Elks, VFW, Kiwanis, Chamber, garden clubs)	19%
Tribes or Native corporations	19%
National Forest Foundation	19%
Volunteer vacation or eco-tourism groups (e.g., Earth Corps & the SCA)	16%
Coordinating groups that facilitate relationships with other partners	14%

Partnership Reliance (mean)



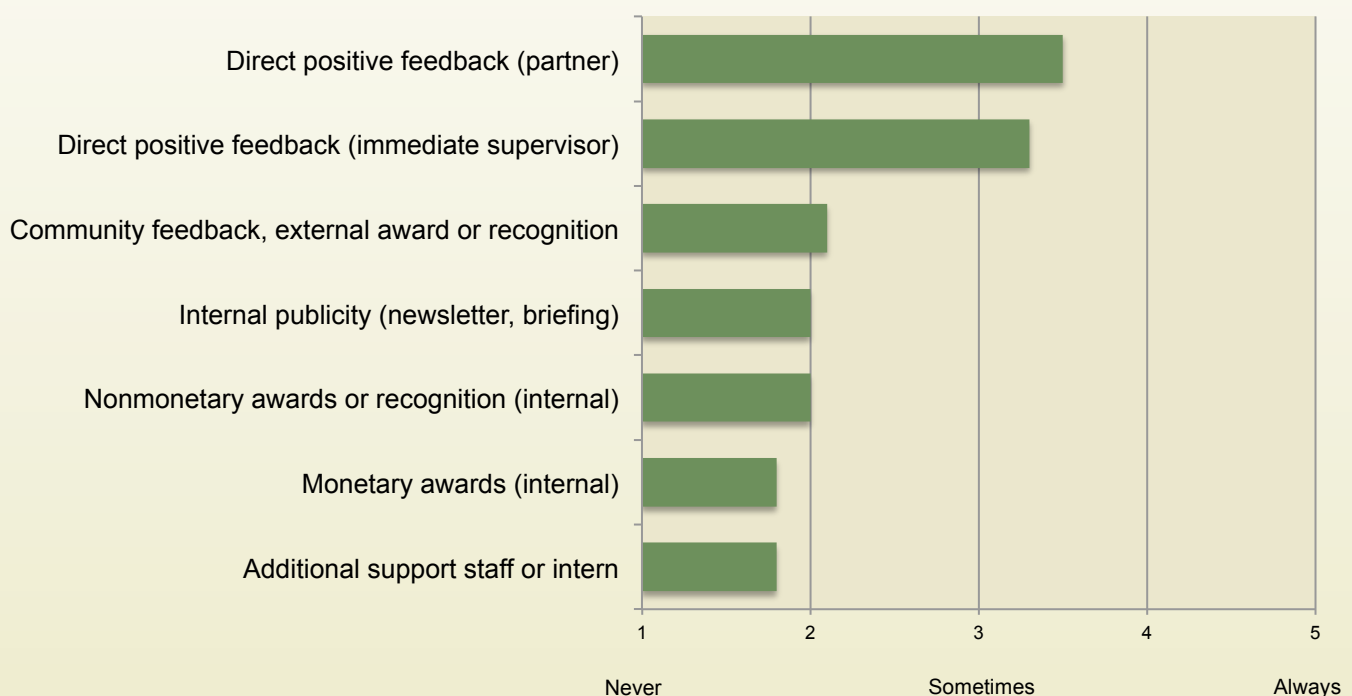
More than half of employees survey reported having a partnership item in their performance evaluation (58%) but less than half have partnership in their position description (46%).

Motivations to Partner

% Agree or Strongly Agree

Public engagement & stewardship	86%
Build trust & agency support	78%
Duty (public service mission)	78%
Personal accomplishment	76%
Expected job responsibility	75%
Enhance outreach	74%
Natural resource conservation	74%
Innovation (new ideas)	70%
Take advantage of opportunities	69%
Social connections	55%
New energy & enthusiasm	55%
Forest leadership emphasis	48%
Natural inclination to work with others	47%
Expectations of local groups	47%
Influences external to agency	42%
Synergy (combined skills & resources)	40%
Necessity (to meet targets)	21%

Incentives for Partnership Work (mean)



Within Administrative Units:

Partnership Access

% Agree or Strongly Agree

We don't always have projects ready when partners are ready to work.	65%
We only have time to work with a few partners.	57%
We find it more efficient to work with organized groups.	54%
We have more projects than available partners.	53%
We don't have time to solicit partners.	48%
We have become strategic about selecting partners.	47%
We have more partners than time to work with them.	39%
We need a coordinating group to facilitate our partnership work.	39%
We have many partners with interest in low priority work.	38%
We do not have enough partners to meet our work needs.	32%
We have the right amount of partners and can manage these relationships.	28%
We have access to many partners but prefer to use a select few.	21%

*Most personnel
(67%)
do not believe that
their administrative
unit has the
necessary financial
resources to work
with partners.*

Research
Methods

In 2011, 13 national forests were randomly selected for this project. At least 1 national forest from each of the 9 USDA Forest Service regions were sampled. Participation in the project was authorized from forest supervisors and district rangers. Emails with a link to an online survey were sent to all district personnel and select individuals working at the forest supervisor's office. Of the 1542 email requests, 611 USDA Forest Service employees responded (40% response rate). USDA Forest Service respondents served an average of 16 years with the agency and 7 years in their current position.

Challenges & Barriers

The challenges personnel on *all forests sampled* most often face when working with partners include:

- administering grants & agreement paperwork;
- lacking agency resources to bring to the table; and,
- not having time to recruit & maintain partners.

Personnel on *all forests sampled* sometimes face the following challenges and barriers:

- maintaining relationships after personnel turnover;
- dealing with difficult partners;
- the loss of knowledge, skills or abilities to perform specific tasks within the agency
- the loss of agency control of decision processes;
- a lack of rewards or incentives;
- partners lacking required training (e.g., safety);
- a lack of administrative support to manage partners; and
- a lack of skills to recruit & maintain partners.

*Partnerships enhance the
budgetary and human resource
capacity of public land
management agencies—
estimated for the Forest Service
to be \$1 billion annually—and
foster a public land ethic.*