

## Real Jobs for Real People

Contracting opportunities exist in many communities within and near National Forests. For example, in Amador and Calaveras Counties, local residents are participating in job training opportunities related to the [Cornerstone Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration](#) project. This project is aimed at restoring forest health and improving local economic conditions in communities near the Stanislaus and Eldorado National Forests.

“These are real jobs for real people,” as Steve Wilensky, Executive Director for the [Calaveras Healthy Impact Products Solutions \(CHIPS\)](#) program, points out.

“This is not your father’s U.S. Forest Service,” said Wilensky. “The Stanislaus National Forest (STF) and Calaveras Ranger District have won my respect by creating local job and contracting opportunities. The agency is encouraging Sierra residents, who are short on job opportunities, to take their rightful place in restoring our beloved landscape. It’s meaningful work that makes me feel like I am contributing to my community.”

### **Contracting opportunities exist on the STF via several different venues, including:**

- The Cornerstone Collaborative Project has work projects as well as a training program;
- Rim Fire restoration projects;
- Contracts are often awarded on the forest to support fire operations each summer; and
- Miscellaneous opportunities exist as needs arise.

**On the Cornerstone Project:** The U.S. Forest Service, in conjunction with CHIPS and the [Amador Calaveras Consensus Group](#) (ACCG), has been ramping up projects to revive the timber industry, which was severely impacted when several mills closed down 20 years ago, causing the unemployment rate to soar to 26 percent in parts of Calaveras County.

“The program has been expanding,” said Teresa McClung, Calaveras District Ranger, Stanislaus NF. “By working together, we’ve been successful in providing jobs to local residents in economically disadvantaged communities. This enables us to reduce fuel loads, restore wildlife habitat and improve watershed health, while helping the local economy.”

“People that go through our program, gain a sense of pride. This is work people can feel good about,” said Wilensky. “For example, we had some members of the Tuolumne Band of the Me-Wuk Indians refurbish ancestral sites after participating in artifact preservation training sponsored by an archaeologist. They also opened up sections of the forest canopy, allowing native oaks and medicinal plants to grow.”

The good news is that these projects require a variety of proficiencies. “People skilled in plantation thinning and mastication work are in demand,” said Kevin Zeman, Resource Management Officer, Calaveras Ranger District, Stanislaus NF. “We also have a need for skilled equipment operators, including those that can run a chainsaw or a feller-buncher.”

To get involved with CHIPS, contact the Motherlode Job Training Program as well as the California Indian Manpower Consortium. The [fedbizops](#) website also lists current contracts being sought by Cornerstone, as well as other projects on the Forest.

“We have work on the Calaveras Ranger District, but to take advantage of opportunities, you need to be ready when opportunity strikes,” said Zeman, Resource Management Officer, Calaveras RD, STF. “That requires planning ahead and taking the necessary steps needed to be successful. To gain that edge, check out our [10 steps to success](#).”

### **Rim Fire Restoration Work:**

After a large fire, work opportunities are generated as restoration begins. Companies and vendors experienced in tree planting; logging and thinning; using equipment such as backhoes to restore meadows; and fuel reduction techniques can be in high demand.

Ron Sherrod, a Vietnam veteran out of Newcastle, Calif., is a great example. Ron hired workers within a 50 mile radius of Pinecrest Lake to craft the new amphitheater benches used by campers attending interpretive talks held near the lake. The wood for these benches came from burned cedar trees logged from within the footprint of the Rim Fire and were milled in Twain Harte.

Joe David, designer and owner of Joe David Designs, also found work post-fire by creating the layout and design for the Rim Fire Recovery newspapers that were dispersed throughout communities near the Stanislaus.

“As a sole proprietor of a small business, I am always alert to new client opportunities,” said David. “In 2014, I had the pleasure to work with the Stanislaus Rim Recovery Team to create a series of publications to inform forest visitors and local residents about the recovery process. Over the summer we published three 8-page newspapers. For me it was a crash course in the various aspects of the Rim Fire recovery process. There were so many stories associated with the fire and its aftermath, and many of them were unfolding as we were producing the publication. It felt good to work on a project that spoke to the community in such a direct way, and as always I appreciated the work.”

“There are many other types of work that will soon be available,” said Kim Williams, Silviculture Technician, Groveland Ranger District. “We will need people to plant trees and other seedlings. Those who are skilled in herbicide application or the use of hand tools to remove vegetation could also get a job.”

“If you can safely run a forest cultivator with ripper shanks, these will be needed to remove competing vegetation so our tree seedlings can survive,” said Williams. “Tractor or grapple piling fuels is another option.” Equipment operators who can run these machines along with masticators, feller-bunchers and chainsaws all stand to benefit.

“Site preparation may also call for the need to deep till some of our soils,” said Williams. “We’ll need folks who can break up the compaction without inverting soil layers.”

### **Fire Season Contracts:**

During fire season, many small business owners are called to support wildfire operations. Fire camps require copy machines, food trucks, shower units and even laundry services, amongst other things. Region 5, which covers all of California, posts its new solicitation schedule each fall, on the following website:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r5/fire-aviation/management/?cid=stelprdb5303034>. A glance at this website will show that portable toilets are in demand within the state, along with chainsaw repair services and sleeping units for firefighters, along with other items.

“On the Stanislaus, we contract out water tenders, gray water trucks and weed washing units when we have a fire,” said Wendy Flannery, ECC Manager, Stanislaus NF. “We also rent chippers, excavators and hand washing stations.”

If local restaurants have planned in advance, they can also be awarded pre-season meal agreements for providing food to firefighters. “Once hundreds of firefighters are on the ground, we bring in an Incident Management Team and order a caterer from a national rotation list, so the vendor can handle the volume,” said Flannery. “Before the fire gets this substantial, local restaurants could be awarded a contract to feed a reasonable number of fire crews by providing boxed lunches, for example.”

Supporting fire operations across the west is a way of life for some companies. To make it work, you must be flexible, willing to travel, and learn the business end of things. That means learning about contracts and the bidding process. Even if you only desire to work on the Stanislaus, you still need to [learn the system](#).

### **Miscellaneous Contracts:**

Numerous other contracts may become available on the [fedbizops](#) website, depending upon need. Green timber sales, tree planting opportunities, janitorial services and even writer/editor positions are sometimes contracted out by the government.

“It benefits the U.S. Forest for you to understand the bidding process,” said Zeman. “By working together, we can get much needed work done. If local companies are geared up and ready to take advantage of competitive contracts, that’s a win/win for everybody. Awarded contracts provide an economic benefit to local communities and it helps us to accomplish our goals at the same time.”

The working together website listed in the link is your best hub for obtaining information on working with the government. By clicking the contracting link on the left side of this page, you will find numerous topics of interest directly related to working with the Forest Service.

Creating a user account on the Sam's website (<https://www.sam.gov/portal/#1>) is free. *If you end up on a .com site that tries to charge you to enter your data, **you are not on the official website.*** If you get stuck, Sam's has helpful tips and a user's guide on the first page. Every year, you must reactivate your account on this website. Since that can take a while, it is recommended that you renew your account well in advance of your annual deadline, so job opportunities are not missed.

The purpose of the pforecast website is to watch for upcoming opportunities. This will aid you in long-term business planning and in seeing the types of contractors the government is seeking in the near future.

Current business opportunities are listed on the "fbo or firebizops" site: <https://www.fbo.gov/> At this location, you can place a bid on open job opportunities. Detailed business plans can also be uploaded to this site. It's important to remember that this is a competitive bidding process. It pays to accurately estimate your costs while ensuring that you are providing a quality service for the price you are seeking.

Starting a business can be daunting, but getting the training you need can position you to strategically take advantage of the contracting market. The Small Business Administration sponsors free workshops via the Procurement Technical Assistance Centers scattered throughout the state. Specialized support for veterans is also available at: <https://www.sba.gov/content/veteran-service-disabled-veteran-owned>. Information for women-owned businesses can be obtained at: <https://www.sba.gov/content/women-owned-small-business-program>.

Wilensky feels that working for the "feds" is good business. "This definitely beats flipping burgers," said Wilensky. "The Stanislaus National Forest is committed to large scale restoration work. The feds are rolling up their sleeves to partner with communities to get the job done. Check it out for yourself. The forest you save could be in your own neighborhood."