

## **2020 Shared Stewardship Peer Learning Sessions Lessons Learned: Promoting a Cultural Shift and Building Strategic Alignment**

### **Summary**

Government agencies, non-profits, and private entities working in our nation's forests recognize the problems afflicting them, including wild-fires, climate change, and insects and disease. Many see Shared Stewardship, where federal, tribal, and state land managers work together to manage our nation's forest at scale, as an essential tool to address these problems, but how do we get there together?

For all entities involved, Shared Stewardship will require an organizational culture shift and strategic alignment with partners at scale.

*"The 'All Hands, All Lands' approach is essential to active management and Shared Stewardship is essential to creating resilient landscapes, enhancing wildland fire response, and, as a nation, being able to once again live with fire."*

- Vernon Sterns, Jr., Intertribal Timber Council President

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The USDA Forest Service, state and tribal foresters, nonprofit and private partners and other agencies should consider the following lessons learned for promoting a cultural shift toward [Shared Stewardship](#) and when building strategic alignment between organizations.

### **Align goals across federal, state, local, and tribal governments and the private and nonprofit sectors.**

To achieve Shared Stewardship, agencies and organizations must assemble around common goals. For instance, forest managers and partners agree that they want to build resilient forests and to do so at the landscape-scale. Forest managers and partners also agree that cross-boundary projects should encourage risk taking and innovation, particularly within the Forest Service. Broad goals like these can build inter-organizational alignment while leaving space for each organization to set their own priorities.

### **Integrate indigenous voices into projects and conversations.**

Indigenous people are the original stewards of these lands and have deep connections to lands on and off their reservations dating back to before the United States existed. Accordingly, tribal participation in landscape-scale forestry projects is critical to not only protecting land of cultural significance but also exposing organizations like the Forest Service and state forestry agencies to a different perspective on land management.

### **Peer Learning Session Recordings**

- [Shared Stewardship Peer Learning Series, Session 1: "Promoting a Cultural Shift toward Shared Stewardship" \(July 8, 2020\)](#)
- [Shared Stewardship Peer Learning Series, Session 2: "Building Strategic Alignment for Shared Stewardship using State Forest Action Plans" \(August 27, 2020\)](#)

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## **Create accessible databases and compatible datasets to share information across organizations.**

In order to engage successfully in the Shared Stewardship of our nation's forests, agencies and organizations need to be able to share data. This will require compatible datasets and accessible databases. Such information-sharing promotes inter-organizational relationships and cross-boundary successes. Start thinking about data needs early in your cross-boundary projects as gaining access and developing data compatibility can take time.

## **Institutionalize Shared Stewardship across all agencies and organizations.**

To manage natural resources across jurisdictions, agencies and organizations must embed cross-boundary practices throughout their organizations. Once embedded, these ways of working together across boundaries can endure changes in administrations and keep the forest community's jointly-held commitment to the nation's forests. This is largely done through relationship building. The more people work together in the present, the more they'll work together in the future.

## **Build alignment into long-term plans.**

Each National Forest has a forest plan and each state has a forest action plan. Organizations should seek input from partners in their long-term plans and should reference partners' long-term plans within planning documents.

## **Case Study: Longleaf Pine Restoration, Texas**

Longleaf pines are fire and wind adapted trees that provide important wildlife habitat. Their range once spanned from Virginia to Florida and westward into East Texas. Aggressive logging practices decimated the longleaf pine population in eastern Texas in the early 20th century, producing more than 2.25 billion board feet of lumber in 1907.

Hoping to restore the longleaf in eastern Texas, a group of stakeholders created the Texas Longleaf Taskforce in 2010. The Taskforce includes groups ranging from the Forest Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, to the Nature Conservancy and the Hancock Timber Resource Group. Despite their diverse interests, the partners were able to assemble around the common goal of restoring longleaf pine.

The Taskforce is focused on engaging private landowners since more than 95% of land in Texas is privately owned. For the last decade, the Taskforce has used its resources to bring private landowners to the table and educate them on the value of longleaf pine and prescribed fire. To date, the Taskforce has facilitated the restoration of longleaf across more than 34,000 acres. Texas State Forester Tom Boggus attributes their success to the collaboration of many organizations and private land owners. "If we don't work together we won't move the needle, whether it is climate change or water issues, the forest products industry or wildlife preservation," he said.