

Large Scale Forest Fuels Projects and Collaborative Groups Improvement Study

Analysis of a Survey Conducted for the Western Governors' Association's Forest Health Advisory Committee (FHAC)

June, 2010



Clearwater Basin, ID Area burned in The Big Burn of 1910

photo by William Mullins

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Introduction

The Western Governors' Association's Forest Health Advisory Committee (FHAC) sought answers to questions on how large scale forest treatment collaboratives are doing throughout the West. They were particularly interested in finding out where groups of different stakeholders were finding "zones of agreement", what successes they are having, and what barriers they face. In February, 2010 we undertook a survey of representatives of large scale treatment collaboratives throughout the West. It was decided to do "key informant" interviews in which very knowledgeable people are interviewed to get their insights into a problem or question. A questionnaire was developed with open-ended questions allowing the key informants to talk about their perceptions. Names of potential interviewees were submitted by members of the FHAC. In all, 21 representatives were interviewed either via telephone or by filling out the questionnaire and returning it. Representatives of groups were chosen to have a geographic distribution across the West and also as representatives of different stakeholder groups.

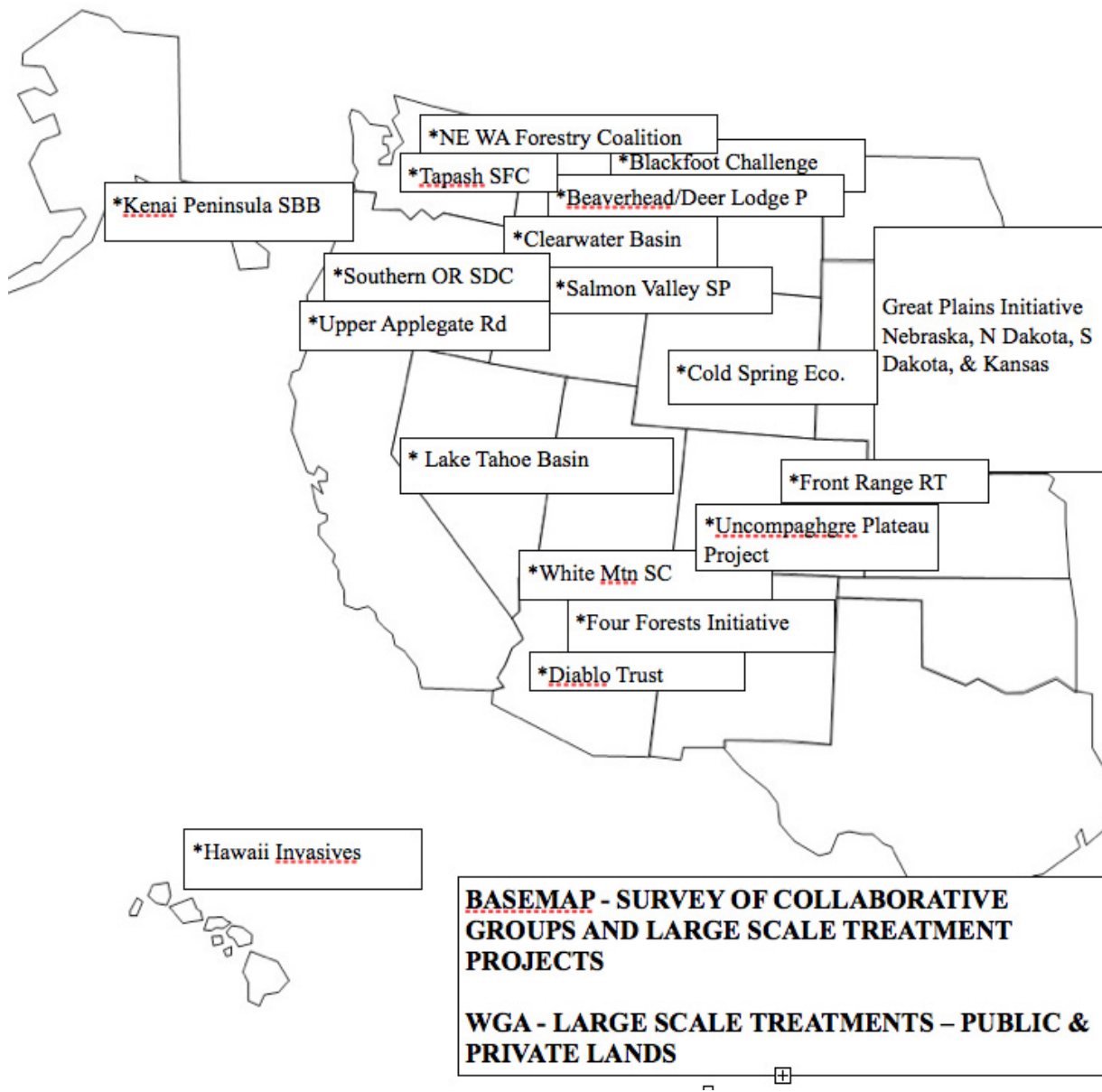
This paper presents the results of the interviews. The paper presents a picture, or a "temperature taking", of how things are going in collaboratives in 2010. Answers are grouped under the headings of each question. Because questions were open-ended, interviewees were able to interpret the question in their own way, and did not necessarily answer the questions in the same way. Quotes from the interviewees are presented to give a more full view of what they are saying about working in collaborative groups. Since we were talking to key people who are very involved in collaboratives and working in the field of forest health for long periods of time, it is not necessary to have many people give the same answer for an answer to be important. Every answer given in this survey format is important.

a. Large Scale Forest Treatment Collaboratives Interviewed:

Salmon Valley Stewardship Project, ID;
Clearwater Basin Collaborative, ID;
Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative;
Upper Applegate Road Corridor Fuels Reduction Project, OR;
Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition;
Tapash Sustainable Forests Collaborative, WA;
Great Plains Tree and Forest Invasives Initiative, NE, KS, ND, SD;
Beaverhead/Deerlodge Partnership, MT;
Cold Spring Ecosystem Management Project, WY;
Blackfoot Challenge, MT;
Uncompahgre Plateau Project (UPP), CO;
Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Roundtable, CO;
Four Forests Restoration Initiative, AZ;
Diablo Trust, AZ;
White Mountain Stewardship Contract, AZ;
Oregon Landscape Scale Collaboratives Subcommittee;

Hawaii Invasive Species Projects;
 Kenai Peninsula Spruce Bark Beetle Mitigation Program, AK;
 Lake Tahoe Basin Multi-jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy,
 NV/CA.

b. Map of the 18 collaboratives interviewed in this study



Question 1. What groups/stakeholders are involved in this project/group?

Groups submitted long lists of members, too numerous to name individually. Generally they included: conservation groups, local government, timber industry, local businesses, landowners, federal/state agencies for land management and wildlife, universities, professional groups, recreation groups, sportsmen, non-profits, utility providers, insurance providers, and individuals.

The Oregon Landscape Scale Collaboratives Subcommittee gave a general rule as to who should be included: “any partner willing to: a) work together, and b) offer tangible support is invited to participate.”

a. How did they become involved?

How Groups Started:

The most common reason for getting together as a group was either because several people recognized a common problem or they saw an opportunity. Of the eighteen groups, six of them originated through a common vision. Three groups were formed because they were invited to participate in the planning process by the Forest Service. Two groups formed by invitation of one of the stakeholders, two were convened by senators, and one was convened by a governor. Other mechanisms by which groups convened were: invitation of the landowners, by a task force, and through a public law. One group, Salmon Valley Stewardship in Lemhi County, Idaho, was initiated at the suggestion of Sustainable Northwest, and then invited to participate in project planning by the Forest Service (making them the 4th group invited by the Forest Service).

Some quotes on how groups started:

“Sen. Crapo convened and hosted the group, but he had conditions: we must hire a facilitator, run the group professionally, be inclusive and have an open process of selection for members. We had to have problem-solvers in the group. He invited a list of 25 people to the initial meeting” (Clearwater Basin Collaborative).

“People had a common vision of what could be accomplished, saw that we could have a sustainable supply and if we brought in the industry, we could reduce fuels and affect fire behavior” (Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative).

“Each group recognized that we have to deal with forest health and that problems don’t stop at property lines. None of us could deal with it on our own. A common problem pulled us together. Our goals include improved water quality, an improved road system, habitat for wildlife, and a sustainable, resilient forest to support these goals. We want to restore the forest to more historic conditions” (Tapash Sustainable Forestry Collaborative).

“UP Project and USFS invited people to come together to have discussions on a large scale project to address ecosystem health issues” (Uncompahgre Plateau Project).

“We came together after the 2002 fire season, which included the Hayman Fire. People were concerned about wildfire risk on the Front Range. A sub-group identified stakeholder groups and invited the groups to a meeting” (Front Range Roundtable).

b. Did you feel that this was an open and inclusive process?

Seventeen groups said that they had an open and inclusive process. One group said they did not. The Beaverhead/Deerlodge, MT representative said, “Not all affected groups were initially invited. It was decided much of the discussion needed to be between industry and conservation groups to resolve differences primarily concerning logging activities and restoration needs. It was agreed that a smaller group dealing with these issues first would be more productive. We later decided to take our proposals public and expand the group to those who were interested with the intent to make modifications, if necessary. This approach received mixed review. Some felt left out of the process since they weren’t involved from the very beginning. Others were invited but did not want to participate.”

A few respondents mentioned that some groups were invited but turned down the invitation. The collaboratives felt that this could not be helped.

c. Were there any key groups that were not involved but who can affect the outcome of the project/group?

Half of the groups (9) answered “no” to this question. The other nine groups all listed at least one group that was not initially involved, but who should have been involved. Four respondents mentioned county commissioners. Motorized recreation groups were mentioned three times, and “left-leaning” environmental groups were mentioned four times. Groups mentioned once include: cattlemen, ranchers, more timber industry, Forest Service, local governments, and state agencies for wildlife, fish & game, or agriculture. Several representatives said that groups that had initially not been at the table joined the process later, and are now involved.

Question 2. Does your group have a working definition of the following terms?

a. large scale

b. restoration

c. best science

Half the groups did not have specific definitions for the terms large scale, restoration and best science. A few groups had definitions in their agreed upon documents, some are shown as follows.

Large scale definition:

A starting point for landscape scale assessments would generally, but not always, follow these parameters:

(A) A unit of assessment that includes a geographic area large enough to capture a range of biological conditions leading to a characterization of needed management actions, typically ranging from a watershed encompassing 25,000 to 100,000 acres up to a sub-basin of approximately 1,000,000 acres; and

(B) An area that may exhibit similarities enabling Federal forest managers to develop and implement management activities to address issues relating to:

- (i) potential natural vegetation;
- (ii) surface features;
- (iii) water flow or distribution;
- (iv) wildlife; and
- (v) natural disturbances associated with flooding, wind, or fire.” (from Oregon Landscape Scale Collaboratives Subcommittee)

Ecological restoration definition:

To include both structures and processes, ecological restoration must address the following:

1. Overstory: tree density, distribution of tree size classes, distribution of tree age classes, and distribution of tree species (structure).
2. Understory: whether shrubs, forbs, and grasses that typically coexist with a certain tree species are present, with a minimum of foreign weeds (exotics) (structure).
3. Soil conditions: soil quality and the natural process of nitrogen and carbon cycling within the soil; porosity and natural water-holding capacity are also important, which can be compromised through soil compaction (structure and process).
4. Water conditions/aquatic habitats: water quality, water flow, and the presence of aquatic habitats (structure and process).
5. Biodiversity/threatened and endangered species, and USFS sensitive species) are missing, threatened, or endangered (structure).
6. Patch size/arrangement of patches: whether a diverse mosaic of forest patches exists, reflective of underlying biophysical diversity and characteristic disturbance history (structure).
7. Presence of recent wildfire: whether fire plays its natural role in an ecosystem consistent with its historical range of variability (process). (from Front Range Roundtable Living With Fire document, 1).

Restoration definition:

“The objective of forest restoration is ecological integrity and resiliency by restoring within the natural range of variability the functions, processes, structure complexity, and the composition of species and their interactive networks.” (Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative, Productive Harmony Guidelines, 2).

Best science definition:

“Guide restoration treatments through use of specific ecological references for composition and structure based in Plant Association Group and historic fire regime

accounts.” (from Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative Productive Harmony Guidelines, 2).

Most respondents did give definitions even if they felt that their group did not have an agreed upon definition. Ten definitions were given for restoration and large scale; only four definitions were offered for best science.

Large scale - Answers ranged from 1,000 treatment acres to 50,000 acres to over 500,000 acres, or more than one watershed in size. Four respondents said large scale is over 50,000 acres. One respondent said that large scale is 50-100,000 acres and “the scale at which you can make a substantial difference to how large scale fire would behave.”

Restoration - Most respondents agreed that restoration dealt with taking an altered ecosystem and changing it to its historical composition and structure to the extent possible. Two respondents gave the definition: “the intentional process which initiates the recovery of an altered ecosystem to a state of ecological integrity”.

Best science: Personal definitions included: “The most up to date research that is peer reviewed for objectivity and accuracy” and “using the best information that is readily available”. One group reported using their ecologic, economic, and biologic monitoring from 180 plots for decision-making.

Question 3. Month/Year project was initiated:

Blackfoot Challenge, MT has done projects since 1985. Four groups: Cold Spring in WY, Diablo Trust in AZ, Hawaii Invasives, and the Kenai Peninsula, AK projects were started in the 1990's. The White Mountain, AZ and NE Washington projects were started between 2000 and 2005. The remaining groups: Salmon Valley, ID; Clearwater Basin, ID; S. Oregon; Upper Applegate Rd, OR; Great Plains (NE, KS, ND, SD); Beaverhead/Deerlodge, MT; Four Forests Initiative, AZ; Front Range, CO; and Lake Tahoe Basin, NV/CA projects were all begun between 2006 and 2009. Uncompahgre Plateau Project, CO, Tapash, WA, and Four Forests Restoration Initiative, AZ have completed their environmental assessments but not awarded contracts.

a. Projected completion date:

- One group has completed their projects: Cold Spring, WY. Upper Applegate Road Corridor has completed the work on private land and the Forest Service has three more years of work on their land.
- Six groups reported that their projects will be on-going with no anticipated completion date: Clearwater Basin, ID; NE Washington; Blackfoot Challenge, MT; Front Range Roundtable, CO; Oregon Landscape Scale Subcommittee; Hawaii Invasives.
- Great Plains Initiative will complete the project in 2010.

- Beaverhead/Deerlodge, MT; Kenai, AK; Diablo, AZ and Salmon Valley, ID; and White Mountain Stewardship Project anticipate finishing their projects within the next 5 years.
- Lake Tahoe Basin, NV anticipates completion in 2017.
- S. Oregon Small Diameter is looking at 2019.
- Four Forests Restoration Initiative is looking at 2022.
- Uncompahgre Plateau Project, CO is unsure when they will complete the project.

b. Current status / c. Size of area of concern:

The current status and size of the project and the area of concern was unique to each collaborative. The answers to these questions are combined below:

- Salmon Valley, ID - letting the 1st stewardship contract for treatment of a 13,000 acre project.
- Clearwater Basin, ID - always working on getting projects through the pipeline/ working on a 300,000 acre project.
- S. Oregon Small Diameter - developing a contract for the first 600 acres.
- Upper Applegate Rd Corridor, OR - private lands are complete; Forest Service has 3 more years/ total area 5,000 acres.
- NE Washington - on-going work/ have treated 100,000 acres to date.
- Tapash, WA - completed analysis, coming up with prescriptions/ 200,000 acre project area in 50,000 acre increments / total study area 3 million acres.
- Great Plains Initiative- doing final report / project area covers 4 states.
- Beaverhead/Deerlodge - draft EIS out, final EIS to be out this summer / 2,500 acre project / total area 45,000 acres.
- Cold Spring, WY - project completed / 6,500 acres.
- Blackfoot Challenge, MT - on-going projects / 1.5 million acres.
- UPP, CO - environmental assessment complete/ project 17,000 acres/ total area 1.5 million acres.
- Front Range Roundtable, CO - identified areas needing treatment; working to get those areas treated/ 4.2 million acres.
- Four Forests Restoration Initiative, AZ - landscape assessment phase / 750,000 acre project / will mechanically treat 1 million acres over 20 years.
- Diablo Trust, AZ - have completed treatments on 50,000 acres / total area 426,000 acres.
- White Mountain, AZ - have awarded about 50,000 acres; have treated about 38,000 acres / project size up to 150,000 acres.
- Oregon Collaboratives Subcommittee - has initiated one "FFAC Action Plan"; will do 3-5 more in the next year and a half / the size of projects vary across the state.
- Hawaii Invasives - on-going project / survey and control invasives over 75,000 acres per year.
- Kenai Peninsula, AK - hazard tree removal -- reforestation program -- education program -- modeling -- CWPPs -- mapping / project areas vary widely.

- Lake Tahoe Basin, NV/CA - 3rd year of implementation/49,000 acres of first treatments and 19,000 acres of maintenance treatments.

d. Land ownership proportion (% breakdown):

- Salmon Valley, ID - 92% federal / 8% private.
- Clearwater Basin, ID - 6 million acre basin is predominately federal land with some state, tribal and private.
- S. Oregon Small Diameter - 100% federal.
- Upper Applegate Rd, OR - 80% federal / 20% private.
- NE Washington - 100% federal.
- Tapash, WA - 50% federal / 30% state / 20% tribal.
- Great Plains Initiative (NE, KS, ND, SD) - greatest proportion is private, then federal, then state.
- Beaverhead/ Deerlodge, MT - 100% federal.
- Cold Spring, WY - 40% federal / 9% state / 51% private.
- Blackfoot Challenge, MT - 65% federal / 20% state / 15% corporate timber.
- UPP, CO - 74% federal / 1% state / 25% private.
- Front Range Roundtable, CO - 55% federal / 35% private / 10% local government/non-profits.
- Four Forests Restoration Initiative, AZ - almost 100% federal with a little tribal and some private intermixed.
- Diablo Trust, AZ - 33% federal / 33% state / 33% private.
- White Mountain, AZ - 100% federal.
- Oregon Collaboratives Subcommittee - varies but most over 50% federal.
- Hawaii Invasives - 20% federal/ 40% state / 40% private.
- Kenai Peninsula, AK - multi- land ownership, both public and private.
- Lake Tahoe Basin, NV/CA - 85% federal / CA Tahoe Conservancy 6% / other jurisdictions 5% / CA state parks 3% / NV Tahoe Resource Team 1%.

e. Funding source(s):

Many different funding sources were named. Federal funds from the Forest Service and BLM were most frequently cited; also Title II, ARRA funds, stewardship contracts and National Fire Plan were mentioned. Other sources include state and local governments, grants, private foundations, volunteer contributions, salvage funds, timber sales, the Farm Bill, and state bonds. One respondent mentioned biomass as a source of funds. Two groups received planning funds from the National Forest Foundation and one from The Nature Conservancy.

f. Will the project sustain itself with marketable products? _____%

Only one respondent had an enthusiastic response to this question, the NE Washington Forestry Coalition member said that they will get 90% support from marketable products. Most of the other respondents could not put a percentage figure on this

question; two respondents estimated 20% or less. Nine respondents said that their projects would not sustain themselves with marketable products. Five respondents said that they have/will have some revenue from timber sales, three mentioned biomass, and one mentioned firewood.

g. Is biomass utilization part of your project?

There were fourteen “yes” responses plus two who said that it is “a goal” of the project. There were four “no” answers. The Kenai Peninsula, AK representative said that biomass had played a role in the first few years of the project, but the chip facility closed in 2004, and now the opportunity to use the dead wood has passed. The Clearwater Basin, ID representative said that they are working on a co-generation plant that will be a big part of their project.

h. Did the project create new jobs? How many?

Since the collaboratives are in different stages of their projects, some groups were able to give real numbers while others gave projections. Two respondents clarified that it was not a matter of creating new jobs as much as it was a matter of maintaining existing jobs. Several mentioned that the jobs were seasonal. Of the twenty responses, seven said the project created less than 50 jobs. The NE Washington Forestry Coalition said that their projects have sustained 600 jobs and created 400. White Mountain Stewardship Contract has added 213 jobs; Hawaii Invasives employs 75 people annually. The Four Forests Restoration Initiative estimates that over 600 jobs will be created by the project, and the Tapash Collaborative anticipates employing 100.

i. Has the project been reviewed for short-term impacts vs. long-term value?

Respondents had several different answers to this question. Eight respondents said that they are doing/will be doing monitoring of the project. Five respondents said that information is in the NEPA or the EIS. Four answered “yes”, and three said “no”. One respondent said that in addition to the evaluation during the NEPA process there will be the long-term value of the reduction in fire behavior, reduction of fire impacts, and the value of increased forest health.

Question 4. How was the idea of the project formulated?

There are almost as many answers to this question as there were groups interviewed. Five groups said that project ideas were developed collaboratively by their boards by identifying a problem and using science to develop treatments. Two groups said that the idea came from the Forest Service. In Beaverhead/Deerlodge, the county saw the beetle-killed trees and went to the Forest Service for a solution; in NE Washington the tribe saw the beetle-killed trees and went to the Forest Service for a stewardship contract. Other mechanisms that led to ideas for projects include: priorities listed in CWPPs, a state forester seeing invasive species on the move, a task force on beetle-kill, a public law, and a major local wildfire incident.

Quotes on how ideas for projects are formulated:

“Most projects come out of a perceived problem, for example, when we had several years of drought we had the idea to develop irrigation efficiency and leave more water in the streams for the fish. Most ideas come from desperation: are we going to stay with the status quo or are we going to improve things? How can we make the place a better place to live and enhance what we have?” (Blackfoot Challenge).

“Collaboratively. We picked the area, formulated the goals and objectives, and treatment parameters together” (Uncompahgre Plateau Project).

“By teams. We have working groups, including people from academia, scientists, and various agencies, the projects were scientifically formulated” (Diablo Trust).

“Resulted from the devastation of the Rodeo-Chediski (RC) fire” (White Mountain Stewardship Contract).

a. Did you use any legislative authorities to initiate/expedite the project?

Eight collaboratives answered “no” to this question. Four cited the Stewardship Authority, four cited HFRA, two cited FLRA, and three referred to state level authorities.

b. Who/which group took the lead?

Eleven groups said that they all took the lead together as a collaborative. Sometimes one agency would take the lead for a specific work segment, such as The Nature Conservancy taking the lead in the Conservation Action Planning exercise to set goals and treatments for the Tapash Sustainable Forests Collaborative, or the Forest Service doing the NEPA, but they said that decision-making is done by the whole group. Three groups named a state forestry agency as the lead agency. One respondent said the Forest Service took the lead, and two groups named several federal and state agencies working together. One group named a social scientist and a former BLM employee who are leading their group.

Quotes on taking the lead:

“We all took the lead together by exercising due diligence. Some individual advocates have “adopted” some areas and became proponents for those projects” (Clearwater Basin Collaborative).

“It’s always been a coalition effort split equitably between timber industry and conservation interests” (NE Washington Forestry Coalition).

“It has been collaborative across the board” (Four Forests Restoration Initiative).

c. How did project momentum grow?

There were overlapping answers to this question and the next regarding turning points. Two respondents said that momentum grew because people were concerned after a recent large wildfire, and another pointed to concern over standing dead trees. Two respondents said that as people saw their neighbors doing treatments, they wanted to have their land treated. Two mentioned hiring a coordinator as building momentum. One respondent said that people were tired after 30 years of fighting, and two pointed to the determination of the collaborative members to see the project through. Two respondents said that field trips to the land inspired the group and built momentum.

Other factors in building momentum include:

- working towards formal 'high level of support' letters for Forest Service projects,
- need to keep the mills running,
- getting work started created incentive to do more projects,
- members working within their agencies, bringing supervisors out to the land,
- the prospect of working at a landscape level created momentum,
- public education and fuels treatments helped to build momentum.

Some quotes from respondents regarding momentum:

"We got work started and that gave other members of the collaborative the incentive to do more projects. The momentum snowballed as we had success" (Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Roundtable).

"We spent a lot of days on the land. The decisions to do projects came from what we call days on the land, field trips, looking at the results of monitoring and wildlife management goals. It's been a great neutralizer in decision-making. We go to the land. The land is a transformative tool" (Diablo Trust).

"We had face-to-face meetings and hired a coordinator for two years. He enhanced the communication and facilitated implementation of the project. The coordinator made all the difference" (Great Plains Tree and Forest Invasives Initiative)

d. Were there any key turning points?

- Coming to agreement on guidelines, or treatments, or finishing a document or plan were key turning points mentioned eight times.
- Field trips to the land were cited twice.
- Securing the funds to hire a director or coordinator was mentioned twice.
- Getting the project funded was mentioned three times.
- Having the tribe join the coalition was mentioned twice.
- Local wildfires raising awareness was mentioned three times.
- State and federal agencies gave recognition.
- Forest Supervisor expressed faith in the collaborative process.

- Group focused on the interests of the members not their positions.
- End of an extended drought.
- Approval of the EIS.
- Established a demonstration project.
- People became aware of the serious wildfire threat.

Not all turning points are positive, one group said they had no positive turning points, and another said that a moratorium on roadless entry slowed them down.

Some quotes from respondents regarding turning points:

“In October 2007 we went on a group field trip and we experienced the old growth forest conditions together. All our key moments happened in the field where we were able to verbalize the future conditions that we wanted to see. When we saw designated old growth stands that had been preserved and were in good shape, we were able to put into words what we wanted the project to look like” (Salmon Valley Stewardship Project)

“We created guidelines and policies that direct our collaboration. These guidelines and policies were created using “best available science” and have prescriptions that focus on Commercial Thinning, Regeneration Harvesting, Road Construction and Decommissioning, Old Growth Management and Fire Salvage. If the Forest Service prescriptions are within our guidelines we don’t need to discuss the project. We agree on the prescription and the project can move forward. Another turning point was when the Forest Supervisor said that the collaboration was working so well that he would involve the public in developing the whole Forest Plan” (NE Washington Forestry Coalition).

“1. When the tribe became involved. 2. When the Senator convened the group. 3. When Mark Gray gave the group his blessing. 4. When the Obama administration gave the group its blessing” (Clearwater Basin Collaborative).

“1. When we came to agreement on doing commercial cuts to offset the cost of restoration treatments. 2. At first, we thought that the mixed conifer forest didn’t need treatment, just the ponderosa pine, but when we studied the historic environment, we saw that it was not just ponderosa pine” (Uncompahgre Plateau Project).

“When the EIS was completed after 6 years. That gave us the federal authority to do the land restoration” (Diablo Trust).

“1. Obtaining grant money to hire a Director. This was a Secure Rural Schools Title III grant. The Director kept the project going by organizing meetings, keeping members on task toward completion of foundational processes, and record-keeping. 2. Coming to agreement on the Productive Harmony Guidelines. 3. BLM district manager dedicated \$1 million toward the project and US Forest Service dedicated ARRA funds to the project. This jump-started the project.” (Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative).

Question 5. Were there earlier landscape scale assessments, planning efforts or agreements that provided the basis for this project/group?

Five groups did not have any existing prior plans or assessments, others mentioned the following documents (# of times mentioned):

- CWPP - (4)
- Landscape analysis - (3)
- Biomass supply study - (3)
- Fire and fuels assessment - (3)
- MOU - (2)
- Assessment of part of planning area - (2)
- Invasives Assessment Analysis -(1)
- Wildlife and water quantity/quality/ landscape analysis - (1)

Question 6. What mechanisms are there for local input in the projects?

- newspaper - (12)
- email distribution list - (16)
- invite participants to meeting - (18)
- word of mouth - (19)
- other -- web-based info, signs around town, website, will do face-to-face outreach and community meetings, direct mail, presentations to local organizations, public meetings, meet with bd. of commissioners & local governments, education programs, info in local landowners' newsletter, involved local SAF members, field trips, artist program, campouts, days on the land, education program in schools.

Question 7. What are the key elements and processes of your agreements and core principles?

Most of the groups have agreed upon documents or MOUs that set out their mission, goals, and objectives. Rather than try to describe them, they submitted copies of the documents. This section draws information from those documents. The documents which were submitted for this research are posted on the Western Governors' Association website at www.westgov.org.

Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) set out the parties to the contract, their agreed upon mission statement and goals, and the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners. The group agreement documents also contain a mission statement, goals, and responsibilities, but they go further and include agreements on how the group will operate, how decisions will be made, and appropriate conduct within the group and in relation to the community.

These factors were cited as being important parts of the groups' agreements and core principles:

- MOU document -- (6)
- Consensus - (4)
- Document containing mission, roles, responsibilities, rules of conduct -- (4)
- Use a facilitator/manager - (2)
- Other values mentioned include: environmental protection, education & outreach, mapping, biomass utilization, CWPPs, maintain forest products industry, designate pristine areas, restoration, sound management of federal or state land, public safety, and forest health. It should be noted that not every group uses consensus. At least one group said they vote by majority.

Informal quotes about shared values:

"The Coalition follows a consensus-based decision making process following a set of Ground Rules and board direction, advised by science and focused toward accelerating forest restoration and fuels reduction projects at a landscape scale" (NE Washington Forestry Coalition).

"We just finished the Comprehensive Management Plan. We don't vote on everything but there has always been consensus. We say, 'We'll proceed this way unless there's an objection', and if no one objects, the decision is made" (Diablo Trust).

"Our goal is to develop a collaborative approach to improve ecosystem health and natural function of the landscape using best available science, community input, and adaptive management" (Uncompahgre Plateau Project).

"The work group is founded on the principle that a collaborative and sustainable partnership of federal, state and local governments, forest industries, environmental groups and other nongovernmental organizations can add value to efforts improving forest health, economic vitality and other social and environmental benefits derived from Oregon's federal forest lands and its forest-dependent communities." (Oregon Landscape Scale Collaboratives Subcommittee)

Improving forest health, economic vitality and other social and environmental benefits, or very similar language, is found in all of the agreed upon documents. The groups are all working to balance ecologic, economic and social well-being. The following example, from the Front Range Roundtable document sets out five values:

Shared Values:

1. "*Respect of human safety.* Respect for human safety and well-being requires that we recognize community protection from fire as a first priority. This means that we consider not only how best to thin overgrown forests where they abut residential areas, but also the best means for ensuring that future residential development avoids high-risk areas.

2. *Healthy landscapes.* Because a crucial aspect of human well-being rests on the right to reside in and visit healthy ecosystems characterized by resilience, integrity and biodiversity, an equal and connected priority is the maintenance of healthy and sustainable landscapes. In this semi-arid locale, the importance of forests as watersheds serving our population centers confirms that issues of fire management affect every resident, tying the state of the forests to the well-being of urban and suburban communities located well outside of the forest environment.

3. *Collaborative strategies.* The mixture of public and private land ownership along the Front Range demands collaborative strategies as a way of addressing and reducing the distrust and misunderstanding between and among citizens and governmental entities that has greatly complicated the implementation of comprehensive fire management. The FRFTP Roundtable's goal is to foster a sense of shared risk, as well as shared responsibility, for developing productive, practical and sustainable solutions.

4. *Economic and policy factors.* The Roundtable further recognizes that economic, social and ecological health are necessarily interdependent. Therefore the Roundtable has approached the problem of forest fire with a framework that reflects these three concerns: the ecology of the Front Range forests; economic challenges and opportunities for treatment of the forests; and policy and procedural realities at the federal, state and local levels.

5. *Community engagement.* The Roundtable understands, too, that the effectiveness of its work depends on its ability to engage with and be informed by local communities and interest groups, and therefore we have accordingly adopted community engagement as the fourth element of our work (1).

Commitment to collaboration

In addition to agreeing on balancing ecologic, economic and social values, some groups have gone further in their documents by adopting statements of commitment to the collaborative process and rules of conduct for collaborative members. Here is an excerpt from the Salmon Valley Stewardship Project's Group Process, Structure and Function document:

III. "Commitment to collaboration"

A. Collaboration principles:

- We recognize that collaboration will take time and that the relationships among group members will change over time. To create a foundation for effective and efficient implementation of restoration projects that will meet community needs; we believe that our collaborative process should *initially* be approached with the following principles:
 - i. Project scope and objectives should be appropriately scaled, focusing on smaller projects first
 - ii. Every effort should be made to ensure diverse participation of stakeholders
 - iii. The process will encourage participation, and be open and inclusive

- iv. The process for coming to agreement and how to handle disagreements should be put in place as early in the process as possible
- v. Decision making processes for the group should focus on producing outcomes that strive to meet the needs of all participants
- vi. The collaborative group is committed to helping ensure that targeted projects are implemented, providing technical assistance and, when possible, financial assistance.

B. Collaboration

- The collaborative group will develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to fulfill the stated vision/mission, and includes:
 - i. Development of organizational structure;
 - ii. Clarification and consensus on goals and objectives;
 - iii. Identification of priority areas and development of potential projects (based on ecological, economic and social priorities);
 - iv. Participation in identifying appropriate contract mechanisms;
 - v. Development and initiation of a multiparty monitoring plan;
 - vi. Support to project implementation.
 - vii. Creating a “safe” space for discussion and vetting of ideas.

IV. Ground Rules for Collaboration

Basic rules for collaboration:

- Respect each other in and outside of meetings.
- No backroom deals.
- Personal attacks will not be tolerated.
- The personal integrity and values of participants will be respected.
- Stereotyping will be avoided.
- Commitments will not be made lightly and will be kept.
- Disagreements will be regarded as “problems to be solved,” rather than as “battles to be won.”
- Participants are representative of a broad range of interests, each having concerns about the outcome of the issues at hand. All parties recognize the legitimacy of the interests and concerns of others, and expect that their interests will be represented as well.
- Participants commit to keeping their colleagues/constituents informed about the progress of these discussions.
- Participants commit to stating needs, problems, and opportunities. Not positions.
- Participants will air problems, disagreements and critical information during meetings to avoid surprises.
- Participants commit to search for opportunities and alternatives. The creativity of the group can often find the best solution.
- Participants agree to verify rumors at the meeting before accepting them as fact (3).

Here is an excerpt from the Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative's Productive Harmony Guidelines dealing with how the decision to do projects will be made:

We are a diverse group of stakeholders who share a long term goal to remove small diameter trees from uncharacteristically dense forests in the Rogue Basin. We believe this is critical in order to improve ecological health and resiliency, reduce the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfire, and improve the region's economy and quality of life.

We have developed these guidelines in order to ensure that ecological, social, and economic goals are given equal attention and pursued together in a spirit of productive harmony, or sustainability. We have defined each of the three "legs" of our sustainability stool at three levels of detail:

1. Our **long term goal** is the ideal which we strive to maximize. Different projects will come closer to meeting one or another of these goals, but we will maximize them all to the extent possible.
2. Our **minimum standard** is the threshold that any project must meet to gain our support. This is our "bottom line" in each category, and we will not support any project that fails to meet any of these thresholds.
3. **Specific guidelines** outline the way we will do our work. We recognize that every project and situation will be slightly different, and it is not possible to write a single set of specific guidelines that have universal application. The guidelines will be adapted to each specific project, and will also adapt and evolve over time as we learn more and grow more comfortable working together (2).

Salmon Valley's representative had advice for new collaboratives, "I would absolutely recommend agreeing on group structure as one of the 1st tasks in a collaborative. This experience cleared up a lot of gray areas for our group and made it more comfortable to invite more stakeholders since we had ground rules to offer. The document did not end all dissension. We had plenty of more technical issues to work out and we continue to, including old growth definitions, climate change, wildlife corridors, etc, but science rarely seems to end with one conclusion."

Question 8. What issues has your group had trouble coming to agreement on?

There is a long list of issues that groups have had trouble agreeing on. The most common answer was prescriptions for treatments in different ecological zones. This answer was given by respondents from six groups. Topics mentioned at least twice were: wilderness areas, roads, motorized access, timber harvesting, and the correct response to an invasive species. Other topics of disagreement are: wild and scenic rivers, cattle allotments, management of restoration, finding funding, committing to long term supply of biomass, how to implement projects on Forest Service land, NEPA language, managing wildlife, ecological restoration in high elevations, large tree retention, science and the definition of restoration, turf issues, and monitoring protocols.

Some quotes on areas of disagreement:

“Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, motorized access. We are still frontier land and interest in it is very polarized. People have been fighting for 30 years, one year of cooperation doesn’t change the way they feel. That’s why we have strict rules like no impugning of another person’s character. This is important” (Clearwater Basin Collaborative).

“What is the right tool to use to implement the project on Forest Service land? How to commit to a long-term supply of resources for biomass. The Yakama Nation is the largest timber tribe in the nation. It is frustrating when the Forest Service questions our ability to do this. Also because of the economy, WA DNR has bailed out of forestry programs. This is a real problem for us to meet the wood supply and landscape objectives” (Tapash Sustainable Forests Collaborative).

“What our response should be, action details of how to respond to the Emerald Ash Borer on statewide levels, each state takes its own tack. We used consensus on decision-making.” (Great Plains Tree and Forest Invasives Initiative).

“There are always things going on. Right now it is the wolf issue. We have the biggest population of grizzly bears, but there’s hunting pressure. We have to decide how to manage or not manage and how we can work with different groups and interests” (Blackfoot Challenge).

Question 9. How did the group reach agreement on the project goals?

There were many different answers to this question. Answers fell into two categories. Some respondents cited an organizational process, such as using a workshop format or vetting the decision through the organizational structure from a committee up to the full board. Others mentioned writing and rewriting goals until they reached agreement or simply hashing goals out in meetings. Five respondents mentioned coming to consensus, four mentioned the importance of focusing on goals, and two mentioned collaboration.

Some quotes on reaching goals:

“Locked ourselves in a room together for several hours! We went back to focusing on the desired future conditions. We talked about what we felt was wrong with the landscape, what we felt could be done. At first, we thought commercial harvest was not going to be acceptable to the environmental groups. But then we found out that it’s OK in areas previously managed. We came to understand how big the scope of the project could be” (Salmon Valley Stewardship Project).

“We meet 7 times monthly. We have the steering committee and working groups and sub-committees. Ideas start at the sub-committee level, then go to the full working

group, and if they are approved there, they go to the steering committee (Clearwater Basin Collaborative).

“We operate by consensus. We go around the table looking for a better way to do things. Community input is so important. We’re not always right, and we’re not always wrong” (Blackfoot Challenge).

“Through dialogue and discussion under the umbrella of the convener and utilizing a neutral facilitator” (Oregon Landscape Scale Collaboratives Subcommittee).

Question 10. Do you have criteria for determining the success of the project? Are you monitoring these criteria?

Measuring success is always a difficult concept. Most respondents interpreted this question to be about monitoring. Nine mentioned that they had monitoring criteria or plots in place and three said they were working on setting monitoring criteria. Most referred to ecological effects monitoring, but one respondent said that his group was monitoring social, economic and environmental effects. Other measures of success that were suggested include: whether the project was appealed or litigated, if the project happened on the ground, the success of group dynamics, the number of projects the collaborative had supported over the years, setting reasonable objectives, one project led to more projects, annual review of plans and progress, and fire behavior in an area after treatment.

Quotes on determining success:

“The landscape will tell the story. If the landscape is sustainable, we will know if we were successful. Once, we set a goal to treat 200,000 acres per year. But that wasn’t doable. We need reasonable objectives, perhaps 70,000-80,000 acres per year” (Tapash Sustainable Forests Collaborative).

“If a project is not appealed or litigated, that’s success. If the project actually happened on the ground, that’s success. We measure success on short-term, mid-term, and long-term time frames. The fact that we are still at the table 2 years later, is success. This is civility in action. People are talking who never talked before. We are trying to create an environment where we have a social license to proceed. And we are trying to elevate the stature of the community” (Clearwater Basin Collaborative).

“The obvious criteria are that we are achieving the deliverables from the project grant. We have identified needs beyond the scope of the original project and have sought funding for additional projects. When a project precipitates other projects and expanded work, that is success” (Great Plains Tree and Forest Invasives Initiative).

Question 11. Did you change the scale of your project during its development? If so, why?

Two groups reported changing the size of their project to make it bigger; one group said it was to have a greater effect on the environment. Three groups said that they had made the project smaller, one was due to a Forest Service decision, one was by compromise, and one was by design, to gain experience from the first project. Eleven groups said that they had not changed the size of the project. And two groups said that in the past they have adjusted projects to make them both bigger and smaller.

Question 12. Did you feel that a large-scale approach increased or decreased problems in conducting your project? Why?

Since each answer to this question was unique, all of the answers are set out here. There were eight responses saying that a large scale approach increased problems, and six responses saying that large scale decreased problems. Six respondents were either divided on the issue, seeing both good and bad aspects to taking a large scale approach, or did not consider it an issue at all.

a. Large scale increased problems:

“When we did the 13,000 acre project it was easy to have field trips and see what were trying to do. But on 50,000 acres, it’s too big to visit the whole thing. We will do an over flight” (Salmon Valley Stewardship Project).

“Forest Service is skittish about large scale projects. There are always NEPA problems. We have a work in progress under a FLRA application that is for 1.2 million acres” (Clearwater Basin Collaborative).

“Sometimes we run into capacity issues relative to the availability of collaborators to review proposal and develop comments” (NE Washington Forestry Coalition).

“Large scale brought more players into the process, including environmental groups from other areas. We got national attention and it drew more attention to the project. Forest Service has to do the same process whether the project is large or small. It may have worked against us, as we came under more scrutiny” (Cold Spring Ecosystem Management Project).

“Large scale is more complex, there are more unknowns in the planning because the planning is not traditionally done at this scale” (Four Forests Restoration Initiative).

“It is hard for local collaboratives to bite off big chunks when they have enough trouble finding common ground on small chunks. Plus, working at a landscape scale often means finding common ground in more difficult forest types (e.g. mixed conifer) where they previously were able to focus on easier forest types (e.g. low elevation dry pine)” (Oregon Landscape Scale Collaboratives Committee).

“Required more resources and better technology” (Hawaii Invasives Projects)

“The large scale approach increased problems: (1) needed command structure (2) some people thought we were trying to do too much in too tight of a time frame and (3) a wide variety of vegetation types/habitats were included i.e. stream environment zones, steep ground, general forest, WUI (4) initially it was difficult to find contractors/crews to do the large amount of work – that’s not a problem now however (5) code changes were required to allow work in certain environments (6) securing funding in a manner that satisfied everyone in terms of priorities and amounts” (Lake Tahoe Basin Multi-jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy)

b. Large scale decreased problems:

“A large scale approach is needed to attain a sustainable supply of small diameter wood. The increased scale decreased the problem of being able to meet the goal of attaining a sustainable supply” (S. Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative).

“More landowners were able to participate. As we sent out letters and called people, more people got on the bandwagon. I would go out to meet with 2-3 landowners and more people would show up” (Upper Applegate Rd. Corridor Fuel Reduction Project).

“A landscape approach for large scale projects allows you to see the effects more clearly and to negotiate agreements on a larger scale” (NE Washington Forestry Coalition).

“You can only be successful at a landscape level if you use a large scale approach. Where you have checkerboard ownership on a map, you can’t do the treatments that you need to do because of agency rules and regulations. You need to do it on an ownership blind basis. We’re taking a top down approach instead of a bottom up approach. Why? The key to success is to look at the forest without borders” (Tapash Sustainable Forests Collaborative)

“It was easier to accomplish restoration goals using large landscape since larger stewardship contracts would generate more funds for restoration work.

1. Some of the principles we agreed on for restoration and logging activities were better accomplished such as limiting the number of entries/disturbance over time by doing all the work really needed in the drainage or area. Also, could close more roads since they wouldn’t be needed anytime soon.

2. We believe a large EIS is better. This is an area of disagreement with some in Forest Service who question “big gulp” EIS approach” (Beaverhead/Deerlodge Partnership).

“In fact, the overall effect was a reduction of problems once the complexities were worked out. The large-scale approach is the only way to aggressively restore our southwestern forests before another Rodeo-Chediski fire occurs. The overall

assessment, planning and implementation costs of large landscape scale projects goes way down in terms of cost/acre when compared to small project level projects. This has been confirmed once again with the WMSC costs to date” (White Mountain Stewardship Contract).

c. Advantages and disadvantages or simply not an issue:

“It is more of a challenge dealing with so many people and groups. The increase in challenges made us more effective. We spoke with one voice across a huge geographic area which let to greater credibility to our message” (Great Plains Tree and Forest Invasives Initiative)

“All our projects are on valley-wide basis” (Blackfoot Challenge).

“17,000 acres is ideal. It is large enough to see an impact at a landscape scale. It is a great first step” (Uncompahgre Plateau Project).

“It is overall a good approach. It brings a lot of players to the table. It can be more difficult for the same reason. Different agencies have a lot of different mandates to be worked out” (Front Range Roundtable).

“Large scale makes more sense to people from an ecological view, but it is harder to implement. We break it into doable pieces. Our goal is large landscape treatment to provide for better ecosystem health” (Diablo Trust).

“Our focus in fuel treatments has been in the Wildland-Urban Interface (from the “back porch out”). As such we have not taken a large-scale approach to fuel mitigation projects but have focused on strategic treatments of fuels posing the greatest risk within CWPP areas” (Kenai Peninsula Spruce Bark Beetle Mitigation Program).

Question 13. What barriers in project planning did you experience?

a. Federal planning barriers

Respondents mentioned many federal barriers. Several pointed to the long time it takes for project planning and to go through the NEPA process. Others took that in stride. One respondent mentioned that a 10 year agreement is not long enough if you have to spend 8 years negotiating to get it. Respondents pointed to agency red tape and an inability of Forest Service and BLM to work together.

Several respondents mentioned Forest Service personnel turnover as a problem. When turnover of key personnel occurs, the groups have to start over. One collaborative member suggested that there needs to be a handover memo, so that new personnel can see where the negotiations were and what was agreed on. Two respondents noted an unwillingness of the federal personnel they were working with to change to a landscape approach to land management and/or working collaboratively. Respondents

emphasized the need to involve the Forest Supervisor in project planning; his support is critical to get cooperation from the staff.

A difficulty in the Stewardship Contracting Authority was noted in the fact that retained receipts cannot be used for planning purposes. The NEPA must still be funded by the region, even when the collaborative has money available from projects. There was general concern over funding.

The NEPA process and litigation over projects were noted as barriers.

Some quotes on federal barriers:

“Forest Service is required by law to do certain things. The Forest Service is hampered by a culture that overdoes NEPA, but I don’t think of that as a federal barrier” (Clearwater Basin Collaborative).

“It’s important to have the highest level of command involved in your projects. We had the head of State and Private Forestry, State Forester and other senior members of local, state and federal agencies involved. This is especially important initially. When you have success, then it trickles down and you have great cooperation of the staff of all the agencies” (Kenai Peninsula Spruce Bark Beetle Mitigation Program).

“Change in federal agency personnel is a problem. Handover memos need to be institutionalized for new personnel, letting them know where we are in negotiations and what agreements are in place. This will reduce some of the communication problems” (Diablo Trust).

“Stewardship authority does not allow retained receipts to be utilized for planning purposes, only for implementation. So we can’t use our receipts for the NEPA. We have to go to the region to get planning money” (NE Washington Forestry Coalition).

b. Non-federal barriers

Non-federal barriers included the cost to individuals to attend collaborative meetings, extremist groups that litigate proposed projects, lack of support from county commissioners who prefer income from timber sales, funding for work on state land, getting permission from landowners to cross their land, and the difficulty of balancing the interests of all the stakeholders.

Some quotes on non-federal barriers:

“Volunteer stakeholders sometimes have trouble attending meetings because they have to travel so far. We could use funding for a travel incentive for the volunteers.” (Salmon Valley Stewardship Project).

“Bringing the county commissioners on board. At times they don’t understand the value of the projects. The county gets funding from timber sales but not from stewardship contracts” (NE Washington Forestry Coalition).

“We are balancing a lot of different interests and it is challenging to get to agreement. Biomass utilization is always a challenge” (Front Range Roundtable).

c. How have these barriers affected the project’s outcome or progress?

Most groups said that they were able to persevere through the barriers, that barriers made the progress slow, but did not stop them. Several used the word “patience”. One respondent said, “We worked through the problems, and we continue to work through them.”

Question 14. Were you able to work through these barriers? If so, how did you resolve the problem?

Solutions include:

- negotiating with people
- bringing in outside expertise
- reducing the scale of the project
- getting political support from Washington
- working with the county commissioners
- hiring a coordinator
- using legislative authorities
- creating a Memorandum of Understanding
- teleconferencing
- having more than one representative from stakeholder groups.

Some quotes on overcoming barriers:

“It’s all about opening doors and having conversations” (Clearwater Basin Collaborative).

“It took six to eight years in the EIS process. We had grassland when we started with not much juniper, but during the eight years the juniper grew and it was a problem. There will always be more problems. It is an on-going process” (Diablo Trust).

“All planning obstacles have been overcome to date. Outcome has not been affected. Only obstacles that have slowed progress are lack of industry/markets in the early years of the WMSC and the ability to fund the treatments. HFRA and the Stewardship Authorities have helped overcome some of those obstacles in addition to working with stakeholders and internal specialists” (White Mountain Stewardship Contract).

“Not all of the problems are resolved; it’s an ongoing collaborative and negotiating process. We bring in outside expertise. We are getting national attention from the media and the Secretary of Agriculture” (Four Forests Restoration Initiative).

“We work through it. We give the federal partners more ability to do things. We make the federal partners more efficient (Blackfoot Challenge).

Question 15. How have you integrated current scientific research into your project?

a. How collaboratives integrate science into their projects:

- Collaborative members/agencies bring science - (7)
- Consulted with scientists re: treatments- (4)
- Use monitoring/evaluation- (3)
- GIS- (3)
- Climate change- (2)
- Use modeling - (2)
- Using a published paper- (2)
- Sociological assessment- (1)
- Prescription/stand inventory- (1)
- Research on community protection- (1)
- Risk assessment- (1)

Some quotes on integrating science into projects:

““We did an inventory, researched through statistical knowledge and methodology. We consulted with scientists about treatments and economists for cost estimates” (Great Plains Initiative).

“We hired an ecosystem research group...to help facilitate the meetings of the Partnership. They brought data/studies/research to us for consideration. Many of them are ex-forest service employees and biologists so they were very familiar with FS processes as well as the science. Both sides developed a trust for their information and expertise very early. They also had state of the art mapping technology which helped on specifics” (Beaverhead/Deerlodge Partnership).

“We did research on community protection and incorporated that from the beginning of the analysis. The science is the foundation of everything that we do.” (Front Range Roundtable).

“This is a long-standing effort. There is a strong scientific foundation among the stakeholders. The four forests have strong representation in the group from the scientific community, the forestry agencies, from universities, and individual

stakeholders who are scientists. We integrate that into the collaborative process. We will have a standing scientific and monitoring committee as part of the collaborative effort” (Four Forests Restoration Initiative).

““With the involvement of the stakeholders, whose memberships include academia, we have the latest science research and subject matter experts at our immediate disposal. In addition, the monitoring provides data; information and lessons learned that is used in adaptive management” (White Mountain Stewardship Contract).

b. What scientific uncertainties affect the project/group and how are you dealing with them?

- Effects on landscape of large fires/treatments- (9)
- Climate change strategy- (6)
- Wildlife issues - diversity/elk/northern spotted owl- (5)
- Old growth management- (2)
- Lack of resources- (1)
- Using controlled fire- (1)
- Historical functioning of forest- (1)
- Restoration in higher elevations- (1)
- 16” cap on harvesting- (1)
- Invasive species- (1)
- Accuracy of the models- (1)

Some quotes on scientific uncertainties:

““We are planning for wildlife use in the area; we want to manage for a range of biodiversity, not just elk. The Forest Service draft framework for mitigating climate change strategy is serving us well. We still have questions about old growth management. Is it better to manage it, or to leave it alone? The research is contradictory. We are being careful. We look at study plots, and we are not advocating the same strategy throughout the whole area. We want to know when our strategy is working, and when it is not.” (Salmon Valley Stewardship Project).

““For planning, we have the spotted owl problem in the dry eastern Cascade forests. Fire shaped the landscape, now we have the fire risk; we have to decide what actions we should take. We have done some thinning from below. We need to take action to meet our goals” (Tapash Sustainable Forestry Collaborative).

“Monitoring protocols to determine the effects of fuels/restoration activities on soil, water, air quality, forest health. Several research projects are currently underway to address these uncertainties” (Lake Tahoe Basin Multi-jurisdictional Fuels Treatment and Wildfire Prevention Strategy).

“We had questions about chemical treatment needs and industry research. There were some complexities in the statistical description of the inventory system. We had to guess how many plots to make. We didn’t have the data to make fully informed decisions” (Great Plains Tree and Forest Invasives Initiative).

““We used the best available science and data and did not have much disagreement in this area. We may not have agreed on some issues (such as global warming) but that really didn’t affect what we wanted to do on the ground.” (Beaverhead/Deerlodge Partnership).

Question 16. Are you aware of any large-scale projects that were attempted but not pursued?

Question 17. Do you know what obstacles were encountered that led to dropping those projects?

Fifteen respondents said they did not know of any projects that were not pursued. Only five people answered these two questions, and since the reason a project was not pursued was related to the project, I have put the answers to these two questions together. There were two respondents who talked about biomass projects not being pursued for economic reasons.

- Bobar project / public did not support commercial timber component
- Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project / political interference from members of Congress
- Four Forests area Pilot Project / lack of broad stakeholder support
- Biomass projects / need sustainable supply commitments and a local market, economic factors prevented this from happening.

Conclusion

Overall, the groups seem pleased with their progress. Only one group expressed disappointment in where they are today. In that case, the group felt that despite their best efforts, the Forest Service had excluded them from the project planning process.

The collaboratives are finding success coming together as a group, including all the stakeholders, and identifying shared missions and values. They are creating rules of engagement to interact without divisiveness. They are writing MOUs and other agreements to set out roles, responsibilities, goals, objectives, and decision-making processes. Many have a history of successful projects behind them, others are moving forward with project planning.

Important turning points that they have identified include going to the land and experiencing it first hand as a group, getting political recognition, coming to agreement on procedures and forest treatments, finishing a NEPA or EIS process, and receiving funding for projects.

Areas that have been identified for improvement include a strong federal commitment at all levels to work with the collaborative process and at a landscape scale, carry-over through federal personnel changes, funding for projects, and getting local political support.

References

- 1) Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Roundtable, "Living with Fire: Protecting Communities and Restoring Forests: Findings and Recommendations of the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Roundtable", May 2006, <http://www.frftp.org/roundtable/report.pdf>.
- 2) Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative, "Productive Harmony Guidelines" May 2007, <http://pacrimrcd.org/Page.asp?NavID=421>
- 3) Lemhi County Forest Restoration Collaborative (Salmon Valley Stewardship Project), "Group Process, Structure and Function", April 2006

Appendix A -- Report to the FHAC March 29, 2010



Western Governors' Association Large Scale Forest Fuels Treatment Projects & Collaborative Groups Improvement Study

The Western Governors' Association's Large Scale Treatments-Public & Private Lands Sub-committee agreed there was a need for more information on collaborative groups and landscape scale treatment projects. The WGA Forest Health Advisory Committee members suggested potential key informants for an interview based on geographic distribution and recognition for that person's work on projects for forest restoration, wildfire risk mitigation, biomass utilization, and invasive species management. A total of 21 key informants involved in 18 collaborative groups were surveyed via phone interview during the month of March, 2010. Based on preliminary results, we have isolated specific areas in which the collaborative groups are working well, and areas where they are experiencing problems and need assistance to make improvements to meet desired goals and objectives.

Collaborative Group Successes

1. Coming together as a group, making a best attempt to include all stakeholders, and identifying shared mission/values.

Respondents all noted the importance of an open and inclusive collaborative group, bringing all interested stakeholders to the table. They noted that a key turning point in collaboration occurred when new stakeholders joined the collaborative and when they agreed on balanced and shared values of biological, social and economic interests.

- "I think the future depends on being inclusive and how we tackle issues across boundaries at the landscape scale."
- "In the past, the tribe has been one of the groups that appealed projects. Now we are at the table and we want to see something happening, but they are gun-shy. But the relationships are growing."
- "It took two years to write our desired landscape description and quality of life goals, we rewrote it until we had agreement. There were many iterations."

2. Rules of Engagement / Leadership and Cooperation

Coming to agreement on ground rules for interaction is an important step. Groups create Memorandums of Understanding and collaborative harmony documents to control the behavior of partners. Many groups noted the importance of hiring a Director to keep the group on task and conduct the business of the group.

- "We agreed to find a middle ground on each issue and support each others' needs. Not wants, needs."
- "We had face-to-face meetings and hired a Coordinator for two years. He enhanced the communication and facilitated implementation of the project. The Coordinator made all the difference."

3. Go to the land

Many groups noted the importance of field trips to create a shared vision, foster camaraderie, and develop ideas for projects.

- "The decisions to do projects came from what we call days on the land, field trips, looking at the results of monitoring and wildlife management goals. It's been a great neutralizer in decision-making. We go to the land. The land is a transformative tool. "

4. Integrating science into decision-making.

Most collaboratives had many scientists and forestry practitioners as board members and members bring the latest information to the group. Other groups contracted with consultants and research institutes to provide the information needed for decision-making.

- “We hired a research institute to help facilitate the meetings of the Partnership. They brought data/studies/research to us for consideration. Many of them are ex-Forest Service employees and biologists so they were very familiar with Forest Service processes, as well as the science. Both sides developed a trust for their information and expertise very early. They also had state of the art mapping technology which helped on specifics.”

5. Landscape view / smaller projects

Respondents strategize at a landscape scale, planning multiple projects over multiple years to attain cumulative impacts.

- “Large scale makes more sense to people from an ecological view, but it is harder to implement. We break it into doable pieces. Our goal is large landscape treatment to provide for better ecosystem health”
- “We look at the landscape on a large scale and we do fuel block removal on a smaller scale. We do as much as the funding allows us to do. We have a large scale process and small scale projects.”

Turning Points for Project Development

6. Funding

Groups reported increased enthusiasm when their projects received funding.

- “BLM district manager dedicated \$1M toward the project and US Forest Service dedicated ARRA funds to project. This funding jumpstarted the project.”

7. Acceptance of NEPA or EIS

Acceptance of an EIS or NEPA study was noted as a key turning point.

- “When the EIS was completed after 6 years. That gave us the federal authority to do the land restoration.”

8. Political Recognition

Groups reported that having a senator involved in starting the collaborative or initiating a project motivated the process. Also, support from Washington, DC motivated projects.

- “We have used political favors to acquire the funds through our congressional representatives and grants. We have gone to Washington, DC and asked for earmarks or other appropriations. We have met with the county commissioners and brought them on board with the projects.”

9. Pre-approval and support for management prescriptions

One collaborative described their method for facilitating project implementation by pre-approving treatment methods to several management objectives.

- “We developed guidelines and policies using “best available science” and have prescriptions that focus on Commercial Thinning, Regeneration Harvesting, Road Construction and Decommissioning, Old Growth Management and Fire Salvage. If the Forest Service prescriptions are within our guidelines we don’t need to discuss the project. We agree on the prescription and the project can move forward.”

Areas for Improvement - Federal

1. Need federal commitment

Respondents noted the need for involvement and commitment of the highest level of forestry management personnel and key federal, state, and local decision makers.

- “We’ve had a high level of involvement of the Forest Supervisors. It’s important to have the highest level of command involved in your projects. We had the head of State and Private Forestry, State Forester and other senior members of local, state and federal agencies involved. This is especially important initially. When you have success, then it trickles down and you have great cooperation of the staff of all the agencies.”

- “Lower to mid-level management in agencies can’t make a commitment. You need to have the Supervisor involved.”

2. Carry-through for projects with personnel changes

Several respondents noted the frequency of Forest Service personnel changes. Many times cooperating personnel moved out and Collaboratives had to start over with new people. In one case, change in personnel facilitated the development of the project.

- “Change in federal agency personnel is a problem, handover memos need to be institutionalized for new personnel, letting them know where we are in negotiations and what agreements are in place. This will reduce some of the communication problems.”
- “There is a lot of turnover of field personnel. It’s helpful to have an agreed upon document to point to.”

3. Time issues

Many respondents noted the length of time it took to accomplish things in the federal system. Others noted the long time for processes, but took it in stride.

- “We had a long time after the initial planning phase where we had no communication from the Forest Service. It was hard to keep members interested without feedback. The lack of communication about slipped timelines from the Forest Service eroded some of the trust of the restoration group.
- “Sometimes the agreements aren’t long enough to get the work done. If you work 8 years to get a 10 year agreement, that’s not long enough.”

4. Recognize new thinking

Several respondents felt the Forest Service was reluctant to change procedures on land management and hesitant to commit to the collaborative process.

- “Biggest barrier in taking a non-traditional approach is breaking new ground. There are some resource barriers. And there is disagreement on what’s possible. The lines break down between the state and the federal agencies”.
- “Lots of old school thinking still in the Forest Service that wanted a conventional timber sale program and did not like stewardship contracting, or taking a large landscape approach. The Forest Planning process itself was a huge obstacle. Forest Service was not receptive to a collaborative approach. They were still advocating the existing approach/ process of taking public comment and then making the decision themselves.”

5. Funding

Many noted funding as the biggest barrier. In particular, it was noted that getting funds for planning and doing the NEPA were difficult. One respondent recommended using retained receipts from other projects for the next NEPA, but that is not allowed under Stewardship Contracting.

- “Decline in the federal budget will hurt us in the long run, unless the group can meet the goal of adding substantial value to small diameter, such that it pays mostly for itself.”
- “Stewardship authority does not allow retained receipts to be utilized for planning purposes, only for implementation. So we can’t use our receipts for the NEPA. We have to go to the region to get planning money.”

Areas for Improvement - Non-federal

6. Local political support

Local political leaders need to be supportive of the Collaborative. Many don’t join for political reasons.

- “Bringing county commissioners on board. At times they don’t understand the value of the projects. The county gets funding from timber sales but not from stewardship contracts.”

7. Individuals bear their own costs to participate

Several respondents noted the cost to individuals in time and travel costs to attend Collaborative meetings.

- “It is evident that most non-federal partners are in the Collaborative on their own dime. This precludes involvement of some of the members to all but a few meetings. “Remarkably, most of the folks have stuck with the Collaborative, being fueled not by funds, but by passion.”

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