

Purpose: To describe current Forest Service coordination and collaboration, best practices, and actions intended to improve these practices

Service First Authority

The Service First authority provides an allowance to BLM to cross-delegate its authorities regarding issuance of a right-of-way to the Forest Service line officer with delegated authority for the Cascade Crossing Electric Transmission Line Project, thereby allowing the Forest Service line officer to issue a single record of decision for the project. This is an example of how the Service First statute enhances the ability of four Federal land management agencies, the Forest Service, BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service, to coordinate and collaborate in natural resource management. The Service First authority allows the four land management agencies to cross-delegate their authorities, duties, and responsibilities to their respective personnel (a best practice). The three primary objectives of the Service First authority are (1) to provide better customer service; (2) to improve natural resource stewardship; and (3) to conduct business more effectively and efficiently.

At the Glenwood Springs, Colorado, office, BLM's process for approving rights-of-way across federal land has been adopted by the Forest Service and BLM, as well as BLM's standard guidance on oil and gas permitting. Like the Cascade example above, BLM and Forest Service have collaborated on NEPA analyses, permit approvals, and inspection of oil and gas sites. After leases are issued and before drilling begins, the Glenwood Springs interagency team is involved in several integrated activities, including approval of rights-of-way for roads and pipelines and applications for drilling permits. The agencies have created joint guidelines for standard stipulations, such as restrictions during certain months to protect wildlife, in all lease agreements, and have standardized processes for oil and gas leases and operators, too.

Permitting and review of major infrastructure projects like those near Butte, Montana, could be significantly expedited if the cross-delegation authority in the Service First statute were expanded to provide for issuance of a single land use authorization when lands managed by more than one Federal agency are involved. To allow issuance of a single authorization, the Service First statute would have to provide for cross-delegation of each agency's authorities, so that the authorities of one agency could be applied to lands managed by another agency for purposes of a particular project; it doesn't now.

Adapted for training purposes from *Implementation of Executive Order 13604: The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Plan for Improving the Federal Permitting and Review Process for Infrastructure Projects* (2012)