



## Strengthening the Ties that Bind



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A joint workshop between community-based forestry  
groups and the USDA Forest Service

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by

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## Introduction

**Over the past several years, the USDA Forest Service has experienced momentous change in program focus, size, and resource availability.** Historically, a primary objective for the agency was to supply fiber to help meet national demands for wood and wood products. However, recent attention to ecosystem and/or watershed conditions indicates that many of our national forests are at high risk for wild-fire, disease, and insect damage. Recognizing the magnitude of the challenges it faces in restoring these threatened systems, and acknowledging the costs associated with meeting them, the Forest Service has been trying to efficiently and effectively target available funds to those areas most in need.

The combination of administrative cutbacks and deteriorating resource conditions has also profoundly impacted the economies and social conditions of some rural, resource-dependent communities (particularly in the West). While some of these communities have successfully diversified their economies, there continues to be considerable interest in exploring new and innovative ways that allow the Forest Service and local communities to work together more effectively to solve their mutual challenges. One way in which resource *and* community sustainability objectives can be met is through the application of collaborative stewardship.

**What is collaborative stewardship?** Collaborative stewardship (or community-based stewardship) is an approach to natural resource management that asks a range of stakeholders to work together to pursue a mutually desired outcome. Collaborative stewardship fosters a philosophy that human communities and natural ecosystems are not separate systems. It allows for local citizens and interest groups to become involved in projects from the design phase, through implementation, and into monitoring exercises. It supports a more open, transparent process of project development and execution, empowering a multitude of interests through engagement. Collaborative stewardship also promotes the inclusion of diverse perspectives (e.g., communities of interest and place, commodities and conservation, workforce, etc.). In essence, collaborative stewardship encourages innovation in restoring and maintaining the triad of ecosystem sustainability—ecology, economics, and social well being.

### Collaborative stewardship

encourages innovation in restoring and maintaining the triad of ecosystem sustainability—ecology, economics, and social well being.

Faced with declining resources (human and financial), forest health issues (loss of stand diversity, loss of resilience for catastrophic events, and structural heterogeneity), and local economic conditions (high unemployment rates, underfunded schools, loss of skilled workforce and infrastructure, etc.), collaborative stewardship has evolved as a way of addressing the complexity of larger, multi-objective projects while meeting the needs of local communities. This has been an especially important evolution for those rural communities that were once heavily reliant on timber management for survival (both economically and socially). It is also an important approach for the Forest Service, which faces increased project delays due to heightened regulation and incidence of litigation, compounded with complex resource needs and declining annual budgets.

Collaboration can be an effective means both of achieving national-level objectives and responding to local-level needs.

**Why is collaborative stewardship important?** As the Forest Service moves more in the direction of achieving objectives at the watershed or ecosystem scale, it must consider efficient and effective ways of designing and implementing new projects that cover vast landscapes. Community-based stewardship may be the key to devising the most workable solution.

Why should the agency focus on collaboration with communities? Considering the increased complexity of public land management (e.g., multiple objectives, expanded project scales, and checkerboard ownership patterns), collaboration helps address a diversity of interests and objectives. For communities, this collaboration can

help stimulate local economies, help improve or deepen relationships between the agency and community groups, establish required education/training opportunities, and improve overall communication strategies. For the government, collaboration can help foster a new way of doing business, improve program efficiencies and effectiveness, provide closer ties to surrounding communities of place and interest, and can help with better utilization and marketing of small-diameter materials. In general, collaborative approaches result in the exploration of more and better ideas, while helping to gather support and acceptance among all involved. This is especially critical given the general lack of trust between stakeholder groups and the government, and the subsequent litigious nature of our present-day society.

Collaboration can be an effective means of achieving both national-level objectives and responding to local-level needs. It offers huge potential to restore the overall integrity of our public forests—promoting environmental and economic richness, fos-



tering social equity and access, developing a trained multi-cultural forest workforce, securing fair treatment and rights for all forest workers, and leveraging combined funding and efficiency of projects.

## Workshop Format and Design

As agency efforts in reviewing and improving partnerships were underway, several participants in The Ford Foundation's Community-based Forestry Demonstration Program began discussing the potential usefulness of a workshop centered upon innovative strides in collaborative natural resource management.<sup>1</sup> The objectives for this workshop included: Convening a diverse group of community organizations and their agency partners to discuss current or past work with the agency (specifically those innovations in contracting and effectiveness learned and/or utilized); identifying key issues, problems and successes; and ultimately developing a collective message for suggested improvements in contract or project administration.

A total of 20 community partners and local-level Forest Service personnel participated in the June 3-5, 2002 workshop, entitled "Strengthening the Ties that Bind: A Joint Workshop Between Community-based Forestry Groups and the USDA Forest Service." In addition to key community and agency partners, the meeting also involved regional and national-level Forest Service staff, whose knowledge and support are key to the successful local efforts participating in the Ford demonstration program (*Appendix A*).

To meet its objectives, the meeting was structured into presentation/discussion sessions, followed by breakout working sessions (*Appendix B*). Partnered presentations by community practitioners and Forest Service personnel addressed specific issues related to collaboration (e.g., multiple agency participation, workforce development, livestock grazing issues, landscape assessments, stewardship contracting, etc.). Subsequent break-out sessions were utilized to identify key contractual and administrative tools being used and suggestions to improve collaborative relationships. Towards the end of the workshop, these suggestions were segregated into specific contributions that community-based organizations could provide and similar suggestions for the agency. These points were formally presented to the Forest Service's National Leadership Team on Wednesday, June 5.

### The June 3-5, 2002 workshop

brought together 20 community partners and local-level Forest Service personnel.

<sup>1</sup>The National Demonstration Program is an effort supported by the Ford Foundation to answer key questions about community-based forestry in the United States. Thirteen projects were selected through an open national competition, and will be supported over a five-year period that began in 2000. These pilot initiatives focus on public, private, and tribal lands and utilize differing economic strategies for turning forest resources into sustainable livelihoods. For more information, visit [www.aspenccsg.org/cbf](http://www.aspenccsg.org/cbf).

Suggestions emerging from the workshop were segregated into specific contributions that community-based organizations could provide and that the Forest Service could provide.

## Community-Based Organizations: Current and Potential Contributions

In their presentation to the National Leadership Team, workshop participants provided a list of contributions that community-based organizations could provide agency efforts in the stewardship of national forests.

### Provide local leadership: Finding common ground among diverse interests

Through active involvement in the design, implementation, and monitoring stages of projects, community-based organizations can assist in the proposal of and advocacy for community-based projects on public lands. Involvement at each stage of project implementation helps strengthen the role for local communities in making decisions that directly affect the health and sustainability of their communities. In this role, community groups often can inclusively convene various stakeholders to define areas of agreement and eventually organize management activities, in some instances even implementing their own demonstration projects focused on ecological restoration and local workforce development.

In workshop discussions, participants provided detailed descriptions of the roles they have played in program/project development and direction, including the establishment of mutually beneficial project goals and objectives. Some groups, through their active participation and diverse membership, help focus projects on broader ecological scales—promoting cross-boundary management applications and monitoring. For example, the **Public Lands Partnership** (Delta, CO), which represents a diverse group of local, state, and federal government employees, mining and user group representatives, and other members of the public, helps prioritize project activities among the Colorado Division of Wildlife, USDA Forest Service, and USDI Bureau of Land Management.

Community groups also provide leadership in advancing true innovations in process and efficiency. For example, **Wallowa Resources** (Enterprise, OR) promotes collaboration through all phases of the forest restoration process (e.g., assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring). Through their work in securing efficiencies in

the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and project planning process, they are providing a multitude of benefits to both the Forest Service and the land it serves.

### Provide local knowledge, skills, memory

Community groups also contribute significantly to project success through the application of local knowledge, site-sensitive skills and multi-generational memory. Many workshop participants have found that by relying on the local knowledge of communities for project needs (rather than large, out-of-state firms), mutually beneficial results emerge, including increased job opportunities and skills development, increased project efficiencies, and overall declines in program/project cost. Turnover in both agency personnel and large-firm practitioners has often resulted in an inability to truly anchor ecosystem restoration projects in the place they are occurring—for as project leaders move on, they take with them historical project knowledge and lessons learned. As project scales expand to fit ecological frames of reference (both temporally and in size), this emphasis on establishing an historical reference and learning through application will become paramount.

Community groups exercise local knowledge, site-sensitive skills and multi-generational memory in a variety of beneficial ways.

Several community groups have exercised local knowledge and skills in a variety of beneficial ways. The **Quivira Coalition** (Santa Fe, NM) has established a community-based monitoring program for grazing and ranching practices that is currently being used as a model for timber-dependent communities. **Las Humanas** (Mountainair, NM) is building upon the existing skill set in their communities by inviting local youth to reconnect with the land through field trips, education, and involvement in local monitoring efforts. Community groups also are involved in developing landscape assessments that mesh science with local knowledge and involve the community in development processes (e.g., **Swan Valley Ecosystem Center**, Condon, MT). Some community groups are also directly involved in project implementation. For example, the **Priest River Development Council** (Priest River, ID) was the successful bidder on a Forest Service Stewardship Contracting Pilot.<sup>2</sup> Through a variety of activities, they aim to reduce fuels, treat insect/disease outbreaks, re-introduce fire, support public education, and contribute to local ecosystem rehabilitation. Finally, some groups continue to advocate for improved training to establish a strong knowledge base for required restoration work. The **Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters** (Eugene, OR) urges the Forest Service to support improved training and safety/work quality measures for those individuals that are

<sup>2</sup>Under Section 347 of the FY1999 Omnibus Appropriations Act, the Forest Service was granted authority to enter into 28 Land Stewardship Contracting pilots to test new administrative processes and procedures for the agency. For more information on these pilots, visit [www.pinchot.org/pic/cbf/pilots.html](http://www.pinchot.org/pic/cbf/pilots.html).

### The diversity of interests

typically involved in community-based efforts offers political, financial and technical assistance for innovative efforts by the Forest Service.

directly involved in restoration efforts (i.e., the mobile or “invisible” workforce).

### Build and maintain support for USFS

Agency collaboration with community-based groups helps build a system of support for “risk takers” in the agency by providing political, financial and technical assistance to meet project goals. The diversity of interests typically involved in community-based efforts (e.g., environmental organizations, agency and government offices, commodity groups, etc.) offers a broad base of support that further enriches relationships and provides the means by which involved parties can work in constructive ways to meet shared desired conditions. The following are areas in which community groups have built and/or maintained support for the agency:

- **Extension of Forest Service Policy and Landowner Assistance.** The **Quivira Coalition** (Santa Fe, NM) represents a collaboration of ranchers, environmentalists, and government agencies working to implement a variety of land management projects in the Southwest. The Coalition has hosted several educational workshops on land restoration and proper grazing techniques. Through this partnership, ranch stock are brought onto existing grassbanks in the National Forest System, while the Forest Service restores land on home allotments (reducing fire hazards and restoring native grasses). This service is funded through the EPA 319 (Clean Water) funds, resulting in no direct cost to individual landowners.
- **Support for Demonstration Projects.** **Las Humanas** (Mountainair, NM) is involved in collaborative resource management between land grant communities and the Forest Service in New Mexico. Many villages and town folk have participated in a two-phase demonstration project to help reduce fire hazards in the area. In this partnership, local community members conducted thinning activities (often cross-trained by USFS and Las Humanas personnel) in exchange for fuelwood (the resulting product from thinning operations). As part of this effort, Las Humanas helped identify and monitor thinning specifications, administered fuelwood permits, and distributed product to local community members.

■ **Direct Program Support.** The **Swan Ecosystem Center** (Condon, MT) provides direct support to the Forest Service through the maintenance of the Condon work center. In 1994, they formed a non-profit to manage the existing wilderness or backcountry ranger contracts and, to date, staff the informational center through volunteer support. In addition, the Ecosystem Center helps with partial support of wilderness or backcountry rangers' salaries.

### Demonstrate strength and offer models

Community groups, through their membership and established processes, can also provide ideal models for collaboration. Given the diverse memberships of many community-based efforts, these collaborations have been able to effectively address issues across the landscape, and provide/consolidate/leverage financial support for resource management projects on public lands. Whereas many of these collaborative efforts initially focused on public education issues, some have evolved into direct application of restoration/stewardship activities and further building of community capacity. The following are ways in which community groups have demonstrated their strength in resource management projects:

The diverse memberships of community groups can help leverage funding, expand the project scale and product utilization, and build a stable and representative workforce.

■ **Funding Support and Leveraging.** Many groups, as a result of their mission and membership diversity, have the ability to leverage significant funding to facilitate watershed or large-scale ecological restoration projects. As mentioned, the non-profit **Public Lands Partnership (PLP)** operates as a state-federal-private collaboration. As a non-profit, PLP is capable of pooling funds from multiple sources, and prioritizing around a larger-scale than a strictly administered agency effort. Towards these ends, PLP formed an umbrella Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Colorado Division of Wildlife, BLM, and the Forest Service to pool resources for project development and execution. From the agencies' perspective, this MOU has released some of the administrative burden. Similarly, **Wallowa Resources** is utilizing collaborative funding sources to support its community watershed assessment (close to 1:1 ratio of support, including cash and in-kind contributions).

■ **Expanded Project Scale.** Some community groups state that through their involvement, the Forest Service can expand the land base on which it applies management techniques. **Las Humanas** explained that in its community-thinning project, they could permit thinning on larger parcels of land (both private and public)

than could the Forest Service. Similarly, the **Quivira Coalition**, through its educational programs, has facilitated the rehabilitation of private lands.

■ **Improved Product Utilization and Marketing.** Some organizations are also contributing to improved management through business management models. **Gila Woodnet** (Santa Clara, NM) is working to establish small-diameter timber manufacturing and products marketing in the Southwest. They are trying to facilitate local business development by studying issues of scale and need, identifying realistic timelines for operations, and providing economic incentives for innovative approaches (e.g., grants, awards, priority).

■ **Workforce Development.** Some organizations are also contributing to the development of a stable restoration workforce. The **Watershed Research and Training Center** (Hayfork, CA) has been actively involved in building a local workforce and contracting capacity to compete for National Fire Plan, Resource Advisory Committee (RAC), and restoration projects on national forests. They are also investigating options for small-diameter material processing. They have explored various ways to locally capture restoration work through workforce training, contracting workshops and use of special designations or legislation.

■ **Diversity and Representation.** Through their involvement, some organizations ensure that the agency and, in essence, the field of restoration, embraces notions of diversity and fair representation in public decision-making processes. The **Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters** actively supports investigating how contract mechanisms reflect responsibilities to workers, the inclusiveness of workers in partnerships and larger political/society issues, and representation in public processes.

**Workshop participants suggested**

a number of ways to facilitate cooperative resource management efforts between community groups and the Forest Service.

**USDA Forest Service:  
Current and Potential Contributions**

Partnered with the capacity and willingness of community-based groups to engage in resource management issues, motivation on the part of the agency is essential. Whereas many districts and regions across the U.S. have embraced the concept of collaborative stewardship, there are still many issues in need of further clarification and direction. As community-based groups forge ahead in partnerships with the federal government, inconsistencies in how different forests/districts approach partner-

ships and collaboration pose considerable obstacles. The following recommendations were offered to help alleviate some existing frustrations and encourage the agency to truly commit itself to collaborate with community and interest groups in forest stewardship.

### **Establish clear direction for place-based collaboration**

Communication and trust are critical issues in public lands management. Throughout the workshop, participants raised the importance of clarifying and providing ample commitment to collaboration with partners. This clarification and communication needs to be expressed throughout all levels of the agency (from the Washington Office, through Regional and Supervisors' offices, down to the district level). Such direction will help establish the priority of collaboration in management decisions and may help raise various mechanisms of support.

#### **Clarification and communication**

of the agency's commitment to collaborative public lands management may help raise various mechanisms of support.

Communication of the agency's position on partnerships and collaboration has been a challenge, especially internally. Many times, the agency's leadership has expressed supportive messages, but there has rarely been consistency in their interpretation. According to numerous accounts, internal support for collaboration and how this collaboration is institutionalized is quite variable. Some regions have embraced collaboration as a means of effectively addressing pressing management issues, while others have not. Through improved communication, sideboards for existing decision processes can be developed, helping to clarify tasks for involved/interested groups and recommendations for implementation.

Workshops participants offered the following suggestions for improved communication:

- The Chief should provide his interpretation of Congressional Intent, based on a review and analysis of collaborative success and constraints across the National Forest System. This clarifying interpretation should be shared in a letter to the regions and possibly included in the Forest Service Manual.
- The recommendations of "Partnership Authority Analysis" should be reviewed with community-based groups—and then implemented.

- The agency should place great priority upon addressing the partnership review list of authority changes (*Appendix C*).

Training is necessary within the Forest Service to provide those directly involved in community collaboration with the appropriate skills.

### Capacity building

The agency needs to address issues of capacity building, particularly within the Forest Service. Not surprisingly, wide gaps in understanding exist between line officers and contracting officers with regard to partnerships and collaboration. Recognizing that different offices of the agency (e.g., procurement vs. timber management) have different authorities (and also recognizing that these differences sometimes contribute to risk-averse behavior—for example the issues of personal liability with contract officers), training is necessary to provide those directly involved in community collaboration with the appropriate skills.

Participants offered the following suggestions for capacity building:

- Establish a “help desk” with experienced field staff to trouble-shoot problems that partners and the agency encounter.
- Establish training sessions to promote collaboration for line officers, program managers, contracting and grants and agreements specialists, and partners. A possible model for this assistance is the 1901 course model, which provided NEPA training and certificates of completion.
- Establish a training program to address current reforestation techniques (i.e., micro-planting, inter-species planting, etc.)
- Provide full support of the “Partnership Task Force.”(*Appendix D*)
- Ensure sufficient capacity and experience on each forest team to facilitate use of grants and agreements to implement collaborative forestry work.

### Staff transition planning

Another issue raised by community groups was the problem of key staff transitions within the Forest Service, often during critical stages of collaboration building or project implementation. These transitions are exacerbated by poor information sharing during personnel change, resulting in a breakdown of relationships, communica-



tion, and trust within the community. Each group resounded that collaboration is personality-driven and that when cooperative “personalities” move to other forests or have their work focus changed, the bulk of the collaborative spirit and history typically disappears with them. Community groups repeatedly highlighted the fact that when key personnel leave, the commitment to a particular cause often falters, allowing for subsequent personnel to break existing promises. Some groups have been adversely affected by these transitions, while other have experienced successful transitions with new agency personnel. Over and over, community groups and agency representatives urged, “Continuity is key.”

Participants offered the following suggestions for staff transitions:

- Identify someone within the agency to walk community groups through the bureaucratic channels of the agency.
- Establish clear transition plans for exiting and arriving staff, with communities involved in plan development.
- Ensure that responsibility and hand-offs are fully planned and accounted for.
- Mentor and support staff to work in collaboration with outside groups.

### NEPA process improvements

In workshop discussions, project delays associated with NEPA processes evoked many frustrations, echoing many findings in the recent agency report, *“The Process Predicament: How Statutory, Regulatory, and Administrative Factors Affect*

*National Forest Management.”*<sup>3</sup> The lack of internal and external support for the NEPA process (e.g., financial, personnel, time, etc.) has led to insurmountable delays that stall collaborative efforts and result in interested parties “losing steam.”

Community groups urged that collaboration start prior to NEPA and become an integral part of the entire project process. Some groups (e.g., **Wallowa Resources**) indicated that pre-NEPA collaboration helps contribute to project streamlining by providing financial, technical, and political support. Other community groups emphasized the efficiency of bundling—where several records of decision are made, not just one.

### Continuity in Forest Service

staffing and improvements in pre-NEPA collaboration would both contribute to project streamlining.

<sup>3</sup>On June 12, the Forests and Forest Health Subcommittee of the House Resources Committee held a hearing at which Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth unveiled “The Process Predicament,” a report outlining the problems hindering the agency’s ability to deliver results on the National Forests. The report can be downloaded at [www.fs.fed.us/projects/documents/Gridrev5.2.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/documents/Gridrev5.2.pdf)

Participants offered the following suggestion for NEPA process improvements:

- Implement NEPA streamlining suggestions (as stated in *The Process Predicament* report).

### More consistent administration

of funds among federal land management agencies and more up-front funding for collaborative efforts can deliver greater dividends and reduce overall costs.

### Funding and budgeting

Collaboration is a big investment for the Forest Service, particularly as an up-front cost. As such, reliable support from the Washington Office or through the annual budget appropriations process needs to reflect these investments. Participants urged that collaboration be used to help deliver greater dividends, leverage external funding, and reduce the overall costs of project implementation.

The ongoing frustration for many community groups is an inconsistent administration of funds among various federal land management agencies. This situation has been particularly frustrating for those groups focused on stewardship of lands managed by multiple owners. Unlike other agencies, the Forest Service cannot contribute funds to a project in advance of its implementation.

Rather, in most instances, the agency reimburses for work after it is completed. This issue is especially problematic for those small community-based organizations that consistently worry about cash-flow. Slow invoice turn-around further exacerbates these concerns.

Participants offered the following suggestions for funding and budgeting:

- Create mechanisms for providing necessary funds to communities up-front (prior to collaborative work initiation).
- Support the Economic Action Program of State and Private Forestry to assist with the initiation of programs of work and to support organizations. Rural development should always be considered an important mission of federal land management.
- Identify mechanisms to fund collaborative efforts that have multiple benefits. Operating in accordance with a “Primary Purpose” was identified as a critical obstacle to collaborative stewardship, especially for projects that have multiple objectives.

## Incentives

As mentioned above, collaboration requires substantial initial investment on the part of the agency. For many Forest Service personnel, who operate with uncertain support from the Washington Office, Regional Offices, and forests, the risk of extending oneself without administrative or financial backing thwarts many efforts. Community groups noted that in some areas, contracts originating from the National Fire Plan (NFP) have not been awarded to local organizations. Discussions revealed that this occurred mainly because those contract officers responsible for NFP projects are new and under a great deal of pressure to get work done. There are no incentives for these individuals to take the necessary risks to promote greater collaboration with more locally based organizations.

Contract officers responsible

for NFP projects should be

offered greater incentives to

promote collaboration with

locally based organizations.

Workshop participants offered the following suggestions for incentives:

- Adjust current performance reviews to incorporate elements related to collaboration and provide rewards for improved or innovative behavior.
- Expand the “External Relations” evaluation and performance criteria to include place-based collaboration benefits.
- Establish two new “Chief’s Awards” that rely on community nominations. Examples of awards include: (a) a staff award for each region, providing additional funding for training, etc., or (b) a district award within each region, providing some publicly visible symbol such as a flag or allowing districts to paint their vehicles a distinctive color.

## From Suggestions to Action:

### Recent Collaborative Initiatives within the Forest Service

The suggestions offered by participants not only provided new avenues for improvements but also intriguing possibilities for dovetailing responses into existing or emerging initiatives within the Forest Service. In recent years, the agency has embarked on several initiatives aimed at improving its ability to partner with community and interest groups, and facilitating an overall shift in management towards a more collaborative focus.

The Forest Service's

**Collaboration Support Team**

focuses on training in the skills and resources necessary for collaboration and on development of information-sharing resources.

In May 2001, the **Collaboration Support Team** was established, giving recognition to the Forest Service's commitment to collaborative processes. Seventeen members were selected for the team based upon a nomination process, with each nominee chosen because of his/her passion for collaboration, experience, and willingness to take risks. Currently, the team provides a number of services, including addressing relevant policy issues, providing internal and external support, and acting as a technical resource in collaborative efforts. At present, the team primarily focuses on training in the skills and resources necessary for collaboration (both within the agency and among all partners); mentoring (e.g., serving as an information resource and providing referral to third parties who can help with identified obstacles); cross-learning and the development of information-sharing resources (e.g., various email list services and a future newsletter); and identification of internal agency policy barriers and

problem-solving (i.e., how these barriers can be removed). The need for the **Collaboration Support Team** is evaluated on an annual basis, and the team will continue to function until collaboration is institutionalized within the agency and technical assistance is no longer needed. *For more information, see Appendix E.*

Additionally, in May 2001, the Forest Service received a request from Congressmen McInnis (R-CO) and Udall (D-NM) to review current barriers and solutions to partnerships between the agency and outside organizations, individuals, and interests. The objective of their request was to develop omnibus partnership legislation that would clarify, add, consolidate, or improve agency partnership authorities, thereby increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency. It was Congress' impression that the bulk of authorities under which the agency administers work were based upon a code of conduct from the 1940s and 1950s. They believe that the physical, economic, and social environment has since changed, making many of these authorities no longer applicable.

Responding to this request, Chief Bosworth established the **Partnership Authorities Workgroup** to engage internal and external partners in the review of the current situation, analyzing existing partnership policies and authorities, and developing recommendations for improving partnering ability. The Workgroup drafted a conclusive report to identify necessary changes, being cognizant of the needs not only at the Washington Office level, but also, more importantly, in the

field. The report provides 13 recommendations, which were presented to the Chief. These recommendations span permanent extension of the Wyden Amendment to clarifying the ability of federal employees to assist in fundraising. *For details on these 13 points, see Appendix C.*

Though the efforts preceding the Partnership report were focused on legislative corrections/improvements, the resulting report also touched upon a variety of contractual and administrative authorities that limit the agency's ability to partner with outside groups. In response to some of these administrative issues, the Agency recently chartered the **Partnership Task Force** (June 2002). The purpose of this team is to assist practitioners and partners by fostering an organizational culture that cultivates and expands partnership capacity and by streamlining the internal work process of the agency. Currently, the team's scope of work includes six key areas: (1) policy development and leadership direction; (2) simplification of the agreements process; (3) budget, financial accountability, and incentives; (4) core training and competency building; (5) establishment of a resource center and/or network; and (6) *organization and staffing responsibilities. For more information on the Partnership Task Force, see Appendix D.*

## Conclusion

Despite years of publicized polarization among interests in public land management, participants from this workshop provided a solid example of how collaboration can help establish solutions to complicated resource issues and achieve a variety of management objectives on the ground. Through various tides of change (e.g., personnel, federal budgets, land conditions, administration, etc.), these individuals have experimented, learned, and taught others through example. This workshop, in part, continued the learning cycle by bringing key issues to the attention of agency leadership, at all levels.

The discussions and information sharing that occurred during the workshop built upon the growing energy and enthusiasm among community members, interest groups, and agency personnel to establish new working relationships, partnerships and innovative strategies for overcoming obstacles. This energy can be witnessed in new approaches to projects (e.g., expanded proj-

The workshop discussions and information sharing built upon the growing energy and enthusiasm among community members, interest groups, and agency personnel to establish new partnerships and innovative strategies for overcoming obstacles.

By examining obstacles and successes through the lens of real experience, we hope that this workshop will ultimately help change the policy of forest management on public lands.

ect scales, inclusive processes and procedures, and innovative funding mechanisms), ongoing attention to change (e.g., existing and new initiatives within the agency targeted towards collaboration and partnership building), and efforts in capacity building (both within communities and within the agency).

As all stakeholders continue down the path of collaborative problem solving and lesson sharing, we must carefully reflect upon and balance the values we have for our national forests and the needs we have as a collective community. As defined above, these needs and values perhaps are best met through the process of collaborative stewardship. But as with any endeavor, careful sideboards must be placed to create successful outcomes. During closing comments, participants in the work-

shop identified those issues they felt critical to project success:

- I. Collaboration must be fostered from the beginning of a project to its end;
- II. Bundled processes should be used to encourage administrative efficiencies (e.g., NEPA);
- III. Trust of communities of interest and place should be built through transparency or open discussion and processes, specifically as they relate to decisions, final records, and multiparty monitoring;
- IV. Support of collaboration should be reflected through a commitment in funding and budgeting; and
- V. Creative measures must be developed to identify and monitor success (e.g., not traditional output targets).

These points, together with the issues presented herein, provide a foundation for future projects and efforts in collaboration and inclusive decision-making. By explaining obstacles/successes through real experience, this workshop helped to provide a forum for true learning—one that will inevitably resonate beyond involved participants and help change practices, attitudes, and ultimately the policy of forest management on public lands.

## Appendix A

### Workshop Participants

David Asleson . . . . . USDA Forest Service (Priest River, ID)  
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Joyce Casey . . . . . USDA Forest Service (Washington, DC)  
Dan Castillo . . . . . USDA Forest Service (Missoula, MT)  
Mary Chapman . . . . . Public Lands Partnership (Delta, CO)  
Nils Christoffersen . . . . . Wallowa Resources (Enterprise, OR)  
Anne Dahl . . . . . Swan Ecosystem Center (Condon, MT)  
Gerald Engel . . . . . USDA Forest Service (Silver City, NM)  
Wayne Fitzpatrick . . . . . Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters (Eugene, OR)  
Barbara Johnson . . . . . The Quivira Coalition (Santa Fe, NM)  
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Meg Mitchell . . . . . USDA Forest Service (Enterprise, OR)  
George Ramirez . . . . . Las Humanas (Mountainair, NM)  
Jeffery Romm . . . . . University of California at Berkeley (Berkeley, CA)  
Douglas Russell . . . . . USDA Forest Service (Bigfork, MT)  
Craig Savidge . . . . . Priest River Development Corporation (Priest River, ID)  
Bill Timko . . . . . USDA Forest Service (Washington, DC)  
Gordon West . . . . . Jobs and Biodiversity Coalition (Santa Clara, NM)  
Bill Wickman . . . . . USDA Forest Service (Vallejo, CA)

### Organizers/Facilitators

Robert Donnan . . . . . The Aspen Institute (Washington, DC)  
Andrea Bedell Loucks . . . . . Pinchot Institute for Conservation (Washington, DC)  
Kelly Malone . . . . . The Aspen Institute (Washington, DC)  
Mary Mitsos . . . . . National Forest Foundation (Missoula, MT)  
Mary Virtue . . . . . Cornerstone Consultants (West Chester, PA)  
Barbara Wyckoff-Baird . . . . . The Aspen Institute (Washington, DC)





## Strengthening the Ties That Bind

A joint workshop between community-based forestry groups and the USDA Forest Service

Radisson Barcelo Hotel ■ Washington, DC ■ June 3-5, 2002

### Workshop objectives:

- Increase understanding of administrative and contractual mechanisms that can make agency/community collaborative efforts easier and more effective.
- Identify and articulate needed changes to administrative and contractual mechanisms so that community/agency partnerships can better contribute to the solution of public lands issues faced by the Chief and his Administration.
- Develop and reinforce a “learning network” among those involved in collaborative efforts on public lands.

### Monday, June 03

- 9:00 a.m. Welcome and Introductions  
Mary Virtue, Cornerstone Consultants, and Andrea Loucks, Pinchot Institute
- 9:30 a.m. Purpose of meeting  
Joyce Casey, USDA Forest Service  
Mary Chapman, Public Lands Partnership
- 9:45 a.m. Current efforts to improve collaborative relationships and what we are learning  
Joyce Casey and Keven Kennedy, USDA Forest Service
- 10:30 a.m. Working across boundaries with multiple agencies:  
Development of the MOU  
Public Lands Partnership
- 11:10 a.m. Workforce training and development:  
Participating Agreements—Where do we stand?  
Watershed Research and Training Center
- 11:50 a.m. Working with ranchers:  
How can collaborative projects address grazing issues and improve the watershed?  
The Quivira Coalition
- 1:15 p.m. Fuels reduction contracting:  
Scale issues for community involvement in fuels reduction efforts  
Las Humanas
- 2:00 p.m. Landscape Assessment:  
Merging Forest Service and community processes to increase efficiency  
Swan Ecosystem Center

- 3:00 p.m. Stewardship Contracting: Contracting issues from ideas to implementation  
*Priest River Development Corporation*
- 3:45 p.m. Small group breakouts—What patterns are we seeing?
- 5:00 p.m. Report back

### **Tuesday, June 04**

- 8:30 a.m. Break out sessions—What are the key issues?
- 9:30 a.m. Commercial Timber in Service Contracts:  
Building Efficient Capacity for Restoration where it does not exist  
*Jobs and Biodiversity Coalition*
- 10:30 a.m. NEPA and EIS efficiencies:  
Watershed assessment; optimizing community benefits and analysis efficiencies  
*Wallowa Resources*
- 11:15 a.m. Some of those who do the work: What are the issues and opportunities?  
*Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters*
- 1:00 p.m. Small group breakouts—What are the key issues?
- 2:15 p.m. Report Back
- 3:15 p.m. Development of Talking Points for National Leadership Team

### **Wednesday, June 05**

- 7:30 a.m. Coffee and pastries mixer with the National Leadership Team (NLT)
- 8:00 a.m. Presentation from meeting participants to the NLT—presentation of local needs/agenda
- 8:10 a.m. Presentation from Chief Bosworth—presentation of national needs/agenda
- 8:20 a.m. Question and Answer period—where can we help each other  
*Facilitated by Art Jeffers, USDA Forest Services*
- 9:30 a.m. Debrief on morning meeting  
*Mary Virtue, Cornerstone Consultants*
- 11:00 a.m. Development of Next Steps

## **USDA Forest Service Partnership Authorities Workgroup Key Findings/Recommendations**

The Workgroup recommends 13 areas where new or clarified authorities would benefit the use of partnerships to accomplish the Forest Service mission. These included:

1. Obtain clarification from Congress to maximize the use of existing partnership authorities.
2. Provide authority to enter into partnerships that provide mutual benefits to the Forest Service and partners, notwithstanding the Federal Grants and Cooperative Agreements Act.
3. Extend permanent authority to enter into Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Agreements (the Wyden Amendment) beyond 2005 and provide clarification of activities classified as watershed restoration.
4. Change challenge cost share policy to cost share and seek authority allowing for advancement of funds.
5. Clarify and expand authorities that allow the Forest Service to support and work with nonprofit partners.
6. Provide authority to expand the activities for educational and interpretive program partnerships between the Forest Service and cooperating associations.
7. Provide authority to allow the National Forest Foundation (NFF) to assist in the formation of local nonprofit organizations to support local Forest Service units.
8. Provide authority to clarify the role of the agency and employees when working with partners who are fundraising to support agency projects and programs.
9. Provide authority to exempt nonprofit organizations from prohibited source classification when support of the Forest Service and agency programs is part of the mission of these organizations.
10. Provide authority to allow Forest Service employees, in an official capacity, to participate in and serve on boards of non-federal public service organizations, when it is in support of the agency's missions and programs.

11. Provide authority to allow the Forest Service to develop or enhance programs that further the mission of the agency using any funds appropriated to the agency.
12. Provide authority to allow partner organizations to claim the value of work completed by volunteers recruited, trained, and supported by partner but enrolled as Volunteers of the National Forests.
13. Provide authority to allow National Forest System (NFS) units to enter directly into partnerships with Universities and Colleges to obtain the scientific expertise needed to fulfill the mission of stewardship and conservation of NFS lands.

## **Work Plan Overview—Partnership Task Force, June 18, 2002: Introduction and Key Deliverables**

Greetings to Partnership Practitioners!

The Partnership Task Force was launched in early June 2002. The Task Force was established by Chief Bosworth as a result of the Partnership Authorities Work Group Report and recommendations. The Task Force will assist practitioners and partners by fostering an organizational culture that cultivates and expands partnership capacity and by streamlining our internal work processes.

We will:

- Exemplify partnership behavior and connect with employees and key external partner organizations
- Provide support to Forest Service Legislative Affairs for changes in legal authorities
- Use a broad-based group of internal specialists and external partners to complete work tasks
- Provide frequent progress reports
- Solicit feedback and use it to improve our work
- Leverage resources, funding, and creativity with existing organizational efforts—R5 Grant Strategists Enterprise Team and Collaboration Support Team are examples

We are:

Dave Allasia . . . . . Grants & Agreements Coordinator, Pacific Southwest Region  
Joyce Casey . . . . . Policy Analysis and Collaboration Support Team, Washington Office  
Steve Kratville . . . . . Partnership and Outreach Coordinator, Northern Region  
Bob Lange . . . . . National Partnership Coordinator, Washington Office  
Susan Odell . . . . . National Coordinator Rural Community Assistance, Washington Office  
Mary Wagner . . . . . Forest Supervisor, Dixie National Forest, Intermountain Region

We will soon be seeking interested individuals to serve as members of ad hoc teams on a number of projects. Please contact us directly if you have an interest or know of some key connection we need to make! You can reach Mary Wagner, Team Leader @ 202.401.4414



## The Collaboration Support Team

Chief Dale Bosworth charted the Collaboration Support Team in May 2001. The Team works at the direction of the Field Leadership Team, a subset of the National Leadership Team. The mission of the group is to support collaboration in the Forest Service by breaking down internal policy barriers and coaching/supporting agency employees. Currently, it is focused on 21 separate, but related, tasks:

1. Create flexibility to move funding to the ground for partnerships.
2. Develop simple but clear guidance on FACA compliance.
3. Provide reprogramming authority to regional foresters for collaboration opportunities.
4. Develop a system for holding the agency accountable for progress on collaboration.
5. Clarify policy on membership and involvement with other groups on government time.
6. Update the Report of the National Collaborative Stewardship Team.
7. Study what motivate agency employees to work collaboratively.
8. Inventory and coordinate related efforts.
9. Develop strategies for identifying other collaborators, as well as understanding community networks.
10. Revitalize the Forest Supervisor Collaboration Network.
11. Develop a strategy and work plan for assembling case studies of collaboration.
12. Identify and develop core competencies for collaboration. Provide information on training.
13. Identify current problems and Support Team opportunities to improve relationships with underserved communities.
14. Work with the Ecosystem Management Coordination Staff to support design and implementation of collaborative principles in the revised planning rule.

15. Distribute the Toolkit (commonly referred to as the “R6 Toolkit”) throughout the agency.
16. Develop and solicit feedback on a draft communication plan for the Collaborative Support Team.
17. Issue a six-months report from the Field Leadership Team on the Team’s activities.
18. Consider development of a readiness assessment tool.
19. Describe the relationship between the Collaborative Support Team, the Forest Supervisors Network, and the Field Leadership Team.
20. Provide support for collaboration training.
21. Continually sense what is working and not working with agency collaborations.

For more information, contact:

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The National Demonstration Program in Community-Based Forestry is an initiative of the Ford Foundation assisted by the Managing Partner, the Community Strategies Group (CSG) of the Aspen Institute.

As the Managing Partner for the program, CSG manages the portfolio, provides technical assistance, facilitates peer learning, and shares lessons learned with the broader community-based forestry movement.

The Community Strategies Group structures and contributes to focused learning that supports the innovation of organizations and funders working to achieve more widely shared and lasting prosperity in communities.

The Community Forestry Program of the Pinchot Institute for Conservation focuses on national-level policy development aimed at clearing away barriers to community-based forest stewardship, and provides technical assistance to both resource management agencies and the communities themselves.



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