

**USDA Forest Service Sponsored:**  
**2010 Outlook Dialog:**  
**“*Developing Landscape-Scale Conservation*”**

**Workshop Summary Report**

May 25-26, 2010 – Marriott Buttes, Tempe, AZ

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This project is conducted for the USDA Forest Service, Research and Development by the National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE) a non-profit, non-advocacy organization with the mission of linking science to the priority needs of decision makers.

## I. Summary

The 2010 Outlook Dialog workshop, “*Forestry within a Landscape-Scale Approach to Conservation*” was held May 25-26, 2010 at the Marriott Buttes Resort in Tempe, Arizona. This USDA Forest Service (USFS) sponsored event gave participants an opportunity to interact with a diverse set of leaders in the forestry community and define the current and future information needs for enhancing the use of landscape-scale approaches across diverse forest ownerships.

USDA Secretary Vilsack and Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell have a vision for enhancing the use of landscape scale conservation that embraces integrated ownerships. At the workshop, the Forest Service (FS) Office of Research and Development reached out to key leaders seeking input on the information, approaches, and tools that research can produce to facilitate better applications and foster greater collaboration across diverse ownerships.

The Outlook Dialog is an annual stakeholder process to enhance the basis for increased research coordination, collaboration, and partnership within the natural resource community. The first stage of this year’s dialog was the survey of participants using phone interviews and an emailed questionnaire. The survey solicited participants’ opinions and concerns about landscape-scale conservation, the challenges facing the forest community, and the information, partnerships, and collaborations needed to address these challenges. The survey results were shared with participants prior to the workshop as a background report to stimulate ideas.

Sessions at the workshop focused on areas regarding developing landscape-scale conservation, such as building visions for ideal and attainable futures, defining conditions fostering partnerships and collaboration, and identifying the types of science and communication needed to support landscape-scale activities. Small interactive breakout groups allowed participants to discuss, debate, and evaluate different questions posed and the best ways to address the challenges to successful landscape-scale conservation in the forest community and beyond.

## II. Prioritized Needs and Goals

Throughout the meeting, participants identified key areas where action could be taken within their organizations and the forest community as a whole. The group agreed to move towards the following goals:

1. *Work towards a shared and common vision, within each organization, region, state, etc, until a vision for the landscape is agreed upon.*
2. *Encourage a more holistic approach to landscape-scale conservation.*
3. *Take advantage of the momentum behind conservation trends such as the Administration’s “America’s Great Outdoors” initiative.*
4. *Aim for greater collaboration across all boundaries and jurisdictions.*
5. *Learn from past mistakes and build on successes of partnerships and landscape-scale conservation efforts.*

6. *Try to utilize leadership roles (specifically the Forest Service) to better lead by example and be a neutral leader and convener in collaboration processes.*
7. *Recognize new and growing issues in communities and proactively take a role in addressing them with collaboration and find a way to work across the boundaries in place.*

### **III. Defining Landscape-Scale Conservation**

Workshop participants brainstormed definitions and key aspects of landscape-scale conservation. Many people voiced the same themes, concerns, and visions. Among the most talked about were the following:

Most participants agreed that for landscape-scale conservation to be effective, a common and shared vision of what the landscape requires needs to be developed. Participants expressed the need for social science integration and a change of people's behavior towards the land and land-use. The lack of cultural and psychological integration within forestry management and research creates barriers and gaps.

A recurring idea throughout many responses was the need for more holistic approaches to conservation. Landscape-scale conservation requires considering more than just the ecological landscape, it also incorporates the ecosystem services, social/political values, and other aspects that affect management and conservation of land.

Many participants recognized there often is enough research, but the lack of communication and standardizing of results is what creates a barrier to implementation. Converting research to usable information was a high priority for many participants. Often research is conducted and studies are published, but the information does not make it to the end user. Landscape-scale conservation also takes into consideration all resources (natural and human-made) and recognizes the changes in patterns and processes in large areas across time and space.

### **IV. Building Shared Understandings**

The following list summarizes the ideas generated by meeting participants in the first breakout session at the workshop and does not imply a priority order. The breakout aimed to examine current efforts, then discuss what the ideal situations would be, then from that point, which of those are attainable and how?

#### **A. Current Status of Landscape-scale Conservation Efforts**

- a. There are some successful efforts and common themes among them, however, the successes are not common. There is no collective effort to accomplish progress on the land.
- b. The United States is at a technological transition that has empowered "new ideas" that have been around for a while but we now have the capacity to accomplish them.
- c. Currently, landowners are interested in landscape-scale conservation, i.e. work across boundaries, but there still remains a heavy distrust in the government at local, state, and federal levels.

- d. Often, scientists confuse facts with values and assume they can fix problems with more research, when it is often social science barriers.
- e. Examples of current landscape-scale conservation initiatives:
  - i. Front Range Roundtable: brought stakeholders together in Colorado to discuss priorities and visions. It included at least 10 counties east of the Rockies but phased out after the report because of lack of funding and support. However, new energy has been brought to the group and they are working to make a comeback.
  - ii. Tongass Future Roundtable: 32 communities were able to come together around public policy issues in the Tongass National Forest and Southeastern Alaska. Driven by the issue of rural communities role in protecting and maintaining the forest and supported by using all available programs and incentives in federal and state government.
  - iii. Anchor Forest Project: 500 people in the Northwest US. Market-based solutions and ecosystem services focused. Legislature funded studies and the outcome was mapping of states' structures and surrounding values.
- f. As the forestry community shifts towards a landscape-scale conservation perspective we are challenged to do so collectively. If we start from a more synoptic view, it will help change the processes and make a more strategic approach to landscape-scale conservation.
- g. American's Great Outdoors is a current trend in the conservation community. It gives the notion that landowners' interests are aligned with the changes and they have seen successes and are interested in participating.
- h. "Random acts of conservation" are occurring across the landscape, but are not being recognized or organized collectively. This creates an opportunity for a collaboration or partnership at a landscape-scale in different areas across the nation.

## **B. Ideal Visions for Landscape-scale Conservation**

- a. The forest community would agree on a common vision and share a set of societal and economic values. Funding would ideally follow this vision and values.
- b. There needs to be a way to accurately measure ecosystem services and a common understanding that those services are not free. The need is to create a market around those services which may mean to monetize and recognize them widely to obtain an outcome of less cost and greater protection.
- c. Land and other resources would be used for the "best purposes" and all services and places would use best management practices.
- d. Effective collaboration across the public/private/state/tribal landscapes as a systematic effort to encourage cross-boundary and cross-jurisdiction partnerships.
- e. Create more incentives for landscape-scale conservation, management, and restoration.

- f. Adopt a holistic landscape-scale approach and have the benefits of top-down and bottom-up approaches to be seamlessly linked.
- g. All information and research would be shared, communicated, and translated effectively and efficiently.

### **C. Attainable Futures**

- a. Develop common terminology and measurement methods.
- b. Design a systematic effort to create and maintain landscape-scale partnerships and collaborations and the creation of a federal program to support landscape-scale conservation efforts.
- c. Use current incentive programs more effectively and build new programs to target specific landscape-scale efforts. Also consider smart-growth incentives to reward good practices and work with other agencies.
- d. Find better ways to acknowledge private landowners efforts through positive feedback and expand opportunities for public and private co-op land trades.
- e. Utilize new technology capabilities such as GIS, data delivery, and modeling programs to their full potential.
- f. Use existing successes by formally identifying them and committing resources and authority to allow for them to continue and build on their foundation. Also use case histories and examples to learn what to improve or what to replicate.
- g. Use local markets, existing tax bases, utility surcharges, and other means as secure sources of revenue and funding for ecosystem services.
- h. Encourage federal agencies to take the lead and play a neutral role as convener of collaborative processes that cede power to stakeholder groups. Federal agencies can be recognized for their leadership and help with continuity of leadership.

## **V. Developing Sustainable Partnerships**

Participants discussed past partnership efforts and the lessons learned from those efforts, then identified principles for future partnerships. They placed a heavy emphasis on the different partners and required needs for successful collaborations. To more fully engage, interested parties must have their own motivation, as well as a feeling of mutual benefit for a partnership to do well. If partners are forced to join or collaborate, it often results in failure because the groups are not working collectively towards a common goal. Each partner needs to feel there is some reward in the effort for them.

Communication is the key to successful collaboration, and a neutral convener is necessary to help all involved parties feel they are benefiting. In addition to a neutral convener, it is essential to the process that there is a strong leader. The leader can be an individual, a group, or a champion; their vision, attitude, and outlook help inspire and hold together the partnership. Stakeholders need to be committed to the process, which will help build trust, and in turn, lead to stronger commitment to the end goal.

A crucial element for sustainable partnerships is a shared and common vision. This vision includes the motivation from each party to maintain an end goal in sight. Motivation can be from positive or negative factors for different partners, but the motivation must be towards a gain for everyone. Resources and funding mechanisms are vital to successful partnerships, including not only monetary amounts, but time and effort of individuals and groups. Often, collaborations require volunteer work from parties involved, which can be difficult to maintain. A steady source of resources can help make a partnership more competitive for further support.

Participants discussed the need for a strong information base for collaborations. Information can include research, uncertainties, sensitivities, credibility, and other aspects. Sharing the information is also required for successful partnerships.

## **VI. Supporting Landscape-Scale Conservation with Sciences**

Breakout groups discussed requirements, barriers, and solutions to linking science to management. The following summarizes the main points from each category and does not recognize priority order.

### **Requirements:**

- a. Common goals and objectives need to be clearly communicated and agreed on by all stakeholders, as well as a defined timeline with a sense of urgency.
- b. Need an awareness of the differences in how people think and operate. Social scientists can assist in understanding group dynamics.
- c. Supportive resources such as funding, leadership, and the understanding of trade-offs are important when factoring science into management and collaboration.

### **Barriers:**

- a. Time constraints
- b. Lack of early discussions of interests and positions by involved parties can lead to misunderstanding of the problem to be solved.
- c. Science often lacks the ability to be communicated and transferred effectively, can lead to people bringing their own science to the table which can be at a different scale than appropriate or useful.
- d. Politics can often stall processes or isolate members.
- e. The lack of value placed with citizen science creates gaps between managers and scientists.
- f. Lack of trust and histories of past engagements.

### **Solutions:**

- a. Use decision support systems, developed by managers along with scientists.

- b. Develop capacity within organizations to manage process of negotiation and partner development.
- c. Use systems approach to maintain a holistic view on issues.
- d. Build a realistic timeline and recognize and reward achievements along the way.
- e. Create guidelines or a handbook of how to build and support landscape-scale conservation efforts.
- f. Recognize when issues are growing in communities and proactively take a role in addressing them with partnerships and collaborations. Through this, find ways to work across boundaries.
- g. Create convincing proposals so all stakeholders are aware of what is in the plan for their benefit.
- h. Have a rewards system for recognizing successful collaborations.
- i. Include partners that can translate between the science and managers, as well as the general public.

## VII. Conclusion and Next Steps

This year's Outlook Dialog: "*Forestry within a Landscape-Scale Approach to Conservation*," was a productive workshop where participants were able to communicate, share and build on their own and each other's knowledge. With a diverse set of participants, many different approaches and opinions were presented and discussed. Working together the workshop participants created valuable guidelines to successful partnerships and helped to better define landscape-scale conservation.

Participants identified the ability to work across boundaries to protect and conserve landscapes as a top environmental challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The meeting also helped confirm the large requirement of social science integration with conservation actions. Private land stakeholders felt the US Forest Service has a better sense of their mission and that will benefit all stakeholders across all landscapes to interact more effectively. All participants left the meeting with a better understanding of what is required for successful collaborations and partnerships to address landscape-scale conservation.

Participants' suggested the following next steps:

- A follow-up Outlook Dialog focusing on scaling, validation, experiments, and/or social science for collaborative processes.
- US Forest Service can help facilitate and lead already existing landscape-scale collaborations and encourage new ones to form.

## **2010 Outlook Workshop Participant List**

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