



Working with Contractors: Habitat-Oriented RFPs and Specifications

FALL 2019 WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Contractors are often the key to getting habitat work done on our ROWs and other lands, either through revegetation (post-construction) projects or routine vegetation management and maintenance. We recognize that **contracting mechanisms** can be tools to promote habitat and can help scale up practices that restore or enhance habitat across our systems (or conversely, if poorly designed, can create perverse incentives that eliminate or reduce habitat quality).

We identified the following factors that contribute to successful outcomes when working with contractors to create, enhance, and maintain habitat:

- Clear expectations and understanding of “why”
- Early coordination—at pre-construction and annual vendor meetings and in long-range planning
- Demonstrated buy-in from upper management
- Adequate contractor training and competence building—with incentives where necessary
- Consistency in terminology and specifications across the ROW industry
- Clear hand-off from vegetation establishment to ongoing vegetation management
- Flexibility—to avoid handcuffing or increasing exposure for contractors
- Defined outcomes and tracking mechanisms
- Shared benefits and risks between ROW managers and contractors—where excellence is rewarded above adequacy
- Multi-year contracts

2019 WISH LIST

We identified a “wish list” of items that would help ROW organizations work better with contractors to promote habitat. The highest priority items are:

1. Define what “habitat-orientated contract/contractor” means (without using the term “green”), so we have a standard definition across the ROW industry.
2. Develop regional ROW habitat specifications (with visual aids and plant IDs similar to what NRCS provides).
3. Develop standard specifications (or pre-qualification requirements) for contractor training and certification related to habitat practices.
4. Develop boilerplate language (e.g., specifications, deliverables) that can be included in contracts or scopes of work to promote habitat practices (and also incorporated into vegetation management plans).