



Managing across levels of government: Evaluation of federal-state roles and responsibilities involving nonfederal forests in the United States

Paul V. Ellefson*, Calder M. Hibbard, Michael A. Kilgore

Department of Forest Resources, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN, United States

Received 1 June 2004; received in revised form 15 December 2004; accepted 21 December 2004

Abstract

With the assistance of state foresters and federal agency executives, an evaluation was made of federal and state government roles and responsibilities focused on nonfederal forests in the United States. The evaluation involved an inventory of legally (and administratively) defined federal roles, identification of federal programs supporting accomplishment of such roles, and assessment of the appropriateness of these roles and the effectiveness of supporting programs. Legal specification of federal roles occurs in myriad laws, rules, and planning documents, while nearly 190 federal programs represent actual expressions of federal roles. State foresters and federal agency executives favor federal roles that promote financial stability, technical competence, and coordination between states. From a state perspective, few (or no) restrictions on state discretion are an important consideration when judging the appropriateness of a federal role or program, while direct federal financial support is viewed as the most appropriate way of formally linking federal roles to state governments. Inadequate resources, cumbersome administrative process, and absence of a shared federal-state vision for nonfederal forests are important deterrents to effective federal-state working relationships.

© 2005 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Federalism; State-federal interface; Intergovernmental relations; Government roles; Linkages; Forestry programs

Owners and managers of forests throughout the world have a history of engaging different levels of governments to work together in order to improve the stewardship of forests and the sustainability of the communities that depend on them. Often involving shared decision-making among agencies at different

levels of government, these intergovernmental linkages usually result in complex organization and program patterns that take many forms, including the providing of technical advice and financial grants, building institutional and professional capacity, gathering data and conducting research, and regulating and directing especially sensitive concerns over the use, management, and protection of forest resources. Making sure that agencies at various levels of

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 612 624 3735.
E-mail address: pellefso@umn.edu (P.V. Ellefson).

government, and the programs these agencies are responsible for, are well focused and suitably coordinated is especially important to the future sustainability of nonfederal forests throughout the world. In the United States, such forests occupy nearly 200 million hectares of land owned by state, county, and tribal governments; corporations and private nonprofit entities; and approximately 10 million individual private citizens (National Research Council, 1998).

1. Federal-state government system

Appropriate jurisdiction of various levels of government has historically been an intensely debated issue in the United States, and nonfederal forests and the correctness of governments to be charged with their stewardship has often been engulfed by these controversies (Dana and Fairfax, 1980; Koontz, 2002). Typically at issue are differing perspectives on how to exercise federalism as a political system, with “federalism” being variously defined, including as “a sort of association or league of sovereign states...with separate, self-sustaining centers of power and prestige.” More pointedly, federalism is generally viewed as a system of government in which power is divided between higher and lower levels of government in such a way that both levels have a significant amount of separate and autonomous responsibility for the social and economic welfare of those living within their respective jurisdictions (Diamond, 1993).

1.1. Structure of system

Establishing formal program and administrative relationships between different levels of government for purposes of promoting the stewardship of nonfederal forests is predicated on the assumption that accomplishing a desired outcome is in the interest of one or more of the government levels involved (Denhardt, 1991). For example, federal grants of money may be provided to state governments so as to ensure at least some minimal level of forest management across all states (for example, reforestation), or federal involvement may be necessary in order to address an especially serious problem in one state that may have negative implications for other states (for

example, spread of forest insects or diseases). The need to foster innovation in policies and programs or to promote structural reform in the way a particular level of state government is organized (for example, establish an agency to address water pollutants occurring from nonfederal forests) or administered (for example, adopt planning, evaluation, and information management functions focused on nonfederal forests) may also imply the need for a federal presence. Interaction between federal and state governments may also be undertaken in order to establish foundations upon which state governments can build the capacity needed to address especially significant issues involving nonfederal forests (for example, protection of endangered species habitats), when, for whatever reason (for example, limited tax base from which to raise revenue), such capacity-building is beyond the ability of a particular state.

Federal-state interactions involving nonfederal forests can embrace a variety of working relationships, including federal control and mandated state responses (for example, federal standards for forest-dependent endangered species), mutual state-federal dependence and sharing of program administration (for example, financial and technical assistance for forest management activities), state-initiated actions to which federal agencies respond with resources (for example, economic development in rural forested areas), and joint action involving multiple levels of government as well as nongovernmental organizations (for example, emergency assistance for wildfire management). Expressions of federalism may also involve initial preemption of state authorities, only to have such authority delegated back to states when they have met federally established standards (for example, state regulation of surface mining under federal agency oversight) (May et al., 1996; Olson, 2000; Scheberle, 1997).

1.2. Desired outcomes of system

From a federal perspective, how might the effectiveness of federalism be judged? From the perspective of nonfederal forests, the literature focused on the matter is sparse. From a more general context, literature suggests that, at a minimum, federally initiated roles and programs should embrace the following (Anderson and Hill, 1997; Dye, 1990;

May et al., 1996; Oliver, 1990; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1997; Radin et al., 1996; Scheberle, 1997):

- Promote autonomous and self-reliant units of state and local government.
- Encourage experimentation with different programs and a willingness to abandon ineffective programs.
- Accommodate diversity in political cultures, traditions and capacity to respond.
- Advance efficiency in government and responsibility for actions taken (or not taken).
- Meet legally established standards, yet allow flexibility for responsiveness to local needs.
- Seek stability in and legitimacy of government organizations and programs proven to be effective.
- Promote trust among and active involvement of the various levels of government that share responsibility for solving an issue.

From a state perspective, the effectiveness of federal roles and associated programs is usually done in the context of a desire to promote the interest of both federal and state interests, not just federal level interests. In the United States and from the perspective of state government managers generally, agency managers often suggest that state-federal working relationships could be improved if federal mandates were adequately funded, more flexibility existed for managing national programs (especially expenditure of funds), less reliance was placed on quantitative measures of state performance (less “bean counting”), national program goals were clearer and their logic more understandable, new programs were capable of being anticipated well in advance of implementation, consistent messages were made about program requirements and operation, recognition was given by federal agencies to the extensive expertise that exists in state agencies, and greater appreciation was afforded state perspectives during establishment and implementation of federal programs (especially challenges posed by on-the-ground program implementation). Since federal government financial and technical support in the United States is often an important and quite lucrative incentive, few state leaders suggest wholesale removal of federal involvement in state government programs (Scheberle, 1997).

The role of state governments in the United States has been suggested as especially important and relevant for coping with environmental and natural resource issues (DeWitt, 1994). Such is not to deny the importance of federal roles in these matters (for example, in transboundary issues involving issues larger than a single state). However, states may have certain advantages, including special ability to customize to local resource and administrative conditions, actively engage citizens, and work across agency boundaries within states (small agencies more familiar to citizens and professionals). States government programs are, however, alleged to be prone to capture by small political factions and often lack the financial and professional capacity to address important large-scale environmental issues (DeWitt, 1994).

1.3. Issues with federal-state system

Interaction between federal and state governments is not without problems, including the struggle between desires for uniformity in program application across states versus the necessity for flexibility in program application within a single state. The former is often advocated as necessary in order to accomplish an overall national interest, whereas the latter is advocated as a basic requirement needed to accommodate extensive diversity in social, political and resource conditions among states (an especially important consideration for nonfederal forests). Federalism is also challenged by the diffuse political and administrative centers of state government that can complicate and even delay the adoption of well crafted and effective federal initiatives (for example, myriad state agencies responsibility for stewardship of nonfederal forests) (Ellefson et al., 2002, 2004). When such is combined with the inability of some states to marshal the necessary resources (for example, money, personnel, expertise) to address an important issue, government inertia can become overbearing. In such cases, especially innovative states may rely on a strong federal presence to break the impasse (they point to the “federal gorilla in the closet”). And political systems built around federalism are also torn by disputes over rights to self-direction (autonomy versus control) and the avoidance of interference by higher levels of government.

Such disputes typically arise over differences about the extent to which the financier (often the federal government) of programs should have a say in the way such programs are implemented (often by state or lower government levels) (DeWitt, 1994; Oliver, 1990; Scheberle, 1997).

2. Evaluation of roles and responsibilities

2.1. Important issues in need of evaluation

Seeking to achieve important national interests in nonfederal forests, the federal government in the United States has in recent years seen fit to engage a wider array of state government organizations (for example, pollution control agencies, fish and game departments) and in some cases has virtually bypassed state government all together (for example, endangered species management, point source pollutant management). These circumstances, combined with continuing federal interest in devolving many forestry responsibilities to states, raise questions about the appropriateness of current federal roles in nonfederal forests and the ways in which state and federal governments choose to link in order to promote such roles. For example, what legally and administratively defined roles is the federal government seeking to perform and are they appropriate? What types of federal programs are being used to accomplish these roles and what agencies are responsible for implementing them? What federal roles (and associated programs) do states prefer and how are these preferences determined? And from both a federal and state perspective, are current federal roles being carried out in an effective manner, and, if so, what standards are being used to judge effectiveness? For administrators in countries throughout the world, issues regarding inter-governmental responsibilities of the type raised by questions such as these can be extremely difficult to address. The experiences of the United States may prove helpful in this respect.

2.2. Procedure for conducting evaluation

A nationwide evaluation of federal government roles involving the use, management and protection

of nonfederal forests in the United States was undertaken in 2001 (Ellefson et al., 2003). The evaluation was three-phased, namely (a) an inventory of legally and administratively specified federal roles and responsibilities, (b) inventory of federally implemented programs focused on nonfederal forests, and (c) information gathered (a mailed questionnaire) from state foresters and executive-level administrators in national and regional offices of State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Responses were received from all 25 of the senior-level administrators that were contacted, while 49 of 50 state foresters responded. Of the state forestry agency responses, in only six cases was the respondent other than the state forester. Because of their executive-level position in state government, and frequent contact with federal program administrators, state foresters were able to provide especially useful insight about federal roles involving nonfederal forests. Although many agencies were included in the legal and program inventories, and are acknowledged as having important roles involving nonfederal forests (for example, Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, Natural Resources Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture, and various state counterpart agencies), only the Forest Service and lead state forestry agencies participated in the questionnaire survey.

3. Legal and administrative definition of roles

Federal laws, the Code of Federal Regulations and various agency directives and strategic plans contain statements that express the federal government's role in nonfederal forests. Review of a modest number of these sources suggests extreme diversity in federal authority to address nonfederal forests. Also, the language specifying a federal role is often all-embracing (for example, promote timber and wildlife and range and water and...), and federal roles and programs for accomplishing such roles are usually considered one in the same, with frequent emphasis on the programmatic "how" of accomplishing a federal role (for example, initiate a forestry cost-share program) and less on defining the federal

role or intent (for example, cost-share program will accomplish a national purpose of. . .).

In the United States, at least six different federal laws specifically address nonfederal forests (for example, Renewable Resources Extension Act of 1978, Cooperative Forestry Act of 1978), while another 10 indirectly speak about such forests (for example, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, Endangered Species Act of 1973). Example paraphrased statements of federal roles specified by federal law are: “cooperate and encourage forestry research,” “analyze and disseminate scientific information,” “encourage management via cost-share programs,” “encourage stewardship via education and technical assistance,” “prevent, control, and suppress wildfire,” “assist communities located near National Forests,” “prevent flood damages,” “preserve free-flowing rivers,” “conserve threatened and endangered species,” and “prevent erosion from unreclaimed mined lands.” Not all of these roles are to be accomplished in partnership with state governments.

The Code of Federal Regulations further clarifies statutory intent regarding federal roles in nonfederal forests. As examples, the Code authorizes the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture to carry out cooperative forestry programs for public benefit through initiation of programs with state and county agencies for purposes directed at the protection, development, and sustained production of all forestry resources. Furthermore, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture is to provide assistance to private landowners, conservation districts, and other organizations in planning and carrying out conservation activities and programs. And the Code directs the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to support research and antipollution activities carried out by state and local governments, private and public groups, individuals, and educational institutions.

Federal agency directives, such as the Manual and related Handbooks of the Forest Service, give further insight to federal roles. The Forest Service Manual directs technical and financial assistance to state and private forest landowners for purposes of promoting good forest stewardship, enhancing state wildfire protection capacity through loans, procuring and leasing of equipment and property, and

fostering state development of permanent long-range planning processes for forest resources and related programs. Other federal agencies have similar authority to clarify their role in nonfederal forests (for example, Service Manual, Director’s Orders and National Policy Issuances of the Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior).

The federal role in nonfederal forests is further defined in agency-prepared strategic program plans. For example, the EPA’s *Strategic Plan 2003–2008* [especially nonpoint source pollutant management and control of invasive species], National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency’s *New Priorities for the Twenty-first Century: NOAA’s Strategic Vision* [especially coastal zone management and protection], Fish and Wildlife Service’s *Strategic Plan 2000–2005* [especially habitat conservation on private lands, and wildlife on tribal government lands] and the Forest Service’s *Strategic Plan (2000 Revision)*.

The Forest Service’s *Strategic Plan (2000 Revision)* specifically defines federal roles in nonfederal forests (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 2000). For example:

- Assist state, tribal, and other governmental agencies and private landowners to achieve sustainable forest and grassland management.
- Enhance broader public accessibility through partnerships and contracts with federal, state, and tribal governments and other entities.
- Assist state forestry agencies, local governments, and cooperators in protecting and increasing forest cover and green space in urban areas.
- Increase assistance to selected cities and communities to improve livability.
- Increase technical assistance and technology transfer in dealing with economic, environmental, and social changes related to natural resources to tribal governments, rural communities and private landowners.
- Focus increases in technical assistance toward tribal governments, rural communities, and private landowners in those areas where the greatest difference exists between the demands for uses and products and their availabilities are expected to occur.

- Expand the annual forest inventory and analysis and forest health monitoring programs to all 50 states and U.S. territories, including grassland and aquatic ecosystems and urban areas.

4. Implemented programs as indicators of federal roles

The nature and number of federal government programs actually being implemented in the United States can also provide insight to federal government roles in nonfederal forests. In 2001, a review was made of federal budget documents, appropriation hearing documents, federal agency web sites, catalog of federal domestic assistance, and other more generalized agency documents. The review defined a program as a set (or group) of activities or projects that are (a) closely related in form or function, (b) involve activities carried out over long periods of time, (c) and are separate and distinct from other sets of activities (for example, a cost-share fiscal incentives program, coastal wetlands planning program, urban and community forestry program) (General Services Administration, 2003). The federal government programs selected were limited to those that have potential to impact the condition of nonfederal forests and that are nearly always linked directly to state or tribal governments.

4.1. Programs and responsible agencies

Identified were 187 federal government programs that have potential to affect the condition of nonfederal forests in the United States, 46 percent (86) of which were administered by agencies within the U.S. Department of Agriculture and 26 percent (48) by the EPA (Table 1). The remaining portion (28 percent, 53 programs) was spread among eight federal departments or independent agencies, and, in turn, more than 44 entities (for example, bureaus, divisions, offices) within such departments or agencies. Within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nine agencies were responsible for the programs considered (for example, Forest Service—25 programs, Natural Resource Conservation Service—20 programs), while 11 entities (offices) were responsible in the Environ-

Table 1

Federal programs influencing the condition of nonfederal forests in the U.S., by department or agency and degree of influence; 2002

Department or agency	Degree of program influence (number of programs)		Total number of programs
	Direct influence	Indirect influence	
Department of Agriculture	43	43	86
Environmental Protection Agency	5	43	48
Department of the Interior	12	9	21
Department of Commerce	2	15	17
Department of Defense	—	4	4
Department of Health and Human Services	—	3	3
Department of Energy	—	3	3
Federal Emergency Management Agency	—	2	2
National Science Foundation	—	2	2
Department of Transportation	—	1	1
TOTAL	62	125	187

Direct influence implies a clear and unambiguous legal, rule, or policy statement of intent to affect the condition of nonfederal forests. An example: "Secretary is to develop and implement a forestry incentives program to encourage [management] of nonfederal forest lands..." Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978.

mental Protection Agency (for example, Office of Water—14 programs, Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances—7 programs).

Of the 187 programs identified, approximately one-third (62) were considered to have a direct influence on nonfederal forests (clear and unambiguous statement of intent to affect the condition of nonfederal forests) (Table 1). A conservative estimate of the combined 2002 budget for these programs is \$1645.0 million. Example programs are the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program and Stewardship Incentives Program, and the EPA's Pesticide

Registration Program and Nonpoint Source Implementation Grants Program. Of the programs considered having a direct impact on nonfederal forests, nearly 70 percent (43) were administered by agencies in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

4.2. Program purposes and functions

Recognizing that many of the 187 federal programs identified had multiple purposes (average of 1.3 purposes per program), the most common purpose was research and development (23 percent of recorded purposes), followed by resource conservation and education and information (20 percent and 19 percent of the observed program purposes, respectively) (Table 2). Agencies with an especially strong presence in education and information were the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (for example, Renewable Resources Extension Program) and various units of the EPA (for example, Pesticide Applicator Certification and Training Program). Resource conservation emphasis was notable in the Natural Resource Conservation Service (for example, Forestry Incentives Program), Forest Service (for example, Forest Stewardship Program), and various entities in the U.S. Department of the Interior (for example, Bureau of Indian Affairs' Endangered Species on Indian Lands Program).

4.3. Linkages to states

The connection between federal and state governments also takes many forms, the most common being project grants (31 percent of the recorded observations), followed by dissemination of technical information (18 percent of observations) and advisory services and counseling (11 percent) (Table 2) (General Services Administration, 2003). Project grant approaches were especially common to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (13 occurrences), of which the Invasive Species Program and the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program are examples. The dissemination of technical information was noteworthy to the Forest Service (for example, Urban and Community Forestry Program) and the EPA's Office of Water (for example,

Table 2

Distribution of federal programs influencing the condition of nonfederal forests in the U.S., by program function or purpose and instrument linking program to state governments; 2002

	Distribution of programs (%)
<i>Function or purpose toward which programs are directed</i>	
•Research, development, and promotion	23
•Resource conservation	20
•Education and information	19
•Market and economic assistance	8
•Pollution control and abatement	7
•Regulation and enforcement	6
•Partnership building	5
•Direct resource management	4
•Planning and program design	4
•Environment remediation	2
•Recreational enhancement	2
TOTAL	100
<i>Instrument used to link programs with state governments</i>	
•Project grants	31
•Dissemination of technical information	18
•Advisory services and counseling	11
•Direct payments	9
•Formula grants	8
•Property, facilities, and equipment use	7
•Provision of specialized services	7
•Regulatory and directive	5
•Training and education	2
•Direct loans	1
•Guaranteed loans	1
TOTAL	100

Total number of programs is 187. Since programs may have more than one purpose or function, and may link to state governments by more than one instrument, the total number of programs is less than the number of functions or instruments recorded.

programs focusing on the Great Lakes Program and Chesapeake Bay).

The number of state government agencies to which federal government programs could potentially link is impressive. In 2000, an estimated 1453 state agencies (cabinet level, sub-cabinet level, and governing-advisory bodies) were responsible for programs influencing the use, management and protection of nonfederal forests (Ellefson et al., 2002). Although not yet fully documented, there is good reason to believe that a large portion of these state agencies engages federal programs as part of their efforts to

affect the condition of nonfederal forests. Forty-seven percent of the agencies had resource use and management as a primary function (for example, fisheries and wildlife management, management and protection of forests, resource conservation generally), while assistance and enforcement activities (for example, planning, budgeting, legal counsel, information management) were second most common (22 percent of agencies). The number and diversity of state and federal agencies (and the programs they implement) represent a significant challenge to securing a holistic approach to the sustainable use and management of nonfederal forests.

5. Administrators' perception of federal roles

5.1. Preferred roles

The combined responses of 49 state foresters and 25 federal agency executives suggest that the most important federal role is to provide financial assistance required to implement state forestry programs (Table 3). Seventy-four percent of the respondents indicated such a role to be very important, with 17 percent (13 respondents) indicating such a role to be among the three federal roles they consider to be most important. Also very important federal government roles were

Table 3

Importance of federal agency roles involving nonfederal forests in the U.S., as perceived by state foresters of state government and by executives of State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2001

Federal role or responsibility	Importance of role or responsibility (percent of respondents)				Among three most important roles (%)
	Very important	Somewhat important	Little importance	Not important	
•Provide financial assistance	74	18	7	1	17
•Supply leading-edge technical advice	66	24	4	6	15
•Foster coordination among states	57	39	4	0	14
•Monitor condition of forest resources	57	38	5	0	12
•Enlarge State programs and make more effective	65	26	9	0	9
•Assist in time of disaster or catastrophe	65	32	3	0	7
•Promote use of innovative programs	37	43	19	1	5
•Build organizational and managerial capacity	34	44	19	3	4
•Synthesize and distribute information	54	41	5	0	3
•Focus on special or unique forest resources	37	50	12	1	2
•Promote links between agencies and clients	27	43	23	7	2
•Advance managerial and leadership skills	34	44	19	3	2
•Promote use of strategic planning processes	27	46	23	4	2
•Integrate economic and environmental interests	47	32	18	3	2
•Evaluate State-implemented programs	38	38	20	4	1
•Secure standing and respect for State programs	24	41	31	4	1
•Convene clients of State programs	31	44	22	3	1
•Manage conflict involving State programs	7	30	54	9	0

Information provided by 49 state foresters and 25 executives of State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

provision of leading-edge technical advice and assistance required to implement state programs, coordination among states situated in a larger multi-state region, and monitoring the area and condition of forest resources within a state. Viewed separately, federal agency executives were more likely than state foresters to identify as a very important federal role that of motivating states to innovate and embrace progressive forward-looking policies and programs. However, state foresters viewed the availability of federal resources necessary to make state programs large enough to be successfully implemented more important than Forest Service executives. Neither group of respondents was enamored with a federal government that convened the partnering of diverse clients of state programs nor with federal involvement to facilitate abatement of conflict among clients of state programs.

5.2. Criteria for selection of roles

Respondents indicated that a clear directive by a federal law or rule should be, by far, the single most important determinant of a federal government role (53 percent of respondents) (Table 4). Ninety-nine percent indicated such a standard to be very or somewhat important. Also frequently cited as a necessary federal

role were broad national and regional goals to be accomplished (16 percent), and federal financial resources are abundant and available to help accomplish a federal role (11 percent). Federal employee interest and support for an activity or program, availability of a large and competent federal agency staff, and the directives of powerful persons (political appointees) or the influence of organized interest groups were ranked very low in importance as standards for selection (Table 4). Differences in selection criteria between state foresters and federal agency executives were minimal.

6. Administrators' perception of linkages

6.1. Preferred linkages

Seventy-two percent of combined state forester and federal agency executives identified financial support via grants, loans, or guarantees as the single most important way for federal agencies to link with states in the accomplishment of a federal role (99 percent considered it very or somewhat important) (Table 5). Other federal-state linking arrangements were far down the list, with co-management of forest land

Table 4

Importance of factors determining federal agency roles involving nonfederal forests in the U.S., as perceived by state foresters of state government and by executives of State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2001

Factor determining a federal role	Importance of factor (percent of respondents)				Single most important factor (%)
	Very important	Somewhat important	Little importance	Not important	
•Federal law-rule directs federal role	85	14	1	0	53
•National goals imply need for federal role	50	35	14	1	16
•Federal financial resources are available	24	53	16	7	11
•Federal commitment exists to federal role	35	44	18	3	8
•Federal agency knowledge implies need for federal role	35	49	12	4	5
•Strong national stakeholder support for federal role	22	58	17	3	4
•Federal employee interest in federal role	8	24	45	23	0
•Federal staff available to attain federal role	7	36	42	15	0
•National centers of political influence direct federal role	18	39	40	3	0

Table 5

Importance of program linkages used by federal agencies working with states to accomplish a federal role involving nonfederal forests in the U.S., as perceived by state foresters of state government and by executives of State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2001

Formal federal administrative and program arrangement with states	Importance of administrative arrangement (percent of respondents)				Single most important arrangement (%)
	Very important	Somewhat important	Little importance	Not important	
•Provide financial support directly to states	85	14	1	0	72
•Lend technical personnel to states	36	45	16	3	7
•Lend equipment and material to states	20	66	10	4	4
•Partner with states to resolve client conflict	16	39	37	8	4
•Participate in agency planning processes	15	50	28	7	4
•Establish state-federal counterpart offices	5	22	50	23	4
•Serve on state committees and task forces	17	53	27	3	3
•Co-manage forest land with states	5	15	41	39	1
•Co-own equipment and facilities with states	4	16	62	18	1
•Provide products and equipment to states	10	35	46	9	0
•Join with states in judicial proceedings	7	42	31	20	0
•Give direction and mandates to states	3	16	35	46	0

with states and federal government directives and mandates to which states must respond being viewed as especially distasteful. Federal agency executives considered the following to be considerably more important than state foresters: federal service (along with state delegates) on state committees and task forces, and federal agency program offices to which states can establish matching counterpart offices.

6.2. Criteria for selection of linkages

The factor most frequently identified as single-most important for judging the worthiness of a state-federal linkage arrangement was that few (or no) federal agency restrictions are imposed on a state agency during the course of implementing the relationship (24 percent of respondents) (Table 6). The implication being that there should be ample room for administrative discretion necessary to accommodate varying conditions (resource and human) found within a state. Other selection criteria considered important were that a long-term federal commitment exists to the arrange-

ment, the arrangement is easy to understand and administer, and that the approach is really the only way of accomplishing certain mutually agreed to outcomes. Although important in the eyes of some, a large federal staff interested in a program and the political influence of interest groups were viewed with some skepticism as criteria for selecting federal-state working arrangements.

7. Effectiveness of roles and linkages

An overwhelming 97 percent of responding state foresters and federal agency executives indicated their working relationships with state or federal counterparts were proceeding very well (35 percent) or moderately well (62 percent; in contrast to poorly or not well at all) in the United States (Table 7). Eighty percent of respondents indicated that current federal government roles were promoting a cooperative working relationship generally between the two levels of government, in that agencies are becoming more

Table 6

Importance of factors determining program linkage used by federal agencies working with states to accomplish a federal role involving nonfederal forests in the U.S., as perceived by state foresters of state government and by executives of State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2001

Factor determining federal–state working relationship	Importance of factor (percent of respondents)				Single most important factor (%)
	Very important	Somewhat important	Little importance	Not important	
•Few (or no) federal agency restrictions	68	28	4	0	24
•Only way of accomplishing desired outcomes	54	38	5	3	20
•Federal commitment exists to relationship	49	42	9	0	20
•Finances are available to implement relationship	36	50	11	3	14
•Federal law-rule requires relationship	49	35	15	1	11
•Easy to understand and administer	65	28	7	0	5
•Strong national stakeholder support for relationship	31	47	19	3	3
•Federal employee interest in relationship	23	38	34	5	3
•Federal staff available to implement relationship	15	42	36	7	0
•National centers of political influence direct use of relationship	14	45	36	5	0
•Few (or no) federal agency reporting requirements	13	57	26	4	0

collaborative and more willing to work together (in contrast to 8 percent suggesting greater detachment [“go it alone”] or competition [“vie for turf”] and 12 percent indicating a neutral federal effect). As for effect on new state government initiatives, nearly nine of 10 respondents (87 percent) suggested that current federal roles and linkages added to existing or stimulated new state policies and programs (in contrast to no effect [8 percent] or substituted for existing programs [5 percent]).

As for how federal government roles and linkage mechanisms were influencing state government forestry agendas and decision making, 34 percent of respondents indicated more state government attention was being directed to nonfederal forests, although nearly one-third (32 percent) indicated no changes were occurring in such measures (Table 7). Twenty-seven percent suggested that federal government involvement had caused a shift away from lead state forestry agencies that traditionally direct state government forestry actions. Only a very modest portion of respondents (7 percent) indicated current federal government roles and linkages had led to a change

Table 7

General condition and affect of state-federal roles and program linkages involving nonfederal forests in the U.S., as perceived by state foresters of state government and by executives of State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2001

A. General condition of working relationships (portion of respondents)...

With Counterpart Units in Federal or State Agencies: very well—35 percent, moderately well—62 percent, poorly—3 percent, and not well at all—zero percent.

B. Affect of current federal roles and working relationships (portion of respondents)...

On overall working relationships: more isolated—4 percent, more competitive—4 percent, more cooperative—80 percent, and neutral in affect—12 percent.

On state initiatives (new or modified policies and programs): stimulates new state policies and programs—21 percent, adds to existing state policies and programs—61 percent, substitutes for existing state policies and programs—5 percent, and no affect—8 percent.

On state agendas and decision-making: state government giving more attention to nonfederal forests—34 percent, changes in who in state government makes decisions affecting nonfederal forests—7 percent, shifts in organizations influencing state decisions affecting nonfederal forests—27 percent, and no changes—32 percent.

Table 8

Effectiveness of state-federal program linkages for accomplishing certain desired outcomes involving nonfederal forests in the U.S., as perceived by state foresters of state government and by executives of State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2001

Desired outcome of federal-state program relationship	Effectiveness federal-state relationship in accomplishing desired outcome (percent of respondents)			
	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Little effectiveness	Not effective
•Acquiring adequate resources and ensuring their stability (funds, staff)	19	69	11	1
•Encouraging innovation in type and application of programs	14	51	32	3
•Engaging client groups and encouraging citizen participation in program design and implementation	11	47	38	4
•Facilitating quick action necessary to capture new and important opportunities	11	42	40	7
•Managing conflict and reducing tension in program design and implementation	7	46	39	8

in which agencies in state government make decisions concerning nonfederal forests.

When viewed separately, state foresters were more much more likely to consider federal-state working relationships as more competitive than federal agency executives (74 percent versus zero percent, respectively). Only 6 percent of the state foresters suggested a cooperative relationship while 92 percent of the federal executives suggested so. Similarly, 56 percent of the executives indicated new state policies and programs were stimulated by federal government roles and programs (only 16 percent of state foresters), while 63 percent of state foresters indicated such to be only adding to existing state programs (only 44 percent of agency executives). Federal agency executives were also more likely to indicate that federal programs lead to more state

attention to nonfederal forests (48 percent of executives versus 27 percent of state foresters).

The ability of current federal-state linkages to acquire adequate and stable resources for state government programs was viewed as very or somewhat effective by nearly nine of 10 (88 percent) responding state foresters and federal agency executives (Table 8). However, the respondents were less positive as to current linkages' ability to engage client groups (42 percent indicating little or not effective), facilitate quick program responses and manage conflict involved in program design and implementation (47 percent little or not effective for each of the latter two categories).

As for major deterrents to effective federal-state government working relationships, 91 percent of the respondents indicated inadequate resources were very

Table 9

Importance of factors deterring effective state-federal program linkages involving nonfederal forests in the U.S., as perceived by state foresters of state government and by executives of State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2001

Major factor deterring effective federal-state program relationships	Importance of major deterring factor (percent of respondents)			
	Very important	Somewhat important	Little importance	Not important
•Inadequate resources to accomplish desired outcomes	54	37	9	0
•Complex and cumbersome administrative procedures	41	38	20	1
•No shared federal-state vision for nonfederal forests	26	40	31	3
•Lack of trust between federal and state agencies	22	43	27	8
•Lack of clear federal and state roles	18	40	35	7
•Unhealthy competition between federal and state agencies	18	32	35	15
•Excessive state agency reliance on federal assistance	15	41	36	8
•Apathy toward new directions and new programs	13	38	42	7

(54 percent) or somewhat important (37 percent) (Table 9). Complex and cumbersome administrative steps and the absence of a shared state-federal vision for nonfederal forests also ranked high as very important deterrents (41 percent and 26 percent, respectively). Differences between state foresters and agency executives were minimal, although lack of trust between the levels of government was considered a deterring factor by more agency executives (80 percent indicating very or somewhat important) than state foresters (57 percent). Also more troubling to federal executives was lack of clearly defined state-federal roles involving nonfederal forests.

8. Conclusions and future outlooks

Working relationships across different levels of government can assume various structures and can be

defined in a variety of ways, most notably by statutes, administrative directives and myriad programs that are often implemented via partnerships that engage governments at various levels. Critical to successful attainment of interests desired by governments at different levels is a clear understanding of the roles appropriate for each level and the assured access to programs that will enable different levels to link with one another. Drawing from information provided by state foresters and federal executives contacted by this evaluation, the roles and working relationships used to accomplish mutual state-federal interests in nonfederal forests appear, for the most part, to be functioning quite well in the United States (Table 10). If there are detractors, they arise primarily from inadequate resources to accomplish agreed-to roles and from the complex and often cumbersome administrative procedures that are imposed on many intergovernmental working relationships.

Table 10

Summary of especially important federal roles and federal-state program linkages involving nonfederal forests in the U.S. as perceived by state foresters of state government and by executives of State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2001

Characteristic	Perceptions of state foresters and federal agency executives	Perceptions of state foresters	Perceptions of federal agency executives
Federal roles and responsibilities	<i>Role:</i> provide financial resources, furnish technical assistance, and promote coordination among states. <i>Selection criteria:</i> legal requirement, unique and effective federal position, and available federal finances.	<i>Role:</i> provide financial resources, furnish technical assistance, and monitor condition of forest resources. <i>Selection criteria:</i> legal requirement, unique and effective federal position, and available federal finances.	<i>Role:</i> promote coordination among states, furnish technical assistance, and encourage innovation in goals and programs. <i>Selection criteria:</i> legal requirement, unique and effective federal position, federal agency leadership commitment, and strong stakeholder support.
Federal program and administrative linkages to states	<i>Linkage:</i> financial support, lend technical personnel, and equipment, participate in development of state goals and programs. <i>Selection criteria:</i> few federal administrative restrictions, only way of accomplishing desired ends, existence of federal agency leadership commitment.	<i>Linkage:</i> financial support, and lend technical personnel and equipment. <i>Selection criteria:</i> few federal administrative restrictions, available federal finances, existence of federal agency leadership commitment.	<i>Linkage:</i> financial support, presence on state committees, lend equipment and technical personnel, participate in development of state goals and programs. <i>Selection criteria:</i> only way of accomplishing desired ends, existence of federal agency leadership commitment, and few federal administrative restrictions.
Effectiveness of current roles and linkages	<i>Overall:</i> moderate to very well. <i>Especially effective:</i> acquiring program resources, and encouraging program innovation. <i>Deterrents:</i> inadequate program resources, cumbersome administrative procedures, absence of state-federal vision for nonfederal forests.	<i>Overall:</i> moderate to very well. <i>Especially effective:</i> acquiring program resources, and encouraging program innovation. <i>Deterrents:</i> inadequate program resources, cumbersome administrative procedures, absence of state-federal vision for nonfederal forests.	<i>Overall:</i> moderate to very well. <i>Especially effective:</i> acquiring program resources, and engaging citizens and client groups. <i>Deterrents:</i> inadequate program resources, lack of state-federal agency trust, absence of state-federal vision for nonfederal forests.

The federal government's role in nonfederal forests in the United States, and its expression through state governments, has historically been subject to change. The driving force behind such change has usually been reinterpretation of federalism so that it better accommodates present-day social and political conditions. Fifty or more years ago, an evaluation of this nature would not have had to deal with the extensive presence of federal government programs (multi-agency implemented) now being focused on nonfederal forests in the United States. Furthermore, it would not have had to contend with the formidable professional and institutional capacity that now exists among state governments and that enables them to effectively work with federal agency counterparts on matters involving nonfederal forests. Such is the fluid nature of federal and state responsibilities in the United States.

What does the future hold for federal-state roles and responsibilities involving nonfederal forests? Based in large measure on the evaluation carried out here, the following are suggested as an appropriate context for the future.

- Selection of federal government roles (and accompanying programs) involving nonfederal forests in the United States will continue to stir spirited debate, all occurring within the context of broader national debate over the appropriate roles of various levels of government generally. Given the pluralistic political system in the United States, and its social and cultural diversity, the contentiousness that, at times, occurs over the appropriateness of federal government roles will probably continue far into the future.
- Federal agency involvement in nonfederal forests in the United States will continue to be extensive; many federal agencies and programs will be responsible for a host of activities that affect the use, management and protection of nonfederal forests. Conversely, the diverse federal agency presence will continue to be challenged by equal if not greater organizational and program diversity among state and local units of government. The interface between state and federal agencies seeking to promote their respective roles in nonfederal forests will continue to be a sea churning with complexity.
- Federal and state government roles exercised through programs implemented by these two levels

of government will probably continue to precipitate intergovernmental conflict and some inefficiency in the United States. However, advances in the coordination of more sharply focused responsibilities will result in very laudable and quite progressive outcomes for nonfederal forests and those that depend on them.

- Some levels of government (and certain government entities) in the United States will be acknowledged as more effective than others; they will simply be better positioned to accomplish desired consequences for nonfederal forests. Federal government agencies, for example, will probably have better access to financial resources and may be better positioned to promote solutions to broad multi-state issues, while state government agencies will be even more adept at experimenting with different approaches to problems and more understanding of local conditions around which successful program implementation can occur. Diversity in capacity and efficiency will continue to be hallmarks of state government efforts focused on nonfederal forests.

- State and federal government working relations involving nonfederal forests in the United States will continue to improve and will reflect improved understanding of responsibilities that are complementary. These improvements are likely to stem, in part, from access to additional resources (fiscal and professional), reductions in cumbersome administrative procedures, and greater mutual understanding of (and commitment to) a shared state-federal vision for nonfederal forests in the United States.

Acknowledgments

This review and evaluation was funded, in part, by State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

References

- Anderson, T.L., Hill, P.J., 1997. Environmental federalism: thinking smaller. In: Anderson, T.L., Hill, P.J. (Eds.), *Environmental Federalism*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., New York, p. 283. Pg xi–xix.

- Dana, S.T., Fairfax, S.K., 1980. *Forest and Range Policy: its Development in the United States*. McGraw-Hill Publishers, New York, NY, p. 458.
- Denhardt, R.B., 1991. *Public Administration: An Action Orientation*. Brooks/Cole Publishers, Pacific Grove, CA, p. 441.
- DeWitt, J., 1994. Civic environmentalism. *Congressional Quarterly Press*, Washington, D.C., p. 347.
- Diamond, M., 1993. What the framers meant by federalism. In: O'Toole L.J. (Ed.), *American Intergovernmental Relations*. Confessional Quarterly Press, Washington D.C., pp. 39–48. p. 426.
- Dye, T.R., 1990. *American Federalism: Competition Among States*. Lexington Books, Lexington, MA, p. 219.
- Ellefson, P.V., Moulton, R.J., Kilgore, M.A., 2002. An assessment of state agencies that affect forests. *Journal of Forestry* 100 (6), 35–41.
- Ellefson, P.V., Hibbard, C.M., Kilgore, M.A., 2003. Federal and state agencies and programs focused on nonfederal forests in the United States: an assessment of intergovernmental role and responsibilities, Staff Paper Series, vol. 167. Department of Forest Resources, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN, pp. 146. Available from <http://www.cnr.umn.edu/FR/publications/staffpapers/index.html>.
- Ellefson, P.V., Kilgore, M.A., Hibbard, C.M., 2004. Regulating forestry practices on private land in the United States: assessment of state agency responsibilities and program effectiveness, Staff Paper Series vol. 176. Department of Forest Resources, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN. Available from <http://www.cnr.umn.edu/FR/publications/staffpapers/index.html>.
- General Services Administration, 2003. *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*. Office of Government-Wide Policy, Office of Acquisition Policy. Washington, D.C. Available from <http://12.46.245.173/cfda/cfda.html>.
- Koontz, T.M., 2002. *Federalism in the Forest: National Versus State Natural Resource Policy*. Georgetown Univ. Press, Washington, DC, p. 232.
- May, P.J., Burby, R.J., Erickson, N.J., Handmer, J.W., et al., 1996. *Environmental Management and Governance: Intergovernmental Approaches to Hazards and Sustainability*. Routledge Press, New York, NY, p. 254.
- National Research Council, 1998. *Forested landscapes in perspective: Prospects and Opportunities for Sustainable Management of America's Nonfederal Forests*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., p. 249.
- Oliver, C., 1990. Determinants of intergovernmental relationships: integration and future directions. *Academy of Management Review* 15 (2), 241–265.
- Olson, E.D., 2000. *Environmental Federalism*. Natural Resources Defense Council. Hearings on Environmental Federalism. May 2, 2000. U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. Washington, D.C.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1997. *Managing across levels of government*. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris, France, p. 418.
- Radin, B.A., Agranoff, R., Bowman, A., Buntz, C.G., et al., 1996. *New Governance for Rural America: Creating Intergovernmental Partnerships*. University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, p. 242.
- Scheberle, D., 1997. *Federalism and Environmental Policy: Trust and the Politics of Implementation*. Georgetown Univ. Press, Washington, D.C., p. 207.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 2000. *Strategic plan (2000 revision)*. Forest Service, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.