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Implementation Partnership Opportunities in the Pacific Northwest

An Assessment of Current and Potential Capacities of Community-Based Nonprofit Organizations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Numerous partners are crucial to federal land management in the United States, including other federal, tribal, state, and local governments; the private sector, and the nonprofit sector. There are also "non-traditional" entities that may not fit neatly into these categories but play important roles, particularly at local and regional scales. Prior research has recognized these as "community-based organizations" (CBOs), grassroots entities that facilitate collaborative dialogue as well as economic development and sustainable land management, with a pragmatic focus on the implications for local communities. However, there is limited knowledge about how they engage with the implementation of federal land management under newer partnership efforts such as the USDA Forest Service's Shared Stewardship initiative.

The purpose of this assessment was to understand the current capacity and future interests of CBOs in participating in the implementation of management activities on national forest land in Region 6. This is intended to inform the ongoing work of Shared Stewardship in Region 6, and to recognize the capacities and needs of CBOs for meaningful partnership with federal agencies. The assessment focused on organizations within the states of Washington and Oregon and targeted a list of 38 entities. A total of 34 organizations responded for a response rate of 89%. Nineteen respondents were from WA, and 15 from OR. Respondents were asked about their current capacities and future interests in working in four broad categories of implementation-related activities: vegetation management, aquatic restoration, sustainable recreation, and organizational and administrative capacities.

Findings About the Organizations

- Average total paid staff size per organization was 16 and the median was nine, with an average of ten full time staff.
- A majority of respondents had worked on all land ownership types queried except for tribal reservation lands. The most common land ownership worked on was federal lands, followed by private non-industrial forestland.
- A large majority of respondents (82%) worked "regionally within this area of our state." A majority also reported working locally in their communities, in their local watersheds, and/or in their counties. This suggests that these entities may be playing not only "community-based" but also regional roles. Work at larger scales was less common.
- Nearly all respondents had worked with the USDA Forest Service, and a majority had also worked with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Less than a quarter had worked with the Bonneville Power Administration, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Defense, or Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Findings About Implementation Capacities and Needs

- The majority of respondents had existing organizational and administrative capacities such as nonprofit status and the ability to administer and manage funding from federal agencies and related foundations.
- A majority also had the capacity to collaborate or form coalitions among multiple user groups in a recreation context, conduct monitoring related to vegetation management, and perform invasive plant species management/removal.
- Although not a majority, 40-49% of respondents had the following aquatic restoration capacities: streambank restoration, riparian vegetative planting, fencing and stream crossings to protect aquatic restoration projects, and off- and side-channel habitat restoration.

- Few respondents, on average, wanted to add or reestablish capacities in any of the four categories. There was only one that a majority of respondents wanted to add or reestablish: 50% were interested in diversity, equity, and inclusion training and initiatives.
- Open-ended responses provided further insight on several other important roles that these organizations played, and linked these activities, although not directly on the ground, to successful implementation.
  - Planning and creating enabling conditions: Skills in facilitation, grant writing, coordinating public or stakeholder input on planned projects, building social support, partnership convening, collaboration, research, and/or mapping.
  - Education and outreach: Education of private landowners and the public was identified as essential for achieving support for on the groundwork.
  - Intermediary project management: Coordinating, administering, and/or contracting with other entities such as private sector businesses or other agencies with the capacity and labor sufficient for on the groundwork; and developing and managing organizational infrastructure such as agreements to sustain partnerships.
- Open-ended responses also indicated that respondent organizations have the following interest in future work with federal agencies:
  - To continue their existing work and expand on their specific strengths and experiences.
  - To have more interaction through joint projects, and collaborative efforts with federal agencies.
  - To increase economic and social outcomes from federal land and resource management, particularly for rural communities.

Implications and Potential Applications

- CBOs have strengths in planning, collaboration, and building support that remain key to successful implementation. This suggests a need for an expansive concept of "implementation capacity" that includes these important intermediary activities, even if they are not "on the ground."
- Many CBOs have strong administrative capacities for project management and contracting work to other entities such as the private sector. In this role, CBOs may also create more access to opportunities for small, local businesses and people who may not otherwise participate in federal government contracting.
- There was limited interest in expanding many capacities, which suggests that many CBOs do not necessarily want to expand their scope, at least to take on the capacities examined in this assessment. However, there may be other capacities that they want to build. They may also have more interest and willingness if offered tangible opportunities to build this capacity with funding or other support. In addition, there may be need for an organization to build its capacity in the context of its local area, which is not well represented at the scale of this assessment.
- More work is needed to understand non-traditional implementation partners. CBOs do not fall into a traditional category such as the private sector or the government. However, the definition of a non-traditional partner may warrant continued examination in order to more precisely identify their capacities and needs, and how they contribute to federal land management.

INTRODUCTION

Numerous partners are crucial to federal land management in the United States. These include other federal, tribal, state, and local governments; the private sector, and the nonprofit sector. There are also "non-traditional" entities that may not fit neatly into these categories but play important roles, particularly at local and regional scales. Prior research has recognized these as "community-based organizations" (CBOs), defining them as grassroots entities that facilitate collaborative dialogue as well as economic development and sustainable land management, with a pragmatic focus on the implications for local communities (Appendix 1).

Despite some existing studies of CBOs, there is limited current information about how they may engage with the on-the-ground implementation of federal land management under newer partnership efforts such as the USDA Forest Service's Shared Stewardship initiative. Recommendations about this initiative, released by the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC) in 2020, suggest that roles for CBOs have been unclear and propose increasing transparency and engagement with these partners. In this context, RVCC and the USDA Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6) requested an assessment of non-traditional CBO partners from Oregon State University (OSU). The purpose of this assessment was to understand the current capacity and future interests of community-based nonprofit organizations participating in the implementation of management activities on national forest land in Region 6. The assessment focused on organizations within the states of Washington and Oregon that met the following criteria:

- Non-governmental, non-business entity
- Based in a community and/or have a community-based natural resource management model, which means having a locally-oriented mission in the places where they work
- Mission includes natural resource management and economic development
- Pragmatic, problem-solving orientation with an emphasis on implementation and innovation (applied work rather than only collaborative dialogue)

This report provides a summary of the assessment results and implications. It is intended to inform the ongoing work of Shared Stewardship in Region 6 and to recognize the capacities and needs of CBOs for meaningful partnership with federal agencies.

APPROACH

A roster of potential assessment participants was created by beginning with a list used in prior research about CBOs. This list was created in 2015 and updated through a web search to identify entities that remained active in 2020 and confirm that they met the above definition of a CBO. Additional potential entities were identified through: 1) A search of USDA Forest Service Region 6 partnership agreement records, and 2) An outreach from a representative of the Washington Department of Natural Resources to key informants around that State. The final list contained 38 organizations.

An assessment questionnaire was developed using questions from prior research about CBOs as well as input from staff in Region 6. This included Forest Service definitions of vegetation management, aquatic restoration, and sustainable recreation; and specific types of activities within those categories. The assessment was administered using Qualtrics, an online survey platform for which OSU has a license. An individual email requesting participation was sent to the director or other similar contact of each organization. This indicated that one person per organization with broad knowledge of their work should complete the assessment. Reminders were sent one week later. The assessment was open from May 8 to June 3, 2020.

A total of 34 organizations responded for a response rate of 89%. Nineteen respondents were from WA, and 15 from OR (Table 1). Data were downloaded and cleaned, and basic coding and descriptive statistics performed using Microsoft Excel. Open-ended responses were edited to remove identifying information, and analyzed for recurring or emphasized themes. All results are presented without linking to organizations to protect confidentiality (but see Appendix 2 for a list of respondents).

Table 1. Assessment list and respondents

	Total	Washington	Oregon
Number on list developed	38	21	17
Number that responded to assessment	**34**	**19**	**15**
Proportion of list that responded to assessment	89%	90%	88%

YCC Crew members hike atop Council Mountain, near the town of Council, ID, Payette National Forest. Photo credit: Forest Service photo by Kelly Martin


Forest Service photo by Charity Parks

FINDINGS: ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

Respondents were asked about the size of their paid and volunteer workforces (Table 2). The number of staff can be an indicator of organizational capacity, although organizations may take different approaches to building an in-house staff versus engaging contractors or volunteers to accomplish their work. The average total paid staff size per organization was 16 and the median was nine, with an average of ten full-size staff. Paid staff sizes were slightly larger in WA than OR. The average number of volunteers per organization was 128, but differed greatly for WA (average 210 volunteers) and OR (average four volunteers). However, the median number of volunteers for respondents in that state was ten, and the larger average of volunteers in WA can be attributed to one respondent that listed several thousand. Excluding that outlier, the average number of volunteers for WA CBOs was 44, which is still much larger than the OR average of four. It is not known why volunteer workforces are more substantial for WA CBOs. Possible reasons could include differences in the size of local populations and their interest, types of work, or deliberate fostering of volunteerism.

Table 2. Numbers of staff and volunteers

	Total paid staff	Full-time staff	Part-time staff	Seasonal staff	Other paid staff	Volunteers
Mean number, both states	16	10	3	5	1	128
Mean number, WA	16	10	3	3	2	210
Mean number, OR	15	9	3	10	1	4
Median number, both states	9	4	2	2	1	6
Median number, WA	9	4	1	1	2	10
Median number, OR	7	4	2	2	1	3

Next, respondents were asked about the geographic scales at which they worked (Table 3). The largest number (82%) worked "regionally within this area of our state." A majority also reported working locally in their communities, in their local watersheds, and/or in their counties. This suggests that although this report, and other prior research, focuses on "community-based organizations", these entities may be playing not only local but also regional roles within their states. Work at larger scales was less common. Thirty-five percent of respondents were also active at the state level, and approximately a quarter at the western US level.

Table 3. Scales of respondent work

	Locally in our community	In our local watershed(s)	In our county	Regionally, within this area of our state	At the state level	At the western US level	At the national level
Percent of respondents, both states	76%	74%	71%	82%	35%	24%	12%
Number of respondents, both states	26	25	24	28	12	8	4
Number of respondents, WA	14	14	14	16	7	5	1
Number of respondents, OR	12	11	10	12	5	3	3

In addition to scales of work, it is important to understand these organizations' experiences working on different types of land ownerships. A majority of respondents had worked on all land ownership types queried (nine types) except for tribal reservation lands (Table 4). The most common land ownership worked on was federal lands, followed by private non-industrial forestland. Thirty-eight percent of respondents had worked with most (seven or more) of the queried ownership types (Table 5). On average, respondents had worked with five different ownerships. WA respondents had an average of six ownerships worked with, and OR respondents had an average of five. More WA respondents had worked with a diversity of ownerships than OR respondents.

Table 4. Landownerships where respondents worked

	Federal lands	Private, non-industrial forest land	Municipal or community-owned land	State-owned lands (e.g., parks, forests, wildlife lands)	Lands protected by conservation easements, land trusts, or private reserves	Private industrial timberland	Private agricultural or ranchland	Tribal reservation lands	Other
Percent of respondents, both states	85%	76%	68%	65%	62%	59%	56%	44%	18%
Number of respondents, both states	29	26	23	22	21	20	19	15	6
Number of respondents, WA	16	15	16	16	16	13	11	12	4
Number of respondents, OR	13	11	7	6	5	7	8	3	2

Table 5. Diversity of land ownership types

	Worked with 1-3 ownership types	**Worked with 4-6 ownership types**	**Worked with 7-9 ownership types**
Percent of respondents, both states	29%	32%	38%
Number of respondents, both states	10	11	13
Number of respondents, WA	2	8	9
Number of respondents, OR	8	3	4

Respondents were also asked about their experience working with nine types of federal agencies (Table 6). Experience was defined as previously worked with in any formal capacity (e.g., performing contracted work, entering into agreements for mutual benefit, purchasing goods). Nearly all respondents had worked with the USDA Forest Service, and a majority had also worked with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Less than a quarter had worked with the Bonneville Power Administration, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Defense, or Natural Resources Conservation Service. Experience with one or more federal agencies may prepare CBOs to partner with others. Respondents in both states had worked with an average of three federal agencies each, and a majority had worked with one to three agencies (Table 7).

Table 6. Federal agencies worked with

	USDA Forest Service	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Bureau of Land Management	US Army Corps of Engineers	National Park Service	Bonneville Power Administration	Natural Resources Conservation Service	Department of Defense	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Other*
Percent of respondents, both states	97%	71%	50%	32%	29%	21%	9%	9%	6%	12%
Number of respondents, both states	33	24	17	11	10	7	3	3	2	4
Number of respondents, WA	18	12	6	6	8	5	1	3	1	1
Number of respondents, OR	15	12	11	5	2	2	2	0	1	3

* Responses written in for other federal agencies included Environmental Protection Agency, USDA Agricultural Research Service, US Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation, and "USDA" with no agency specified.

Table 7. Diversity of federal agencies worked with

	Worked with 1-3 federal agencies	Worked with 4-6 federal agencies	Worked with 7-9 federal agencies
Percent of respondents, both states	53%	44%	3%
Number of respondents, both states	18	15	1
Number of respondents, WA	12	6	1
Number of respondents, OR	6	9	0


USDA photo by Paul Wade

FINDINGS: ABOUT CAPACITIES

Respondents were asked about four broad categories of implementation-related capacities, with a total of 61 individual capacities across those categories:

- Vegetation management: The removal and/or planting of vegetation to restore historic vegetation structure; increase resiliency to disturbances like wildfires, insects, disease, and climate change; reestablish species diversity; and/or generate commercial outputs like timber.
- Aquatic restoration: Reestablishing watershed functions and related physical, chemical, and biological characteristics to support aquatic and riparian ecosystems.
- Sustainable recreation: Providing recreation settings and opportunities on the National Forest System that are ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable for present and future generations.
- Organizational capacities: The administration and management of organizational functions.

For each capacity, respondents were asked to indicate if they: 1) Currently had it, 2) Did not currently have but wanted to add or reestablish it, 3) Did not need it, or 4) Did not know/were unsure. Although responses by specific capacity varied greatly, there was only one capacity that no respondents had (serving as a concessionaire, which was within the sustainable recreation category). At the broad category scale, the largest number of respondents currently had organizational capacities (Table 8). Few respondents generally wanted to add or reestablish capacities in any of the four categories.

Table 8. Capacities had by broad category

Broad capacity category	Number of capacities within this category	Percentage of respondents who currently had at least one of the capacities in this category
Vegetation management	20	76%
Aquatic restoration	19	59%
Sustainable recreation	8	85%
Organizational/administrative	14	100%
Total capacities across categories	61	

Table 9. Capacities that a majority of respondents currently had

Broad category	Specific capacity	Total # of organizations that currently had this capacity	Total % of organizations that currently had this capacity
Vegetation management	Any type of monitoring related to vegetation management	23	68%
	Invasive plant species management, removal	18	53%
Sustainable recreation	Collaborating or forming coalitions among multiple user groups	28	82%
Organizational and administrative	Nonprofit status with the IRS	32	94%
	Administration/management of funds, agreements, and/or contracts with any other federal agency	31	91%
	Administration/management of funds, agreements, and/or contracts with the USFS	30	88%
	Outreach (e.g., to the public and community)	29	85%
	Administration/management of funds, agreements, and/or contracts with the National Forest Foundation or National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	26	76%
	Private landowner outreach	24	71%
	Subcontracting to businesses	22	65%
	Volunteer recruitment and management	22	65%
	Serving as a fiscal sponsor for other organizations	20	59%
	Working with the USFS through stewardship contracting authority	19	56%

Table 10. Capacities that respondents currently had

Broad category	Specific capacity	Total # of organizations that currently had this capacity	Total % of organizations that currently had this capacity	# WA respondents that currently had	# OR respondents that currently had this capacity
Vegetation management	Any type of monitoring related to vegetation management	23	68%	15	8
	Invasive plant species management, removal	18	53%	12	6
	GIS mapping of forest resources or other biophysical resources	15	44%	9	6
	Thinning of trees, brush, and other vegetation	14	41%	10	4
	Restoration of non-forested habitats (e.g., wetlands, meadows)	13	38%	9	4
	A cross-trained workforce (i.e., staff or a crew able to perform multiple types of work)	12	35%	8	4
	Site preparation	11	32%	8	3
	Conducting analysis for federal environmental compliance processes (e.g., NEPA, ESA, historic preservation laws, etc.)	10	29%	7	3
	Tree planting	10	29%	8	2
	Owning equipment such as chippers, masticators, other large equipment and/or hand tools	8	24%	6	2
	Managing or implementing defensible space programs	8	24%	5	3
	Surveying	6	18%	3	3
	Seed collection or production	6	18%	3	3
	Rangeland improvement activities	6	18%	3	3
	Fire rehabilitation	5	15%	4	1
	Timber cruising	5	15%	3	2
	Conducting prescribed fire	4	12%	3	1
	Processing of wood products (including biomass)	3	9%	1	2
	Wildfire suppression	2	6%	1	1
	Road construction or maintenance	1	3%	1	0
Aquatic restoration	Streambank restoration	16	47%	11	5
	Riparian vegetative planting	16	47%	11	5
	Fencing and stream crossings to protect aquatic restoration projects	15	44%	9	6
	Off- and side-channel habitat restoration	15	44%	10	5
	Fish passage restoration	13	38%	8	5
	Reduction and rehabilitation of recreation impacts in riparian areas	11	32%	7	4
	Large wood, boulder, and/or gravel placement	10	29%	5	5
	Channel reconstruction and relocation	9	26%	4	5
	Bull trout protection	8	24%	5	3
	Culvert and structure removal	8	24%	4	4

Broad category	Specific capacity	Total # of organizations that currently had this capacity	Total % of organizations that currently had this capacity	# WA respondents that currently had	# OR respondents that currently had this capacity
Aquatic restoration	Beaver habitat restoration	8	24%	7	1
	Beaver dam analogues	7	21%	5	2
	Riparian vegetation treatment and controlled burning	7	21%	5	2
	Small dam removal	6	18%	4	2
	In-channel nutrient enhancement	6	18%	3	3
	Set back or removal of existing berms, dikes, and/or levees	6	18%	4	2
	Non-system road decommissioning	6	18%	4	2
	Juniper removal in riparian areas	5	15%	2	3
	Removal of pilings, docks, or similar structures	3	9%	3	0
Sustainable recreation	Collaborating or forming coalitions among multiple user groups	28	82%	16	12
	Developing and/or delivering interpretive programming	15	44%	11	4
	Monitoring of any type related to recreation	7	21%	5	2
	A recreation-related workforce (e.g., trail crew, volunteers)	6	18%	2	4
	Trail construction and/or maintenance	5	15%	2	3
	Recreation site or facility construction and/or maintenance	5	15%	3	2
	Design, analysis, engineering , or other technical planning work related to developing recreation sites or facilities	4	12%	2	2
	Serving as a concessionaire to manage recreation sites	0	0%	0	0
Organizational and administrative	Nonprofit status with the IRS	32	94%	18	14
	Administration/management of funds, agreements, and/or contracts with any other federal agency	31	91%	17	14
	Administration/management of funds, agreements, and/or contracts with the USFS	30	88%	15	15
	Outreach (e.g., to the public and community)	29	85%	17	12
	Administration/management of funds, agreements, and/or contracts with the National Forest Foundation or National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	26	76%	14	12
	Private landowner outreach	24	71%	13	11
	Subcontracting to businesses	22	65%	13	9
	Volunteer recruitment and management	22	65%	11	11
	Serving as a fiscal sponsor for other organizations	20	59%	10	10
	Working with the USFS through stewardship contracting authority	19	56%	11	8
	Applying for and updating federally-negotiated indirect costs rates	14	41%	5	9
	Diversity, equity, and inclusion training and initiatives	11	32%	4	7
	A for-profit subsidiary or other related for-profit structure	4	12%	1	3

Capacities That Respondents Wanted to Add or Reestablish

Of the 61 capacities examined, there was only one that a majority of respondents wanted to add or reestablish: 50% were interested in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training and initiatives (Table 11). The next most-desired capacity was applying for and updating federally negotiated indirect costs rates, which was of interest to 35% of respondents. In addition, there were several vegetation management capacities of interest to about a quarter or slightly more of respondents: owning equipment, a cross-trained workforce, GIS mapping, conducting environmental analysis, and seed collection or production.

However, there were 28 capacities that ten percent or less of respondents wanted to add or reestablish; 13 of those were in the aquatic restoration category. This general lack of interest in adding or reestablishing most capacities was also demonstrated as respondents selected "we do not need this capacity" for 35 of the queried capacities; 16 of those were in the aquatic restoration category and 12 in the vegetation management category.

Table 11. Capacities that respondents wanted to add or reestablish

Broad category	Specific capacity	Total # that wanted to add or reestablish this capacity	Total % that wanted to add or reestablish this capacity	# WA respondents that wanted to add or reestablish this capacity	# OR respondents that wanted to add or reestablish this capacity
Vegetation management	Owning equipment such as chippers, masticators, other large equipment and/or hand tools	10	29%	6	4
	A cross-trained workforce (i.e., staff or a crew able to perform multiple types of work)	10	29%	5	5
	GIS mapping of forest resources or other biophysical resources	9	26%	5	4
	Conducting analysis for federal environmental compliance processes (e.g., NEPA, ESA, historic preservation laws, etc.)	9	26%	5	4
	Seed collection or production	8	24%	5	3
	Processing of wood products (including biomass)	7	21%	2	5
	Managing or implementing defensible space programs	5	15%	2	3
	Thinning of trees, brush, and other vegetation	5	15%	2	3
	Surveying	5	15%	5	0
	Conducting prescribed fire	5	15%	2	3
	Timber cruising	5	15%	4	1
	Any type of monitoring related to vegetation management	5	15%	2	3
	Tree planting	4	12%	2	2
	Fire rehabilitation	4	12%	2	2
	Rangeland improvement activities	4	12%	1	3
	Restoration of non-forested habitats (e.g., wetlands, meadows)	4	12%	2	2
	Wildfire suppression	3	9%	2	1
	Road construction or maintenance	2	6%	1	1
	Invasive plant species management, removal	2	6%	1	1
	Site preparation	1	3%	1	0

Table 11. Capacities that respondents wanted to add or reestablish, cont.

Aquatic restoration	Beaver dam analogues	6	18%	4	2
	Riparian vegetation treatment and controlled burning	6	18%	2	4
	Reduction and rehabilitation of recreation impacts in riparian areas	5	15%	4	1
	Beaver habitat restoration	5	15%	3	2
	Set back or removal of existing berms, dikes, and/or levees	4	12%	1	3
	Streambank restoration	4	12%	3	1
	In-channel nutrient enhancement	3	9%	2	1
	Off- and side-channel habitat restoration	3	9%	3	0
	Bull trout protection	2	6%	2	0
	Fish passage restoration	2	6%	1	1
	Channel reconstruction and relocation	2	6%	1	1
	Large wood, boulder, and/or gravel placement	2	6%	1	1
	Riparian vegetative planting	2	6%	1	1
	Non-system road decommissioning	2	6%	0	2
	Fencing and stream crossings to protect aquatic restoration projects	1	3%	1	0
	Culvert and structure removal	1	3%	0	1
	Small dam removal	0	0%	0	0
	Removal of pilings, docks, or similar structures	0	0%	0	0
	Juniper removal in riparian areas	0	0%	0	0
Sustainable recreation	Monitoring of any type related to recreation	7	21%	4	3
	Trail construction and/or maintenance	6	18%	4	2
	Developing and/or delivering interpretive programming	6	18%	4	2
	A recreation-related workforce (e.g., trail crew, volunteers)	3	9%	2	1
	Recreation site or facility construction and/or maintenance	3	9%	2	1
	Serving as a concessionaire to manage recreation sites	2	6%	2	0
	Design, analysis, engineering , or other technical planning work related to developing recreation sites or facilities	2	6%	2	0
	Collaborating or forming coalitions among multiple user groups	0	0%	0	0

Table 11. Capacities that respondents wanted to add or reestablish, cont.

Organizational and administrative	Diversity, equity, and inclusion training and initiatives	17	50%	13	4
	Applying for and updating federally-negotiated indirect costs rates	12	35%	10	2
	A for-profit subsidiary or other related for-profit structure	11	32%	5	6
	Recruiting and managing volunteers	8	24%	6	2
	Volunteer recruitment and management	7	21%	6	1
	Working with the USFS through stewardship contracting authority	6	18%	3	3
	Subcontracting to businesses	5	15%	1	4
	Private landowner outreach	4	12%	3	1
	Administration/management of funds, agreements, and/or contracts with the USFS	3	9%	3	0
	Administration/management of funds, agreements, and/or contracts with the National Forest Foundation or National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	2	6%	2	0
	Serving as a fiscal sponsor for other organizations	2	6%	0	2
	Administration/management of funds, agreements, and/or contracts with any other federal agency	1	3%	0	1
	Nonprofit status with the IRS	1	3%	1	0

Open-Ended Responses About Important Capacities

Respondents were also given the option to answer two open-ended questions: 1)"Are there any other important capacities that we did not ask about that you would like to mention? If so, please list them, and describe if your organization already has this capacity or wants to develop it"; and 2) "What are your organization's top strengths in working with federal agencies? What particular skills or assets does your organization bring to this work?" Twenty-one of the 34 respondents answered the first question, and 33 answered the second. Content analysis revealed three primary themes in terms of frequency and emphasis.

First was **the importance of capacities for planning and creating enabling conditions.** Several responses described their organizations' skills in facilitation, grant writing, coordinating public or stakeholder input on planned projects, building social support, partnership convening, collaboration, research, and/or mapping. They linked these activities, although not directly on the ground, to successful implementation, as they helped prepare projects. As one respondent noted, *"you didn't ask about the capacity/ability to create enabling conditions of the sort required to ensure that project specific capacities of the sort listed above can be regularly/sustainably executed in a federal public lands context. That is our primary focus and capacity/ability."* Another stated that there was no lack of local infrastructure or capacity to implement vegetation management and aquatic restoration work among local businesses and agencies, and that "*the main capacity crunch right now is social license.*" Similarly, a respondent suggested the need for "*…a recognition that funding for restoration needs to include funding for capacity, engagement and monitoring to really benefit from the contributions that organizations like [ours] can provide.*"

Second, numerous respondents also spoke to both their **capacity for education and outreach, or their need to enhance this capacity.** They suggested that education of private landowners and the public was essential for achieving on the ground work. One respondent described this issue as: *"Much of the funding and planning for large-scale restoration is limited by a lack of participation by the very*

individuals who own the land…The level of interest, understanding, and effectiveness is limited which results in poor efficiency and limited stakeholder participation. Regional social marketing combined with targeted stakeholder engagement campaigns that address a host of needs rather than just a narrow restoration focus is one concept to be considered." Others explained the importance of their programs for educating the public about wildfire, reaching young people in high school/university settings, and/or fostering peer and intercultural learning through exchanges. Several noted their communications experience in delivering many presentations and workshops to large numbers of audiences, and their skill at conveying complex information in accessible ways.

A third common theme in these responses was that **respondent organizations acted as intermediaries in managing implementation work, but did not implement and provide the workforce themselves.** Several respondents wanted to clarify that they had various roles in project implementation, but did not directly lead or perform every aspect from start to finish in most cases. Commonly, they characterized their involvement as coordinating, administering, and/or contracting with other entities such as private sector businesses or other agencies with the capacity and labor sufficient for on the ground work. Many spoke to their project management capacities and strong in-house administrative abilities for successful and efficient implementation. A few mentioned their skills in developing and managing organizational infrastructure such as agreements (e.g., stewardship agreements) or memoranda of understanding to do so.

Open-Ended Responses About Desire for Future Partnerships with Federal Agencies

Respondents were also given the option to answer another open-ended question: How would your organization like to continue to partner with federal agencies in the future? Thirty-three of 34 respondents answered this question. Content analysis was again used to identify several key (frequent and/or heavily emphasized) themes.

First, most respondents to this question indicated that they would like to **continue their existing work with federal agencies**, and reiterated their specific strengths and experiences. Many also suggested a desire to build on those and expand their roles based on their existing capacities. For example, one respondent described wanting to take on more monitoring contracts under their existing monitoring program, and to expand this program beyond the USDA Forest Service to work with other agencies in their local area. Another stated that they would like to adapt models that they had developed for stewardship contracting and workforce training developed within two Forest Service regions, and expand those nationwide.

Second, many respondents wanted to see **more interaction, joint projects, and collaborative efforts with federal agencies.** These opportunities included specific examples such as having agency personnel sit on a technical review team, working directly with agency resource specialists to develop restoration projects, and engaging federal employees in wildfire-related education. Some respondents envisioned approaches for stronger partnerships such as more closely coordinating planned upland and watershed/riparian restoration activities, more matching dollars from agencies, and increased use of partnership agreements. A few respondents used a "shared stewardship" or "co-management" framing to articulate the level of meaningful engagement and "access" to more collective decision making that they desired with federal agencies. As one respondent stated, *"it is an imperative that communities--from counties to states--play a role in determining the best management of our forests."*

Finally, several respondents also wanted to **increase economic and social outcomes from federal land and resource management,** particularly for rural communities. This included activities such as continuing or expanding work on rural economic development with USDA Rural Development, more deliberately planning implementation efforts to engage local businesses and support local communities, creating or expanding local workforce development programs, engaging local youth in job corps or similar programs, and encouraging federal agency staff to reside in rural communities.

IMPLICATIONS AND POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS

This assessment examined the current capacities and potential capacity-building needs of community-based organizations in Washington and Oregon at the request of Region 6 of the USDA Forest Service. Its purpose was to identify non-traditional partners for implementation of vegetation management, aquatic restoration, and sustainable recreation activities on federally managed lands. A total of 34 respondents participated from a list of 38 organizations. Assessment results indicated that majority of respondents, on average, had capacities in the broad organizational and administrative category, but not others. The only specific capacity that majority of respondents wanted to add or reestablish was diversity, equity, and inclusion training and initiatives; and there were many capacities that respondents said they did not need. Open-ended responses demonstrated that: 1) Additional capacities for planning, education, outreach, and otherwise creating enabling conditions were important for implementation; 2) These organizations have acted as intermediaries in coordinating, managing, and contracting out project implementation; 3) There was strong interest in maintaining and expanding various meaningful partnership roles with federal agencies; and 4) There was also interest in increasing economic and social outcomes from federal land or resource management. There are several potential implications and applications of these findings, as well as important considerations:

CBOs have strengths in planning, collaboration, and building support. These skills remain key to successful implementation for several reasons. CBOs can help foster enabling conditions for implementation such as meaningful stakeholder involvement in planning processes, project design that reflects diverse interests, and education and awareness for entities such as private landowners and local communities. These strengths would apply also to implementation. Even if a majority of CBOs are themselves not always equipped to perform the work on the ground, they may help sustain engagement and monitoring through implementation time frames in ways that could maintain support, adapt to changes, or enhance outcomes. This information suggests a need for an expansive concept of "implementation capacity" that takes these important intermediary roles into account. It is also clear that in order to serve as federal partners, many CBOs want meaningful involvement in decision making, with some even characterizing this as "co-management."

CBOs can act as important project managers. The risks and costs involved in directly implementing on the ground work may not be feasible or desirable for many nonprofit organizations with small staffs and budgets. Many types of vegetation and aquatic work may demand, for example, heavy equipment or engineering qualifications. These may require investments of capital and skill building that are not possible for smaller CBOs. Other types of vegetation or recreation work may be labor intensive (e.g., hand thinning, trail building); some, but not all, organizations may want to invest in building large crew workforces. However, this assessment showed that many CBOs have strong administrative capacities for project management and contracting work to other entities such as the private sector. An important potential feature of this role is that CBOs may be able to create more access to opportunities for small, local businesses and people who may not otherwise participate in federal government contracting. The CBO processes may be more approachable or flexible for those entities that are unable or do not wish to work directly with the federal government. This could affect local economic opportunity and impact.

There was limited interest in expanding many capacities, but strategic capacity building may be warranted. There was only one capacity that a majority of respondents wanted to add or reestablish (DEI training and initiatives). This suggests that many CBOs do not necessarily want to expand their scope, at least to take on the capacities inquired about in this assessment. However, there may be other capacities that they want to build. They may

also have more interest and willingness if aware of tangible opportunities to build this capacity (i.e., if funding or specific programs were being offered). In addition, there may be a strong need for a particular organization to build its capacity in its local area that is not well represented at the scale of this assessment. For example, only two organizations indicated a desire to build the capacity to serve as a recreation concessionaire. Yet this could be a crucial missing need in their local areas. Capacity-building can take many forms from large-scale trainings to direct funding to peer learning, and should be tailored to the needs and learning styles of participants.[1]

More work is needed to understand non-traditional implementation partners. This assessment followed and refined criteria used in prior studies to focus on CBOs as a specific type of entity not well understood in existing research or practice, as they do not fall into a traditional category such as the private sector or the government. However, these criteria and the definition of a non-traditional partner may warrant continued examination in order to more precisely identify their capacities and needs. Within the assessment population, there were diverse entities including forest collaboratives with a registered nonprofit status, land trusts or similar organizations, and nonprofits with a local economic development emphasis. Future assessment could delve more deeply into smaller subsets of organizations within each category (vegetation management, aquatic restoration, and sustainable recreation) to learn more about their functioning and goals. This would be particularly needed for sustainable recreation, as it is evident that a majority of CBOs in this assessment did not have current capacity or interest in building recreation-related capacities. It is also evident that CBOs are not only "community-based" in their work, given that a large majority of respondents reported working regionally within an area of their state beyond their communities. The roles of CBOs as not only local but also regional partners would benefit from further examination as well. Finally, quantifying the share of federal land management work that CBOs perform, and outcomes of this work, would further illuminate their contributions.

CONCLUSION

This assessment examined how CBOs in Washington and Oregon engage with the on-the-ground implementation of federal land management. Although specific implementation capacities varied widely among these organizations, most had administrative abilities that were or could be used to help manage the implementation projects under newer partnership efforts such as the USDA Forest Service's Shared Stewardship initiative. The findings of this assessment also affirm the roles of CBOs in planning, and an enduring need for activities such as outreach, communication, collaboration, and community engagement to enable implementation. Capacity for these activities may be particularly relevant in cross-boundary, all-lands efforts that engage multiple partners, funders, and landowners.

[1] Davis, E.J., Jolley, A., & Goulette, N. 2020. Investment Opportunities for Increasing Forest and Fire Capacity in California: A Capacity and Needs Assessment of Local Groups, Nonprofits, and Tribes. Watershed Research and Training Center, Hayfork, CA. https://www.thewatershedcenter.com/s/RFFC_CapacityNeeds_web.pdf

APPENDIX 1: EXISTING RESEARCH ABOUT CBOs

Abrams, J., Davis, E.J., Nowell, B., & Moseley, C. 2017. Building Practical Authority for Community Forestry in and Through Networks: The Role of Community-Based Organizations in the U.S. West. Environmental Policy and Governance 27(4): 285-297.

Abrams, J., Davis, E.J., Ellison, A., Moseley, C., & Nowell, B. 2016. Community-Based Organizations in the US West: Status, Structure, and Activities. Ecosystem Workforce Program Working Paper #67. University of Oregon: Eugene, OR.

Abrams, J., Davis, E. J. & Moseley, C. 2015. Community-Based Organizations and Institutional Work in the Remote Rural West. Review of Policy Research 32: 675–698. doi: 10.1111/ropr.12148.

Davis, E.J., Abrams, J., Moseley, C., Ellison, A., & Nowell, B. 2016. Economic Development and Public Lands: The Roles of Community-Based Organizations. Ecosystem Workforce Program Working Paper #68. University of Oregon: Eugene, OR.

Davis, E.J., Moseley, C., Evers, C., MacFarland, K., Nielsen-Pincus, M., Pomeroy, A., & Enzer, M.J. 2012. Organizational Capacity for Natural Resource Management in Oregon. Ecosystem Workforce Program Briefing Paper #42, University of Oregon: Eugene, OR.

Davis, E.J., & Moseley, C. 2012. The Social and Livelihood Benefits of USDA Forest Service Agreements with Community-Based Organizations. Ecosystem Workforce Program Working Paper #38, University of Oregon: Eugene, OR.

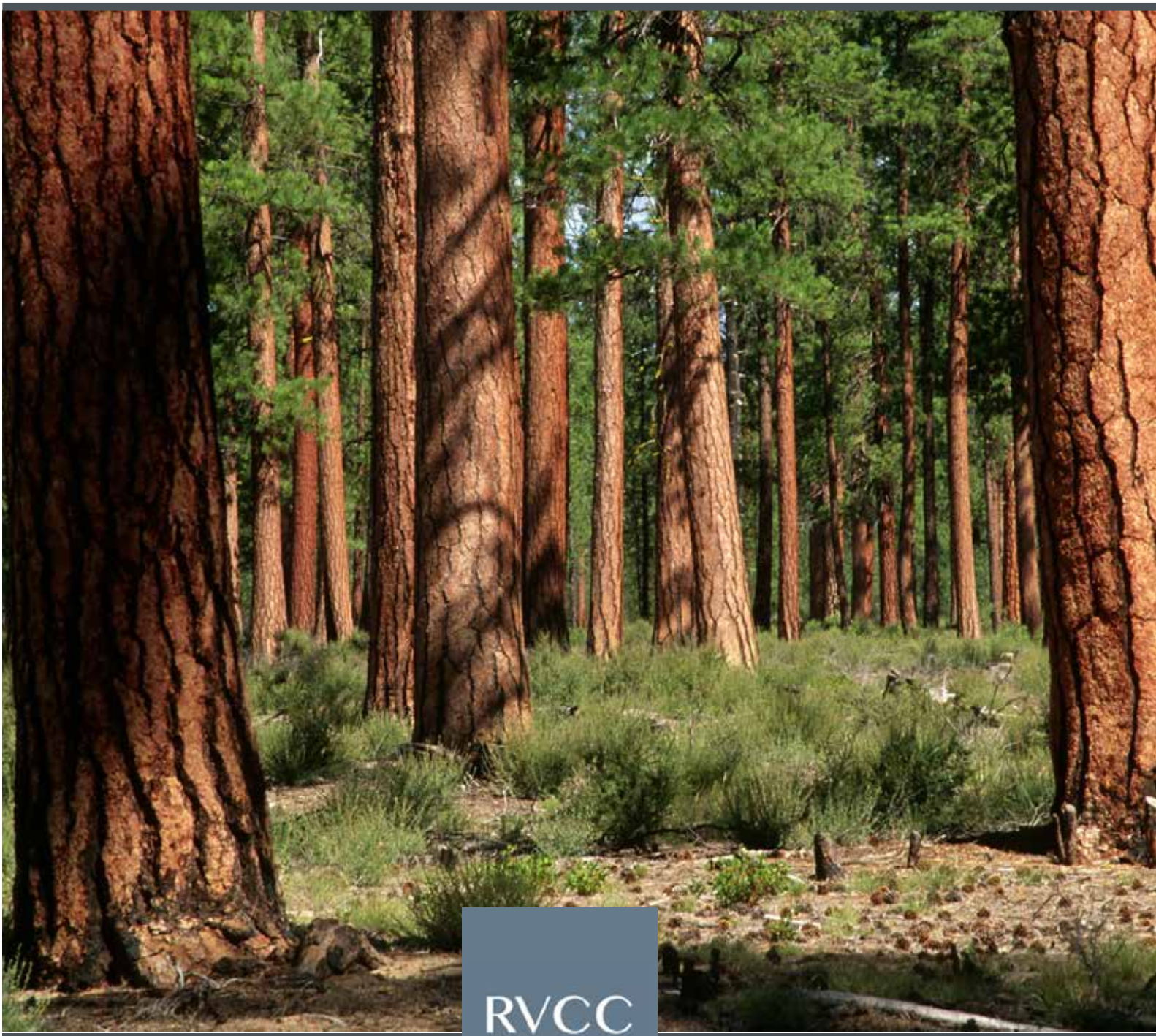
Molden, O., Abrams, J., Davis, E.J., & Moseley, C. 2017. Beyond Localism: The Micropolitics of Local Legitimacy in a Community-Based Organization. Journal of Rural Studies 50, 60-69.

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF RESPONDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Washington:
10,000 Years Institute
Cascade Fisheries
Center for Natural Lands Management
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
Coast Salmon Foundation
Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center
Columbia Land Trust
Glacier Peak Institute
Initiative for Rural Innovation & Stewardship
Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
Nisqually Land Trust
Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association
North Coast Land Conservancy
North Olympic Salmon Coalition
Northeast Washington Forest Coalition
Northwest Natural Resource Group
Pinchot Partners
Sustainable Obtainable Solutions
Trout Unlimited

Oregon:
Applegate Partnership
Blue Mountains Forest Partners
Central Oregon Forest Stewardship Foundation
Coos Watershed Association
Deschutes River Conservancy
Ecotrust
High Desert Partnership
Klamath Watershed Partnership
Klamath-Lake Forest Health Partnership
Lake County Resources Initiative
Lomakatsi Restoration Project
Siuslaw Institute
South Willamette Solutions (Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative)
Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative
Wallowa Resources

OCTOBER 2020



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