

Community-based Perspectives Supporting Traditional and Multiparty Monitoring

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Both traditional and multiparty monitoring are central to effective federal land management because they help policy makers, land managers, and citizens to understand the impacts of management activities. Over the past decade, the number of laws and policies requiring multiparty monitoring of federal land management activities has grown. Multiparty monitoring has emerged because: (1) it can help reduce social conflict over proposed actions; (2) it is a necessary component of adaptive management; and (3) it provides a mechanism for learning about ecological and socioeconomic processes.

Policy makers, land managers, and stakeholders are grappling with the challenges of developing, implementing, and supporting effective monitoring, particularly multiparty monitoring. Several guidebooks and other resources have been developed to assist in understanding various approaches. However, considerable confusion remains about how to create and support successful monitoring efforts. There are also political, financial, and institutional barriers to multiparty monitoring.

This briefing paper outlines some of the concepts associated with monitoring of federal land management activities and offers recommendations to support and implement successful monitoring, particularly multiparty monitoring.

Recommendations for Support for Multiparty Monitoring

For any kind of monitoring—but particularly multiparty monitoring—to be successful, managers, researchers, and partners need institutional support. Policy makers can increase institutional support by:

- ❖ Developing targets and reward systems that require management units to undertake multiparty monitoring.
- ❖ Ensuring that all performance targets are outcome-based rather than output-based.
- ❖ Systematically incorporating the costs of multiparty monitoring into project and program budgeting.
- ❖ Developing mechanisms that incorporate lessons from monitoring into policy-making processes to ensure that monitoring leads to adaptation.
- ❖ Supporting monitoring at the project level, where the goals of adaptive management and conflict resolution are most readily addressed.
- ❖ Involving Research Station scientists in National Forest System monitoring efforts to draw on the agency's scientific expertise.

Authority and Direction to Undertake Monitoring

Congress has provided authority and direction to the Forest Service to monitor its activities since 1928, when it authorized the Forest Service to create and fund research stations. The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 requires that the Forest Service collect and analyze information about impacts of management activities at many different levels. The Government Performance Results Act of 1995 directs all federal agencies to evaluate performance based on *outcomes* instead of outputs. This task requires the monitoring of the impacts of federal activities, not compiling lists of government activities.

Over the past several years, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have received congressional direction to undertake multiparty monitoring. The 10-year stewardship contracting authorities, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (Sec 102(g)(5)), and the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program in New Mexico all require multiparty monitoring. In addition, the Western Governor's Association's National Fire Plan Implementation Strategy calls for collaboration and lists monitoring as a collaborative activity.

Purpose of Multiparty Monitoring

Monitoring is the process of collecting and evaluating information. A variety of actors can participate in monitoring. Multiparty monitoring differs from traditional monitoring in that it involves diverse people coming together to develop monitoring questions and methods to answer those questions.

The purpose of multiparty monitoring is to allow agencies and their stakeholders and partners to:

- ❖ Experiment with new approaches to land management, learn from those experiments, and adapt management based on lessons learned
- ❖ Reach agreement about appropriate management activities and build trust
- ❖ Evaluate the impact of policies and programs

Monitoring can occur at different geographic, administrative, and temporal scales. For example, monitoring projects can occur at the project, programmatic, regional, or national levels. Substantively, monitoring can focus on biophysical, economic, social, cultural, and legal/administrative issues.

Developing Successful Multiparty Monitoring Projects

To create effective multiparty monitoring projects, management units and their collaborators need to:

- ❖ Focus monitoring questions on the areas of greatest controversy, experimental components of projects, and core goals.
- ❖ Identify or create specific mechanisms to link lessons learned from monitoring to processes for change.
- ❖ Develop programs that are truly collaborative, and include stakeholders in every phase of the monitoring effort, particularly in identification of monitoring questions.
- ❖ Develop monitoring plans early in project planning, when project goals and objectives are created.
- ❖ Create data collection plans prior to project implementation to ensure that needed data will be available.
- ❖ Include monitoring questions that address the biophysical, socioeconomic, and other goals of the project.
- ❖ Enlist the assistance of social scientists and scientists who have experience with monitoring to help develop viable data collection and analysis plans.

Who We Are

The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition is comprised of western rural and local, regional, and national organizations that have joined together to promote balanced conservation-based approaches to the ecological and economic problems facing the West. We are committed to finding and promoting solutions through collaborative, place-based work that recognizes the inextricable link between the long-term health of the land and well-being of rural communities. We come from California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Arizona, New Mexico, and Montana.

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