

# Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program

## 2016-2017 U.S. Forest Service Project Site Visits



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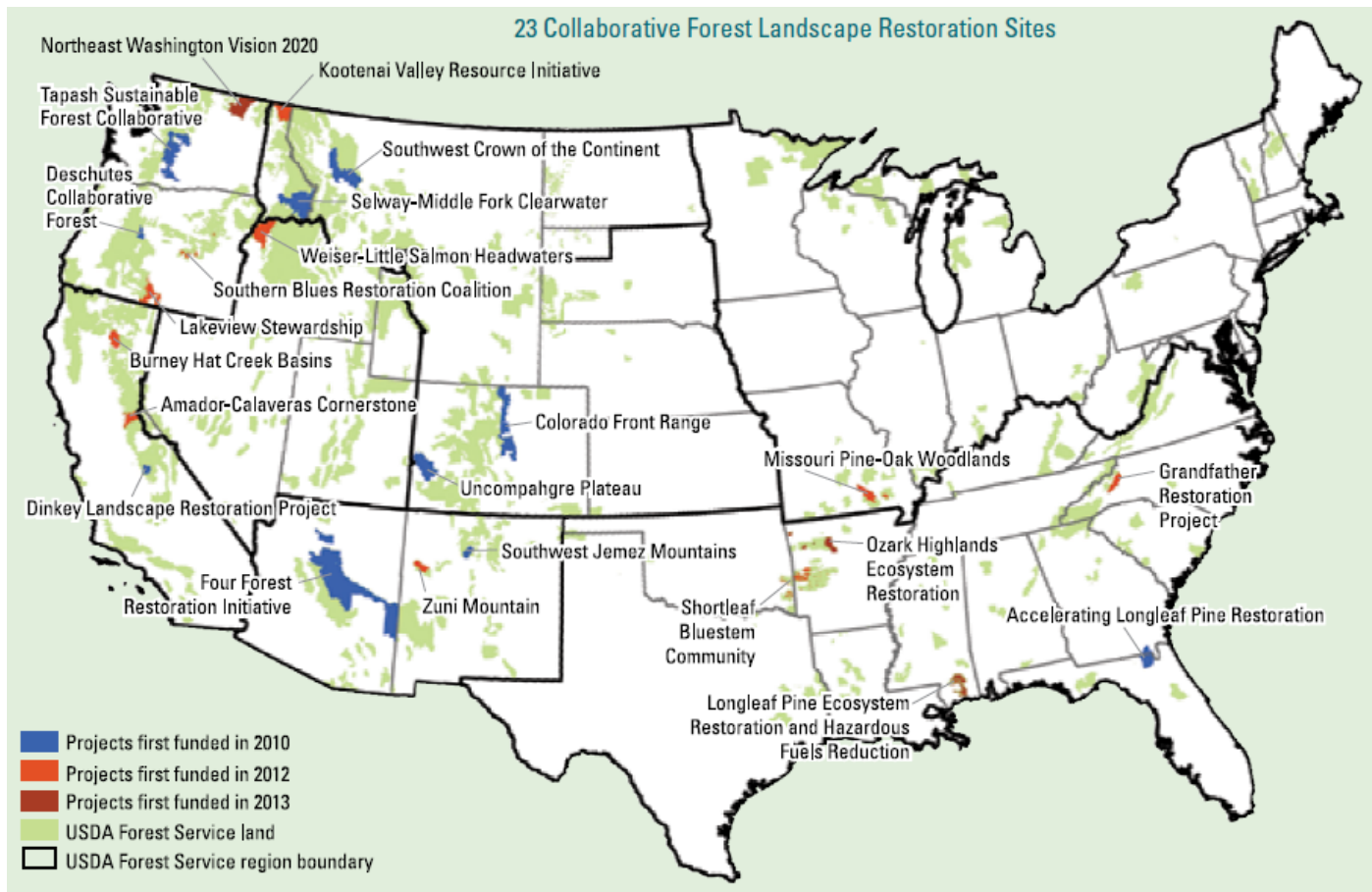
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# 2016-2017 Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program Site Visit Summary

## Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) Overview

Across the country, tens of millions of acres are in need of restoration in order to support and sustain healthy and resilient forests and communities. Resilient landscapes provide integral resources and services to ecosystems and communities. From water purification to recreational opportunities, to wildlife and plant diversity, to a sustainable supply of wood products, we rely on our forested land for ecological, social, and economic benefits.

The [CFLR Program](#)<sup>1</sup> promotes and invests in collaborative approaches to landscape restoration that enhance forest health and resilience and support local communities. CFLR projects bring partners and community members together to promote forest health; reduce the risk of uncharacteristic, catastrophic wildfires; encourage job stability and economic well-being; and ensure these landscapes can continue to sustain the vital resources and services they provide. Today, there are 23 CFLR projects across the country, ranging in size from 130,000 to 2,400,000 acres. Congress can appropriate up to \$40 million dollars per year to support implementation and monitoring of CFLR activities on National Forest System (NFS) lands, consistent with the [CFLR authorizing legislation](#),<sup>2</sup> passed in 2009.



<sup>1</sup> [Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program Website](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Title IV, Forest Landscape Restoration](#)

*Since the CFLR program began, it has demonstrated that collaborative, landscape-scale restoration efforts can deliver multiple benefits on the land and in communities. With its collaborative approach and focus on community engagement, the 23 CFLR projects bring together people with diverse perspectives and supports the relationships and capacity-building that make the work possible. Accomplishments between 2010 and 2016 include:*

- Over 2.4 million acres treated to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire; protecting forests and watersheds and making communities safer.*
- Over 2 million acres improved for wildlife habitat.*
- Over 117,000 acres treated for noxious weeds and invasive plants.*
- Over 121,000 acres of forest vegetation established.*

*CFLR investments in forest and watershed restoration impact local communities by generating considerable, much-needed economic support, including—*

- Between 2011 and 2016, an estimated \$1.2 billion in local labor income and an average of 5,180 jobs were created or maintained each year nationwide.*
- Between 2010 and 2016, CFLR projects sold over 2.1 billion board feet of timber, maintained 630 miles of trails, and constructed nearly 90 miles of aquatic organism passage to allow fish to move under roads. Economic impacts come from a range of project activities, including commercial forestry, trail maintenance, stream restoration, and job training for youth.*
- Between 2010 and 2015, partners have contributed over \$90 million in partner match for work on NFS lands and over \$207 million in additional leveraged investments on private, state and other federal lands within the CFLRP landscape and for project planning.*

*The 23 collaboratives involve over 200 local partners nationwide, representing a range of perspectives on restoration and land management, including local counties, Tribes, state and federal agencies, businesses, utility companies, nongovernmental organizations, advocacy groups, associations, and community members.*

## **What's the Purpose of this Report?**

The 23 projects that make up the CFLR program provide us with a valuable opportunity to learn about approaches to collaborative, landscape-scale restoration. By better understanding the successes and challenges of these “learning laboratories,” we can take what we learn and apply it within and beyond the CFLR program to improve our work.

This report provides a high-level summary of the best practices and innovations observed during site visits to seven CFLR projects in 2016 and 2017 and discuss next steps for further improvements to the CFLR program. The Appendix contains a “Practitioner Primer” designed to share practical tips for building on lessons learned through the CFLR program.

This report is a working document that will be updated with additional lessons and observations from further CFLR site visits in 2017.

## **Site Visit Overview**

In the fall of 2016, the U.S. Forest Service Washington Office (WO) conducted site visits to seven of the 23 CFLR projects. The purpose of these site visits was to:

- 1) Validate that the projects are being implemented as planned to achieve the goals of the program.
- 2) Gain a deeper understanding of challenges and barriers and identify opportunities for support.
- 3) Capture and document lessons learned and innovations to share with the CFLR community and beyond.

- 4) Gather information to help support guidance for planning, implementation, monitoring, and maintenance after the current authorizing legislation for CFLR expires in 2019.

The WO teams included multiple staffs from the U.S. Forest Service Deputy Areas, including Forest Management; Ecosystem Management Coordination; Sustainable Forest Management Research; Fire and Aviation Management; Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air & Rare Plants; Office of Communications; and Strategic Planning, Budget, and Accountability. By bringing together various resources and areas of expertise, the teams were designed to be responsive to specific challenge areas expressed by regions and the CFLR projects.

WO teams interacted with Regional Office (RO) leadership and CFLR contacts, Forest and District leadership and staff, and local collaboratives, partners, and community members. Staff from CFLR forests also participated in visits to neighboring projects to promote peer learning and networking across CFLR projects. The Agency also worked with researchers from Colorado State University to develop key questions for discussion in advance of the site visits to help gather focused information and feedback. Representatives from Colorado State University participated in each site visit.

The site visit locations included both projects that had not yet received site visits as well as follow up visits to projects visited in 2013 or 2014.

CFLR Project Name	National Forest	Region	State
Colorado Front Range Roundtable	Arapaho-Roosevelt and Pike San Isabel National Forests	2	CO
Uncompahgre Plateau	Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests	2	CO
Amador-Calaveras Cornerstone Project	Eldorado and Stanislaus National Forests	5	CA
Burney-Hat Creek Basins	Lassen National Forest	5	CA
Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020	Colville National Forest	6	WA
Tapash Collaborative	Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest	6	WA
Southern Blues Restoration Coalition	Malheur National Forest	6	OR

## Highlights and Observations

Each CFLR project is, to some extent, unique. The seven CFLR landscapes visited have their own ecological, social, and economic contexts, opportunities, and challenges. Some have experienced extensive wildfire, tree mortality, and bug kill in the project area. Some collaborative groups have been working together for a decade and had strong, existing networks and capacity in place. Other project teams brought together new groups, and it has taken time to build the trust and relationships, the “social infrastructure” as one CFLR site visit participant put it, to jumpstart progress.

However, several key themes emerged over the course of the site visits in terms of innovations, best practices, and common challenges. For further details and examples of these themes, please see the Appendix.

### *CFLR Best Practices and Innovations*

- **Moving from a Restoration Vision to Action on the Ground.** As one site visit participant described it “CFLR provides both the carrot and the stick” to make collaborative restoration a reality on the ground. Whereas before CFLR, forests, and partners had general goals for their restoration work, the monitoring requirements for CFLR made the project teams define what they truly wanted, and the sustained funding allowed them to implement on a large enough scale to see real and tangible impacts on the ground.

- **Collaboration and Working through Partnership.** While the project teams have different approaches and mechanisms to structure their work with collaboratives and in the community, they demonstrate the value of working through a collaborative process to achieve desired outcomes. They are building the capacity, relationships, and trust that make the work possible. Several project teams also reported that the sustained investment in this collaborative approach has created an overall culture shift in how the forest operates as a whole.
- **Large-Scale Planning and Adaptive Management.** Forest Service staffs are working with their partners to develop projects that better integrate multiple resource areas, such as aquatics and fuel reductions, to achieve outcomes at broader scales. Landscape-scale evaluation of needs and opportunities and long-term planning for treatment prioritization and timelines helps project teams improve communication, coordination, and efficiency within the forest and with partners. Some project teams are using site-specific monitoring to guide adaptive management and improve subsequent project development. The landscape-scale focus has also encouraged innovations and efficiencies in the environmental assessment National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis.
- **Innovations in Implementation.** Many project teams are taking advantage of a full suite of complementary authorities and programs in addition to CFLR to increase capacity in a synergistic way, including Good Neighbor Agreements, stewardship contracts and agreements, and other Farm Bill authorities. Project teams strive to identify and leverage the valuable skills, capacity, knowledge, and leadership that partners bring to the table and engage the community to get work done, including local youth crews and programs with schools and universities.
- **Importance of Multi-Party Monitoring.** Several project teams are demonstrating the value of multi-party monitoring to support accountability and transparency with partners and the community. Collecting, sharing, and discussing monitoring information builds trust and working relationships to help tackle increasingly controversial issues. Multi-party monitoring also offers opportunities to engage the broader community by sharing responsibilities and roles for monitoring and promoting citizen science. Several project teams are using the information gathered to inform and improve subsequent treatment approaches.
- **Benefits beyond CFLR Project Boundaries.** The CFLR focus on community engagement and building trust with partners has ripple effects that can benefit the Forest Service and partners beyond the immediate CFLR project area. Additionally, the best practices and lessons learned through CFLR are informing other land management efforts and building support and capacity for more collaborative ways of doing business.

### *Next Steps for the CFLR Program*

The review teams noted several areas where changes could improve future work on CFLR projects and agency operations. The WO, Regional Offices (ROs), and forest staffs participating in each site review have developed initial plans to address these challenges and will monitor progress with partners and make adjustments as needed.

- **Supporting Restoration and Local Economies through Use of Restoration Byproducts.** While some projects benefit from stronger local industry and infrastructure than others, all have concerns about developing or sustaining the needed infrastructure and markets for restoration byproducts. The Forest Service National Forest System, Research and Development, State and Private Forestry, and Business Operations Deputy Areas are working together to ensure we are maximizing use of existing agency programs and developing proposals for further innovations and investments to address this challenge.
- **Working at Larger Scales.** While many CFLR projects are working at larger scales than what occurred in the past, project teams are recognizing the need to expand work at the landscape scale to address landscape-scale problems. The Forest Service will explore opportunities to further expand the pace and

scale of restoration through cross-boundary partnerships, stronger connections with forest planning efforts, and innovations to produce NEPA analyses that support desired outcomes.

- **Engaging New Partners.** Many CFLR project teams are interested in expanding their partnerships to engage more perspectives and build further capacity and effectiveness. Some project teams are developing new partnerships by highlighting the connection between restoration and watershed health, water quality, and other ecosystem services. Others are interested in strengthening connections with recreation and local tourism groups. The Forest Service will continue to support new partnership opportunities and resources for effectively working with partners.
- **Expanding Use of Prescribed Fire.** Projects are behind on the prescribed fire goals envisioned in their proposals due to a number of factors, including drought conditions and community sensitivity to smoke and prescribed fire. They expressed concern that the long-term goal of the projects to restore fire-adapted ecosystems could be compromised unless the amount of prescribed fire increases. The Forest Service will work across staff areas to provide best practices and support to help move beyond these barriers.
- **Developing and Implementing Social, Economic, and Ecological Monitoring Plans.** All of the projects have monitoring plans in place to some extent. Following through with implementation of multi-party ecological, social, and economic monitoring, and making the data available and accessible to guide future projects and support accountability, will be critical. In particular, several project teams are interested in improving how they monitor the economic and social impacts of restoration to better understand and adjust their approaches. The Forest Service will work with CFLR project teams and partners to promote peer-learning opportunities and share best practices for multi-party monitoring.
- **Communicating and Telling Our Story.** It can be challenging for project teams to identify the time and capacity to focus on communications with the local community to convey the need for and value of collaborative restoration. However, project teams recognized the importance of telling their story to expand local support, engage new partners, and build momentum for collaborative approaches to restoration. Forest Service staff and partners can work together to develop complementary communication strategies and outreach. The Forest Service will work with the project teams to share resources for communications support.
- **Planning for the Future.** The uncertainty of what will happen after 2019, when the current CFLR authorization expires, is a challenge for planning and making decisions about future investments. Regardless of whether reauthorization occurs, all CFLR project areas need to plan for the long-term maintenance needs. The Forest Service will work across staffs and with the regions, project teams, and partners to develop guidance and encourage forests to initiate or continue conversations with the collaboratives about how they will sustain their work.
- **Achieving Multiple Restoration Objectives.** Ecological restoration focuses on reestablishing the composition, structure, pattern, and ecological processes necessary to facilitate terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems sustainability, resilience, and health under current and future conditions<sup>3</sup>. This involves addressing many different needs, from establishing a forest structure that will reduce catastrophic wildfire risk and allow for the reintroduction of natural fire regimes to restoring the vegetative structure, composition, and pattern needed to sustain diverse wildlife habitat at multiple scales. Some CFLR projects visited had more work to do to address specific restoration needs like wildlife habitat improvement or roads and travel management issues. The Forest Service will work across staffs to connect CFLR projects with additional resources to better address the full suite of restoration needs.

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<sup>3</sup> See 36 CFR 219.19: Code of Federal Regulations, Forest Service, Planning, National Forest System Land Management Planning - <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/CFR-2012-title36-vol2/CFR-2012-title36-vol2-sec219-16/content-detail.html>

## Appendix: Practitioner Primer

The themes and examples below are intended to provide collaborative restoration practitioners with a sampling of best practices and lessons learned through CFLR implementation, that were gathered through site visits to seven CFLR projects in 2016. This Primer is a “living document” for continuing to compile and share learning through the site visits.

### Collaboration Matters

Cutting across the themes below, CFLR project teams demonstrate that collaboration through meaningfully engaging the public and our partners in landscape and resource management improves the quality of the work we do on the ground and the outcomes we see as a result.

***Without the collaboratives’ involvement and support, we heard many times that projects would not have been able to move forward.*** Engaging with the collaborative partner groups and individuals helped shape the vision of projects so that the various perspectives participants bring to the group can support them. By working through differences and identifying common ground at the beginning, projects can move forward with the social support needed for successful outcomes. ***Building trust is essential to success.*** It takes time and continued attention, but pays dividends. ***The investment and focus on collaboration positively impacts other land management and stewardship efforts.***

***The partnerships forged through the collaboratives provide critical capacity*** in terms of scientific expertise, volunteers on the ground, traditional ecological knowledge, communications and outreach, policy advocacy, leveraging funding, and new perspectives that make the work possible. Developing a shared vision with the collaborative for desired (or undesired) outcomes provides direction and a plan for where the project is going and why.

Some groups have been working together for a decade and have strong existing networks, relationships, and capacity to build upon. They have a vision, robust organizational structure, and zones of agreement to guide their work. ***Developing structures and processes for how the collaborative will work together at the beginning helps support group resilience and effectiveness.*** Other CFLR projects brought together new groups, and it has taken time to build the trust and relationships to jumpstart and sustain progress. Furthermore, some areas involve more contentious resource management issues than others and had to acknowledge that it would take more time to build trust. ***For the Forest Service, strong line-officer support for collaboration is critical for creating a shared vision and expectation for collaboration.***

***Collaboratives evolve.*** As groups continue to work together, they build the trust and relationships needed to move beyond established agreements and tackle issues that are more contentious. They expand capacity and bring in new voices with



***The Amador-Calaveras Cornerstone CFLR team has a new partnership with the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority. With a focus on watersheds and the link between healthy forests and healthy water supply, the project team successfully competed for a grant through the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to implement treatments to enhance watershed health. Project teams are recognizing the value of better understanding and communicating the link between their work and ecosystem services, especially clean and abundant water.***



additional perspectives that can help address gaps in skills or expertise.

For many CFLR project teams, the ***government-to-government relationships with Tribes have been instrumental to success***. The **Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 project** team is working with Confederated Tribes of Colville tribal elders to map plants of social and cultural importance and to understand the impact of treatments on those plants. The **Amador-Calaveras Cornerstone** team worked with local tribal crews to implement restoration projects around cultural sites to reduce hazardous fuels and re-introduce aspen and other plants valued by the local tribal members. The **Burney-Hat Creek Basins** team has a partnership with the Pit River Tribe to assess and monitor hydrological impacts of CFLR projects with the goal of applying the data collected to improve the design of subsequent projects. Consulting and working with tribal governments and members has helped these projects ensure that restoration efforts move toward mutually beneficial outcomes.

***However, collaboration is by no means easy***. Bringing people with very different perspectives on landscape management together to work toward a shared vision requires time, energy, and tough conversations. As one participant put it, the CFLR approach “isn’t faster, but it’s better.” By investing more time upfront to involve local communities and partners, this approach builds relationships, trust, and support for long-term success. According to a **Northeast Washington Forest Vision Coalition** partner, “the hours spend in collaboration are worth it; better than spending those hours in litigation.” By focusing on collaboration and outreach during early planning, the intent is to minimize time spent in objections and litigation at the next phase, and in the process, also build support and social capacity. Project partners acknowledged that not all of the time and energy spent in collaboration necessarily protects them from litigation from entities working outside of the collaborative process. While many project teams shared that litigation or objections have indeed decreased dramatically thanks in part to collaboration, litigation can still occur. ***Project teams are focusing on how collaboration can strengthen proposed projects and how partners provide important support and strengthen the Forest Service’s case if litigation does occur.***

***At all of the projects visited, we discussed the value and importance of continuously looking at who’s at the table and what perspectives, stakeholders, and potential partners might be missing*** at various points in the project cycle (planning, implementation, and monitoring). Project teams shared that bringing in new partners can be challenging, and it can be a challenge to sustain involvement, especially for those participating on a volunteer basis. It is important to include participants with different perspectives, skills, resources, and networks. Project teams are interested in encouraging additional participation in the collaboratives and

*The Southern Blues Restoration Coalition is evolving its approaches to prescriptions on the landscape from recommending plantation-style treatments to “skips and gaps.” The Blue Mountains Forest Partners are now developing zones of agreement for increasingly contentious issues. The Forest Service and partners have moved from “traditional” approaches of marking individual trees to designation by prescription as a relationship has developed with the contractor.*



*(Photo: Greg Mayer)*

*The Burney-Hat Creek Basins team includes multiple Forest Service staff in meetings with the collaborative to promote broad participation and maintain continuity if an employee leaves and someone new is brought in. The collaborative shared that, although the previous ranger left, they are less concerned about the impact to their work, as there is a more collaborative orientation from the Agency in general.*

expanding the scope of engagement throughout the project cycle, especially an increasing focus on collaborative implementation.

***Creating resilience through transition.*** Because trust and working relationships are critical, transitions in agency personnel and individuals involved in the collaborative can impact project progress. Projects were clear about this issue, and shared some of their innovations to help address it. For example, the **Malheur National Forest** works with the **Southern Blues Resource Coalition** to host a regular workshop focused on onboarding and orientation for new employees involved in work with the collaborative. Documentation of meetings and agreements has also been critical for continuity and institutional memory.

### ***Best Practice Recap:***

- Invest in building trust and working relationships with partners and community members, and recognize it takes time to do so.
- Develop expectations with the group for how it will function at the beginning, including ground rules, a charter, and organizational structure and revisit to adapt, as needed. Every group will be different, but proactively discussing the structure and processes of the group upfront can support success.
- Have subcommittees that focus on different projects or topics. This can help spread out the workload and engage more stakeholders in issues of interest to them.
- Use a third party, neutral facilitator to start the group off on the right foot or navigate contentious issues.
- Go out into the field to help resolve conflicts. It is nearly always the best way! Remember to have fun and spend time building social connections.
- Recognize that the Forest Service does not need to run everything; partners can take the lead.
- Start with smaller projects to build trust, expectations, and capacity before tackling more difficult projects.
- Continue to ask, “Who’s not at the table?”
- Explore creative ways to work together in project planning, implementation, and monitoring. Can partners be involved in writing NEPA documents? Completing surveys? Marking trees?
- Recognize and leverage everyone’s skills and interests to encourage shared ownership and increase capacity.
- Take good notes at meetings and field trips and share them. Notes can serve as a valuable reference and establish accountability and transparency.
- Use best available science and site-specific monitoring as your guide for working through controversial issues.
- Start with what you have in common—the shared vision for desired (or undesired) objectives for the landscape.
- Seek strong line-officer support for collaboration. It is critical for creating a shared vision and expectation of approaching work collaboratively.

### ***Initial Resources:***

- National Forest Foundation’s collection of tools, best practices, and peer learning sessions developed to aid collaborative groups, Forest Service staff, and community partners in the practice of collaboration is available on the [National Forest Foundation Practice of Collaboration Website](#)
- Best practices on creating resilience through transition of Forest Service staff are available in the USFS Handover Memo on the [Partnership Resource Center, The Art of Collaboration Website](#)
- The National Collaboration Cadre is a network of people who provide coaching and training to National Forests and their communities who are interested in understanding and developing collaborative processes. Visit the [Collaborative Planning, USDA Forest Service National Collaboration Cadre Website](#)
- Also visit the [Collaboration at Arm’s Length: Navigating Agency Engagement in Landscape Scale Ecological Restoration Collaboratives Website](#) ” (Butler, William)

## Working at the Landscape Scale

CFLR project teams recognize the need to work at the landscape scale to address landscape-scale problems. While smaller-scale or resource-specific projects are appropriate in some situations, when looking at landscape and watershed resilience, treatments must be implemented at a scale that results in improved ecological function and economic benefit.

CFLR encourages a comprehensive look at restoration needs across the landscape. To this end, many projects are *including fuels reduction, aquatics, road maintenance and decommissioning, recreation, and other resource area concerns in project planning and implementation*. They are generally embracing integration, especially fuels reduction and aquatics, to achieve outcomes at the desired scale. Working across resource areas helps everyone focus on the question, “How do we restore the landscape?” rather than focusing on any one resource. *When multiple resource areas have “skin in the game,” it can incentivize completing the planning process as efficiently as possible*. On the **Malheur National Forest**, the staff shared that their goal is for each individual, regardless of their resource backgrounds, to be able to speak for all the resource areas involved in a project.



*Landscape-scale problems require landscape-scale solutions, regardless of ownership boundaries. The Tapash Collaborative recently completed an integrated restoration plan to prioritize strategically the landscape, including NFS, The Nature Conservancy, tribal, and state lands, through sub-watershed assessments with decision criteria for landscape-scale restoration and smaller-scale and maintenance projects. This work aligns with broader efforts beyond CFLR, including the Yakama Integrated Basin program of work.*

However, working at the pace and the scale projects envisioned can be challenging. *In areas where wildfires have impacted the CFLR landscapes, project teams work to balance reacting to these events with an eye toward future resilience (reforestation and revegetation) and improving resilience in “green” stands not yet impacted by fire*. In Region 5, for example, it is important to note that both CFLR projects are faced with significantly changed conditions in the form of wildfire impacts and insect and disease mortality. These are issues that extend well beyond the project and NFS boundaries, and they have resulted in systems that are stretched beyond their capacities.

*Project teams are working to approach environmental analysis in a way that supports desired outcomes and acknowledges the scale of the issues and changing conditions*. How can we scale-up planning areas to fit the need? How can we include adaptive management components in decisions, recognizing the changing conditions on our landscapes? Translating the landscape strategies into NEPA actions can be challenging, but several project teams are using innovative approaches to move forward.

*The Uncompahgre Plateau project team uses adaptive NEPA approaches to support their work. Finding that “old ways of doing business” did not allow them to keep pace with the rate of change on the ground, the project uses this broader, more flexible approach to analysis so they can adapt actions to needs on the ground. It took a long-term investment by the Region and Forest to make the change, but they are now seeing the payoff. NEPA is a vehicle to help the project get to their desired outcomes.*

CFLR project teams have multiple objectives for their work on the land. As outlined in the authorizing legislation, projects should promote “social, ecological, and economic sustainability.” Sometimes, an action that may maximize one resource area or value does not maximize, or can even detract from, another. For example, several project teams had examples of smaller projects designed in part to provide opportunities for local forestry businesses to build capacity for larger projects. However, these projects may not attain the scale needed for reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. ***Working through tradeoffs is not easy, but acknowledging them and working together to prioritize desired outcomes is often a necessary part of working at the landscape-scale.***

***Working with partners to develop a multi-year plan or strategy for the project area can help provide direction, efficiency, and adaptability.*** Planning survey approaches, contract packages of work, planning areas, and implementation priorities provides a roadmap to coordinate efforts and line-up actions for maximum efficiency. When changes occur, be it a new great opportunity or a wildfire within the landscape, having an adaptable plan in place can help the group chart a new course.

Project teams recognize the role of implementing prescribed fire to “finish the job” and ensure treatment investments have lasting impacts for restoring fire-adapted ecosystems. ***While many project teams are facing challenges in implementing prescribed fire, they are working with partners in innovative ways to address this issue.*** The **Tapash Collaborative** project team intended to focus on prescribed burning for restoration goals at much larger scales than they have been able to implement. The collaborative is currently working with the State of Washington on a pilot to expand opportunities for prescribed fire implementation. Region 5 is exploring The Nature Conservancy’s TREX program (Prescribed Fire Training Exchange) to engage community members in outreach about the role of fire on the landscape and to build capacity for implementing prescribed fire. Communicating with the public about the role of fire on the landscape can help increase local support.

***Project teams are working with partners to find creative ways to build capacity.*** Working at the landscape-scale requires capacity for ongoing and often concurrent planning, implementation, and monitoring. CFLR project teams are making use of a range of available tools, programs, and authorities to complement CFLR and get the work done. These tools include Forest Service authorities and programs as well as other creative means of supporting capacity involving local partners, governments, and community members. The **Uncompahgre Plateau** project team makes extensive use of different tools and authorities available, including a stewardship agreement with the Mule Deer Foundation, Integrated Resource Service Contracts, traditional



*Working effectively at scale and strategically placing treatments within a watershed result in real outcomes on the ground. In 2016, the Cold Springs Fire started on private lands and burned through approximately 94 acres of NFS land near Nederland, Colorado. This section of NFS land had been treated in April 2015 through the Front Range CFLR project. The placement of these treatments factored in terrain and access issues, land ownership patterns, and limitations on prescribed fire implementation.*

*While the slash piles had not yet been burned, this project rearranged a large amount of heavy fuels, increasing the spacing between the tree canopies. When the wildfire hit the unit, fire activity moved from the tree tops down to the ground, allowing firefighters to engage the fire and hold it on two sides of the unit. Firefighters who were on the scene believe that the rearrangement of heavy fuels in this unit prevented the fire from causing more spot fires across Boulder Canyon, which would have put thousands more residences in the path of wildfire. Surrounded on all sides by private property, the CFLR treatment is credited with preventing the destruction of more homes. While there were hundreds of homes along the fire’s perimeter, the loss was limited to eight residences.*

timber sales, service contracts, veteran job corps, correctional crews, youth conservation corps, and force account/agency crews. Strong “Grants and Agreements” capacity within the Forest has been important for their success. The **Amador-Calaveras Cornerstone** group started working with CalAm, a group of local retired professionals, to help identify and apply for grants. Working with partners locally, regionally, and nationally builds necessary capacity.

*Having adequate forest industry capacity and markets for byproducts of restoration activities can be an essential capacity consideration for landscape-scale restoration: see following section.*

### ***Best Practice Recap:***

- Recognize that it takes time and investment to build up the capacity to plan, implement, and monitor at the landscape scale; it is often a “go slow to go fast” mentality.
- Learn about all the tools in the toolbox—programs, grants, authorities, contracting mechanisms, and agreements—that may help get the work done on and beyond NFS lands.
- Understand that partners and other federal, state, tribal, and local agencies are critical to outreach and work with other landowners and community members to increase scale and work across boundaries.
- Think creatively about building capacity—are there “non-traditional” groups that may be interested in either immediate or “downstream” project outcomes and have new knowledge or capacity to contribute?
- Recognize investments in grant-writing and other capacity building efforts may take time, but have long-term dividends for project outcomes.
- Ask, “What does this landscape need to be healthy?” when putting projects together to integrate resource areas for the outcomes desired.
- Approach NEPA in a way that best addresses the needs on the landscape and in the community, including landscape-scale approaches, adaptive management, focused environmental assessments, and categorical exclusions.
- Create a 5- to 10-year plan to help guide and prioritize your work. These plans help promote communication and coordination and allow for adaptability as unexpected barriers or opportunities arise.
- Recognize that there may be multiple, and sometimes competing objectives, and work together to create criteria for prioritizing tradeoffs.

### ***Initial Resources:***

- Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition—[From Ideas to Action: A Guide to Funding and Authorities for Collaborative Forestry Website](#)
- [USFS Stewardship Contracting Reporting, Guidance, and Directives Website](#)
- [National Forest Foundation Landscape Restoration Approaches and Tools Website](#)
- [Malheur National Forest Interactive Accelerated Restoration Status and Planning Map Website](#)
- [The Nature Conservancy Prescribed Fire Training Exchange Website](#)

## **Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities.**

**Project teams emphasize the connection between restoration, economic stability, and the social values communities hold. The community connection includes support for the forest products business and infrastructure, recreation and tourism, and engaging youth and the public in the management of their public lands.**

Many project team participants shared that job enrichment and community stability are key desired outcomes for their projects. **Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group** works with CHIPS—Calaveras Healthy Impacts Product

Solutions—to create forest restoration and products job training and other opportunities for local people in Calaveras County. The **Uncompahgre Plateau project** team hires local high school students to do monitoring. Supporting local training and job opportunities helps engage the community, supports desired economic objectives, and expands capacity to get work done.

***Project teams continue to work toward further integrating a range of values and desired outcomes into restoration projects, including recreation issues.*** For example, many are actively working with partner groups, including Oregon Youth Conservation Corps, AmeriCorps, Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions, and Powder Creek Correctional Facility, to complete trail maintenance that reduces sedimentation and enhances recreation resources. Through these and other partnerships, project teams are broadening participation in the project, engaging youth in the natural resources field, and completing work that supports multiple objectives.

***For many CFLR projects, sawmill and other wood product infrastructure and markets are insufficient to fully support the needs of the project.*** Excess supply and pricing may limit competitiveness. Transportation-haul costs can be a major barrier. For the **Tapash Collaborative**, the average haul distance is 250 miles.

***Project teams continue to assess new opportunities and technologies*** to expand markets and infrastructure, including new products and processing approaches. As a potential and partial answer to the beneficial disposal of, especially, the excess small dead trees, Amador-Calaveras Cornerstone project partner CHIPS has been actively working to establish a business incubator forest products site that would include a heat-and-power biomass plant, native plant greenhouse, and other businesses, all in close proximity to NFS lands.

***Project teams are using a suite of tools and approaches to support local forest products industry and expand markets, including offering multiple scales and contract types.*** Stewardship grants and agreements may be a path forward for many projects to keep the work – and local industry- viable, along with defining “local” community benefit appropriately when awarding contracts. However, one size does not fit all. For some contexts, a long-term, 10-year stewardship contract may provide needed stability. For others, tying up most of the work with one contractor may reduce overall capacity. ***In determining the best approach for a project, it is important to work with partners and local industry to understand shared interests and capacities.***



*After major fires in the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 project area in 2015, Forest Service staff and industry partners came together to talk about capacity and how to address salvage. Working within regional guidance provided, they found a balance of smaller-scale salvage projects and are moving forward with treatments as planned. A recent third-party study showed that 40% of contracts affiliated with this CFLR project go to local entities, compared to 20% without CFLR.*

### ***Best Practice Recap:***

- A suite of activities, including wood product utilization, aquatic restoration, recreation, monitoring, and so on, drives the restoration economy. Involving partners with various perspectives and capacities can help better integrate and balance these benefits into treatment design and implementation.
- Supporting local forest industry infrastructure not only enables CFLR projects to work toward desired restoration outcomes but also supports local economic health.
- “Best value” approaches to contracting that factor in the benefit to local economies in awarding contracts can help project teams work toward economic goals.
- Involving local industry and collaborative partners early and often in project development can ensure the project is in line with shared objectives and capacity.

### ***Initial Resources:***

- USDA Forest Service Wood Innovation Grant to expand wood energy and wood products markets to support forest management needs on NFS and other forest lands-[Northeastern Area Wood Education Resource Center Website](#)
- Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition, [Rural Development through Land Stewardship publication](#)
- Tools to Assist in the Development of a Local Restoration Economy, [University of Oregon, Ecosystem Workforce Program, Tools for the Restoration Economy Website](#)
- University of Arkansas webinar on the Ozark Highlands CFLR project and economic benefits of restoration-[Oak Woodlands & Forests Fire Consortium, Regional Economic Benefits from Forest Restoration Projects](#)

## **Multi-Party Monitoring and Assessing Impact**

**All projects have a monitoring plan in place, to some extent. Following through with implementation of multi-party social, ecological, economic monitoring, and making the data available and accessible to guide future projects and support accountability will be critical.**

The CFLR multi-party monitoring requirement and investment in ***monitoring provides a platform for building effective working relationships with partners, and generates valuable data to improve subsequent projects within and beyond the CFLR boundaries.*** Several project team participants said they would advise collaboratives to start developing and defining monitoring questions and roles early, especially so that baseline data is available.

***Site-specific monitoring of treated areas with partners and the community can promote trust, transparency, and shared ownership.*** It also allows for learning and making improvements to treatments. For the **Southern Blues Restoration Coalition**, site-specific monitoring data helps the group resolve differences. By going into the field to observe and discuss ongoing and completed treatments with their science liaisons, the group moves ahead by “following the science.” The **Uncompahgre Plateau** team found it easier to start defining their guiding restoration principles by agreeing on the conditions that they *did not* want to see and figuring out what was needed to move away from these undesired conditions.

*On the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 project, partners came up with an initial list of 120 possible monitoring questions and then worked together to prioritize 12 key questions. The project brings together the Forest Service, Colville Confederated Tribes, Conservation Northwest, Rocky Mountain Research Station, and others to carry out this monitoring plan. One monitoring component focused on engaging with tribal elders to map plants of social and cultural importance and understand the impacts of treatment activities on those plants. Data collected regarding goshawks helped to address public concerns in a subsequent project.*

**Project teams emphasize the importance of not only collecting monitoring data, but also sharing and discussing it.** Project collaboratives and community members have regular field trips to observe and discuss projects together. **Colorado Front Range** hosts annual “monitoring jam sessions.” These “jam sessions” are a 1-day workshop by members of the CFLRP Leadership Team to assess monitoring results and determine consistency with desired conditions. The results of these sessions are ultimately summarized in a report that is presented to the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership and made available on the web.

Project teams want to better understand the social and economic impacts of their work through multi-party monitoring. **Several project team participants expressed that the most valuable outcome of CFLR is the social capacity they have built in the community, and many project team participants are interested in the economic benefits that a restoration economy can provide.** While these are important benchmarks of success, several project teams are struggling to define measurable metrics for monitoring these impacts. Partners, including universities, can be instrumental in defining and monitoring socioeconomic impacts. (See examples below.)

### ***Best Practice Recap:***

- Work with a wide range of partners with various skills and interests to support effective multi-party monitoring design, implementation, and sharing.
- Recognize the value of site-specific monitoring in building trust, transparency, and good communication.
- Develop monitoring plans, including defining the priority monitoring questions and determining roles, early in the process.
- Recognize the value of ecological as well as social and economic monitoring to understand and communicate the impact of your work to stakeholders with a range of interests and enable adaptive management.

### ***Initial Resources:***

- [National Forest Foundation Learning Topics, Multiparty Monitoring Website](#)
- [Tracking Progress, The Monitoring Process Used in Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Projects in the Pacific Northwest Website](#)
- [National Forest Foundation Peer Learning Webinar, Assessing the Socioeconomic Impact of Forest Restoration Webinar](#) with Jonathan Kusel, Sierra Institute and Cassandra Moseley, University of Oregon
- [Design and Governance of Multiparty Monitoring under the USDA Forest Service's Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program Website](#) (Schultz, Coehlo, & Beam)
- University of Montana, [Measuring the Benefits of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program for Local Communities in Northeast Washington FY2012-2015 Website](#)
- (Internal agency site) [Forest Service Crowdsourcing and Citizen Science Community of Practice, Citizen Science Website](#)

## **Telling Our Story**

**Effectively communicating the need and value of collaborative restoration can be a challenge for project teams, but it is important for expanding local support as well as building momentum nationally for collaborative, landscape-scale approaches to land management.**

***It is important to identify the right messengers, the right messages, and the right approaches to tell the story.*** Make messages personal and connect with people on issues they care about and that impact them. The downstream benefits of restoration, such as clean water sources, can help forge connections with people outside of the project boundary. Sharing the tangible outcome of treatments (for example, the Cold Springs fire on the **Colorado Front Range Project** described on pg. 11), can be powerful.





*Before and after photos can show people that the project is having real impacts.*

**How does your audience get their information?** Consider a full range of approaches, maps, social media, before and after photos, local papers, door-to-door conversations, op-eds, radio, and so on. Put the information where people are. Project teams have found that different audiences in the community may have different preferred ways of receiving information, so taking advantage of multiple outlets is often best. Partners may have great ways to get the word out through their networks, and partners and the Forest's Public Affairs staff can work together to develop complementary communications strategies.

#### ***Best Practice Recap:***

- Set aside time and focus on reaching out to the local community and beyond. It can be challenging to find the capacity and time to devote to communications, but it can pay dividends in terms of increased awareness, support, and involvement.
- Work alongside partners to develop a communication plan. What are the right messages for your audiences? Who are the right messengers? Where do audiences get their information?

#### ***Initial Resources:***

- Fact sheets are available for each CFLR project on [The Nature Conservancy, Forests, Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program Q & A Website](#).
- [Malheur National Forest Accelerated Restoration Story Map Website](#).
- The [Grandfather Restoration Project Website](#) has a joint blog with guest authors and interactive comments.

## **Planning for the Future**

**Building trust and restoring landscapes does not happen overnight; it takes years of sustained capacity building, planning, implementation, monitoring, and maintenance to see outcomes on the land and in the community. Preparing for changing conditions and building resiliency into plans at the beginning can help set projects up for success.**

***Over the course of project planning, implementation, monitoring, and maintenance, conditions are likely to change***—from unexpected drought events, to wildfire impacts, to loss of forest products infrastructure, or invasive species issues. Continually tracking trends and the best available science can help groups prepare for likely scenarios. As noted in the sections above, having a long-term plan in place can help provide options when the unexpected occurs, and strong social infrastructure and working relationships can help project teams react and adapt effectively.

***Leveraging multiple funding sources not only encourages shared ownership in project success—it also helps sustain work.*** Project teams are actively pursuing multiple-funding streams to sustain capacity and continue

future work. On the Malheur National Forest, proposed projects for the CFLR landscape need to identify an outside funding source for at least 25 percent of the cost. Many organizations are more likely to invest in projects if the funding is matched, so it's important to identify and maintain these funding sources.

The investments we make in restoration, in terms of funding and staff and partnership time, are significant. To help ensure these investments continue to provide future benefits, ***CFLR project teams are acknowledging the need for maintenance treatments.*** The **Tapash Collaborative** includes the need for maintenance treatments in its landscape evaluations and planning. Acknowledging and incorporating the need for maintenance into initial strategies can help ensure these considerations are included.

### ***Best Practice Recap:***

- Recognize that conditions are likely to change. Practice situational awareness and work with partners to stay abreast of trends and new information that may inform future directions. Use flexible, adaptive approaches.
- Leverage multiple local, regional, and national funding streams—including public and private funding—to sustain future capacity.
- Plan for maintenance treatments to continue the benefit of initial treatments.

## **Conclusion**

CFLR implementation over the last 7 years has provided us with an important opportunity to learn about the successes and challenges of collaborative, landscape-scale restoration. Each CFLR has taken a unique approach to its plan of work, and these various approaches offer other collaborative restoration efforts chances to learn, apply, and adapt. Peer-learning opportunities can help project teams identifying common challenges and solutions and build on existing experience and knowledge. We look forward to continuing to learn and share those lessons in the years to come.