

2020 Shared Stewardship Peer Learning Sessions Lessons Learned: How People Are Working Across Agreements and Different Systems & Using Cross-Boundary Tools

Summary

As land managers shift their focus to landscape-scale treatments, the traditional model of developing a project proposal, funding, implementation, monitoring, and adaptation also must shift. The resources required for such a transition include both the tangible—like funding and research—and the intangible—like place-based knowledge and local labor. These resources are numerous, but, accessing them requires robust relationships and coordination among federal, state, local, tribal, and private partners for landscape-scale and cross-boundary success.

“We’re used to working in silos but we’re trying to get people to map out their different projects to then develop them into one landscape-scale project of which everyone has a piece”
– David Smith, Administrator of the Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife

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Capitalize on resources and knowledge unique to each partner.

Federal, state, local, tribal, and private partners each have different access to resources. For instance, a nonprofit land trust may have access to grant funding that a government entity may not, and vice versa. Additionally, the federal government often can provide large pools of specialized expertise, whereas local, tribal, and private partners can offer hyper-localized knowledge of a landscape or a resource – some of which has been developed across countless generations. To ensure a project maximizes its resources and integrates a diversity of voices, managers should map out partner resources at the beginning of projects. This document can detail funding sources, specialized knowledge, local partnerships, volunteer networks, and more.

Institutionalize relationships.

To ensure land managers can capitalize on resources and partnerships, federal, state, local, tribal, and private partners can establish agreements that formalize their relationships. Such a process can include a memorandum of understanding, multi-year business plans, regional science networks, and local contractor agreements. The partnerships—and resources that stem from them—can then be quickly leveraged when needed, since the parties have documented their respective roles. Symbolically, an institutionalized relationship represents the fundamentals of Shared Stewardship: government and private entities working together to most efficiently execute landscape-scale treatments.

Peer Learning Session Recordings

- [Shared Stewardship Peer Learning Series, Session 3: “How People are Working Across Agreements and Different Systems” \(September 24, 2020\)](#)
- [Shared Stewardship Peer Learning Series, Session 4: “Cross-Boundary Tools to Implement Shared Stewardship” \(October 15, 2020\)](#)

Dedicate resources to joint communications.

Cross-boundary partnerships should dedicate resources to joint communications to build understanding and support for projects. Particularly in the early stages of cross-boundary projects, entities can focus on pooling data and crafting compelling visual communication tools. Sharing visual communication tools based in geospatial and biophysical data with stakeholders can result in better understanding among the public and better feedback, which will strengthen the cross-boundary project as well as the partnerships involved.

Investigate tools and authorities that support cross-boundary projects.

Cross-boundary partnerships should evaluate the growing list of tools and authorities for cross-boundary and landscape-scale projects and make use of those that fit their needs. Such tools and authorities may include the Good Neighbor Authority, tools from the Tribal Forest Protection Act and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, and Stewardship Contracting. Funding opportunities for cross-boundary work may include state grant opportunities or the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership.

Case Study: The Ohio Interagency Forestry Team and Wayne National Forest

In southeast Ohio, six public agencies are working to restore oak-dominated forests across 17 counties. The USDA Forest Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ohio Department of Natural Resources Divisions of Forestry and Wildlife, Ohio State University Extension, and Central State University Extension—collectively known as the Ohio Interagency Forestry Team (OIFT)—have treated lands across public and private land boundaries since the early 2000s. Between 2015 and 2017 alone, the group received \$3.4 million for collaborative oak management. In 2019, the OIFT signed a five-year business plan to create a shared vision for forest landscapes in the region, to increase public awareness of the loss of oaks, and to collectively manage oak-dominated forests.

Importantly, the OIFT has created a regional science network through which partners can share, interpret, and synthesize data. Partners now have a one-stop shop for data, analysis, and outcomes for the area. The science network also has standardized data interpretation and terminology so that partners can more easily find connections across land management boundaries.

When it started, the OIFT brought together leaders from the respective agencies to share their visions and missions and distill those into common priorities. The middle managers have translated those priorities into actions and tackled the nuts and bolts of implementation.

See fs.usda.gov/detail/wayne/landmanagement/?cid=FSEPRD769961 for more on the Ohio Interagency Forestry Team.