



Full Stream Ahead

January/February 2007

News and Highlights of Creeks and Communities: A Continuing Strategy for Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration

Creeks and Communities Learning Lab

In the November/December 2006 issue of Full Stream Ahead newsletter, the recent experience of the National Riparian Service Team participation in a nationally sponsored “learning lab” was noted, and as promised, this issue contains a more in-depth discussion. The idea of developing learning labs as a way to build organizational capacity for cooperative conservation was a recommendation of the Interagency Cooperative Conservation Team (ICCT), a group established to ensure follow-up from the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation. The intent of learning labs is to provide experiential training by exposing individuals to the application of what are currently considered best practices of working collaboratively. In other words, they are set up to afford participants an opportunity to experience what it means to work collaboratively and to see what that looks like in actual, on the ground situations.

Early in 2006, the FS National Partnership Office selected the National Riparian Service Team (NRST) to pilot the first learning lab and provided \$30,000 in funding. The NRST was chosen because of their experience with community involvement, joint fact finding and learning while doing. An invitation to participate in the learning lab was sent to 75 individuals who were known to have current experience with collaborative management efforts. Twenty people responded with interest, and nine were selected to participate with the NRST in Creeks and Communities activities. Coaching and mentoring opportunities were centered around ‘service trips’ which provide assistance to place-based problem solving, blending technical and social dimensions, as needed over time to facilitate changed behaviors on the ground. They are also tailored capacity building activities which helped serve the objectives of the learning lab. Below are some case studies of 2006 learning lab trips.

Save the Date: The National Riparian Service Team will once again be hosting the biennial Riparian Coordination Network Meeting. The meeting is scheduled for November 5-9, 2007 at a location that is yet to be determined. These are working meetings designed to increase and enhance the ability of the Riparian Coordination Network to effectively implement the Creeks & Communities strategy. A portion of the meeting will be set aside for finalizing FY2008-2009 state work plans.

Custer National Forest—2006 Learning Lab



Participants: Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), South Dakota Fish & Game, Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks, Landowners, Permittees, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), South Dakota & Montana Extension, and County Weed Supervisors

Request: Design assessment tool for local conditions and engage community to create a strategy for use prior to initiating the NEPA process.

Step #1: Three day workshop with Forest Service, University Extension and NRCS technical experts to design riparian-wetland assessment tool for low-discharge, spring dominated flow regimes (August 2005).

Step #2: Situation assessment to identify stakeholders and understand their concerns/needs and provide advice for how best to design an effective community workshop (May 2006).

Step #3: Three day workshop with all stakeholders to discuss the assessment method and its use in allotment management planning; included an evening discussion about 2005 workshop, two similar classroom and group field sessions, and a half-day close out regarding next steps (June 2006).

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK:

Dave Hogen, Fisheries, Fremont-Winema National Forest – “This opportunity reminded me of the power of listening. I plan to consider a few more factors when setting up a meeting or a workshop. For instance, the Custer workshop was very tailored to fit local schedules.” *Dave is a key player in the Fremont-Winema National Forest efforts.*

Caitlin Bean, Biologist, CA Fish and Game – “I do not have any formal training in social science, yet in order to be successful in fulfilling conservation mandates a good understanding of social processes is critical. Experiential learning about the NRST process has really opened my eyes regarding the potential success garnered through the use of key consensus and team building experiences... Experiencing these social processes with the NRST has provided me with new ideas and additional skills for designing collaborative approaches to problem solving in Siskiyou County.” *Caitlin is spearheading in the Shasta and Scott Valley regions of northern California.*

Tahnee Robertson, U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution Roster Member – “Lessons from this experience will be useful for my facilitation work, especially in land management contexts and where citizen science and adaptive management are key components...The learning lab approach – bringing us into your team field visit – is such an effective method.”

Shasta Valley—2006 Learning Lab

Participants: Shasta Valley Resource Conservation District, landowners, and CA Fish & Game

Request: Introduce information about collaboration and riparian function that could be used by the stakeholders to design a strategy to provide incidental take permits for landowners engaged in voluntary restoration projects for Coho salmon.



Step #1: Three-day workshop focused on building relationships and addressing past conflict between the Resource Conservation District (administer the permits), landowners and the CA Fish & Game (February 2006).

Step #2: Dinner and introduction to riparian-wetland function, followed by a one-day (three sites) field discussion with Resource Conservation District, landowners and CA Fish & Game (July 2006).

Step #3: Two-day workshop with all stakeholders (including community members from Scott Valley (a neighboring watershed embarking in a similar permit system) to discuss the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) riparian-wetland assessment method and design management and monitoring plans as the basis for the permit system (October 2006).

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK:

Rosie Mazaika, OR BLM Riparian Coordinator - "I was reminded that we are doing great work in the federal agencies in evolving this discussion [relating to PFC, grazing management, water quality and ESA compliance]...I hope to have another opportunity to join the team in the field as I think these experiences make us all more effective in our day to day work." **Riparian Coordination Network Member**

"Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together"

Custer National Forest—2006 Learning Lab



Participants: Lake County Watershed Council, Lakeview Soil & Water Conservation District, Forest Service, landowners, permittees, Lake County Resources Initiative, Ducks Unlimited, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and Oregon State University Extension

Request: Work with partners to design a system for prioritizing and creating options for cooperative riparian restoration projects.

Step #1: Three-day workshop with partners to discuss proposed restoration activities on National Forest and private land. Included a half-day classroom session on riparian-wetland function and two and a half days in the field assessing streams as a group, discussing proposed activities and determining what actions best meet resource objectives (August 2006).

Step #2: Three-day technical training on PFC assessment method, which the group plans to use to prioritize and design future restoration projects (planned 2007).

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK:

Jim David, Soil Scientist, Ochoco National Forest – “I learned how to professionally listen, ask questions and formulate answers in a politically sensitive manner. One of the most important concepts stressed was working with a group to set realistic and attainable goals for stream function.” *Jim is helping the group develop options for fixing headcuts using both rock and geo-textiles.*

Chuck Petersen, Range Management, NV NRCS – “The learning lab is a great way to assist in carrying out the NRCS mission to promote cooperative conservation which is an effective way of helping people help the land. I look forward to utilizing these learned skills in an effort to enhance natural resources.”
Riparian Coordination Network Member

“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”

LEARNING LAB LESSONS:

- Building capacity for cooperative conservation requires a variety of training forums. Participants provided positive feedback about the importance and benefits of hands-on, situation-specific, experiential training
- opportunities and after-hours immersion with team members. They also noted interest in being involved with:
 - multiple phases of service trips and seeing how one phase helps inform the development of another phase
 - a more structured training, so they could better understand the range of process techniques and the rationale for using one tool versus another in specific situations
 - continuing mentor relationships with team members
- It is important to seek out and build the skills of local cooperative conservation champions, regardless of what organization they work for.
- An important two-way learning opportunity was created between NRST members and learning lab participants, as well as between the learning lab participants themselves, because both technical and social specialists were selected. This blending of technical and social dimensions in relation to natural resource issues reflects an important component of the Creeks and Communities strategy.
- Scheduling learning lab opportunities was a challenging endeavor due to the heavy commitments of those interested in participating. While the application process was worthwhile, it is also important to remain flexible and opportunistic when matching people and places.
- Providing feedback about the learning lab process in relation to a self-assessment of core competencies proved difficult. Participants typically felt more comfortable evaluating their experience in words. At the request of the ICCT, the NRST plans to follow up with participants to get a better sense of the concern. This information will then be fed back to the ICCT workforce transformation/competencies team to inform future efforts.
- Co-facilitators, and the associated costs, are necessary in order to meet both the needs of the community or group and the learning lab participant.

LEARNING LAB OUTCOMES

Changed Thought Process

Most learning lab participants noted an increased understanding of what it means to work in a collaborative culture and a changed or reinforced belief that it is important. While respondents did not always come right out and say so, it was reflected in the themes that were captured in their comments (e.g., 'I learned the importance of listening to all viewpoints when trying to get the full story,' 'I learned what it means to truly listen,' or 'I learned that to be effective, attempts to transfer information must be geared to the people receiving the information, meet their schedule and otherwise be responsive to their needs'). This is important because a traditional response to changing organizational culture is to focus on creating strategies and actions (e.g., increase % of employees trained) designed to support the envisioned change without ever looking at the underlying beliefs and behaviors and determining whether they are consistent with the desired outcome. What the learning lab has shown is that experiential training can have an impact on those beliefs and behaviors that are critical for long-term success.

Ripple Effect Demonstrated

The application for the learning lab targeted 'local champions' or individuals who were already working collaboratively and in partnership with others in their area. The objective was to identify folks who were already there or doing it, so to speak, and could benefit from a little extra coaching and mentoring. This process had the intended effect and many learning lab participants immediately took some of the principles and practices they gained and applied them to work they are involved in at home. Others joined the extended Riparian Coordination network, and will be working to implement the Creeks and Communities strategy as new State Team members. The title 'ripple effect' is fitting because it refers to the manner in which one person can touch and affect many others, thereby multiplying the impact of a training effort that may have initially touched only a few people

Consensus Institute – Learning Lab Capstone

Learning lab participants requested formalized training to further their knowledge of principles and practices that are key to successful. A three-day, hands-on workshop was held in Prineville, OR November 28-30, 2006. The workshop focused on human behavior and basic processes for managing natural resource conflicts related to change, power, scarcity and diversity. Participants learned tools and techniques for conducting situation assessments, convening groups of people around difficult situations and creating an atmosphere of listening with respect - critical to resolving tough issues. Over 40 people attended the training, including University Extension Agents, private landowners and community members, educators, students, private facilitators, local government, BLM, Forest Service, NRCS, Fish and Wildlife Service, community-based non-profit organizations and State Fish and Wildlife agencies. Some participant feedback is provided below.

Q 1: How did you feel about the past 3 days?

Q 2: What would you tell other people that you learned



It was time well "invested." I've learned from everyone here. Now I want to go back and use what I have learned. *How to involve people in decision-making in an honest, open forum that respects all participants.*

I felt the three days were very productive and I hope to apply these skills in the future. *I learned that it is important to address issues in a collaborative manner. It will take more time, but it will be more effective in the long run. The relationship and processes will help meet future challenges.*



Intrigued, excited, interested in applying to our travel management working groups and follow-up public meetings. Joyful – I haven't laughed so hard with a group I barely know! We had fun! Confident that we can be successful and carry this out in some form. *Worthwhile. I learned skills in building relationships between people to develop a sense of "community" among themselves. I gained some tools to use to accomplish building trust and respect between people so they can work together in resolving conflict and problem solving.*

Refocused, clearer on how to use the process as a facilitator versus a participant. *The process is flexible enough in its application to meet the needs of any age group or organization.*

"Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together"

Q 1: How did you feel about the past 3 days?
Q 2: What would you tell other people that you learned



I feel energized, invigorated and renewed. My belief in the power of human potential has been reinforced and I am reminded that because people are fundamentally insecure and self-conscious that there is a real need for collaborative decision-making. *I learned that problem solving and conflict resolution cannot be addressed adequately by using conventional and unilateral methods. People need to be heard, valued and wanted and this process results in those things (especially in today's world of extremes, stresses and polarization).*



It was a reinforcement of some of my basic beliefs – that I forget to act upon at all times and in all circumstances. It is eye-opening how profound, and simple these tools are. *It was a very worthwhile expenditure of my time and I plan to implement it in every facet of my life – work, community work, and with my family.*

I felt that the past few days have been extremely eye-opening. I've learned how to deal with internal and external conflict in a meaningful way that respects and values all viewpoints. I've learned not to be so afraid of conflict. *I would tell people that I've learned to slow down and listen and appreciate other ideas and opinions. I would also say that I truly learned what consensus is and how it can be reached in a civilized way.*

Website of Interest:

The Rancher Stewardship Alliance is a community of ranching families in south Phillips County, Montana (south of Malta, north of the Missouri River). This area of the glaciated plains has exceptional conservation values for a host of short-grass prairie birds and mammals. In earlier days, bison was a primary source of disturbance with which the various species evolved. Today, cattle grazing and outstanding stewardship are filling that role. The populations of elk, whitetail and mule deer, prairie dogs, burrowing owls, horned lark, sage grouse and a host of other species remind us of what Lewis and Clark saw on their journey through there.

The multi-generation ranching community came together a number of years ago to confront issues that at that time seemed to threaten them; potential listings of sage grouse, black-tailed prairie dogs, mountain plover, and experimental reintroduction of black footed ferrets. They chose to work together in a way that benefited their families and their future on the land, AND in a way, that insures long-term conservation of this important resource. The short-grass prairie worldwide is one of the most threatened ecosystems. Working in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy, they continue to plan, work, and evolve in their approach to the many issues and opportunities they face. You can read all about this group at their new website; www.ranchersstewardshipalliance.org

“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”

TR-1737-20 Errata Sheet

Grazing Management Processes and Strategies for Riparian-Wetland Areas (TR 1737-20) has been shipped. There have been a few errors found in the document and corrections can be found at the NRST website http://www.blm.gov/or/programs/nrst/technical_notes.php. Additional copies are available through the Denver Service Center by using the Technical Reference order form found on the NRST [website http://www.blm.gov/or/programs/nrst/training.php](http://www.blm.gov/or/programs/nrst/training.php).

Full Stream Ahead

Is there something you would like to see in a future issue of *Full Stream Ahead*? If so, send an email to nrst@or.blm.gov. The NRST utilizes this newsletter to share highlights, news and hot topics that pertain to the Creeks and Communities Strategy. This newsletter is for the entire network and we encourage you to send in ideas, questions and articles for us to publicize. The deadline for submissions to the January/February 2007 issue is March 9.

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