Poster Title: Strategic Direction and All Lands, Cross-Boundary Collaboration: The West Virginia Restoration Venture

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Abstract:

In 2014, three U.S. Forest Service (USFS) leaders in the Northeast and Midwest along with the President of the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters signed a statement of intent to collaborate across land ownership and organizational boundaries on conservation projects. That same year, the USFS and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) began funding projects through the Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership. The West Virginia Restoration Venture (WVRV) was one of the first projects funded through this initiative, and has successfully implemented a variety of land management activities across ownership boundaries.  In an effort to understand what contributed to their success, WVRV participants were interviewed by an interdisciplinary team of USFS employees about how their work related to foundations of collaboration laid out in the 2014 statement of intent and the strategic plans of USFS and NRCS.  Thematic analysis of interview data revealed strong links to strategic goals, including sharing science to inform management, achieving multiple social-ecological benefits by integrating landscape issues, and incorporating project goals that emphasize landscape connectivity into partner organizations’ decision making criteria. These results are important for illustrating benefits of landscape scale restoration work to social, ecological, and organizational communities.