

**LESSONS LEARNED
FROM THE USDA FOREST SERVICE COMMUNITY-
BASED WATERSHED RESTORATION
PARTNERSHIPS**

**An Assessment of the Accomplishments, Limitations, and
Transferable Knowledge**

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
Introduction, Background and Purpose of the Lessons Learned Report.....	1
Methodology.....	2
Overall Findings.....	4
Specific Accomplishments.....	6
Summary of on-the-ground accomplishments.....	6
Summary of socio-economic accomplishments.....	7
Summary of partnership-based achievements.....	8
Summary of internal Forest Service achievements.....	10
Limitations and Obstacles.....	12
Summary of obstacles to successful partnership development.....	12
Summary of obstacles to internal Forest Service organizational success.....	15
Lessons Learned and Recommendations.....	17

Lessons Learned from the USDA Forest Service Community-Based Watershed Restoration Partnerships

Executive Summary

This report assesses the successes, limitations, knowledge and lessons that can be obtained from the large-scale marshalling of people and resources involved with the USDA Forest Service Community-Based Watershed Restoration Partnerships (CBWRP).

In 1999, the Forest Service initiated the CBWRP with the goal of testing innovative approaches to landscape-level, partnership-based land and water restoration. Fifteen watersheds located across the nation were involved in the program and the Forest Service invested over \$100 million in the effort. In 2002, a formative review of the CBWRP was completed for FY 2000 through 2002. This "lessons learned" report builds on the 2002 review and provides a comprehensive assessment of the CBWRP from FY2000-05. The assessment methodology included a combination of questionnaires and phone interviews.

Five key overall findings resulted from our study: 1) The CBWRP produced many notable economic, social, and environmental achievements; 2) The CBWRP accomplished its goal as a learning lab; 3) The most important long-term outcome may be an expanded way of thinking; 4) Most programs that struggled or failed to live up to their initial goals did not expand their way of thinking; 5) As with many experiments in large organizations, the Forest Service has struggled to embed the knowledge generated by the CBWRP in its internal systems and structure.

The study found that the CBWRP produced a significant number of on-the-ground accomplishments ranging from restoring thousands of acres of riparian, uplands and wetlands, completing numerous instream habitat improvement projects, wildfire improvements, and other projects. The CBWRP also produced some important socio-economic benefits. For example, based on the data provided to us, all told over 2000 people were involved, over 220 people were employed in some capacity (full, part time, temporary or contract), and materials or services were purchased from 83 businesses.

Our review found that the CBWRP produced a number of achievements regarding its ability to develop effective partnerships. For example: a) Forest Service leadership was the driving force behind the development and success of most watershed partnerships; b) The CBWRP was most successful where it fully engaged local civic capacity; c) Most CBWRP projects enhanced local networking and communication; d) Most CBWRP projects generated increased understanding and awareness among participants; e) The CBWRP increased support for the Forest Service within many communities; and f) The CBWRP fostered a number of new initiatives.

The CBWRP also produced a number of achievements related in internal Forest Service operations. For example: a) The CBWRP created an opportunity for visionary agency

employees to step forward; b) Although often temporary, new positions were created within the agency to coordinate the CBWRP; c) The CBWRP demonstrated that the agency could successfully take on big complicated challenges; d) In some cases, the CBWRP won awards and provided a model for others.

Although the CBWRP produced many achievements, a number of obstacles were identified through our review that constrained success. Understanding the nature of these constraints may allow the Forest Service to improve its ability to engage in landscape-level, partnership-based restoration. For example: a) Not all CBWRP partnerships were successful or seen as valuable; b) Although vital to initiating watershed programs, the timing and amount of funding provided by the Forest Service was often problematic; c) The loss of funding threatens the remaining ongoing programs; d) Where Forest Service employees or its partners saw the CBWRP simply as a source of additional funding the partnership, the program struggled or failed to deliver long-term outcomes; e) The competitive nomination process used to launch the initiative caused start-up problems for some programs; f) The Forest Service sometimes created false expectations related to funding which led to disappointment and cynicism among partners; g) Some people question how funding was used; h) The geographic scope of some partnerships was too large; and i) Some of the watershed partnerships failed to produce a common vision or gain the commitment consistent participation needed among partners.

A number of constraints specifically related to internal Forest Service operations were also identified. For example, many of those we interviewed told us the agency often: a) Lacked sufficient technical expertise and staff to effectively participate in landscape-level, partnership-based restoration; b) Lacked support and involvement in the CBWRP at all levels of the organization; c) Did not adequately support employees who were visionary leaders; d) Has not resolved tension between the requirements of landscape-level, partnership-based restoration and traditional Forest Service "inside the green line" approach, which in some (but not all) National Forests makes it difficult for agency staff to fully engage in the new model.

Based on these strengths and limitations, we identified seven major lessons or areas of enhanced knowledge that the Forest Service can use to increase its ability to operate landscape-level, partnership-based restoration programs:

1) The first and most important lesson that can be obtained from the CBWRP is that when organized, structured and funded effectively, in many situations landscape-level, partnership-based restoration is a preferred approach because it is more practical, efficient, effective, and appealing to the public. We therefore recommend that the Forest Service carefully examine the benefits of this approach and determine where, when, and how the agency can use it to resolve many of the challenges it faces today.

2) The second lesson that can be taken from the CBWRP is that partnership-based programs are most likely to succeed where civic capacity is high. We therefore

recommend that, when possible, the Forest Service should prioritize partnership-based programs in regions where civic capacity is high. However, it is often areas without high civic capacity that require significant restoration work. In this case, the Forest Service may need to invest considerable time and resources cultivating influential public and private community leaders prior to launching major restoration projects. This approach would reassert a historic Forest Service tradition of involvement in local community activities.

3) The third lesson that can be taken is the importance that visionary energetic agency employees (and partners) play in organizing partnerships, resolving complex problems, and producing success. We therefore recommend that the agency make it a priority to identify and provide employees who have the ability to think differently with the flexibility and time to engage in partnerships and test out innovative solutions, even if their styles may run counter to agency norms.

4) A fourth lesson learned is that a long time horizon and clear participation guidelines are necessary for success in landscape-level, partnership-based programs. We therefore recommend that, if the Forest Service wants to engage in the new approach, it must make a long-term commitment of funding and resources and make the terms of engagement clear to all potential partners and participants.

5) A fifth lesson is that enhanced understanding and skills among Forest Service employees are required for long-term success with landscape-level, partnership-based restoration. We therefore recommend that the agency promote internal staff education and training programs and encourage and support staff attendance in external professional development training programs. In addition, education and training programs should be offered to public, private, and non-profit partners involved with partnerships.

6) A sixth lesson, one that was not universally held but was nevertheless a common theme, is that many Forest Service employees said the conflicts between landscape-level, partnership-based restoration and the traditional "inside the green line" agency approach diminished their ability and commitment to participate in watershed partnerships. We therefore recommend that the Forest Service clearly declare its intentions regarding landscape-level, partnership-based restoration and let employees and its partners know the extent to which the organization is committed to this approach.

7) The final overall lesson that can be taken from the CBWRP is that the greatest benefits of the initiative will accrue only if specific steps are taken to embed the new approach in the core structures and systems of the Forest Service. We therefore recommend that a systematic effort be made to examine and adjust agency policies, programs, and procedures to ensure they support employee thinking and behavior consistent with landscape-level, partnership-based restoration and discourage actions inconsistent with the new approach.

**Lessons Learned from the USDA Forest Service
Community-Based Watershed Restoration Partnerships**

I. Introduction, Background and Purpose of the Lessons Learned Report

This report assesses the successes, limitations and lessons that can be learned from the large-scale marshalling of people and resources involved with the USDA Forest Service Community-Based Watershed Restoration Partnerships (CBWRP).

In 1999, the Forest Service initiated the CBWRP with the goal of demonstrating how the agency can best be involved with and support landscape (watershed) level partnership-based approaches to land and water restoration. Twelve watersheds from across the nation were initially chosen to participate in the program. Three additional watersheds were included in 2000-2001 for a total of fifteen projects. This report summarizes the findings of a comprehensive review of those projects from FY2000-05.

Fifteen Large-Scale Watershed Restoration Projects	States Involved
Bitterroot	MT
Blue Mountains Demonstration Area	
Chattooga River Watershed	GA, NC, SC
Conasauga River Watershed	GA, TN
Lost Rivers National Learning Site	ID
Lower Mississippi Alluvial Delta	AR, IL, KY, LA, MO, MS, TN
Pacific Coast Watershed	OR, WA
Potomac River Watershed	DC, PA, MD, VA
Rio Peñasco Watershed	NM
St. Joe Ecosystem	ID
Upper Kootenai Watershed	MT
Upper Sevier River Community Watershed	UT
Upper South Platte Watershed	CO
White River	VT
Upper Pit River	CA

The CBWRP was an ambitious effort to test new ways for the Forest Service to define and accomplish its mission and goals. The specific goals were to design and try out innovative approaches to improve water flow and quality, aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity, and forest and range conditions, and to reduce the risk of fire at the river basin or landscape scales.

Since its inception, the Forest Service Washington Office has invested roughly \$100 million in CBWRP programs, which are located across the nation. This is a significant investment by the Forest Service of both funding and human resources. In addition, numerous local and state government agencies, non-profits, universities, and private landowners and organizations invested direct and in-kind time, money, and other resources in the CBWRP. Due to the large scale of this investment, the Cooperative Forestry staff in the State and Private Forestry Deputy Area, and Policy Analysis staff in

the Programs, Legislation, and Communication Deputy Area of the Forest Service, decided it was important to understand the overall accomplishments, weaknesses, and larger lessons and possibilities that can be drawn from the CBWRP.

In 2002, Bob Doppelt and Craig Shinn of Portland State University (Doppelt has since moved to the University of Oregon) carried out a formative review of the CBWRP from FY 2000 through 2002. That report provided the agency with a mid-term assessment of the strengths and limitations of the CBWRP---those elements that at the time helped and hindered progress on landscape-level, partnership based restoration.

This "lessons learned" report builds on the 2002 review. It seeks to assess the accomplishments and barriers to success from the project's inception in 1999 through 2005. It also seeks to help the Forest Service and its many public and private partners understand the knowledge gained from the large-scale marshaling of forces involved with the CBWRP. These lessons learned might provide guidance to the Forest Service should it decide to pursue future landscape-level, partnership-based restoration efforts.

Bob Doppelt, Director of Resource Innovations, a sustainable development research and technical assistance program at the University of Oregon, and Principal with Factor 10 Inc., was contracted by the Forest Service to produce this assessment. Greta Onsgaard, graduate student alumni from the University of Oregon, assisted Mr. Doppelt.

Our research found that the CBWRP was very successful in achieving its ultimate goal of providing a learning lab for a new approach to restoration. There is much for the Forest Service and the many partners involved with the CBWRP to be proud of. At the same time, we also found a number of obstacles that are likely to constrain future similar efforts. By understanding these lessons, the Forest Service and its partners may be able to enhance future landscape-level, partnership-based programs.

II. Methodology

The methodology used to assess the lessons learned from the CBWRP included a combination of questionnaires and personal interviews. A questionnaire was developed by the researchers and distributed by the Forest Service Washington Office to individuals formerly involved with each of the CBWRP projects. The questionnaire sought quantitative data about the on-the ground projects completed by each watershed partnership. Phone interviews were conducted to ascertain participant views of the outcomes of the on-the-ground projects as well as the results of the partnership work and lessons they have learned based on their experience in the project. The rationale and methodology of these procedures is described below.

Questionnaire

From 2000-02, almost all of the CBWRP projects published annual reports that listed some of the on-the ground projects and other accomplishments produced in those years. Most projects did not publish an annual report after 2002. The questionnaire developed for this lessons-learned report sought to bring the information about the on-the-ground

activities up-to-date through 2005. It also sought information on funding, and other accomplishments achieved from 2000 through 2005. See the Appendix for a copy of the questionnaire.

Information and data on the accomplishments found in the annual reports produced between 2000-02 were grouped into similar categories to form the basis of the categories for the questionnaire. Based on the data contained in the 2000-02 annual reports, 14 categories were created for the questionnaire. Each category has specific questions describing the outputs of on-the-ground projects under each category. For example, under the category “Road Improvements” a question asks about the number of miles of road that have been maintained, restored, or reconditioned.

The questionnaire was distributed via email to 100 current and former CBWRP participants from multiple organizations (Forest Service and other federal, state, local, private, partners, etc.). Participants chosen to receive the questionnaire were selected based on a list of contacts gathered from the 2000-2002 annual reports and from the Forest Service Washington Office (WO). Questionnaires (or information that answers the questions) were received from nine of the fifteen CBWRP projects.¹ Questionnaires were not received from the Blue Mountains, Chattooga, Conasauga, Upper Kootenai, Lower Mississippi, and Lost Rivers projects. However, phone interviews were held with people formerly involved in each of these partnerships with the exception of the Conasauga and Upper Kootenai. Upon receiving the completed questionnaires, the data was entered in an Excel spreadsheet and the summary table found in the Appendix was produced.

Interviews

Phone interviews were conducted to ascertain current and former CBWRP participants’ views of both the on-the-ground activities and the lessons they learned from participating in the project. See the Appendix for the interview questions. In most cases, the interview was conducted after we received the questionnaire, but in some cases the interview was conducted before the questionnaire was received because respondents said the survey took too long to complete. Individuals formerly involved with the CBWRP who did not want or were unable to complete a questionnaire were also interviewed.

Over 70 interviews were requested and 30 were completed representing 13 of the 15 CBWRP project. Semi-structured interviews were conducted that ranged between 30-60 minutes. We sought to interview a variety of current and former Forest Service employees as well as stakeholders involved in the CBWRP projects. Interviewees were selected based on a list of contacts gathered from the annual reports and through the help of the WO. In some cases, we were able to interview several participants from a single CBWRP project, while in other cases interviews were limited to one person.

The interviews sought information on the following five overall issues:

¹ We received a packet of information from one of the watersheds and had to fill out the questionnaire ourselves

1. Views on the scope and effectiveness of on-the-ground projects (outputs).
2. The degree of contribution the CBWRP made in enabling those outputs to be achieved and activities that would not have been possible without the CBWRP.
3. Limitations or obstacles faced by the CBWRP that constrained it from achieving more.
4. Looking back, actions that could have improved or enhanced the CBWRP and what could have been done differently.
5. Given their experiences in the CBWRP, recommendations for the Forest Service regarding how future landscape-level, partnership-based land and water management efforts can be enhanced.

III. Overall Findings

1) The CBWRP Produced Many Notable Economic, Social, and Environmental Achievements

The CBWRP produced much for the Forest Service to be proud of. Our review found that the investment made by the Forest Service resulted in numerous beneficial on-the-ground land and water restoration activities. Most of the watershed programs implemented successful restoration projects. The CBWRP also enhanced the knowledge, skills, and understanding of landscape-level (watershed) restoration among Forest Service employees and the agency's many public, private, and non-profit partners. The building of numerous networks and support groups, often referred to as capacity building, is another important outcome of the CBWRP. In many cases, dialogue among community members, partners, and Forest Service employees improved significantly, leading to lasting relationships and cooperative approaches to restoration that are still operating today.

2) The CBWRP Accomplished its Goal as a Learning Lab

The CBWRP was an experimental program designed to determine how the Forest Service could best engage in landscape (watershed) level, partnership-based restoration. As those who initiated the program hoped, our review found that the experiment produced numerous positive outcomes that benefit the watersheds, communities, private landowners, public agencies, and Forest Service. At the same time, the CBWRP experienced a number of disappointments, mistakes, and a few programs failed to achieve almost any of their original objectives. The mix of successes and mistakes is just what should be expected from this type of large-scale experiment. People learn from both success and failure. The CBWRP therefore should be considered a success in that it offers the Forest Service and its partners fertile soil for learning how to enhance their ability to manage at the landscape level and work in collaboration with public, private, and non-profit parties. As a result of the CBWRP, some of the projects are still viewed

as national demonstration areas of how to effectively conduct large-scale partnership-based restoration activities. This underscores the long-term influence of the CBWRP.

3) The Most Important Long-Term Outcome May Be an Expanded Way of Thinking

Throughout our research, one theme continuously emerged: the CBWRP helped personnel from both the Forest Service and its many partners learn to think in new and expanded ways. The idea of managing at the landscape level as opposed to the project, forest, or unit levels alone, is new to many people. Similarly, the notion that the Forest Service can often accomplish more by working in collaborative partnerships with federal, state, local and private partners than it can on its own is also different from the traditional agency model. Our research found that these two ideas have taken root in many watersheds and with many partners due to the CBWRP. Although not all of the 15 watershed projects embraced these concepts, our research found that the achievements and learning were greatest in those programs where the Forest Service and its partners embraced landscape-level, partnership-based thinking and management. The majority of those that saw the CBWRP as a new way of doing business and took advantage of the opportunity to develop strong relationships with several partners also continued after Forest Service funding ended and many have grown and prospered.

4) Most Struggles and Disappointments Occurred Where New Thinking Did Not Take Hold

Following from the point above, our research found that watershed programs that viewed the CBWRP primarily as a way to obtain additional funding for existing projects or operations, rather than as a new way of doing business, experienced significant problems and most ended or significantly slowed soon after the funding stream stopped. The amount, type, or timing of funding provided by the Forest Service was a problem for almost all of the watershed projects. Sometimes too much money was provided too quickly off the top, other times not enough was provided to allow the projects to successfully incubate and sometimes no money at all was delivered. However, our research found that funding was most troublesome in those projects that did not embrace the vision of working in collaboration with multiple partners at the landscape level. These efforts struggled to get projects on-the-ground, resolve internal Forest Service or inter-agency conflicts, or build the capacity needed to sustain themselves over time. In contrast, most of the programs that embraced the new expanded vision were able to overcome funding problems and build internal capacity.

5) As With Many Experiments in Large Organizations, The Forest Service Has Struggled to Embed the New Knowledge in its Internal Culture and Operations

Although, as one person put it, the CBWRP "advanced the ball" on thinking and acting at the landscape level in collaborative partnerships, our research found that much of the knowledge generated through the program has not been fully institutionalized in the systems and structures of the Forest Service. For example, although not a universal comment, a surprising numerous Forest Service employees told us they continue to

struggle with conflicts between the traditional "inside the green line" agency thinking and approach and the new landscape-level, partnership-based model. In addition, a number of interviewees said few personnel policies and procedures related to hiring, time allocation, benefits, and promotion or restoration planning have changed as a result of the CBWRP.

In sum, it appears that a number of former participants feel the Forest Service has not made a sufficient commitment to landscape-level, partnership-based restoration. Consequently, many of the Forest Service's internal systems and structures do not yet seem to support and some often work against the thinking and behaviors tested and refined by the CBWRP. The lack of integration has made it difficult for a number of Forest Service employees to continue their participation in the CBWRP or to engage in landscape-level work with multiple partners in their regular jobs. When the CBWRP started in 1999, many of the watersheds had a few influential people from the Forest Service leading the effort who inspired people to think differently. However, many of these people are no longer involved with the initiative. Turnover among Forest Service employees and lack of leadership in general has made it increasingly difficult to continue the effort.

IV. Specific Accomplishments

1. Summary of On-The-Ground Project Accomplishments

The Community-Based Watershed Restoration Partnerships produced many important, tangible on-the-ground accomplishments including restoration of wetlands, riparian zones, and upland wildlife habitat. Projects addressed forest health treatments, including thinning, fuels reduction, prescribed fire and tree planting. They also treated noxious weeds, rehabilitated roads, and improved recreational sites and trails. Numerous federal, state, and local governments, private parties, and non-profits were engaged in the projects. Based on data obtained from the annual reports and from our survey, from FY 2000 to 2005, the CBWRP programs produced the following on-the-ground accomplishments (See the Appendix for a complete list of accomplishments.):

- Restored/enhanced over 80,000 acres of riparian, upland, and wetlands.
- Planted over 3.5 million feet of buffer along streams.
- Completed over 242,300 feet of in-stream restoration construction.
- Improved the health of over 230,700 acres of forests through the use of thinning, prescribed fire, fuels reduction, and tree planting.
- Implemented over 990 defensible space plans to protect homes from forest fires.
- Maintained, restored, or reconditioned over 4,300 miles of roads.
- Maintained or restored over 1,000 miles of trails.
- Rehabilitated over 278 campsites.
- Treated, restored, or enhanced over 42,100 acres of habitat and browse for wildlife.
- Treated over 64,800 acres of noxious weeds.
- Watershed assessments were completed for over 2.79 million acres of land.
- Completed over 4 community fire plans.

- Planted over 2.4 million trees.
- Restored or improved over 630 acres of grasslands.
- Monitored, inventoried, or surveyed over 2,000 miles of streams/rivers.

2. Summary of Socio-Economic Accomplishments

According to the information provided to us, the on-the-ground outputs combined to produce a number of socio-economic achievements. For example:

- From FY 2000 to 2005, more than 1,800 people were involved with the CBWRP.
- More than 215,000 person hours were invested.
- Over 240 partners have been involved in some way with the program.
- Over 310 conservation workshops were held and more than 70 educational presentations were made.
- The CBWRP employed over 220 people on a full, part-time, temporary or contract basis during the duration of the program.
- The CBWRP purchased products or services from over 83 businesses.

3. Summary Of Partnership-Based Achievements

a. Forest Service Leadership Was the Driving Force Behind the Development and Success of Most Partnerships

The Forest Service provided the vision, technical assistance, encouragement, and often the initial funds needed to launch most of the CBWRP projects. In most cases, the partnerships came about directly because of the effort of the former Inter-deputy Area Water Coordinator, and other WO staff who met with local forest employees, encouraged them to organize a group and apply for entry in the program, and often offered start up funds. Numerous Regional and local Forest Service employees then picked up the ball and organized diverse stakeholder groups to participate in the project. For example, as a direct result of agency involvement diverse interests came together in the Pacific Coast, Potomac, St. Joe, Upper Pit, Upper South Platte, White River, and Bitterroot projects to work toward common goals. People involved with the White River CBWRP said Forest Service funding allowed them to hire staff that was critical to running the project. Forest Service line officers we interviewed involved with the Rio Peñasco project said that if the WO of the Forest Service had not provided start up funds, the agency would not have been able to show others why watershed level work is important, participate in on-the-ground projects, listen and work with the many partners, or learn how others solve problems. In sum, leadership by Forest Service employees at the WO, Regional and local Forest levels provided the vision, encouragement and initial funding to get CBWRP programs up and running.

b. The CBWRP Was Most Successful Where It Fully Engaged Local Civic Capacity

CBWRP programs appeared most successful in those regions or communities where the Forest Service or its partners made extensive efforts to reach out and involve the existing "civic capacity" of the area of community. Civic capacity can be thought of as the social capital (the established network of possible partners), community competence (variety and abundance of knowledge, skill, and ability of possible partners), and civic enterprise (history of collective action among possible partners). Partners may include local governments, non-profits, special districts, schools, private businesses and landowners, and others. The Upper Pitt, White, Potomac, Pacific and others achieved their success because staff from the National Forest System or State and Private Forestry (as was the case in many of the Northeast CBWRPs) made an explicit effort to engage local partners in new or expanded ways. In contrast, programs that did not make extensive efforts to understand and engage existing civic capacity ended up as the least effective.

c. Most CBWRP Projects Enhanced Local Networking and Communication

The CBWRP successfully brought many diverse people, public agencies, and non-profit organizations together and built numerous networks, many of which continue to exist today, often in somewhat different forms. For example, the Rio Peñasco partnership has become a Community Wildfire Restoration Plan and led to the formation of a National Forest Restoration Partnership. Our research found that a majority of CBWRP participants feel that the collaboration with multiple partners increased dialogue and led to more effective planning and project development. The St. Joe partnership, for example, led to a great willingness of people working and talking together. The Upper Pit River CBWRP promoted the idea of working with multiple agencies and private parties at a larger scale than just the project level. This stimulated new ideas and expanded restoration and management efforts. The Potomac project brought State Foresters into the partnership at a more involved rate than ever before, which stimulated new dialogue and cooperation.

The CBWRP also helped to increase dialogue between Forest Service staff and its partners. For example, the Rio Peñasco CBWRP provided a platform to increase camaraderie between the agency and local community, which previously often saw the Forest Service as an adversary. Even though the Lost Rivers CBWRP was not successful in implementing on-the-ground projects due to concerns from local stakeholders that could not be overcome, it offered agency staff and partners the opportunity to work with a world-renowned person in range management for free and to engage in a new and interesting project.

d. Most CBWRP Projects Generated Increased Understanding and Awareness

Our research found that the increased communication and partnership-based planning that occurred within most CBWRP programs led to increased understanding of watershed problems and helped build trust among agencies and people that often saw things

differently. For example, in the St. Joe program, working with partners and with county commissioners gave CBWRP participants a broader understanding and appreciation of what was occurring in the watershed and the importance of improving stream quality. In the Potomac, improved relationships among various agencies led people who were planting trees to begin to understand the value of forests to the ecosystem.

The Upper Pit enabled a healthy exchange of information among partners to help solve critical resource issues within the watershed. Our interviews found that people involved with the Pacific Coast Initiative felt the CBWRP helped broaden the understanding of watershed work that was already being done, what the priority needs were, and the importance of watershed health. The solid working relationships that resulted led to increased trust and instilled a better understanding of the ecology of the forests among environmental groups, state and federal agencies, and other partners. This allowed knowledge about the problems and solutions to be expanded to a level not previously possible. Some people involved with the Bitterroot project said that, although the CBWRP program did not result in a long term sustained partnership, by emphasizing the need to work at the landscape level with all of the key public and private stakeholders, a new idea was planted that local people carry forward to this day. Although the Lost Rivers project did not accomplish its initial goals, people we talked with said that reaching out to multiple partners opened the minds of some people to change.

e. The CBWRP Increased Support for the Forest Service Within Many Communities

The act of reaching out to local governments, private landowners, and non-profit organizations, and the new forms of information and knowledge sharing that occurred among many partners led to increased support for the Forest Service within many communities. For example, our interviews found that involving new partners in the Upper Pit project reduced animosity toward the Forest Service within the region and increased support and involvement with the agency. As one person said, this was "paramount in making it successful." A number of people involved in the Potomac partnership said that because the program took a "government follow, not lead" approach, concerns held by some community members about the governments role in land management were reduced and support for the Forest Service increased due to the CBWRP.

In the Upper South Platte, people said greater trust in the Forest Service now exists among members of the environmental community because of the relationships and alliances that have been built. Those relationships led to a more unified understanding of the ecology of the forests among the many public and private partners involved with the South Platte project. In the Blue Mountain demo area, a dialogue was created between state agencies, the county, and other partners. Although people said many of these relationships existed before the project began, the Blue Mountain demo helped strengthen the bonds and helped people address issues on both private and public lands.

f. The CBWRP Fostered a Number of New Initiatives

The relationships that were created or strengthened as a result of the CBWRP spurred a number of new projects and initiatives. For example, in 2002 the Rio Peñasco program solidified into a group with common goals that is still working together. Political leaders at the national, state, and local levels joined to support the collaborative effort, which was expanded to a much larger geographic area and a pilot project resulted that was proposed to Congressional leaders. The National Forest County Partnership Restoration Program (CRP) resulted as an innovative proposal to restore watersheds and larger landscapes to more sustainable conditions in three pilot Forests. The Upper South Platte CBWRP was deemed a model for the State of Colorado, which led to the creation of the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership with the goal of reducing wildland fire risks through sustained fuels treatment along the Colorado Front Range. Our interviews found that people associated with the St. Joe project feel that the CBWRP provided an invaluable opportunity to talk to and learn from national groups. The Potomac CBWRP resulted in the creation of the Growing Native program where people collect seeds from the forest trees, donate them to nurseries where they are grown into seedlings, and then eventually brought back to be planted in the watershed. In addition, the Potomac created the Plant a Seed environmental education program, which helps urban school children learn about watersheds, riparian areas, and water quality.

4. Summary of Internal Forest Service Achievements

a. The CBWRP Created an Opportunity for Visionary People to Step Forward

Our research found that many people believe the CBWRP allowed Forest Service personnel who are passionate about landscape-level work or partnership-based approaches to step forward and act on those beliefs. For example, we heard that visionary Forest Service employees were instrumental in marketing, getting people out in the field, and sharing knowledge about the project in the Blue Mountains, Pacific Coast, Upper Pit and other CBWRP programs. In each case, one or two visionary Forest Service employees made the partnership successful. They encouraged participants to join together and do their best to create something larger than what any single individual or organization could achieve on their own. These people also helped others obtain the tools and funding required for accomplishing landscape-level restoration work.

In the Potomac CBWRP, for example, Forest Service employees worked closely with other partners to build the consensus needed to sustain the partnership over the long run. Many people told us that the Forest Service did a good job of listening to many sides of an issue and bringing people to consensus. Because of agency staff, we were told that the CBWRP enabled local efforts to, “widen the circle of influence and restoration work.” Numerous interviewees involved with the Upper Pit said visionary Forest Service personnel were initially discounted but eventually proven correct when they stuck by their conviction that pulling together numerous public and private partners to create the CBWRP would pay off handsomely for the agency and the landscape. In the Pacific Coast and Rio Peñasco programs, Forest Service staff helped build key relationships.

Many people told us that local agency personnel encouraged and held people accountable and worked very hard to provide others with the tools needed to do the work. Our interviews found that Forest Service employees were especially helpful in the Blue Mountain demo project in getting people into the field to communicate about and advocate for on-the-ground projects.

b. The CBWRP Created New Positions Within the Agency

Our research found that in a number of cases new positions were created within the Forest Service as a result of the CBWRP, which were critical in helping the partnerships succeed. For example, the Blue Mountain demo project hired a staff member as a community change agent (coordinator) to help coordinate with the regional and national offices. In the Potomac project, a specific decision was made to hire a project coordinator through a local non-profit, not as a Forest Service employee. Their job was to enhance communication and coordination among partners. This structure helped ensure that things ran smoothly. Interviewees said that having sufficient money to hire and support a coordinator's role has been paramount in making the Potomac project a success. A coordinator was also hired for the Upper Sevier project, which was critical in ensuring that a person had the responsibility of making sure projects were completed on federal, state, and private land.

c. The CBWRP Demonstrated That Big Challenges could be Addressed

When management is focused on isolated units or limited to Forest Service lands only, it is often difficult for agency personnel to understand how their efforts can help resolve broader landscape-level problems. Our research found that in a number of cases the CBWRP helped Forest Service personnel see how their work affected the larger landscape and provided encouragement that major ecological problems could be resolved. For example, in the Pacific Coast initiative, private industrial timberland owners as well as small woodlot owners are identifying fish passage barriers throughout the entire basin through a collaborative effort. In addition, a significant effort has been made to develop biological priority systems for addressing the barriers. Even in some watershed programs that did not meet their initial goals, such as the Bitterroot, Lost Rivers, and Lower Mississippi, interviewees said the CBWRP produced benefits such as the introduction of the new idea of a landscape-level planning and management and the creation or strengthening of individual relationships and partnerships with key organizations that remain important today.

d. In Some Cases the CBWRP Won Awards and Provided a Model For Others

Our research found that a number of CBWRP projects became models for watershed projects throughout the local area and United States. For example, the Pacific Coast Initiative received something akin to the "Nobel" prize, known as the Thiess International River Prize, for river restoration due to their outstanding work with private and public partners. Through the partner's hard work and innovative ideas, the Upper South Platte has become a model for the State in restoring watersheds and forests. The wildland fire

education team in the Potomac project won a bronze "National Smokey Bear" award for their fire prevention work in the watershed. The National Smokey Bear Awards are presented annually by the Ad Council, the National Association of State Foresters and the Forest Service for sustained excellence in wildland fire prevention. The Bronze Award recognizes performance of statewide significance.

V. Limitations and Obstacles

1. Summary Of Obstacles To Successful Partnership Development

a. Not All CBWRPs Partnerships Achieved their Initial Promise or Were Universally Seen as Valuable

Although the Forest Service helped launch a number of successful partnerships, for different reasons some failed to get off the ground and others seemed to leave many participants disappointed. In one case, the Lost Rivers CBWRP, insufficient time was available to allay the fears of environmentalists and ranchers and the project never really got off the ground. In others, such as the Bitterroot and Lower Mississippi, sufficient funding failed to arrive and they struggled to sustain project implementation. In still others, as discussed below, partnerships functioned for 1-3 years but ended as soon as earmarked funding from the agency was terminated. A few people we interviewed said that their watershed projects would have happened regardless of the funding or partnership provided by the CBWRP and therefore they did not see the program as all that valuable.

As of the winter 2006, as best we could tell, the Pacific Coast, Potomac, St. Joe, Upper Pit, Upper Sevier, Upper South Platte, and the White River watershed programs were still functioning in roughly their original form. The Chattooga, Lower Mississippi, and Rio Penasco partnerships appear to have ended, but aspects of the programs seem to have continued. The Lost Rivers, Bitterroot, Conasauga, and Upper Kootenai programs have ended.

b. Although Vital to Initiating Watershed Programs, the Timing and Amount of Funding Was Often Problematic.

The off-the-top funding provided by the agency was vital to launching many of the partnerships. However, our research also found that in some cases too much money was provided too quickly. The influx of dollars sometimes created undue pressure to get projects completed before the partners had developed effective working relationships or decision-making mechanisms and before sound analysis was completed about priority issues, sites and projects. In other cases funding came too late to pay watershed project staff. In still other cases, funding was provided to the Regional Office, but was not distributed to program partners as expected.

In the Lower Mississippi, for example, the U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station received no new funds for the project. This precluded their ability to complete the research that was originally proposed.

In the Bitterroot the promise of large amounts of funds brought people to the table but the funds were never delivered, which generated disappointment and even anger at the Forest Service among former project partners.

In other projects, people we interviewed said they used funds from the agency to pay staff and fund projects, but didn't have the time or sufficient funding to build the infrastructure necessary to sustain the partnership over the long run. In the Upper Pit and Upper South Platt, for example, people said that rather than a large infusion of off-the-top up-front money, it would have been better for the Forest Service to provide a small amount of money over a long period focused primarily on creating capacity within the partnership to sustain itself over the long term.

c. Loss of Funding Threatens the Remaining Ongoing Programs

The loss of funding from the Forest Service for the CBWRP has also been problematic. With declining funding and a declining workforce, there is a concern over how some watershed partnerships, such as the Potomac and Pacific Coast programs, can maintain capacity. People in the Pacific Coast Initiative said that without funding from federal and state entities it will be difficult to continue their educational efforts aimed at teaching the next generation about watershed health and ecosystem restoration.

d. Where People Saw the CBWRP Simply as a Source of Additional Funding the Partnership Struggled or Failed

Some of the people we interviewed said the CBWRP was seen simply as an opportunity to secure additional funds to complete previously planned projects. As we examined the partnerships it became apparent that when this view was prevalent, the programs struggled to develop a compelling long-term vision for their watershed or to sufficiently engage all of the partners that were critical to success. As a result, program such as the Blue Mountain, Lower Mississippi and Bitterroot ended soon after the funding ended.

e. The Nomination Process Caused Start-Up Problems for Some Programs

Although off-the-top funds from the agency helped launch many of the watershed partnerships, a number of people we interviewed said the start-up process of developing business plans and competing for inclusion was too competitive, time consuming, and difficult. This was especially true for small partners, such as non-profits, with limited staff and resources. Others said the process moved too quickly leaving insufficient time to work with skeptical partners and generate support. For example, the Lost Rivers project did not have sufficient time to effectively engage the environmental community and others that were critical to success.

f. False Expectations Were Sometimes Created Related to Funding

The launching of the CBWRP was interpreted by many participants as an opportunity to receive new, additional money. This led to very high expectations as the partners began to spend time and effort planning for how they would spend the money. Sometimes this effort compromised other projects at the expense of the CBWRP. However, as previously discussed, in some cases the agency did not come through with most or even any funds.

g. Some People Question How Funding Was Used

People we interviewed involved with a few programs raised questions about how funds were spent. Dollars provided by the agency were intended to support organizing the partnerships, developing a common vision for the watershed, completing watershed analysis, and putting projects on the ground that had broad support. However, a few people voiced concern that funds were not used in that way. One person said, "There is a false assumption that everyone using the money is doing good stuff and that good stuff is going to happen." Another said, "When [partner agencies] see Forest Service money they just see it as funding for their operations instead of funding new approaches to restoring watershed health." Another individual commented that, "There's been a problem with the State agency's involvement in the program" regarding how the funds were used.

h. The Geographic Scope of Some Partnerships Were Too Large

Trying to restore watershed health and work with multiple partners on large landscapes has been a challenge for many partnerships. In some cases, such as the Pacific Coast Initiative, the large geographic area had no clear boundaries to guide where restoration should take place. This made it difficult to coordinate, plan, and manage. People associated with the Potomac program said they did not have sufficient staff to manage the large area the CBWRP covers. People involved with the Upper Pit and White River partnerships said it was a challenge to monitor progress at such a large watershed scale.

i. Some Partnerships Suffered from Lack Of Common Vision, Commitment, and Inconsistent Participation

Our research found that a number of CBWRP programs struggled to fully engage all of the partners that were key to restoring the watershed and ensuring long-term success. Partnership-based restoration is a new concept to many and must compete with other commitments. It appears that in many cases the non-profits involved with the partnerships tended to be the most active. A consistent theme we heard was that in many cases it was the non-profits that were able to get projects on the ground quickly and effectively. However, we also heard that due to limited time or resources, the non-profits were often not able to attend numerous meetings or do other work required to build on-going relationships. One person summarized this concern by stating, "We're struggling trying to find people to build relationships among partners."

Some CBWRP programs experienced trouble in forming a common vision and in gaining long-term commitment from key partners. As previously noted, our research found that when partners viewed the CBWRP primarily as a source of funds to complete backlogged projects or backfill budgets, rather than as a new way to do business, commitment to long-term involvement was low. Agencies and individuals that are primarily interested in obtaining additional funds are not likely to spend the time and effort required to develop a common vision for a watershed or for the long-term health of the partnership. One individual summarized this problem by stating, "What often happens is that when it comes time to divide up the money for a given year, all partners leave with a certain amount that is almost always spent on individual projects within their organization rather than on projects that the partners work on as a whole. This is a problem - if a partnership is nothing but a mechanism for dividing up money, then when money runs out there isn't going to be a partnership." Another person involved with a CBWRP on the other side of the country said, "One of the more common struggles, that is not unique to this particular demonstration project, is that there's a lack of a unified vision and strategy among the watershed partners. Most partners tend to focus their efforts on individual projects within the agency and not with other partners."

2. Summary of Obstacles to Internal Forest Service Organizational Success

a. Lack of Sufficient Technical Expertise Among Staff

Many people we interviewed mentioned a shortage of highly trained Forest Service personnel with technical expertise in landscape-level restoration or the personal attributes and skills required for effective partnership-based work. The Forest Service has employees with an exceptional range of high-quality scientific, engineering, planning, outreach, and communication skills. The agency has involved the public in projects and programs in numerous ways over many years. However, the skills and attributes required for a true landscape-level, partnership-based approach are often different and more challenging. It requires the ability to plan, make decisions, implement, and monitor programs and projects at the landscape level in a cooperative manner with diverse interests. The new approach also requires exemplary interpersonal communication and organizational change skills. All too often our research found that people did not believe a sufficient number of people with these skills and attributes currently exist within the agency. One interviewee stated that, "Even if funding were available there is often not enough technical expertise available to get some of their projects on the ground."

b. Lack Of Support and Involvement at All Levels of the Agency

Although our research found strong support for the Forest Service staff in the WO that organized and staffed the CBWRP, we heard numerous criticisms about the lack of support from and inability to innovate within other units of the WO as well as many regional offices. Numerous people said there was a lack of support for the CBWRP from Senior Executives within the Forest Service at the regional and national level. People raised concerns about too much bureaucracy, resulting in, as one agency staff member said, the regional and national offices "doing what they've always done and not being

flexible with trying new things." As evident in the Potomac, lack of interest from the Forest Service regional offices and lack of involvement from many units within the Washington Office, such as the Watershed office, were also mentioned as a problem. In addition, a few people in regional offices we interviewed complained that most decision-making and talk about the CBWRP went directly to the Washington Office and left them out of the loop. For example, people involved with the Upper Pit expressed this as a problem in their partnership.

c. Lack of Support for Visionary Leaders Within the Agency

Due to turnover at the national and regional offices, individuals who played key roles in promoting the vision and providing encouragement for CBWRP participants to think big and innovate are now gone. This has reduced drive and innovation within most of the partnerships. Comments from people involved with the CBWRP on the east and west side of the country summarize this problem: "The partnership has worked hard and made some big gains but they don't have the same push to do good things as they once had." "Not enough people are still around with a 'gung ho' attitude about trying new things and getting projects on the ground." Numerous people we interviewed said the loss of these individuals underscores the lack of support within the Forest Service for innovative, visionary people.

d. Tension Between the Requirements of Landscape-level, Partnership-based Restoration and Traditional Forest Service Approaches

Given that the CBWRP was an experiment designed to test new ways of doing business, it should be no surprise that our research found that many Forest Service employees struggled to engage in the new approach while working under traditional agency structures and systems. The goals and targets that most agency personnel must meet for the most part are focused "inside the green line" at the unit or forest levels. This makes it very difficult for agency staff to find the time or resources to work collaboratively with other partners on activities outside of Forest Service lands. Our research found that many Forest Service employees participated in the CBWRP only by working overtime or even on their own time as volunteers. This speaks volumes about their belief in and commitment to the new approach. Numerous people also told us they hoped the agency would adjust its personnel policies, goals and targets, promotional criteria and procedures, and other systems to accommodate and support landscape-level, partnership-based work. However, people said this appears not to have occurred.

VI. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

1. When Organized and Structured Effectively, Landscape-level, Partnership-based Restoration is a Preferred Approach

Although our research discovered numerous problems associated with the start-up, structure, and funding of the CBWRP, we also found that a strong consensus exists among most of those we interviewed that a landscape-level collaborative partnership-based approach to restoration is the most effective way to resolve many critical ecosystem issues in large complex systems. The majority of Forest Service personnel and stakeholders we spoke with said that water quantity and quality, wildlife, fisheries, riparian, wildfire, and other challenges do not respect political boundaries and cannot be resolved by treating public lands alone. In addition, as budgets have been reduced, people said the ability to leverage resources among numerous public, private, and non-profit entities with interests in a watershed is perhaps the only way to complete needed work. Further, people said the new approach is important in resolving many of the socio-economic challenges facing the Forest Service. For example, partnership-based programs help build trust and reduce contention between environmentalists, ranchers, loggers, the Forest Service and other constituencies. In addition, cooperatively planned restoration projects produce economic benefits that demonstrate the agency's commitment to local jobs and economic-well being.

In sum, one lesson that can be taken from the CBWRP is that when organized, structured and funded effectively, in many situations, landscape-level, partnership-based management and restoration is a preferred approach because it is more practical, efficient, effective, and is very appealing to the public.

Recommendation: Senior executives within the Forest Service should carefully examine the benefits of landscape-level, partnership-based management and restoration and determine where, when, and how the agency can use the approach to resolve the many challenges it faces regarding funding and resource shortfalls, controversial issues, and lack of community support.

2. Partnership-Based Programs are Most Likely to Succeed Where Civic Capacity is High

A second lesson that can be learned is that the most successful CBWRP programs were found in regions where strong active civic groups existed within the local community-- that is, where "civic capacity" is high. Starting from scratch to build local civic capacity is difficult and time consuming. Conversely, identifying and engaging existing civic capacity reduces start-up costs and helps to ensure long-term success. The White River, Potomac, Pacific Coast, Upper Pit and other partnerships that still exist today have done so in large part because of the active state and local government agencies, non-profits, and private parties that are committed to restoring their watersheds.

Recommendation: When possible, the Forest Service should prioritize partnership-based programs where sufficient numbers of partners exist and civic capacity is high. It may

behoove the agency to actively investigate civic capacity in the locations where landscape-level restoration is required and prioritize partnership-based efforts in these areas first. However, it is often areas without high civic capacity that require significant restoration work. In this case, the Forest Service may need to invest considerable time and resources cultivating influential public and private community leaders prior to launching major restoration projects. This approach would reassert a historic Forest Service tradition of involvement in local community activities. The enhanced civic capacity that could result may also provide support for the Forest Service in a variety of other initiatives as well.

3. Visionary Energetic Leaders Are Critical for Success and Should be Supported

A third lesson that can be taken is the importance of structuring programs to allow visionary, energetic and highly committed agency employees to step forward and engage in partnerships. Numerous people we interviewed said that the very existence of the CBWRP was the result of visionary leadership and commitment provided by the former Inter-deputy Area Water Coordinator and other staff in the WO that worked on the program. Each of the most successful CBWRP programs were led by or driven to success due to visionary, energetic agency employees (and partners).

Recommendation: The Forest Service should make it a point to continually identify and support employees that have the capacity to think big, see connections and produce innovative solutions to complex problems. Visionary energetic people often ruffle feathers and struggle to work within tight bureaucratic constraints. However, experience shows that innovators are the keys to the long-term success of many programs. Providing visionary innovators with the flexibility, support, and time to engage in projects will validate the agency's commitment to the best possible solutions.

4. A Long Time Horizon and Clear Expectations are Necessary for Success

A fourth lesson that can be taken from the CBWRP is that "slower is faster and faster is slower." Partnership-based programs cannot be rushed. Pushing too hard too fast can undermine a program and cause it to fail. Most of the CBWRP programs either struggled or failed outright when too much money was provided up front, when funding ended before the partnership had established the infrastructure needed to sustain itself over time, or when a major push was made to complete projects too quickly. Partnerships need time to allow people to get to know and trust each other, to develop effective decision-making mechanisms, complete landscape analysis, and establish the organizational infrastructure needed to set themselves on a sustainable path. Collaborative efforts also need clear criteria about how funds will be used and the level and scope of commitment required to be eligible for funds.

Recommendation: If the Forest Service wants to engage in landscape-level, partnership-based management and restoration, it must accept that a long-term commitment is often necessary. Each community and watershed is different and consequently no one-size-fits-

all approach to organizing or funding will work. Careful analysis is needed to discern the best way to organize, fund, and sustain a partnership over the long term.

A long-term commitment will require that funding mechanisms be established that can be sustained over multiple budget cycles. It may also require that the agency make a commitment to investing in programs before a crisis exists and providing just enough initial funds to support basic organizing and initial project development but not so much that people view the project primarily as a source of funds or feel too much pressure to show immediate results.

The agency should make sure it follows through on every commitment it makes. The best way to do so, of course, is to avoid creating false expectations. For example, if it is possible that a change of administration could change agency priorities, it may be best not to make commitments that go beyond the current administration's time in office and to focus that time on building the capacity of the group to sustain itself without agency support.

Finally, the agency should establish clear expectations with potential partners that eligibility for funds is contingent on a long-term commitment in developing and achieving a common vision.

5. Enhanced Understanding and Skills are Required for Long Term Success

A fifth lesson that can be taken from the CBWRP is that for the Forest Service to effectively engage in landscape-level, partnership-based restoration, the understanding and skills of agency employees as well as its partners will need to be upgraded. Education is needed in areas such as landscape ecology and planning and ecosystem function. Skill development is needed in goal, indicator, and benchmark setting, multi-party communication and negotiations, alternative decision-making mechanisms, and organizational change processes such as Appreciative Inquiry and Systems Thinking.

Recommendation: Enhance internal staff education and training programs and encourage and support staff attendance in professional development programs operated by universities and other training entities. In addition, education and training programs should be offered to public, private, and non-profit actors involved with landscape-level partnerships.

6. Resolving Perceived Conflicts Over Agency Mission and Goals May Help Retain and Energize Top Talent

A sixth lesson, and one of the surprising outcomes of our research, was the extent to which people said that the conflicts between landscape-level, partnership-based restoration and the traditional "inside the green line" agency approach diminished their participation and commitment. Numerous people said the CBWRP provided an opportunity for visionary employees at many levels to step forward, catalyze and lead efforts. However, because participation in the CBWRP often required personal sacrifice,

many of the visionaries found it difficult to continue their participation and a number eventually left the partnership or the agency as a whole. Agency personnel were often caught between the need to meet program and unit specific targets and their desire to plan and implement activities in collaboration with others. Resolution of the conflict between the two approaches appears essential if the agency is to retain and take full advantage of its talented, creative and visionary employees.

Recommendation: The Forest Service must clearly declare its intentions regarding landscape-level, partnership-based restoration. Agency employees and its partners need to know if the organization is committed to this approach. Providing clarity about the importance of a partnership-based approach will allow agency employees and others to make better decisions about how to invest their time and resources.

7. The Greatest Benefits of the CBWRP Will Accrue When the Approach is Embedded in Agency Structures and Systems

Finally, the Forest Service and its partners have learned a great deal from the CBWRP. To take full benefit of these lessons, the agency must take explicit steps to embed the new approach in the heart of the organization. Testing new ways of doing business is difficult in any organization and consequently most of the CBWRP programs struggled with continued implicit or explicit pressure to conform to traditional operating procedures. Pressure to conform has constrained or stifled innovation and, left unchecked, can deprive the Forest Service of just the type of information and new ideas that it sought when it established the watershed projects.

Recommendation: A systematic effort should be made to examine and adjust agency policies, programs, and procedures to ensure they support employee thinking and behavior consistent with landscape-level, partnership-based restoration and discourage actions inconsistent with the new approach. For example, hiring guidelines, salary increases and promotions, successional planning and other personnel policies should be examined. Forest and unit target setting processes should also be reevaluated. In sum, agency governance systems, structures, and human resource practices should be adjusted to support landscape-level, partnership-based collaboration.