

RVCC ANNUAL MEETING – BREAKOUT SESSION SUMMARIES

LARGE LANDSCAPE RESTORATION – STOCKTAKING and LOOKING AHEAD

Session Summary

Over the last decade, the Forest Service and partners have been implementing programs designed to accelerate collaborative landscape-scale restoration, including the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) and the Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership (JCLRP). Participants will take stock of where we stand today through the sharing of recent research, internal agency perspectives, and their own experiences. This session focused on what these programs achieved, where they have fallen short and evolved as we have learned. Courtney Shultz, Colorado State University, and Lindsay Buchanan, CFLR Coordinator for the USFS, spoke about the successes and challenges of both programs.

CFLR

Successes: capacity to follow through with goals (noted by those who received funding); multiple year approach brings projects to the table in a good way; legitimizes the collaborative process; multi-party monitoring very important in process

Challenges: lack of industry support; funding and capacity; range feels disadvantaged because of the focus on forest outputs and timber targets; maintaining the collaborative process from planning to implementation; need greater understanding of the tools available for implementation

Joint Chiefs

Successes: gotten people to work together to compete for funding; worked well where collaborative process already exists and has been a tipping point for them to move forward.

Challenges: budget; how to help in where’s where production isn’t high; generating high degree of certainty that for multiple year projects - particularly related to industry development.

Suggested Action Items

- Find partnerships and maximize participation
- Find better matches between agencies to improve business relations
- Appoint people to positions that value the collaborative approach
- Develop performance measures, and give credit for meeting goals.
- Improve peer learning groups by engaging elected officials and telling success stories; needs to be a hub or library for sharing stories
- Leadership commitment from national level all the way down

Proposed RVCC Priorities

- Reauthorize CFLR bill with no changes
- Change appraisal process for timber modernization processes
- Incentivize partnerships to improve capacity; buy-in for collaboration and personnel capacity; forward business model changes

NEPA: RED HERRINGS and SOLUTIONS

Session Summary

The Forest Service recently announced an agency-wide focus on how it engages in project design, regulatory compliance and public engagement to get more work done on the ground. This focus includes reforming NEPA policies and implementing directives to reduce unnecessary process and analysis. Participants heard from planning experts on the status and context of the challenges, and discussed which implementation delays are due to NEPA and which are not.

Suggested Action Items

- NEPA Strike teams

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- Biggest barrier = budget. Integrated budget at the regional level
- Opportunities for joint training (ex. Farm Bill authorities, third party NEPA)
- Rethinking CE's: establish geographically limited CE's, define the role of collaboration, include more public input and train public on how to comment effectively, consider allowing objections on CE's
- Capacity partners can bring: lead NEPA work, provide specialist capacity, conduct education and outreach, as well as help with PR around NEPA efficiencies
- Further study: Are performance measures realistic today? Should we develop more?

Proposed RVCC Priorities

- Create a product of existing authorities, including templates, to help streamline the process using best practices
- Develop feedback to Forest Service on EADM initiative: i.e. top ten things we think the agency should consider and focus on, including utilization of partners.
- Research: If FS used a new tool, how long is it taking, what are costs, on back end what are you getting? Can identify efficiencies and use as guidepost for making decisions.

COMMUNITY BASED FIRE MANAGEMENT

Session Summary

Efforts to help communities live with wildfire have focused on mechanical fuels reduction and preparing their homes and landscaping to minimize impacts. In many instances, fire adapted communities will also need to begin wielding fire as an active management tool. This session explored how community leaders can work with agency partners to plan for using wildfire and prescribed fires as tools for community wildfire protection, and how we might build cooperative partnerships and local capacity that can shift local culture and bring home increased socio-economic benefits from fire management.

The participants discussed limiting factors to community based fire management, including: state policies on smoke management; agreements for cooperative and cross-boundary burning; land ownership complexity; lack of landowner and citizen awareness of fire ecology, management, and risks; funding to get to scale; lack of risk sharing culture; and ongoing WUI development.

Suggested Action Items

- Need to engage communities and stakeholders in collaborative fire planning : "Fireshed planning"
- Advanced models of landowner led cooperative burning
- Expanding cooperative burning models
- Sharing examples of cooperative burning agreements
- Finding agency champions of cooperative burning
- Myth busting: risk-sharing and liability
- Resolve NWCG equivalent qualifications for non-federal employees
- Share models of qualifications/certifications that NGO's can utilize (ie. self-certification)
- Are there other funding programs or incentives that would get more local fire services engaged?
- Opportunity and demand for local control and knowledge
- Needs: storytelling!
- *Workforce* - Needs: create incentives for cross-trained and quality job workforce; acquire transition strategies; share cross-trained workforce successes

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Proposed RVCC Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share cooperative burning agreements examples- several NGO’s have these including MARS, Lomakatsi, WRTC, MKWC • Share models of qualifications/certifications that NGOs can utilize, such as: self-certification, AD, NWSA, VFD’s • Advance the practice of collaborative spatial fire management planning by using examples such as Region 5’s early adapters, CWPP examples that include fire and use Rx fire, and using early processes and lessons learned to inform administrative policies. Disseminate through networks and stroytelling. • Push federal and state agency policies and culture that promote the community fire workforce by creating incentives for cross-trained, quality job workforce; refining acquisitions strategies; and expanding grants and agreements.

PARTNERSHIPS and AGREEMENTS for SHARED STEWARDSHIP
<p>Session Summary</p> <p>Collaborative approaches to building social agreement about land stewardship have grown in popularity, but how to get work done on the ground after conflict resolution remains challenging. RVCC has found that a lack of guidance on how to use existing programs, tools and authorities that support all lands work in practice leads to confusion about what is possible. This session reviewed mechanisms (such as Good Neighbor and Stewardship authorities) available to share and implement work across boundaries.</p> <p>During this session, one breakout group met to discuss potential policy recommendations and areas where RVCC could focus its work on all-lands efforts. We used the all-lands recommendations from the Western Governors’ Association’s Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative to stimulate conversation. We reviewed the recommendations and collectively identified which seemed most actionable and applicable for RVCC. The other breakout group focused on possible products RVCC might create that support the concept of shared stewardship and facilitate all-lands management.</p>
Suggested Action Items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the use of GNA agreements and other 2014 Farm Bill tools to achieve all-lands restoration objectives across federal, state, local government and privately-owned lands. RVCC could highlight what is working well, what isn’t, and what needs to be adjusted. • Need for a RVCC Farm Bill issue paper that includes vignettes, aggregates stories of how Farm Bill tools have worked and barriers to implementation. Need to highlight nuances around use of Farm Bill Categorical Exclusions. • RVCC could be the entity to act as a directory to relevant technical assistance providers, peers, and resources. If not RVCC, create or identify an entity to take this on. • The RVCC Guidebook lacks the agreements piece. Next steps: include information on sequence of events entering into agreements, what are mutual benefits to each agency? • Identify business practice barriers to cross-boundary projects. “Service First” refers to the co-location of government offices and facilities, and improved integration of administration. Can we better integrate how different agencies use authorities and organize in order to foster more effective all-lands management, especially to more easily share and exchange money? Could we support a dedicated “all-lands unit” working on all aspects of all-lands projects? What can we learn from approaches such as the interagency fire centers?

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- Case studies outlining ingredients & recipes where practitioners were able to stitch a variety of programs/tools/authorities together and HOW they did it. Who did you call? When? What was the sequencing? Maybe create a checklist.
- Storytelling – RVCC could create better testimonials on the power of partnerships and mutual benefit.
- Leadership Intent on Shared Stewardship – Showcase examples of where agency delegated authority and responsibility to partners and invested in them and what the return on the investment was.

Proposed RVCC Priorities

- Create RVCC Farm Bill issue paper that includes vignettes, aggregates stories of how Farm Bill tools have worked and barriers to implementation. Highlight nuances around use of Farm Bill Categorical Exclusions.
- Case study of third party NEPA – where has this approach been successful?
- Summary of the status, use and models of the Good Neighbor Authority: what were commonalities, necessary ingredients, what were the underlying conditions on why it worked?

RURAL DEVELOPMENT through LAND STEWARDSHIP

Session Summary

Rural communities face a number of interconnected challenges to accessing economic growth. Elements of the interconnected economic system include: access to a workforce, capital, markets, housing, the internet, healthcare, education, and infrastructure; civic capacity, and local and federal government capacity and engagement; an understanding of local assets and the ability to generate a comprehensive and strategic economic development plan based on those assets.

Rural communities near public lands also have an outstanding natural asset that many communities are not fully accounting or planning for, or which could be better leveraged to support local economic growth through a natural resource/stewardship economy.

Suggested Action Items

- Work with the Forest Service to help both the public and FS employees to better understand and more consistently use **existing authorities** for local economic benefit, i.e., local preference in contracting.
- Convene **multi-stakeholder conversations** about local assets and capacity in communities with RVCC members, to better connect community economic development strategies (**CEDS**) and place-based planning with natural-resource based opportunities and assets.
- Develop recommendations to help the Forest Service (and other federal land management agencies) and local communities have a better mutual understanding of both capacity constraints, and **opportunities to prioritize** work on public lands that supports local economic activity.
- Work on recommendations related to **youth**, including supporting potential partnerships with schools to connect students to natural resource learning and outdoor education, corps or other training opportunities, entrepreneurship, and workforce development.
- Collect and tell specific **stories** about how RVCC members or their communities are creating natural resource related economic growth, to share positive narratives and examples and help others see opportunities in this space.
- Identify **successful tools or programs** within the RVCC universe that are currently limited by type or place, and developing recommendations to expand or scale those good examples.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways RVCC or its members can increase community capacity to be able to access capital, technical assistance, or other forms of support for a stewardship economy
<p>Proposed RVCC Priorities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple RVCC members committed during the annual meeting to asking about their local community economic development plan, and to helping to create a vision for economic growth through land stewardship. Create a working group focused on this topic, to share ideas, provide technical assistance, and develop policy recommendations.

<p>EMERGING ISSUES and TRENDS in CONSERVATION and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</p>
<p>Session Summary</p> <p>This session covered hot topics and emerging trends that were not included in other breakout sessions. Participants were asked to identify topics of interest, and the topic chosen was the 2018 Farm Bill.</p>
<p>Suggested Action Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation Title <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs: Inspect and discuss CE’s; could this be a vehicle for new authorities? <i>Conservation stewardship program</i> - Needs: a planning component; more TA from third parties <i>Easement programs</i> - works well for ranchers/rangelands <i>Healthy forest reserve</i> - Needs: Farm Bill funding; a western focus and strategy <i>Regional conservation partnership program</i> - Needs: provide case studies Forestry Title <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Forestry-in-the-farm bill Coalition</i> - has been vehicle for some public lands issues Rural Development Title <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs: stronger criteria for collaboration and natural resource entities; challenges with funding (no loan program or construction finance)
<p>Proposed RVCC Priorities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop recommendations to improve the Rural Development title – focused on challenges with loans and funding to small businesses and rural communities. Create RVCC Farm Bill issue paper that includes vignettes, aggregates stories of how Farm Bill tools have worked and barriers to implementation.