

Imminent: New Guidelines for Crosscut Saw Training and Certification

New guidelines expected this summer from the USFS will standardize training and certification for chainsaw and crosscut saw use across national forests, regions and programs, and will allow approved citizen groups to provide training. The crosscut saw is a hallmark of wilderness stewards, a traditional tool relied on for trail maintenance and improvements and for removing hazard trees. But under current rules, volunteers must be certified by agency staff, and training and certification in one area of the country may not apply elsewhere.

As a result, some willing volunteers can't engage in needed stewardship.

A working draft is being circulated in DC, with comments due soon. Next steps will be to incorporate comments as needed and then to consult with regulatory staff on issuing an interim directive.

Among the outcomes to watch for:

A national database of certified employees and volunteers that would be accessible across regions and forests; Certified volunteer groups getting approval to train;

Skills obtained in one area of the country to be applicable elsewhere.

According to the USFS:

The new program establishes a process for certifying non-USFS employees to instruct, evaluate and certify sawyers. The new policy is a functional directive located in the Forest Service Manual (FSM). There has never been a FSM directive so this is something new. The FSH will be edited in the future to eliminate any redundancy with the FSM and to narrow the scope of the FSH to strictly operational issues including cutting methodology and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) All current FS approved training courses will be accepted (S-212 Wildland Fire Chainsaws and the MTDC Chainsaw and Crosscut Saw Training Course). The Policy also explains the minimum requirements needed for each skill level and the field evaluation All current certifications will remain in place until they expire. Once expired the sawyer will be required to follow the new policy.