Ecosystem Workforce Program

INTEGRATING SOCIOECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS INTO THE WATERSHED CONDITION FRAMEWORK

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The Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) will help national forests assess and prioritize activities, and measure progress towards improved watershed condition. The USDA Forest Service also expects restoration to create social and economic benefits. However, strategies for assessing, integrating, or tracking these dimensions were not explicitly incorporated into the WCF. We offer some strategies to help integrate socioeconomic and biophysical dimensions of restoration.

We offer tools for field staff to increase collaboration, and socio-economic benefits in the short term. We also recommend adopting a few straightforward socio-economic measures now, while working to create more sophisticated socioeconomic assessment approaches and performance measures in parallel with future improvements to ecological performance measures over time.

Fostering socio-economic benefits in the short term

A Quick Guide for Incorporating Collaboration into the Watershed Condition Framework provides tips and techniques for field staff to incorporate collaboration into all phases of the WCF.

A Quick Guide for Creating High-Quality Jobs through Restoration on National Forests provides strategies for increasing economic benefit from restoration efforts using existing authorities and programs.

Developing socioeconomic performance measures for the Watershed Condition Framework offers a set of socioeconomic performance measures that are analogous to existing biophysical performance measures. We propose performance measures that can be tracked using existing data or via self-evaluation, similar to the Forest Service's climate change scorecard. We consider these performance measures raw material for a collective conversation and experimentation.

Medium and long-term progress

In of the medium to long term, an assessment of socioeconomic dimensions of ecosystem management analogous to the ecological assessment in Step A of the WCF would provide baseline information for tracking socioeconomic conditions over time. This would augment the ecological criteria for watershed prioritization. The Forest Service could develop indicators to measure the socioeconomic health of particular watersheds using data that the federal government already collects such as poverty, income, educational attainment, or economic diversity. There are significant literatures that could be reviewed to develop these indicators.

Second and more importantly, the Forest Service could adopt a series of measures of human adaptive capacity related to natural resources that can be gathered locally via interactions with local stakeholders and staff self-assessment. These indicators might focus on collaboration, organizational capacity and business capacity.

Proposed categories of performance measures

1. **Adaptive capacity**
   - Collaboration and process
   - Community capacity
   - Local business capacity

2. **Economic benefits**
   - Jobs created or retained
   - Support of high job quality

3. **Social equity**
   - Local business opportunities
   - Tribal engagement
   - Investments in socially vulnerable watersheds

With the development of a socioeconomic condition framework, the Forest Service would be in a position to develop performance measures that reflect integrated outcomes. This effort will need to occur in parallel to the evolution of watershed and terrestrial performance measures that would become increasingly outcome-oriented and integrated over time.

For additional information, see Moseley, C., and E.J. Davis. 2012. *Developing socioeconomic performance measures for the Watershed Condition Framework.* Ecosystem Workforce Program Working Paper 36. University of Oregon. ewp.uoregon.edu/publications/working