

Outlook Dialog 2010 Survey Summary

May 13, 2010

Introduction

In preparation for the *USFS 2010 Outlook Dialog on Landscape-scale Conservation Approaches to Forestry* in Tempe, AZ on May 24-25, 2010; participants were asked to respond to a survey on landscape-scale conservation within forestry. In this survey, the Forest Service R&D reached out to key leaders seeking input on the information, approaches and tools to facilitate better applications and foster greater collaboration across diverse ownerships. These responses were used to shape the workshop agenda and gave an understanding of current views on landscape-scale approaches to conservation. Interviewees included leaders from NGO's, industry, Federal agencies, and academia. Based on the responses from phone interviews conducted by Sarah Chappel and email questionnaires, several themes and recurring ideas emerged.

Analysis of Main Themes

Although we received a wide range of responses, several overall themes emerged from the interviews. The need for social science, integration and a change in people's behavior towards the land and land-use was an underlying concern in many responses. Quite a few respondents noted the lack of cultural and psychological integration within forestry management and research and the barriers that gap creates.

A recurring idea throughout many responses was the need for more holistic approaches to conservation. Landscape-scale conservation requires considering more than just the ecological landscape, it also incorporates the ecosystem services, social/political values, and other aspects that affect management and conservation of land. Most interviewees highlighted the necessity of more information and research on all landscapes for sustainable practices and landscape-scale conservation in forest lands to improve. They also recognized that often the lack of research is less the problem than the lack of usable information, communication and standardizing of results for application to management.

Converting research to usable information was a high priority for many interviewees. Often research is conducted and studies are published, but the information does not make it to the end user. Turning research into useful on the ground information and recommendations is a key challenge for addressing forestry management and conservation at a landscape-scale.

There was an overall agreement that the US Forest Service R&D has the ability to provide positive leadership in the forest community. They have the resources to facilitate partnerships, collaboration, and regional efforts, as well as the power to lead by example. Although there are many barriers in a landscape-scale approach to forestry conservation, overall, the goals are within reach and the energy and drive exists to reach them.

Interviewee Responses: Main and Reoccurring Ideas

1. How would you define landscape-scale conservation? What are the major elements?

- Connectivity
- Inclusive
- all elements of an ecosystem, and an agreement on the ecological context
- includes social and economic aspects not just ecological
- coordination across multiple owners and levels
- Cross boundary (political, social, ecological)
- Focus on a desired future condition (DFC)
- A set of outcomes that are the product of laws, policies, and management actions

2. How does a landscape-scale approach to conservation fit into your organization's planning, research, and management?

- Answers varied widely by interviewee.

3. How can we better link the five major aspects concerning forests (climate change, bio-energy, water, wildlife, and rural wealth) to coalesce effectively with landscape-scale conservation?

- The common denominator in all these is land use
- There is not necessarily competition between the aspects, but just a matter of which is a better focus for each particular landscape.
- They can be integrated into forestry management and drive the active changes in management programs.
- Within these lies ecosystem services, which brings up the need for incentives for forestland owners to retain their forests, through which they will need to be rewarded for previously unvalued ecosystem services (the five aspects above)
- However, none of these aspects are equal in nature, but they can be a driving force for landscape focus instead of agency focus.
- Fundamentally, sustainability cannot be achieved in forests without integrating these aspects.
- Share data on these aspects amongst collaborating groups and regions

4. What key information, approaches and tools can research produce to enhance the application of landscape-scale conservation efforts?

- Linkages between different components of ecosystems (incl. human dimensions).
- More monitoring capabilities and work on adapting management from those findings.
- Finding better ways to communicate findings, possibly interactive sessions between users and scientists

- More user-friendly data sets.
- Not necessarily more work, but focus on translating, integrating, and communicating that work.
- Focus on social science research.
- Protocols for data collection to make integration easier.
- More functioning model data to predict scenarios.
- Research on the economic benefits and willingness for landowners to preserve, maintain, or manage their land and ecosystem services (financial incentives for not converting land)

5. How can the Forest Service better facilitate the application of landscape scale conservation efforts across the 80% of forest land in the US which is not part of the National Forest System?

- Lead by example, engage in a proactive way
- Take into consideration that inholdings within forests do not recognize property lines (fire, insects, invasives, wildlife, water)
- A mental shift to push to color outside of the lines more, and create partnerships on the landscape level, not the jurisdiction level – help break down the boundaries between agencies and across property lines.
- FS could provide more incentives and resources to state, private, and tribal land owners for better collaboration on LSC.
- Need to evolve from the current system and operate on regional or landscape scales, instead of national scale.
- Help with data and information sharing; be a host for research findings.
- Targeted funding

6. What are the opportunities and barriers for the Forest Service to show greater leadership on this issue in the broader forest community?

- **Opportunities:**
 - General consensus that there are many opportunities for the FS to show greater leadership.
 - Take more risks, and don't be so bullied by guidelines.
 - FS could work to bridge the translation gap between managers and researchers.
 - Facilitate better communication and collaboration between federal, state/tribal and private forestry.
 - Facilitate national summit/meeting or even regional meetings.
 - Establish and support the Forest Resource Coordinating Committee (authorized in Section 8005 of the 2008 Farm Bill)

- **Barriers:**
 - Confusing reputation, general public does not know who the FS is or what they do; also a lack of trust in the FS by other agencies, organizations, etc.
 - Focusing solely on forested land, not surrounding agriculture and towns that influence it.
 - Lack of interagency cooperation.
 - Lack of funding for state and private forest lands.
 - Policy confusion and frustration for effective stewardship of land.
 - Difficult to sell and market FS

7. How do embedded issues (such as climate change, water, wildlife, rural wealth, and bio-energy) affect the landscape-scale conservation approach?

a. How do these issues change and shape the necessary research?

- They need to be studied from an integrated and holistic approach – landscape scale conservation includes all of these and we need more research on the linkages between them.
- Also, research and studies pertaining to priority of embedded issues in certain areas.
- These are what the public is interested in, therefore, we need to integrate social/economic research with the natural systems studies.
- Focus on the values of these resources.

b. Are there new areas of research that need to be explored?

- New technology has enabled more GIS, DNA and molecular genetics research.
- Find more cost effective ways to do research.
- Find better ways to doing ecosystem services valuation and where forestry lies within those services
- How natural science information and social science interact on a management level.
- Water as an integrator and not a separate entity.
- Carbon sequestration potentials and carbon life-cycle analyses

8. In what kinds of activities could the forest community benefit from a partnership or collaboration with USFS Research & Development?

- FS should not be bound by traditional partnerships.
- Because of the internet and other research sharing technology, collaborations are more common than ever, but they need to be strengthened.
- Partnerships can be designed around landscapes and look at providing management plans, incentives, etc.

- Offer more training opportunities.
- a. Any benefits for your specific organization?
- Varies by interviewee.

9. What other questions or issues must be addressed to enhance landscape-scale conservation efforts?

- It's time for new approaches and new incentives.
- The era of climate change is upon us and we need to act now and act quickly.
- We need to break down the traditional barriers and work on changing and adapting people's belief systems and behaviors.
- Management costs of public forests.
- Trying to make the information and research into a usable format.
- The separation of terrestrial resources and aquatic resources – prevents effective collaboration