

Collaboration Issue Paper

Over the last few decades, federal lands management has been characterized by gridlock and public controversy, adversely impacting the health and vitality of our national forests and communities. The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC) sees great value in using collaborative approaches to resolve natural resource management issues. RVCC believes collaboration is essential to accomplishing effective and widely supported on-the-ground efforts in assessment, planning, implementation and monitoring of natural resource management projects on public lands.

Federal policies and programs should support collaboration through legislative policy, financial investment, and administrative incentives. In recent years, federal land managers, the Administration, the Western Governors' Association, and Congress have responded to the groundswell of communities and interest groups advocating for collaborative approaches by adopting a new model of resource management that promotes cooperation among diverse stakeholders. Support for collaboration has been defined in national legislation, the White House focus on Cooperative Conservation, and agency discourse and actions. At the community level, numerous success stories demonstrate the promise of this approach. However, adequate support and investment is needed to capitalize on this promising new approach to public lands management.

Collaboration is a shift from traditional administrative and decision making processes. As such, internal federal agency systems need realignment to respond to this shift, including performance measures and targets, budget allocation systems, and personnel rewards and advancement.

Congressional direction and financial support should ensure that land management agency programs and policies promote and support federal and non-federal participation in collaborative efforts. That does not mean, however, that Congress or the agencies should attempt to prescribe the specifics of any individual collaborative group or process.

DEFINITIONS OF COMMON TERMS

The following terms are sometimes erroneously used interchangeably with collaboration.

Collaboration

Diverse stakeholders working together to solve a common problem or achieve a common objective.

Partnerships

Arrangements that are voluntary, mutually beneficial, and entered into for the purpose of mutually agreed upon objectives. Partnerships are usually characterized by a formal contractual agreement between the federal government and another entity. *Partnership Guide. USFS, National Forest Foundation, Partnership Resource Center. <http://partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/partnership-guide/introduction.html>*

Cooperative Conservation

Actions that relate to use, enhancement, and enjoyment of natural resources, protection of the environment, or both, and that involve collaborative activity among Federal, State, local, and tribal governments, private for-profit and nonprofit institutions, other nongovernmental entities and individuals. *Executive Order Facilitation of Cooperative Conservation, August 26, 2004*

Public Participation

Open, ongoing, two-way communication, both formal and informal, between the federal agency and its stakeholders—those interested in or affected by its actions. *Memorandum from the Office of NEPA Policy and Assistance: Second Edition of "Effective Public Participation under the National Environmental Policy Act" (August 19, 1998)*

Each collaborative group needs to be free to determine its own processes for making decisions, structuring its membership, and selecting the issues and activities its members choose to work on together.

WHO WE ARE

The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition is comprised of western rural and local, regional, and national organizations that have joined together to promote balanced conservation-based approaches to the ecological and economic problems facing the West. We are committed to finding and promoting solutions through collaborative, place-based work that recognizes the inextricable link between the long-term health of the land and well being of rural communities. We come from California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Arizona and Colorado.

Collaboration also requires a greater level of involvement by community-based organizations and other stakeholders in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of management activities on federal lands. Building and maintaining the institutional and social capacity of communities, interest groups, and federal and state land management agencies to participate in collaborative processes is necessary for collaboration to work well over the longer term.

RECOMMENDATIONS: STRENGTHENING FEDERAL POLICIES FOR COLLABORATION

RVCC recommends both administrative and legislative actions to improve understanding and systemic uptake of effective collaboration within the federal land management agencies.

These include:

Performance Measures

1. Adopt, measure and report on performance measures that evaluate collaborative land management efforts and their outcomes. This will help ensure that agencies pursue collaborative approaches and are achieving the desired outcomes from those efforts.
2. Include an evaluation of an agency's or unit's collaborative performance as a factor in national and regional budget allocation processes.

Funding

1. Provide federal funding through a new line item to support agency staff at all levels of participation in collaborative processes.
2. Create grant and technical assistance programs to support non-federal partners in collaborative efforts.
3. Give implementation priority to agency projects that are identified and developed collaboratively.

Policy Clarification

1. Issue clear guidance to agency staff about the meaning, purpose, and importance of collaboration, as well as the requirements for collaboration in federal legislation.
2. Clarify the differences between collaboration, partnerships, and traditional public involvement approaches, and issue guidance on how to apply collaborative approaches to specific planning and decision-making tasks.

Administrative Incentives

1. Provide increased training and assistance to agency managers and their partners to enable them to be effective participants in collaborative efforts.
2. Include collaboration as part of the required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities of position descriptions and in future performance evaluations.

COLLABORATION, DEFINED

RVCC believes there exists general agreement around the definition of collaboration and best practices for achieving success. We recommend that future administrative and legislative proposals or programs define collaboration in a manner consistent with that general understanding. We suggest the following:

Collaboration is a process through which multiple stakeholders work together to solve a common problem or achieve a common objective.

(Moote and Lowe, 2005).

Collaboration takes many different forms and can occur at local, regional and national levels. Although these efforts vary from place to place, best practices suggest collaborative groups should strive to:

- Involve diverse participants and use an open, transparent, and equitable group process;
- Share information and perceptions to encourage innovation and mutual learning;
- Seek to reduce conflict, resolve disputes, overcome gridlock, and improve relationships;
- Strengthen the participation of local citizens and organizations, with special attention to groups that have been underserved and under-represented in traditional decision making processes;
- Utilize local and traditional knowledge;
- Leverage knowledge and combine technical, organizational, and financial resources in new ways; and
- Integrate social, economic, and environmental goals.

BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Collaboration requires that all participants -- community members, land management agencies, and other stakeholders -- take time and commit financial and other resources to the collaborative process. That initial investment can ultimately yield many social, economic, and environmental benefits. RVCC members have participated individually in countless collaborative processes focused on the restoration of public lands in a manner that also benefits rural towns. We have seen these:

- Increase agency and community ability to meet local economic, social, and ecological needs.
- Lead to more effective ecological outcomes through improved on-the-ground projects that are broadly supported.
- Build social capital by reducing conflict, developing greater trust among participants, and creating new networks and institutions for sharing information, pooling resources, and undertaking collective projects.
- Foster information exchange and mutual learning, often

leading to better understanding of issues and constraints, as well as creating greater potential for innovative responses.

- Increase and broaden public participation, make decisions more transparent, and instill accountability in and empower the public; increase trust in agency decisionmakers.
- Expand opportunities for the exploration and integration of diverse forms of knowledge, including scientific studies, traditional or cultural knowledge, and local residents' experiences.
- Encourage cross-boundary solutions that take a landscape- or ecosystem-level approach to natural resource management.
- Increase funding opportunities by leveraging private dollars and in-kind contributions to supplement federal and state funds.

THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN COLLABORATION

Many recent federal policies suggest the importance and benefits of collaboration in federal resource management. However, there is not universal agreement about the importance or role of federal agencies in this process, or recognition of the social, economic, or environmental benefits. The success of policies related to collaboration requires the active participation of the agencies throughout the collaborative process. Agency roles and responsibilities need to be more clearly defined, implemented in the field, and supported at the national and regional levels.

Federal initiatives that address collaboration include the Western Governors' Association 10-Year Implementation Strategy, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, the Community Forest Restoration Act, and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, among others. These policies and programs include specific language that reflects the purpose and benefits of collaboration. (Appendix A describes the type of language related to collaboration in each policy.)

While existing federal policies include language that provides basic direction to agencies and their partners to collaborate, there is a lack of clear guidance and incentives for agency personnel to engage in collaboration. The result is that collaboration is not consistently implemented on-the-ground. Again, neither Congress nor the agencies should prescribe how individual collaborative groups or processes be organized or function. RVCC believes it is essential that local flexibility be preserved, and that collaborative groups have the ability to innovate and adapt to site-specific conditions, circumstances, and issues.

Appropriate federal roles in collaboration include:

- Maintaining adequate staff capacity on the ground to enable land management agencies to participate in collaborative processes.
- Providing financial resources (grants, cooperative agreements, other funding), technical assistance, training and collaborative learning opportunities to build community capacity and to support collaborative planning, implementation and monitoring.
- Committing to the implementation of individual projects and long-term work plans on the basis of priorities identified during collaborative processes.
- Measuring, monitoring and reporting on the federal performance in meeting collaboration mandates and goals.

The exercise of these roles will significantly enhance the success of collaborative efforts, but it is also necessary that non-federal entities (NGOs, local government, businesses, etc.) clarify and fulfill their own roles in the collaboration, including ongoing and long-term participation in collaborative efforts.

THE PINCHOT PARTNERS: ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN FOREST RESTORATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

Despite bountiful forest resources, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in southwest Washington was at the heart of the Northwest's timber wars. Change has now taken root. The Pinchot Partners formed in late 2002 after a field tour focused on finding 'common ground' was organized by a diverse committee of interests including conservation, economic development, tribal, forest products, labor representatives, local elected officials, and others. These wildly divergent representatives learned they shared at least a few things in common: a deep passion for the forest and a desire for stability for rural communities. Since then, the Pinchot Partners have been designing restoration projects that promote forest ecosystem health while also creating high quality local jobs. They have been critical to the success of various projects, including: metamorphosis of the Smooth Juniper timber sale from a controversial project ready for litigation to a 3 million board foot non-controversial timber sale; the completion of several culvert replacement and road removal projects; and, a restoration plan on nearly 2,000 acres of plantations (previous clear-cuts) and watersheds, providing two years of reliable forest work for local area contractors. To support local contractor capacity to be involved in restoration opportunities, the Pinchot Partners also convened a stewardship contracting workshop attended by over forty people.

COLLABORATION RESOURCES

Aspen Institute report on the Ford Foundation's Community-Based Forestry Demonstration Program.

(www.aspeninstitute.org/site/c.huLWJeMRKpH/b.612455/k.BCB0/CBF.htm)

Best Practices in Collaborative Natural Resource Management: The Challenge of Defining Targets and Performance Measures. (Margaret A. Moote and Kimberly A. Lowe.) 2005. Ecological Restoration Institute

Collaborative Forest Restoration Program
(www.fs.fed.us/r3/spf/cfrp/)(<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/spf/cfrp/>)

Collaboration and the Forestry Program for Oregon, pgs. 13-14 and 26-27. (<http://egov.oregon.gov/ODF/BOARD/fpfo2003.shtml>)

Exploring Barriers to collaborative forestry, Report from a workshop held at Hart Prairie, Flagstaff, Arizona, September 17-19, 2003, sponsored by Ecological Restoration Institute, Society of American Foresters, Pinchot Institute for Conservation, American Forests

Social science to improve fuels management: a synthesis of research on collaboration. (Sturtevant et al.)
(<http://www.ncrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/viewpub.asp?key=3123>)

The Collaboration Handbook, Prepared by Carol Daly, Flathead Economic Policy Center.
(www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/resources/handbook.html)

USDA Forest Service Partnership Resource Center
(www.partnershipresourcecenter.org)

USDA Forest Service Partnership Resource Center Partnership and Collaboration Training
(www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/training/collaborative-training)

Western Collaborative Assistance Network
(www.WestCANhelp.org)

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COALITION PARTNERS

Arizona

Future Forest, LLC

California

Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment
ForEverGreen Forestry
Watershed Research and Training Center

Colorado

Forest Energy Corporation

Idaho

Framing Our Community

Montana

Flathead Economic Policy Center
Northwest Connections
Swan Ecosystem Center
Wildlands CPR

New Mexico

Center for Biological Diversity
Forest Guild
Gila WoodNet
Restoration Technologies, LLC
Santa Clara Woodworks
SBS Wood Shavings
The Village of Ruidoso, New Mexico, Forestry Department

Oregon

Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council
Ecosystem Workforce Program
Hells Canyon Preservation Council
Institute for Culture and Ecology
Lake County Resources Initiative
Lomakatsi Restoration Project
Oregon Department of Forestry
Oregon Trout
Resource Innovations
Siuslaw Institute, Inc
Sustainable Northwest
Wallowa Resources

Washington

Gifford Pinchot Task Force
Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
Okanogan Communities Development Council
Pinchot Partners

Washington DC

American Forests
Pinchot Institute for Conservation
The Wilderness Society

APPENDIX I: CURRENT LANGUAGE ON COLLABORATION IN FEDERAL POLICIES

This section excerpts language on collaboration from several recent federal policies. The policy language presented is from laws and executive orders, with the exception of language from the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, which is language agreed to by federal, state, local, and tribal entities to implement Congressional direction. Specific policies with language calling for collaboration in a variety of federal policies include:

Stewardship Contracting

These authorities suggest that collaboration may “improve forest health and promote local consensus in determining outcomes.”

A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: A 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan (August 2001)

The legislative language authorizing the 10-Year Comprehensive calls on the federal agencies “to work closely with affected states, including Governors, county officials and other citizens” and suggests “key decisions should be made at local levels.” The Strategy presents an expectation that collaboration “will be the most efficient and effective way of implementing a long-term program.”

Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000

This Act requires Resource Advisory Councils to “provide frequent opportunities for citizens, organizations, tribes, land management agencies and other interested parties to participate openly and meaningfully, beginning at the early stage of project development.” This legislation suggests that a purpose of the Resource Advisory Councils is “to improve collaborative relationships.”

Community Forest Restoration Act of 2000

The CFRA calls for the participation of a “diverse and balanced group of stakeholders... as well as appropriate Federal, Tribal, State, County, and Municipal government representatives in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project.” This legislation identifies several benefits of collaboration, including: cost effective restoration activities; empowerment of diverse organizations to implement activities which value local and traditional knowledge; ownership and civic pride; and, healthy, diverse, and productive forests and watersheds.

Healthy Forests Restoration Act

HFRA calls for “meaningful public participation during the preparation of . . . projects” and calls for “collaboration among state and local governments and Indian tribes, and participation of interested persons . . . in a manner consistent with the Implementation Plan.” HFRA suggests that the purpose of collaboration is to encourage meaningful public participation.

Executive Order on Cooperative Conservation

This Executive Order emphasizes the “appropriate inclusion of local participation in Federal decision-making” and identifies “collaborative activity among Federal, State, local, and tribal

governments, private for-profit and nonprofit institutions, other nongovernmental entities and individuals.” The Executive Order suggests a purpose of appropriate local participation in Federal decision-making.

More detailed language for each policy is presented below, limited to that which deals directly with the term ‘collaboration’.

Stewardship Contracting (Sec. 347 of P.L. 105-277; amended/expanded in 2003)

There is no explicit language calling for collaboration in the legislative authorities. Community-based forestry partners, however, have urged collaboration with communities to address the objective of meeting “local and rural community needs.” In addition, early Committee report language required Region One of the Forest Service to:

maximize collaboration with state and private interests to develop projects which improve forest health and promote local consensus in determining outcomes to be accomplished through end result contracting.

The Forest Service Handbook (2409.19, Chapter 60.3.4) states, *Collaboration shall be a part of stewardship contracting project planning and continue throughout the life of the project.* Chapter 61 of the Handbook includes a definition of collaboration, principles of collaboration, resources for collaboration, and guidance on identifying the local community.

Congressional Direction supporting the WGA 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, from the Conference Report for the Fiscal Year 2001 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (Public Law 106-291)

The Secretaries should also work with the Governors on a long-term strategy to deal with the wildland fire and hazardous fuels situation, as well as the needs for habitat restoration and rehabilitation in the Nation. The managers expect that a collaborative structure, with the States and local governments as full partners, will be the most efficient and effective way of implementing a long-term program.

The managers are very concerned that the agencies need to work closely with the affected States, including Governors, county official, and other citizens. Successful implementation of this program will require close collaboration among citizens and governments at all levels... The managers direct the Secretaries to engage Governors in a collaborative structure to cooperatively develop a coordinated, National ten-year comprehensive strategy with the States as full partners in the planning, decision-making, and implementation of the plan.

Key decisions should be made at local levels.

The Implementation Plan (revised December 2006) for the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy

The plan has a three-tiered organizational structure that facilitates collaboration among governments and stakeholders at the Local, State/Regional, and National levels. (See Page 6).

Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-393)

Sec. 205 (a)(2) on the Purpose of Resource Advisory Committees.

“The purpose of a resource advisory committee shall be to improve collaborative relationships and to provide advice and recommendations to the land management agencies consistent with the purposes of this Act.”

Sec. 205 (b) presents the Duties of Resource Advisory Committees.

A resource advisory committee shall--

- (a) review projects proposed under this title by participating counties and other persons;*
- (b) propose projects and funding to the Secretary concerned under section 203;*
- (c) provide early and continuous coordination with appropriate land management agency officials in recommending projects consistent with purposes of this Act under this title; and*
- (d) provide frequent opportunities for citizens, organizations, tribes, land management agencies, and other interested parties to participate openly and meaningfully, beginning at the early stages of the project development process under this title.*

Community Forest Restoration Act of 2000 (Title VI of P.L. 106-393)

Sec. 602. Findings.

- (5) Restoration efforts are more successful when there is involvement from neighboring communities and better stewardship will evolve from more diverse involvement.*
- (6) Designing demonstration restoration projects through a collaborative approach may—*
 - (a) lead to the development of cost effective restoration activities;*
 - (b) empower diverse organizations to implement activities which value local and traditional knowledge;*
 - (c) build ownership and civic pride; and*
 - (d) ensure healthy, diverse, and productive forests and watersheds.*

Sec. 603. Purposes.

- (5) to encourage sustainable communities and sustainable forests through collaborative partnerships, whose objectives are forest restoration; and*

Sec. 604. Definitions.

- (2) the term ‘stakeholder’ includes: tribal governments, educational institutions, landowners, and other interested public and private entities.*

Sec. 605. Establishment of Program.

- (a) FOREST RESTORATION PROGRAM- The Secretary shall establish a cooperative forest restoration program in New Mexico in order to provide cost-share grants to stakeholders for experimental forest restoration projects that are designed through a collaborative process (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Collaborative Forest Restoration Program’).*

(b) ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS-

- (3) include a diverse and balanced group of stakeholders as well as appropriate Federal, Tribal, State, County, and Municipal government representatives in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project;*

Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148)

Sec. 101. Definitions—Hazardous fuel reduction efforts planned and implemented under Title I are to be done in a manner consistent with the Implementation Plan for the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy.

Sec. 104. Environmental Analysis

- (f) Public Collaboration.—In order to encourage meaningful public participation during preparation of authorized hazardous fuel reduction projects, the Secretary shall facilitate collaboration among State and local governments and Indian tribes, and participation of interested persons, during the preparation of each authorized fuel reduction project in a manner consistent with the Implementation Plan.*

Community Wildfire Protection Plans defined in Sec. 101(3) are another mechanism for collaboration, but the legislative language does not discuss collaboration as a key purpose of these plans. This mechanism is intended, however, to develop understanding and agreement at the local level regarding potentially controversial issues, such as identifying and prioritizing areas for treatment, recommending the types and methods of treatment, and identifying the wildland-urban interface area (Sec. 101(15)).

Executive Order on Cooperative Conservation (August 26, 2004)

Section 1. Purpose.

The purpose of this order is to ensure that the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency implement laws relating to the environment and natural resources in a manner that promotes cooperative conservation, with an emphasis on appropriate inclusion of local participation in Federal decision-making, in accordance with their respective agency missions, policies, and regulations.

Section 2. Definition.

As used in this order, the term “cooperative conservation” means actions that relate to use, enhancement, and enjoyment of natural resources, protection of the environment, or both, and that involve collaborative activity among Federal, State, local, and tribal governments, private for-profit and nonprofit institutions, other nongovernmental entities and individuals.

WHO WE ARE

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