

# **Performance Measures Issue Paper**

Performance measures are emerging among federal land management agencies as a new approach to gauge agency progress towards goals, as a basis for funding allocations, and to provide accountability to the Administration, Congress, and the public. Such measures also document taxpayer dollar expenditures and program accomplishments. The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC) is deeply concerned that current measures are insufficient to assess federal agency progress towards inclusive and integrated land management priorities. Specifically, the current set of strategic goals lack objectives and measures for collaboration and capacity building in public lands communities.

Public lands communities are directly affected by federal agency decision-making and project implementation. Without performance measures that reflect agency goals of collaboration and capacity-building, it is unlikely that Congress will make available the resources necessary to achieve these goals, or that other incentives will be sufficient to realize them. While we recognize that there are significant challenges to measuring collaboration and community capacity, we believe that the agencies should place a priority on establishing the best measurements possible.

In the spirit of community-based forestry and cooperative conservation, we offer recommendations in the following narrative matrix to help agencies measure achievements as defined under the National Fire Plan, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, the Western Governors' Association (WGA) 10-

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Include performance measures related to collaboration, community benefit/capacity building**, and change over time in land conditions (forest and watershed resilience; risk reduction from catastrophic wildland fire) in all future agency strategic planning initiatives.
2. **Initiate a public outreach component** for future agency strategic planning processes that seeks informed public input and increases opportunities for collaboration.
3. **Support social science and applied research activities** necessary to develop and implement criteria for measuring, evaluating, and responding to collaboration and situations in low capacity communities.
4. Create financial (budgetary) and other incentives for agency staff to work towards and **measure outcomes rather than outputs**.

Year Implementation Strategy<sup>1</sup>, and other strategic plans. RVCC stands ready to work with the agencies on advancing tangible performance measures at forest, state, regional, and national levels.

<sup>1</sup> *A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan*, May 2002 - [http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/fire/implem\\_plan.pdf](http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/fire/implem_plan.pdf)

## **COALITION PARTNERS:**

Alliance for Forest Workers and Harvesters • Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment • American Forests • Applegate River Watershed Council • Center for Biological Diversity • Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council • Collaborative Learning Circle • Conservation Northwest • Ecosystem Workforce Program • Flathead Economic Policy Center • Forest Energy Corporation • ForEverGreen Forestry • Framing Our Community • Gifford Pinchot Task Force • Hells Canyon Preservation Council • Institute for Culture and Ecology • Jefferson State Forest Products • Jefferson Sustainable Development Initiative • Lake County Resources Initiative • Methow Forest Owners Cooperative • Northwest Connections • Okanogan Communities Development Council • Pinchot Institute for Conservation • Pinchot Partnership • Resource Innovations • SBS Wood Shavings • Siuslaw Institute Inc. • Sustainable Northwest • The Forest Guild • Wallowa Resources • Watershed Research and Training Center • Wildlands CPR

## **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO EVALUATING PERFORMANCE**

The federal government has recently moved to performance-based budgeting, integrating both budgets and performance outcomes in the planning process. The 2004–2008 Forest Service Strategic Plan, for example, includes a framework for their annual performance plan, a performance budget, and a performance accountability report. This emphasis on performance-based budgeting is intended to tie dollars to agency results and to ensure that goals, objectives, and program targets are being met. It also provides the public with accountability on how taxpayer dollars are spent.

Recently, the federal government released the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) as a strategy for identifying a program's strengths and weaknesses, and informing funding and management decisions aimed at improving program efficiency.<sup>2</sup> According to a briefing of PART:

*...federal programs should receive taxpayer dollars only when they prove they achieve results. The federal government spends over \$2 trillion a year on approximately 1,000 federal programs. In most cases, we do not know what we are getting for our money. This is simply unacceptable. Good government—a government responsible to the people whose dollars it takes to fund its operations—must have as its core purpose the achievement of results. No program, however worthy its goal and high-minded its name, is entitled to continue perpetually unless it can demonstrate it is actually effective in solving problems.<sup>3</sup>*

The recent update of the WGA 10-Year Implementation Strategy provides another example of this increased focus on performance measures. This effort includes revised and new performance measures for the four goals of the National Fire Plan. The update includes implementation outcomes, performance measures, and specific implementation tasks.

The recommendations highlighted herein connect new performance measures to existing government measurement documents. This should facilitate the integration of new and revised performance measures within existing structures.

## **CRITICAL ISSUES WITH EXISTING PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

Historically, federal land management centered on commodity production -- timber harvest within the Forest Service and grazing opportunities within the BLM. These practices, along with aggressive fire suppression over the last century, have left a legacy of increased catastrophic wildfire occurrences and decreased forest health and productivity. In response, today's legislation such as the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, and policies such as the National Fire Plan, call for restoring healthy forest conditions. Unfortunately, agency methods for measuring progress towards these objectives have not changed, and these outdated measures are insufficient for a restoration approach to management. Restoration requires measurements that can identify changing forest health conditions over time. It also requires that we measure the degree of collaboration and partnership-building with neighboring communities, as well as community capacity to play a meaningful role in restoration planning, implementation, and biomass utilization activities – all factors critical to creating long-term investment in restoring and maintaining public lands.

### **Current Measurements Are Not Adequate to Meet Priorities**

In general, current measures developed by the agencies use a traditional input-output approach, such as “acres treated” and “cost per acre.” These measures encourage short-term actions that rely on the quickest and cheapest way to treat the “easiest” acres, an approach that does not prioritize watershed or community socio-economic health. Furthermore, current measures do not gauge agency progress towards collaboration, rural wildfire protection, or other actions necessary for inclusive and integrated forest stewardship. Consequently, current measurements fall short of responding to actual performance of restoration goals.

The accompanying matrix provides recommendations to evaluate three key components currently missing and/or inadequate in agency proposed performance measures: (1) collaboration, (2) community benefit/capacity building, and (3) change over time in land conditions (forest and watershed resilience; risk reduction from catastrophic wildland fire).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/part/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> *FY 2004 Budget Chapter Introducing the PART: Rating the Performance of Federal Programs*, <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/fy04/pdf/budget/performance.pdf>

## **THE RVCC PERFORMANCE MEASURES MATRIX**

This matrix is intended to serve as a starting point for a collaborative effort to improve agency performance measures and accountability. RVCC welcomes the opportunity to partner with the federal land management agencies in revising and strengthening this matrix. To facilitate adoption of these performance measures, RVCC has utilized a structure that aligns with the WGA 10-Year Implementation Strategy and developed a set of goals central to comprehensive forest restoration.

The matrix illustrates a series of outcomes, measures, and measurement strategies for each goal; “*Outcome*” describes the desired outcome for each goal; “*Performance Measure*” measures progress toward achieving the implementation outcome; “*Measurement Strategies*” identifies specific steps that must be taken in order to realize measurable progress.

<b>Goal 1. Increase collaboration between public land communities and federal agencies.</b>		
Objective: Increase working relationships and accomplishments between agencies and public lands communities through effective collaboration so that both can actively participate in restoring and/or maintaining forest and watershed condition across ownership boundaries.		
OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	MEASUREMENT STRATEGIES
1.1. Projects in community-based plans are prioritized collaboratively between communities and agencies for funding and implementation activities (e.g., community wildfire protection plans, forest plan revision process).	1.1.1. Number of restoration projects (on Federal and adjacent non-federal lands) implemented annually by the Forest Service and BLM based on the priorities in a community-based collaborative plan as compared to the total number of projects implemented by the forest or district.	National review of collaborative plans and projects; regional reporting requirements
	1.1.2 Number of community based plans and restoration projects completed and percent completed through a collaborative process	Inventory through state and federal National Fire Plan offices
	1.1.3 Percent of community based wildfire and restoration plans that result in funding for implementation or projects implemented on federal and adjacent non-federal lands	Review of grant dollars from NFP, Title II, and FEMA that are tied to projects in community based wildfire and restoration plans
	1.1.4 Amount of federal and non-federal funds and in-kind contributions used to implement collaborative restoration or wildfire protection projects contained in community-based plans	Inventory of CWPP implementation (collaboration with WGA, WFLC, Joint Fire Sciences)
1.2 Agency personnel and districts receive incentives for working collaboratively with public lands communities	1.2.1 Number and percent of commendations for agency personnel	Annual agency review; regional reporting
1.3 Agencies recognize the value of personnel stability in cultivating collaboration and partnerships	1.3.1 Percentage of agency personnel involved in collaborative/partnership work who are promoted in place	Annual agency review; regional reporting

**“You treasure what you measure  
and you measure what you treasure.”**

- Lynn Jungwirth, Watershed Research and Training Center  
Hayfork, California

## THE RVCC PERFORMANCE MEASURES MATRIX (continued)

<b>Goal 2. Build and maintain capacity in public lands communities.</b>		
Objective: Build and maintain healthy economies in public lands communities, including strong, local, natural resource-based businesses with a reliable/consistent supply of work and forest goods/services.		
OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	MEASUREMENT STRATEGIES
2.1 Increased community-based business capacity for restoration	2.1.1 % of procurement, stewardship contracts, and timber sales that evaluate best value by weighting past performance, technical approach, and benefit to local communities equal to or greater than price.	*
	2.1.2 % of contracts awarded to low-income communities and dollar amount as compared to the whole agency budget	*
	2.1.3 % increase in the number of local contracts awarded and the number of high-skill, high wage jobs created and retained.	
2.2 Agencies demonstrate commitment to providing technical assistance, training, research, and financial assistance to public lands communities (including low capacity communities)	2.2.1 Percent of NFS/SPF budget spent on financial and technical assistance to public lands communities, percent of those communities that are low capacity	Agencies develop and use a designation to identify and evaluate the needs of low capacity communities in planning, implementation and monitoring Agencies integrate indicators of community capacity in planning, program implementation, and monitoring
	2.2.2 Number and amount of business or community support grants awarded; percent of those communities that are low capacity	
	2.2.3 Number and percent of projects that included structured training of workers	*
2.3 Land management agencies contribute to strong rural economies in adjacent communities.	2.3.1 New Performance Measure to be developed	*
2.4 Agencies provide opportunities to utilize biomass in order to stimulate jobs and businesses in value-added production at the appropriate scale for public lands communities <sup>4</sup> , as well as facilities that are tiered to the ecological capacity of the land	2.4.1 Amount of small diameter material, including biomass, and value-added products processed locally (as percent of total amount), including biomass	As measured at the Forest level
	2.4.2 Dollars invested (infrastructure investments, technical assistance, grants, etc.) in public lands communities for development of biomass utilization and local energy projects	
	2.4.3 Number of processing facilities utilizing wood products	
2.5 Agencies provide opportunities to utilize non-timber forest products to increase economic benefits including creation of jobs, supplemental income, and business creation around value-added production	2.5.1 Number of jobs/businesses created or supported utilizing nontimber forest products	Agencies use multiple sources of data including job statistics, data on living or family-wage jobs, NTFP buyer records on how many harvesters sell to them, and agency and other landowner permit data
2.6 Agencies work to restore and conserve culturally important and marketable non-timber forest products	2.6.1 Inventories show increase in culturally important and marketable NTFPs	Agencies work with communities and social scientists to identify culturally important and marketable NTFPs that occur or formally occurred in the local ecosystem

\*Note: RVCC hopes to work with the federal land management agencies to complete, and refine measures and measurement strategies in this matrix through long-term partnerships and collaboration.

<sup>4</sup>The 2005 RVCC issues paper on biomass utilization states the following: "For many rural communities, small (1-10 megawatts) is the appropriate scale. Support for small-scale facilities provides opportunities to test innovative new technologies that generate clean renewable energy and thermal applications integrated with value-added manufacturing facilities. Small-scale is also appropriate for the social and economic capacities of many rural communities, and can provide the greatest number of sustainable jobs."

<b>Goal 3. Improve forest and watershed condition</b>		
Objective: Restore and maintain forests and watersheds to fully functioning conditions across ownership boundaries. Restoration and maintenance of public lands is a primary goal of the federal land management agencies.		
OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	MEASUREMENT STRATEGIES
3.1 Agencies adopt restoration and maintenance of healthy ecosystem function as a primary purpose	3.1.1 Percent of budget expended on projects that improve watershed condition	*
	3.1.2 Number of projects that cross land tenure (public/private)	*
3.2 Agencies use a systemic approach to the inventory and treatment of invasive species	3.2.1 Percent of stewardship contracts that include inventory and treatment of invasive species	*
3.3. Agencies establish an ecologically and economically sustainable transportation system that addresses road maintenance, upgrades and decommissioning	3.3.1 Percent of budget expended on road maintenance, upgrades, and decommissioning projects	Annual agency review of road system based on ecological and economic indicators
	3.3.2 Percent of stewardship contracts that include road decommissioning and number of miles included	
	3.3.3 Acres or stream miles restored through road decommissioning	

<b>Goal 4. Reduce risk from catastrophic wildland fire</b>		
Objective: Increase opportunities for agencies and public lands communities (including low capacity communities) to work together in reducing hazardous fuels. Ensure that public lands communities receive fire protection and preparedness assistance, especially those communities at highest risk.		
OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	MEASUREMENT STRATEGIES
4.1 Ecosystem restoration is performed for multiple outcomes, including fuels reduction	4.1.1 Percent of fuels reduction work that is conducted using stewardship contracting	*
4.2 Business and job opportunities are created in fuels reduction, improving resistance to catastrophic fire	4.2.1 Number and percent of acres treated, using a scientifically credible baseline that incorporates local knowledge, which are moved toward or maintained in a desired fire adapted condition. ( <i>A “scientifically credible baseline” may be established using methods such as Fire Regime Condition Class, through collaborative agreement of scientists and stakeholders at the local level, or through other scientific efforts to establish reference conditions identified in applicable land or resource management plans.</i> )	Monitor change in condition class through Federal Fire Management Plans and CWPPs
	4.2.2 Number of jobs created for local businesses and workers	New data collection methods, data on number of jobs related to fuels reduction and utilization
	4.2.3 Dollar value of contracts awarded to local businesses and workers	Use existing contracting data to calculate value of contracts in relation to distance between contractors and National Forests <sup>5</sup>
	4.2.4 Number and percent of projects involving hazardous fuels reduction prioritized in a collaborative planning process as defined in the WGA 10-year implementation strategy	
4.3. Agencies ensure that low capacity communities access and benefit from wildland fire programs and services	4.3.1 Percent of national, state, regional, and local wildfire risk assessments that identify low capacity communities	Utilize a designation for low capacity communities; develop criteria/indicators that communities can use
	4.3.2 Percent and total dollars of wildland fire landowner assistance provided in low capacity communities	
	4.3.3 Percent and total dollars of volunteer and state fire assistance provided to low income communities	

<sup>5</sup> Moseley, C. and Toth, N., *Fire Hazard Reduction and Economic Opportunity: How are the Benefits of the National Fire Plan Distributed? Society and Natural Resources*, 17:701-716, 2004 and Moseley, C., *Procurement Contracting in the Affected Counties of the Northwest Forest Plan: 12 Years of Change*, PNW-GTR-661, January 2006.

## GLOSSARY

**Collaboration:** A process in which groups and individuals with different interests come together to address management issues across a large geographic region such as a forest, watershed, or landscape. Through collaboration, they explore their differences, identify common interests, and seek common-ground solutions. The goal of collaborative groups is to build and promote a collective vision for how to manage the land.<sup>6</sup> Establishing evaluation criteria for collaboration among agencies and public lands communities can assist in both measuring collaboration and ensuring common goals are established by all interested parties and accomplished through a collaborative process.

### **Community-based wildfire prevention and forest health restoration plans:**

Over the past decade, increasing numbers of communities have developed wildfire protection and forest restoration plans that prioritize areas for and types of treatment. These plans are generally crafted through collaborative processes with federal land management agencies and can result in shared goals and accomplishments in carrying out the plans. Examples of these plans include Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP), called for in the 2003 Healthy Forests Restoration Act, community forest stewardship and restoration plans, forest management plans, and post-fire recovery plans. CWPPs are intended to help communities identify high-risk areas and priorities for fuels treatment on public and private land, as well as actions to reduce structural ignitability.

**Low capacity:** We focus on low capacity communities, rather than low-income communities, because there are many communities that fall outside of traditional definitions of “low-income” but still require technical or financial assistance in order to effectively engage

<sup>6</sup> Forest Service and National Forest Foundation, *Partnership Guide* (May 2005) <http://www.partnershipresource-center.org/resources/partnership-guide/chap1-3.html>

in project planning, implementation, and monitoring. There currently is no specific designation for this type of community; however, establishing criteria and identifying indicators for what constitutes a low capacity community can assist in measuring performance of programs in these areas. In defining a low capacity community, we utilize a definition of ‘community capacity’: the collective ability of residents in a community to respond to external and internal stresses, to create and take advantage of opportunities, and to meet local needs. In relation to wildfire, this also includes a community’s ability to mitigate wildfire threats (hazardous fuels reduction, firefighting, restoration) respond to active wildfire, and mitigate post fire damage.<sup>7</sup>

### **Nontimber Forest Products (NTFPs):**

NTFPs include wild foods such as mushrooms, fruits, nuts and honey; medicinal plants; floral greenery and horticultural stock; native seeds; fiber and dye plants; and oils, resins, and saps like maple syrup. We also include small diameter poles, posts, and firewood. Thousands of NTFPs are harvested throughout U.S. forests for commercial, personal, subsistence, and recreation purposes. NTFPs generate millions of dollars for rural and urban communities, providing both regular employment as well as important sources of supplemental income. The biodiversity of NTFPs are an essential component of sustainable forest management.

**Public lands communities:** Public lands communities are those located adjacent to federal land, may derive economic benefits and/or opportunities related to forest and land management, and may be affected by the conditions of the federal land.

**Quality jobs:** We define quality jobs as those having (1) high wages and benefits, (2) healthy and safe workplaces, (3) long

<sup>7</sup> Taken from American Forests comments on the Federal Register Notice, “WUI Communities within the Vicinity of Federal Lands that are of High Risk from Wildfire.” (2001) <http://www.americanforests.org/downloads/fp/AF-policyviews/fedregltr.pdf>

duration, and (4) skill standards.<sup>8</sup> We define ‘long duration’ to mean multiple seasons of work.

## 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, New Mexico, and Montana.

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<sup>8</sup> Moseley, Cassandra. *A Survey of Innovative Contracting for Quality Jobs and Ecosystem Management*. (August 2002) USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station, General Technical Report, PNW-GTR-552.