

**REVIEW OF USDA FOREST SERVICE
COMMUNITY-BASED WATERSHED
RESTORATION PARTNERSHIPS**

APPENDIX M

Reviews of Watershed Projects

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UPPER SOUTH PLATTE RIVER WATERSHED

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The Upper South Platte Watershed Protection and Restoration Project (USPWPRP) is located within the Pike National Forest southwest of the City of Denver. The watershed supplies 80% of the water used by 1.5 million Denver metropolitan residents. National Forest Service land occupies approximately 500,000 acres of the watershed, while the State Forest Service, Denver Water, Bureau of Land Management, the City of Aurora and private landholders own the remainder. Population in the watershed has grown during the past decade, which has also increased recreation use. Recreation use was estimated at 1,650,000 visitor-days in 1995.

Restoration efforts began to form in 1995 with the initiation of research on historical forest landscape conditions in the watershed. In May 1996, a catastrophic fire burned 11,900 acres in the basin, resulting in the loss of homes and forest cover. Thirteen days of intense rains followed, resulting in flooding and the transport of large amounts of sediment and debris downstream to a water storage facility for the Denver area. This event was a major wake-up call. The Denver Water Department (Denver Water) spent millions of dollars cleaning up this debris and it is estimated that they will spend millions more to dredge the reservoir. A group of stakeholders came together in 1997 as a result of these events to develop a Watershed Protection Project to conserve water quality over the long term. In 1998, the USFS saw the importance of working across landscapes to reduce the potential of catastrophic fires and began working with Denver Water, Colorado State Forest Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, Colorado State University, and the Rocky Mountain Research Station to create the Upper South Platte Watershed Protection and Restoration Project. In 1999, the project was selected by the USFS Chief's office as one of the National Large-scale Watershed Demonstration Projects. The Colorado State Forester and Regional Forester of the USFS Rocky Mountain Region created a steering committee in March 1999 for the project.

The Steering Committee of the USPW developed three main goals for the watershed:
Reduce the probability of fires the magnitude of Buffalo Creek Fire across the landscape;

Reduce fire hazards near residential areas or critical areas for water supply, and Restore sustainable forest conditions across the landscape.

As with many projects where there are numerous views about the causes of, and solutions to, forest health and fire problems, it should be no surprise for every positive outcome people identified through our more than 20 interviews, there was usually a contrasting point of view. People from within federal, state, and municipal government agencies and outside of the agencies voiced the contrasting views. This indicates the complexity of the issues the project is involved with. The plethora of conflicting views also underscores the need to develop governance and management systems to remove personal and institutional barriers and meaningfully engage as many stakeholders as possible in the project. Failure to take the steps to effectively engage public and private stakeholders may threaten the long-term viability and support for the project.

Since Its Inception the Project Has Achieved A Number Of Successes:

- The project has completed a number of on-the-ground projects (see list of achievements on Page 4 of the report).
- The USPWPRP has engaged a number of public agencies in a process to develop a common vision for the watershed.
- The designation as a national Demonstration Project opened the doors for additional funding.
- Land management activities are increasingly based on scientific assessments.
- The steering committee helped create a platform for agency partners to weigh in and improve decision-making about projects.
- The partnership has completed several outreach and educational programs and has hired staff to be the liaison to stakeholder groups.

- Innovation from steering committee members was used to expedite the Upper South Platte Watershed Landscape Assessment.
- The project coordinator and steering committee chair have provided good leadership for the primary partners.
- The watershed project is beginning to evolve from a demonstration project to standard operating procedures.

Although the Project Has Achieved a Number Of Successes, a Number Of Challenges Remain:

- Existing USFS departments, such as the contracting office, have not necessarily embraced the approach proposed by the project.
- The steering committee's governance system does not seem to be working as effectively as everyone would like. Our interviews found many questions raised by government and non-government people alike about the way information is generated and decisions are made.
- Our interviews found that government and non-governmental partners and stakeholders have concerns over the perceived go-it-alone attitude of the core steering committee.
- Some public agencies, as well as stakeholders, have questions about the Upper South Platte Watershed Landscape Assessment.
- Getting projects on the ground on USFS land has been difficult.
- Some people feel that there is a lack of support for the project at the Regional Office.

Our Analysis of These Obstacles Suggests:

- Our research found a number of important issues have not been openly discussed by the steering committee and the lack of open discussion and resolution may constrain future progress. Some people seem to feel the key power brokers on the steering committee are not open to feedback that conflicts with their views and disregard the ideas and views of outsiders. Simply providing time slots during meetings for stakeholders to raise issues does not resolve these problems. When a number of people from government agencies and outside of government voice these types of similar concerns, it usually indicates problems with power and authority relationships.
- In keeping with the comment above, while a strong coalition of primary partners has been built, it does not seem to represent all of the stakeholders in the basin, and power does not seem to be equally distributed among partners. Some partners we spoke with even said they thought the real power lies outside the steering committee and the committee is often used as a formal stamp for what others have already decided to do. This was the reason several federal and non-federal agency representatives did not participate in meetings. Although there are many reasons why key stakeholders may choose not to participate, steering committee members must ask themselves why others are not participating, and if their style and approach plays a role in this.
- These issues suggest a number of unresolved governance issues might constrain future progress in the project. The way information is currently gathered and vetted, decisions made, and power and authority distributed may undermine long-term community support for the project. Currently, those that contribute the most funds to the project tend to have the most power. While this approach may make sense initially, it can constrain the involvement of partners that may not have significant resources to give but still have legitimate claims on activities occurring within the basin. As evidenced by many of the other fifteen large-scale watershed projects occurring across the nation, there are numerous ways to interface power and authority with funding contributions.

Based on the Issues Described Above We Recommend the Following:

- Given the concerns we heard about the Upper South Platte Watershed Landscape Assessment and fuel reduction projects, it may behoove the project to ask an independent science panel to review the analysis and proposed treatments.
- Due to the overwhelming message we heard that three partners dominate the steering committee, revisiting the Charter and MOU and developing a governance structure may enhance the project and system to ensure that decision-making authority is inclusive.
- In keeping with the recommendation above, once the project re-clarifies the governance system, extensive efforts should be made to explain to the public how

decision-making would occur in the future and make a concerted effort to broaden representation on the steering committee.

- Once the committee is expanded, it should institute a process to surface and openly discuss major unresolved issues that are of concern and to develop a common agreement on vision, goals, and strategy for the project. Simply saying that any group or individual is welcome to participate in the steering committee is not sufficient. There are reasons groups chose not to participate and until these issues are addressed, meaningful involvement--and, therefore, long-term public support--may be hard to achieve.
- Given the above, the USFS would benefit from a meaningful dialogue to clarify what collaboration and partnership building means. Our research found confusion over these issues. Agency staff must clarify issues such as: Is the community-based watershed project intended solely to provide additional funds to get work done, or Is it intended to devise a new way of doing business such that synergy is developed between multiple public entities and non-governmental stakeholders.

Strengths

- **The Project Has Completed a Number of On-The-Ground Projects**
 - Mechanically treated 200 acres on Denver Water land (December – April 2000).
 - Rehabilitated 25 miles of unclassified roads (April 2000).
 - Public education in newsletters, meetings, and newspaper articles.
 - Prepared Prescribed Burn Plans for 1,200 acres.
 - CSFS foresters began working with private landowners within the Lower Elk Creek Management Unit and nearby subdivisions to develop and implement fire protection measures.

Most USFS employees we spoke with believe major progress has been achieved. For example, two decision notices were approved for trail improvements and for revegetation projects. Two other decision notices were approved for vegetation treatments in Roadless areas (5,200 acres) and in non-Roadless areas (12,200 acres). However, the decision notice for treatments in roadless areas has now been appealed twice. Over 250 miles of roads and trails have been mapped using GIS technology to identify and prioritize problem areas. Ninety volunteers repaired trails in Dutch Fred Gulch and 1.5 miles of the Gill Trail were restored. Over 100 defensible spaces around homes and structures have been identified, 76 of which have been treated with 75 more acres slated to be cleared in the future. In addition, burned areas in Hi Meadow and Buffalo Creek have been revegetated. The Upper South Platte Watershed Landscape Assessment (landscape assessment) has been completed within a short time. A monitoring strategy was approved to provide a scientific basis for decision-making and a tool for implementing adaptive management. Staff at the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station, as a result of the USPWRP, has published two recent articles outlining their findings. The funding provided by the national watershed project has allowed the Research Station to complete research that is broader in scope and more related to the issues necessary for restoration of the forests in the project.

- **The Project Has Engaged a Number of Public Agencies to Work Together to Develop a Common Vision**

People involved with the Upper South Platte Watershed Protection and Restoration Project (USPWPRP) steering committee said the members were selected based on their technical ability to assist in research, planning, implementation, and monitoring restoration projects. The USPWPRP has successfully involved seven primary partners and several other partners including local, county, and state governments, non-profit groups, and community groups (including Volunteers for Colorado Outdoors and the Colorado Mountain Club). This group is working collaboratively to resolve problems and develop a common plan for the Forest. Several people said many of these relationships had been strained or non-existent prior to the Large-scale Demo Watershed Project, but through this collaborative effort people have gotten over or are slowly resolving bad feelings and misunderstandings and beginning to develop a common vision for the watershed. The group is still in the process of ironing out the wrinkles to create a strong, working steering committee.

Several people stated that because of the special national Demo designation, they have been allowed by their agencies to participate and provide input to the watershed project. A forum has resulted where people share or ask for information. Communication and collaboration among members has been encouraged, resulting in members participating in projects not associated with the watershed project. Combining efforts has assisted the USFS to gain even broader stakeholder representation.

- **The Designation as a National Demo Project Opened the Doors for Additional Funding**

The USFS has leveraged money for the project by receiving contributions from various partners in the form of cash and in-kind matches. For example, the \$100,000 that was given to the Rocky Mountain Research Station by USPWPRP partners has been leveraged by two major grants to \$540,000 per year for three years. Funding has also been obtained from the Joint Fire Sciences Project and NASA to study and develop landscape treatments and research towards preventing catastrophic fires.

- **Land Management Practices Are Increasingly Based on Science Assessments**

The proposed land management treatments are based on research completed by Dr. Merrill Kaufman of the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station. USFS staff and some non-USFS people said a key attribute of the watershed project steering committee is they have decided to base their treatments on scientific research. Because of this research, members of the steering committee have learned a great deal about the area and how fires have burned in the past. Fuel reduction treatments have been applied on Denver Water land prior to being implemented on USFS land. This aided the USFS in gaining support and approval of their treatments because people could view these projects and gain a better understanding of what would occur when treatments were applied to larger landscapes.

- **The Project Has Provided a Platform for Members to Improve Decision Making**

Overall, communication among the key partners seems relatively positive. The steering committee meets once a month and members feel comfortable contacting each other at other times. All the people we interviewed stated they felt comfortable resolving problems at the steering committee meetings and are open to new suggestions. Although, when pressed, we found a number of important issues people feared to bring up. See the next section for details.

In one instance, the forum provided by the steering committee assisted two parties in resolving a potentially detrimental activity. A forester had prescribed certain vegetative management treatments in one area of the forest without telling others about the proposal. At a steering committee meeting the forester presented the proposal and timeline. After a member of the committee reviewed the maps, it was determined the area to be treated was located in an important research plot. This conflict was resolved through a discussion at the steering committee meeting.

- **A Significant Amount of Public Outreach and Education Has Been Accomplished**

A major strength of the project has been the emphasis placed on outreach to private landowners. As part of the business plan, the steering committee developed a communication plan strategy. Seven communication objectives resulted. They include the publication of a monthly newsletter, articles in the local newspapers, public meetings, as well as field visits with the public, media, and public officials. The catastrophic fires of 1996 made people aware of a problem, assisting the steering committee in promoting the project.

One of the biggest outreach successes has been giving people tours at the fuels reduction test sites on Denver Water property. These tours have allowed people outside of the USPWPRP to understand what the watershed project is about and what fuels treatments

look like. Because a majority of the project boundary occurs within the urban-rural interface zone, the State Forest Service hired a full-time forester to work with private landowners to identify defensible spaces and conduct fuel reduction treatments.

- **Innovative Thinking Expedited the Upper South Platte Watershed Landscape Assessment**

A landscape assessment was completed in August 1999 covering 645,000 acres of the Upper South Platte Watershed. USFS staff said the assessment was innovative because agency staff looked beyond traditional agency procedures to complete it in a shorter-than-usual amount of time. The shortened time frame was attributed to the use of the Colorado State University contracting office instead of the USFS contracting office. USFS staff found opposition to using an outside contractor because USFS regulations state when they fund over 50 percent of a project, the USFS contracting office must be used. Agency staff's experience was that using the internal USFS contracting office would slow the process, yet they needed to act fast to get the project completed. As a result, the Regional Forester approached Chief Dombeck directly to request a one-time waiver to use an outside contracting office, which was approved. This is an excellent example of the out-of-the-box thinking and breaking down barriers to get things done by some of the key partners of the project.

- **The Project Coordinator and Steering Committee Chair Have Provided Good Leadership for the Key Partners**

Several people said leadership from the project coordinator and the steering committee chair works effectively for the key partners. These two people promote innovation in order to find better ways of doing things. This is apparent in how USFS staff completed the Upper South Platte Watershed Landscape Assessment in a shorter than usual amount of time. The watershed project coordinator and steering committee chair are well respected. People say that they have been very responsive, are open to new ways of doing things, and work well together. This has created a good foundation for the group.

- **The USPWPRP Is Beginning to Evolve from a Demonstration Project to Standard Operating Procedure**

Several steering committee members had strong feelings that their watershed projects should not be considered Demonstration because they felt this should be the standard way

the agency operates. The Regional Forester and Colorado State Forester made this clear at the outset--it had to be a long-term effort, not a short-term pilot. A number of people said the project is beginning to move past the initial pilot phase and into a phase where things are becoming institutionalized.

Limitations and Obstacles

- **Existing USFS Units, Such as the Contracting Office, Have Not Necessarily Embraced the Means to Achieve Project Goals**

Although understanding and support for watershed-level partnership-based management is growing within the agency, many USFS employees said internal procedures and ingrained historical practices constrain the adoption of the new watershed approach. Because of the way the agency has historically operated, a number of people we interviewed said they felt the USFS contracting office was not comfortable with new contracting processes as it means changing what they have always done. On the other hand, the contracting office has multiple priorities. In addition, one USFS employee said the contracting office was under pressure from the national office because of questions related to performance audits and this was the reason for its reticence. Nevertheless, right or wrong, many people have the impression that it was resistance from the contracting office that led the Regional Forester to ask the Chief for a variance to the Forest Service policy that if the Forest Service covers more than 50 percent of the costs of a Challenge Cost Share Agreement, Forest Service contracting will issue the contract. The request for a variance on standing policy generated some hard feelings that have not yet completely subsided.

- **Government Agencies Dominate the Steering Committee**

The USFS has worked hard to include several groups in the steering committee, but the committee appears to have evolved into a predominantly governmental partnership. There are seven original primary partners that consist mostly of federal and state agencies, with one private group represented by the Upper South Platte Watershed Protection Association (USPWR). A number of people within government agencies and the private sector told us they feel the USFS, Colorado Forest Service, and Denver Water dominate the steering committee. Numerous people observed these three organizations hold most of the political power on the committee, are the most vocal about the type of management that should occur in the forest, and give the impression that their views represent the views of the community at large. People we spoke with said this alliance does not allow for participation or meaningful input from other groups. This has resulted in some groups dropping their support for the project.

This imbalance of power is evident in the text of the Business Plan. The partners are identified as being the USFS, the State FS, and Denver Water. The stakeholders are identified as being local and county governments, fire departments, landowners, and the business and environmental communities. The separation of partners and stakeholders results in little decision-making power by other agencies or stakeholders.

Representatives from the private and public sectors conveyed concerns about a perceived imbalance of power. They who told us when they questioned the steering committee's vegetative management activities, the three dominant players would not fully explain their plans. USFS staff, on the other hand, feels they have bent over backwards to address the questions raised by government agencies and stakeholders. Field trips and many meetings were held to discuss issues. These contradictory views suggest the presence of communication, decision-making, and power and authority problems--which people may equate as being an imbalance of power on the steering committee.

A few federal and non-federal government people we spoke with said they thought the real power does not lie within the steering committee, but with one individual in the District Office. These people feel this person uses the committee as a formal stamp to get his decisions approved. As a result, some people said the steering committee has no real power.

- **The Steering Committee's Governance Systems Are Not Working as Effectively as Many Would Like**

Following from the point above, through our interviews we heard a number of issues raised about the way in which information is shared and decisions are made by the steering committee. For example, some people are confused about the decision-making process because it appears to them decisions must go through the District Ranger prior to receiving approval. Despite the written statements provided in the Charter, many partners expressed confusion over the goals and expectations of their involvement. This confusion has resulted in some partners no longer participating. It appears as though the committee needs to re-clarify how decisions will be made (e.g. majority rule, consensus, etc.), if the Charter reflects the way people want core steering mechanisms to work, and how conflicts will be handled. For example, how will decisions be made when the USFS pursues projects on its lands that conflict with the views of other government agencies or private landowners and local governments? These and other key governance issues should be resolved.

Although there is no doubt USFS managers maintain the responsibility for making the ultimate decision, the tendency to centralize authority and decision-making in agency personnel undermines the basic purpose and goals of a community-based watershed project. While it appears paradoxical, to be successful in watershed partnerships, Forest Service decision-makers must retain their authority legally and, at the same time, decentralize decision making to partners and stakeholders. There are numerous training programs and books focused on how to accomplish these types of leadership tasks.

- **Some People Mistrust the True Intent and Outcome of Specific Projects**

Despite the stated purposes of the project, through our interviews we found people held many different theories as to the true purpose of the watershed project. They ranged from a belief that the primary purpose of the project was to benefit Denver Water by fireproofing the forest to protect the water supply, to a belief that the real purpose was to clear-cut the forest. The most apparent division is between the steering committee and environmental advocacy groups who appealed the EA decision for roadless areas. However, through our interviews we found even some USFS employees and other public agency employees had a hard time describing the true purpose of the project. Each of the key partners have different needs and hold different views about how the forest should be managed. The USPWPRP is also playing out amidst the national controversies surrounding the causes of and best solutions to forest health and fire problems. Nevertheless, the strong and divergent beliefs held by the three dominant agencies on the steering committee (USFS, State Forest Service, Denver Water) and other partners and stakeholders about the future of the watershed may make it difficult for the USPWPRP to find common ground and achieve long-term success.

- **Lingering Resentment Exists Due to the Perceived Go-It-Alone Attitude of the Steering Committee**

The partnership has provided an atmosphere whereby the key partners can propose new ideas. This approach was applauded by some and criticized by others. Some USFS staff feels that strong and decisive leadership is needed to overcome the procedural hurdles they believe stand in the way of actions to reduce the risk of fire and restore forest health. Other government partners and non-government stakeholders said this pattern has created an image of a hot-dog group that is fast and loose with regulations. One instance of being loose with the regulations was the example of the Regional Forester going directly to Chief Dombeck to request a waiver to use an outside contracting office. Our interviews found this resulted in resentment from some people within the USFS. At the same time, each of the partners acknowledged the assessment would not have gotten off the ground without this waiver.

Our interviews also found that many people feel that--right or wrong--the steering committee does not always seek or accept outside council or suggestions. Some government employees we spoke with feel that the cowboy attitude of the steering committee has contributed to threats of appeals, which may ultimately slow the process. In some cases we heard competing opinions and diverse ideas about needs and solutions are acceptable among the key members of the steering committee, but not from outside interests.

The failure to more fully engage and address the concerns of all stakeholders may delay the project and lead to withering long-term support.

- **Questions Exist About the Upper South Platte Watershed Landscape Assessment**

Some public agencies as well as private stakeholders feel the landscape assessment, completed in August 1999, was too broad and coarse-scale. However, USFS staff seems to like the fact the assessment was broad because it allows for flexibility in the field. Again, it must be noted these types of problems are not unique to the USPRP because the project is playing out amidst the context of a national debate surrounding the causes of and best solutions to forest health and fire problems. Although there are differences of opinion in how the assessment was completed, if consensus can be reached on the assessment it could provide the basis for the development of a common vision and action plan for the watershed.

- **Getting Projects On-The-Ground on USFS Land Has Been Difficult**

The USFS has struggled to get projects on the ground on their lands. Some progress has been made, but getting projects on the ground is a major drain of energy and money. A roadblock in getting projects to the ground is a disconnect with support within the USFS. In one instance, it took several months for USFS staff to receive computers to start work

on the watershed project. USFS and non-USFS committee members perceived this as the USFS not being supportive of the project. A number of agency staff told us they did not think other USFS staff members have buy-in on the success or failure of the project. Some members of the steering committee said another reason for delays in getting projects on the ground is USFS staff working on the project often ends up focusing on other issues during some months of the year (e.g. Christmas tree sales). This slows the progress of the watershed project and has created frustration among some members of the group.

Analysis

- **Several Key Concerns Have Not Surfaced in the Steering Committee and May Constrain Future Progress**

Despite the fact steering committee members said they felt the group communicated well, our research found several underlying issues that ultimately affect the project's distribution of power, trust, and decision-making mechanisms. Some people said private meetings have been held to resolve some of the problems, but none of these issues have been raised publicly. The fact that key issues were resolved in private, and not discussed with the entire steering committee, has obviously left some people with the belief the problems have not been resolved. On the other hand, a number of other government agencies said they did not want to publicly discuss problems for fear of jeopardizing inter-governmental relationships. Many partners within and outside of the USFS have suggested these key unspoken governance problems have slowed progress and resulted in some groups not participating. Lack of resolution and clarity on these issues may be a major barrier to future success.

- **Power Is Not Equally Distributed**

While the USFS has built a strong coalition with the Colorado State Forest Service and Denver Water, there appears to be problems related to the inclusion of other groups in the decision-making process. For example, despite apparently being asked to participate, no environmental groups are involved and only one group representing private landowners is involved. Some USFS staff believes this is not their problem--people were asked to participate but chose otherwise. Yet, this very attitude and the way it may play out in communication and decision-making may be at the core of the problem. Many people we spoke with from government agencies told us the USFS is used to doing things in a certain way and to being in control and not listening to other group's suggestions. This has led to an unwillingness to meaningfully respond to issues raised by outsiders. As a result, groups resort to actions such as administrative appeals in order to get their issues or concerns expressed to the USFS. Despite the way the original MOU and Charter were written, effective partnerships require individual players be willing to relinquish some of their authority and control to the whole, even as they retain the ultimate legal responsibility for their lands. Until this occurs, many types of tensions and disruptions may exist.

- **Many People Believe the USFS Remains Too Inwardly Focused**

Almost every non-USFS person and private landowner we spoke with felt the USFS has improved its ability to work with other government agencies. At the same time, these people said the agency still does not understand nor know how to interact with the smaller governmental and non-governmental partners. Numerous people said the agency remains most comfortable directing activities, as it does on its own land, without input from others. On the other hand, some agency staff members believe the watershed project has allowed them to operate differently and get much-needed projects going to reduce the

risk of fire and improve forest health. It appears as though much greater two-way listening and dialogue is needed to bridge the gaps between the way the USFS views itself and the way many partners and external stakeholders view the agency.

- **The Unresolved Governance Issues Are a Constraint to Future Progress**

The questions about which entities to engage in the steering committee and how to share and distribute power and decision-making authority between large and small partners suggest key governance questions need to be clarified. The issue of how decisions will be made must also be resolved. Lack of clarity on these issues may be the major barrier to long-term support and success.

- **Despite the Obstacles, People Are Working Together and Progress Is Being Made**

Almost everyone we interviewed had strong feelings about the continuation of the watershed project and felt if it did not continue, catastrophic fires would continue and more homes and lives would be lost. Most people feel that the partners have overcome some important hurdles and are now starting to work together more effectively. Most people believe the partnership would continue even if large-scale watershed programs were no longer a priority of the Chief's office, because it is a priority of the state. Several steering committee members stated they would complain loudly if the USFS discontinued funding and would appeal to higher authorities to continue the program. Entering a drought year in Colorado, where the risk of fire seems very high, exemplifies the need to continue this project.

Recommendations

- **An Independent Science Panel Should Review the Assessment and Proposed Treatments**

Given the concerns we heard about the landscape assessment and fuel reduction projects, it may be prudent to subject them to review by an independent scientific committee. A team of academic scientists could be organized for this purpose. Although this requires additional time and resources, vetting the work through an independent team may alleviate the concerns we heard and therefore lead to few objections and greater long-term support.

- **Develop a Clear Governance Structure and System For the Partnership**

Due to the overwhelming sense that three partners govern the partnership, it is essential to reach a balance of power and improve communication and authority relationships. There are a number of ways in which watershed partnerships can be structured. There are also a number of ways in which decisions can be made. The governance structure and system chosen should be based on the needs and goals of all of those with interests in, or who are affected by, activities within the basin. This process could start by asking all of the partners to examine the needs, perspectives, and operating styles of the other partners. Based on this assessment, the most appropriate structure and decision-making system can be chosen.

- **Broaden Representation on the Steering Committee**

Although the Forest Service has worked hard to engage diverse interests in the process, the existing make-up of the steering committee means the Forest Service deals primarily with other government agencies. Given the concerns we consistently heard that the current committee does not represent the full range of interests, expanding the group may be prudent. If people can become convinced that a more inclusive governance system will ensure they have a meaningful say in the way decisions are made, more private landowners, environmental interests, and others may be willing to join the steering committee. To expand the membership, new participants will need to feel comfortable that their views will be heard, that they will have equal power within the group, and that they will not be overwhelmed or intimidated by those with different views. Broadening the committee may therefore not be possible until a new governance structure is developed. It will also require willingness among the current partners to listen to and accept the validity of the views and needs of others.

- **Institute a Process to Surface and Openly Discuss Major Issues and to Develop Further Agreement On Vision, Goals, And Strategy**

One way to enhance the governance system and provide assurance to others that their participation in the steering committee will lead to meaningful decisions is to ensure that some of the unspoken concerns we heard are surfaced and openly discussed. Only though

an open discussion--as difficult as this may be--can areas of common agreement be found on the vision, goals, and strategy for the watershed program. This will require careful thought and planning and is certain to be fraught with problems. Some people may not want to participate in more group processes given the concerns we heard about delays that have occurred in getting projects on the ground. Some USFS staff may feel people can today come and discuss their concerns and the failure to do so is not the problem of the steering committee members. This is false. When people fear or hesitate to engage in open discussion, it usually indicates two-way problems related to trust, authority, and power. The failure to surface and address the unspoken issues of concern and to make progress on the development of a unified vision, goals, and strategy may threaten the entire long-term prognosis of the community-based watershed project.

- **The USFS and Members of the Steering Committee May Benefit From a Dialogue to Clarify the Meaning of Collaboration and Partnership Building**

The different viewpoints we heard about the capacity of the USFS and others on the steering committee to engage in true collaboration suggests that a meaningful dialogue is needed to clarify what true collaboration and partnership-building involve. At least two aspects of landscape-level community-based watershed management must be clarified. One element has to do with the nature of the work. Is this an effort to accomplish a new set of goals related to watershed health or a way to get additional funds to achieve old goals? In many cases it is both, but evidence found from our interviews is that confusion exists around this element. A second element has to do with how the work is to be carried out. For some, partnership means any kind of collaborative effort between the Forest Service and other actors. For others, community-based is the key phrase and their interest and focus is on engaging the local community and local interests. These two views can lead to very different organizing and decision-making processes.

The confusion about collaboration suggests the USFS and the steering committee would benefit by a meaningful dialogue to clarify what landscape-level, community-based and partnership-based thinking, practices, and outcomes involve. Failure to clarify these issues seems likely to leave the watershed project mired in controversy and stuck in a crisis response mode of operation.