

May 2011

# Sustainable Operations Questionnaire Report: Communication Findings and Recommendations

A Questionnaire Conducted by the Communication Team of the Western Collective

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## Introduction

The Western Collective (WC) is a chartered collaboration between R1, R2, R3, R4, R6, R10, and RMRS to facilitate the reduction of the Forest Service's environmental footprint (Sustainable Operations). To meet this challenge, the WC is organized into teams based on its fiscal year goals. For FY2011, the Communications Team's focus is to "cross-pollinate" across the various teams and foster organizational connectivity. Surveying documentation from previous WC years, the Communications Team identified knowledge gaps among audiences of the WC along with the optimal methods for creating connectivity from survey documentation collected during previous years. As a result, the Communications Team conducted a questionnaire in an effort to meet four mutually agreed upon goals:

1. To understand what Forest Service employees engaged in environmental footprint reduction efforts know about the Western Collective or Sustainable Operations (referred to as the "extended Sustainable Operations network");
2. To find out how Forest Service employees learned what they know;
3. To determine what resources (website, professional development funds) are currently being used by our extended Sustainable Operations network; and
4. To explore how our audiences would like to receive information from and share experiences with the Sustainable Operations community.

<sup>1</sup>The "extended Sustainable Operations network" reaches beyond FS employees regularly engaged in the Sustainable Operations network to incorporate all employees active or interested in environmental footprint reduction efforts (the target audience of the questionnaire).

## Methodology

Questions were developed in an iterative process by the Communications Team and ultimately drafted as a questionnaire in Google Forms. Text and format selections were made such that the questionnaire could be completed in ten minutes or less. Sustainable Operations leaders including Anna Jones-Crabtree, WC team leads, and Maritza Huerta from the WO, provided additional questions and critically reviewed the questionnaire's language such that study goals would be met and the questions easily understood by recipients. Full documentation of the questionnaire is available upon request.

A primer announcing the questionnaire went out on March 30, 2011 via email to the WC community from Anna Jones-Crabtree. Email language intentionally encouraged the WC network to forward the voluntary questionnaire beyond their traditional sustainability contacts to anyone interested or involved in environmental footprint reduction. On April 6, 2011 the questionnaire link was emailed by Anna Jones-Crabtree with similar language.

The analysis in this report is based on 298 questionnaire responses received between April 6, 2011 and April 18, 2011 among a sample of Forest Service employees who voluntarily took the questionnaire emailed to them by someone in the WC or Sustainable Operations network.

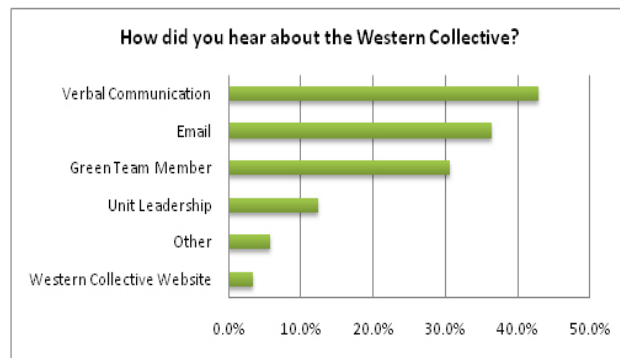
# Summary of Findings

## How the extended Sustainable Operations network knows what they know about the Western Collective and Sustainable Operations:

### What the extended Sustainable Operations network knows about the Forest Service's efforts to reduce our environmental footprint:

- 41% are familiar with the Western Collective.
- 84% are familiar with Sustainable Operations.
- Almost 90% of respondents indicated that, in their opinion, they contribute to environmental footprint reduction efforts in their current position.
- A little more than half are familiar with the Climate Change Scorecard (54%).
- 43% of the respondents who knew about the Western Collective also knew about the Western Collective Professional Development Funds.
- 26% have attended trainings or conferences addressing sustainability and the Forest Service.
- 39% said they were members of their unit's Green Team; and 53% said their unit's Green Team was active. Only 11% of all the respondents said their unit does not have a Green Team.

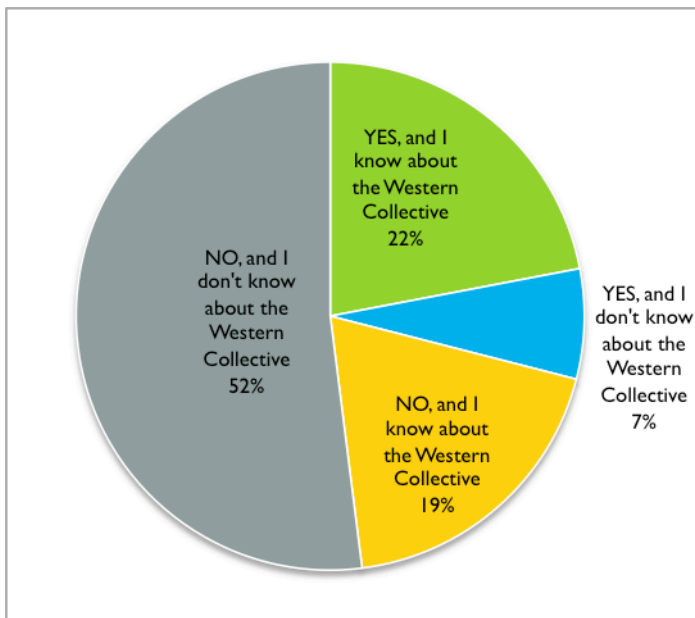
- A little more than half of respondents heard about the Western Collective through verbal communication and a little less than half through email.
- Slightly more than a third of the respondents learned about the Western Collective through another Green Team member.
- Only about 15% heard about the Western Collective through unit leadership.
- Less than 5% learned about the Western Collective through the Western Collective website.



## How the extended sustainability community uses the Sustainable Operations resources:

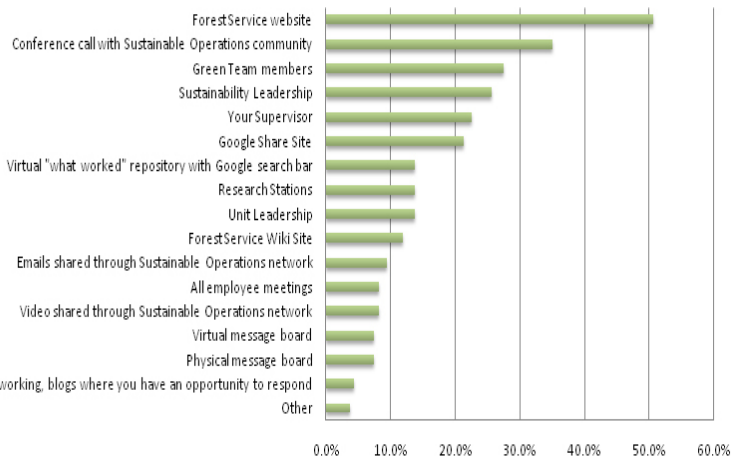
- Only 29% of respondents had used the Sustainable Operations website.
- Respondents familiar with the Western Collective used the website more than their peers who do not know about the Western Collective. Of the 29% of respondents who had used the website, about three-quarters knew about the Western Collective.
- 43% of respondents familiar with the Western Collective knew about the Professional Development Funds for sustainability training.
- Knowledge of the Western Collective was strongly correlated with the use of the Sustainable Operations website ( $r=0.45$ ).
- Use of the Sustainable Operations website was moderately correlated with knowledge of the Climate Change Scorecard ( $r=0.34$ ), attending trainings or conferences on sustainability ( $r=0.41$ ), and being a Green Team member ( $r=0.33$ ).
- Use of the Sustainable Operations website and knowledge of the Forest Service's efforts to reduce our environmental footprint (otherwise known as Sustainable Operations) had the weakest association ( $r=0.28$ ).

**Graph I: Have you ever used the Sustainable Operations Website?**



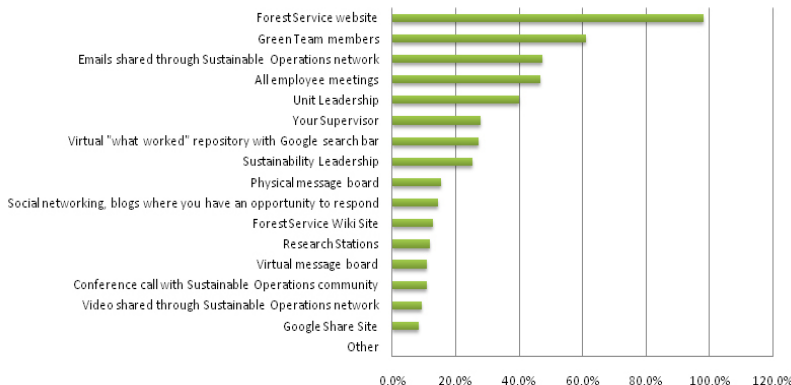
## How the extended sustainability community would like to receive and share information:

How would you like to receive information about the Western Collective?

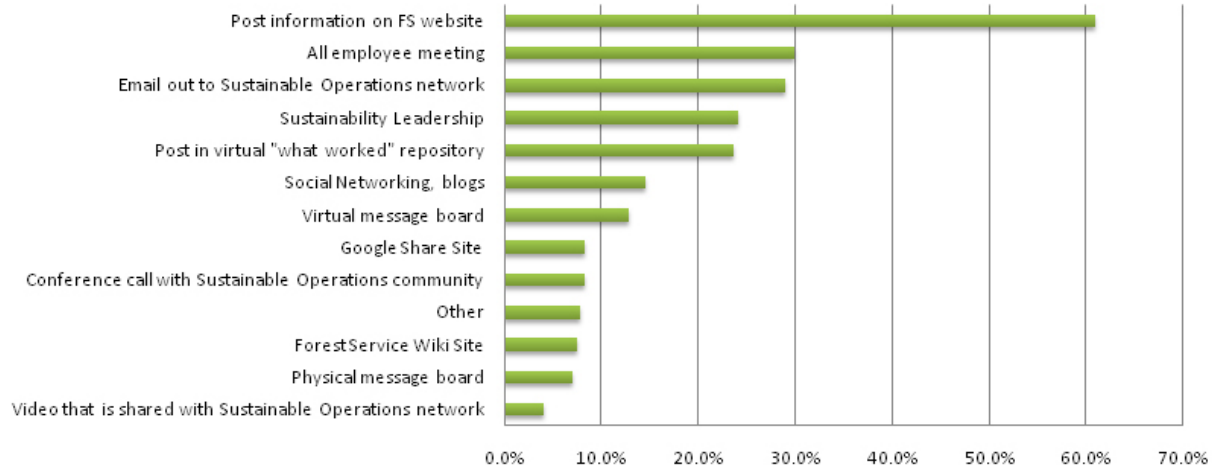


- For respondents familiar with the Western Collective, the most popular means of receiving information were: (1) through the Forest Service website; (2) from Green team members; and (3) via emails shared through Sustainable Operations.
- Respondents unfamiliar with the Western Collective indicated they would like to receive information about Sustainable Operations through the Forest Service website or a conference call with Sustainable Operations.
- The greatest number of respondents would like to share Sustainable Operations successes or challenges by posting information on the Forest Service website. About half as many would like to share them through an all employee meeting or an email sent out to Sustainable Operations. The next most popular means were through sustainability leadership and posting information in a virtual "what worked" repository.

How would you like to receive information about Sustainable Operations?



If you have Sustainable Operations successes or challenges, how would you like to share them?

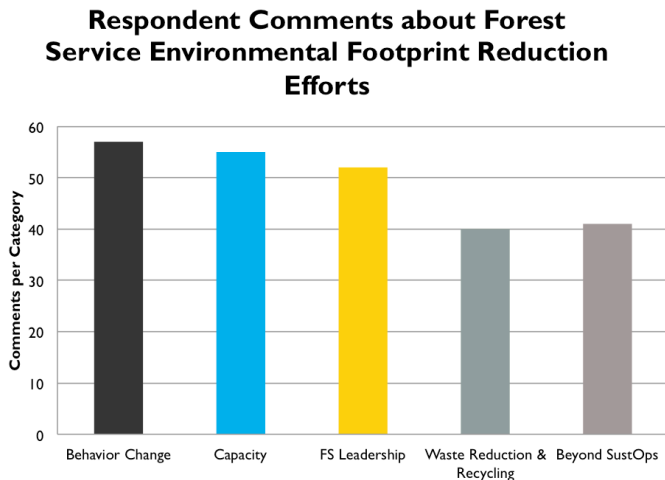


## Respondent's Feedback:

Of the 298 respondents to the questionnaire, 198 answered the following question: *In your opinion, is the Forest Service doing enough in our efforts to reduce our environmental footprint? What other Sustainable Operations initiatives would you like to see? Please explain your answer below.*

Based on the information contained in the comments, 19 categories were developed and each comment was scored. Some comments only contained a "yes" or a "no" and so were only coded in the "yes" or "no" category. Other comments received multiple scores - a mark in each category that the individual addressed in her comment. The "yes" or "no" categories were only marked if "yes" or "no" was listed or something very similar was listed. The chart below illustrates the five categories with the most responses.

Table 5: Five most frequently cited comments to the question on the FS' environmental footprint reduction efforts.



Category	Definition	Marks
Behavior Change	Comments related to behavior changes or visuals to support behavior change such as: energy baselines posted, printing double-sided, turning off lights, increasing VTC use, mandating no disposable water bottles, teleworking	57
Capacity	Comments requesting organizational support, coordination, and communication among "green" champions such as: education to dispel myths, accomplishment reporting, requests for sharing opportunities	55
FS Leadership	Comments requesting increased leadership presence including: communication from leadership, creating culture of efficiency (meeting preparation, time use, policy commitments, allowing change of duty stations), enforcement of sustainability efforts	52
Waste Reduction & Recycling	Comments related to emphasizing waste reduction and increasing recycling such as: increasing office recycling efforts, recycling programs with local communities, waste reduction of resources (paper, water)	40
Beyond SustOps	Comments related to issues beyond the reach of Sustainable Operations including: unfunded initiatives, national policy, national requirements that lead to waste (e.g. documentation)	41
Fleet	Comments related to fleet changes, either support of or complaints about	39
Cultural Integration	Comments focused on an increased integration of environmental resource reduction efforts into FS culture and daily operations	26
Renewable Energy	Comments related to investing in renewable energy options such as wind and solar	26
Building Retrofits	Comments addressing building retrofits	23
Funding and Investments	Comments specifically requesting (or remarking on the absence of) funding and investments for implementation of sustainable operations	21
Green Electronics & Supplies	Comments requesting footprint reduction infrastructure	21
Quantification	Comments asking for more quantification of footprint reductions, dollars saved	16
Incentives or Disincentives	Comments related to rewards for money saved, or earlier pay off periods, and disincentives	15
Local Partnerships	Comments focused on partnering with local communities to increase environmental efforts	7
Landscaping	Comments focused on gardens, xeriscapes, or other methods to improve grounds and landscaping in an environmentally-conscious way	5
Tools	Comments requesting concrete tools such as calculators	2
Other	Comments that touched on subjects beyond the categories listed	12
Yes	Comments that listed "yes" in their response or something similar. This category became important because some individuals only wrote "yes" or "no" in the comment area.	20
No	Comments that listed "no" in their response or something similar	58

# Findings and Recommendations

## Discussion & Recommendations

The questionnaire results revealed insight into ways Western Collective communication can be improved. What we learned about communication methods and the Western Collective itself highlight specific deficiencies and opportunities for improvement. The following findings and recommendations pertain to our four goals for the questionnaire.

**Goal 1: To understand what Forest Service employees engaged in environmental footprint reduction efforts know about the Western Collective or Sustainable Operations.**

Findings	Recommendations
<p>The questionnaire was targeted at the extended Sustainable Ops network and results showed a general lack of knowledge about the Western Collective. Most respondents were familiar with Sustainable Operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase communication efforts' emphasis on <i>who we are</i> in addition to <i>what's available</i></li> <li>• Connect the Western Collective network with Sustainable Operations more effectively</li> <li>• Raise the visibility of the network, activities, and resources associated with the Western Collective, which can serve as a model for footprint reduction implementation</li> </ul>
<p>Almost 90% of respondents indicated that they contribute to environmental footprint reduction efforts in their current position.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect and support individual, on-the-ground Sustainable Ops activities and implementation</li> <li>• Encourage all Board members and WC participants to promote the Western Collective and Sustainable Ops whenever possible within their spheres of influence so we can better connect and empower each other</li> <li>• Use this statistic in Western Collective communications/messaging to help build a social norm in the Forest Service around environmental footprint reduction</li> </ul>

**Goal 2: To find out how Forest Service employees who engage in environmental footprint reduction efforts learned what they know.**

<b>Findings</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p>The Forest Service is human-centric in its communication styles. The majority of respondents who knew about the WC learned about it via word-of-mouth. Information sharing among green team members was also frequently cited.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include person-to-person communication in outreach materials and methods</li> <li>• Provide access to two-way communication on website for posting and sharing information</li> <li>• Encourage line officers to incorporate Sustainable Ops sharing at regularly scheduled events (e.g. all employee meetings, orientations)</li> </ul>
<p>Based on questionnaire responses, email appears to be an effective way to communicate as well.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strategic email outreach program based on audiences</li> <li>• Use membership lists from potential SharePoint site</li> <li>• Be cautious about over-emailing or emailing without sufficient, detailed, and well-organized information</li> </ul>

**Goal 3: To determine what resources (website, professional development funds) are currently being used by our extended Sustainable Operations network.**

<b>Findings</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p>Only 29% of respondents had used the Sustainable Operations website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate visioning of long-term online communications strategy</li> <li>• Link website or SharePoint site from all FS websites</li> <li>• Update and reorganize Sustainable Ops website information to maximize networking and environmental footprint reduction</li> </ul>
<p>While the WC has successfully developed relevant tools and resources, our audiences lack sufficient information on the availability and applicability of these resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase communication focus: at the beginning of each deliverable's development, teams should list audience(s) and communication method(s), including the following: who is this for; how will they use it; how will they find it once it is developed; and who will they contact for questions and feedback?</li> <li>• Evaluate existing tools to determine whether they meet the needs articulated by questionnaire responds and refine tools where necessary</li> <li>• Provide two-way communication on website for posting and sharing information, and option for person-to-person communication for all tools and resources</li> <li>• Organize tools and resources into a user-friendly format</li> <li>• Market these tools and resources as much as possible, in creative ways to diverse audiences</li> </ul>

**Goal 4: To explore how our audiences would like to receive information from and share experiences with the Sustainable Operations community.**

<b>Findings</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p>98% of respondents indicated that they would like to hear about Sustainable Operations through the website. Person-to-person communication (such as Green Team members, all-employee meetings, unit leadership) and email were also popular modes of sharing. The same modes were cited as popular ways to hear about the Western Collective, though less frequently, in addition to conference calls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimize the website for sharing information and experiences and for networking</li> <li>• Strategically use email communication</li> <li>• Encourage line officers to communicate about environmental footprint reduction in meetings and other forms of communication</li> <li>• Hold conference calls with the Western Collective community for sharing information and experiences</li> </ul>
<p>Employees value an opportunity to comment, given the high response rate of 298.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide future opportunities for employee feedback</li> <li>• Let respondents know that they have been heard</li> <li>• Make changes in Western Collective strategies and approach based upon this feedback</li> </ul>
<p>Questionnaire respondents commented on a need for efficient communication. Successful communication programs are straightforward and easy to use, which requires collaborative, goal-oriented work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize your thoughts and materials (and allow for others to do so also as needed) before doing communication in any setting (meeting or phone call)</li> <li>• Manage others' time as you would have others' manage yours</li> <li>• Leverage this opportunity for Western Collective and Sustainable Operations to lead in efficiency gains</li> </ul>

**Additional findings and recommendations also came to light through respondents' comments on the desired direction of the agency's environmental footprint reduction efforts. These have important implications for the Western Collective's core goals and activities.**

<b>Findings</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p>The majority of comments on the desired direction of the agency's environmental footprint reduction efforts focused on behavior change, building capacity, and increased leadership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose one high-impact behavior to focus on and develop a plan and resources for Green Teams to target behavior change.</li> <li>• Focus on role of support and connectivity to meet capacity needs at the field level in the Western Collective workplan</li> <li>• Develop new emphasis area on leadership involvement</li> </ul>