

# Former USDA Employee Now at NPS, Raises Awareness of BioPreferred Program and Federal Requirements to Buy and Use Biobased Products

In 2010, when Brain McCabe joined the USDA Forest Service as a procurement professional, he learned about the USDA BioPreferred® Program and its role in mandating the purchase and use of biobased products in federal contracts. For 10 years, he included the biobased requirements in all of his acquisitions. Then in 2020, he moved over to the National Park Service (NPS), where he introduced the BioPreferred Program and its mandates to his new colleagues.

“While the requirements apply to all federal agencies and service and construction contracts, not all agencies consider it as they should or as they are required to,” Mr. McCabe explained.

“Often, they think it just applies to products, not realizing it also applies to the products on your service and construction projects. If it was referenced, it was usually only a sentence or two. Even when it was included, it was never considered as part of the overall acquisition process or evaluated as part of the solicitation.”

Mr. McCabe set out to change that by adapting what he had done at USDA and applying it to NPS. He developed solicitation templates with boilerplate text that could be edited as necessary and implemented a variety of biobased metrics and evaluation criteria.

For example, he said, if the Category - "Safety Equipment -

25% Minimum Biobased Content" was included in the solicitation, the definition of "Safety Equipment" from the BioPreferred Program Catalog was also included. This enabled solicitations to be clear and consistent and saved the prospective contractor time since they did not have to look up the information on their own. Solicitations and awards also included details on the contractor's responsibility for biobased reporting, including time frames.

One higher profile NPS project utilizing biobased products is the rehabilitation effort for the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument in Washington, DC. The monument, which has gained attention due to its representation of the Women's Suffrage Movement, is adjacent the Senate Office Building, near the Capitol Building and Supreme Court. Its rehabilitation

is funded by the Great American Outdoor Act. As a construction contract, Mr. McCabe said, there was ample opportunity to include biobased products.

“There are about 30 different biobased product categories identified in the contract, because the work required concrete repair and sealing, roadwork, painting, and safety equipment, along with products like compressor oil, spray foam, wood glue, roofing materials and more,” he said. “Ultimately, with contracts like this one, my goal is to keep improving our efforts and to make the NPS a model for both sustainability and for the BioPreferred Program.”

In honor of Mr. McCabe's outstanding commitment to sustainable acquisition, the BioPreferred Program recognized him as a 2022 Excellence in Procurement Award winner.