



RVCC
Rural Voices for
Conservation
COALITION

GOVERNANCE STRATEGIES FOR LARGE LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIPS IN THE WEST

DECEMBER 2022

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Governance Strategies for Large Landscape Partnerships in the West

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pg 6: Courtesy of Front Range Roundtable

pg 7: Alyssa Cudmore

pgs 8,11, 13: Courtesy of 2-3-2 partnership

pgs 14,16,17: Courtesy of Front Range Roundtable

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Introduction

Over the past decade, the increasing complexity of environmental issues, as well as a growing emphasis on landscape-scale policy tools, has spurred the emergence of a new generation of collaborative efforts. These efforts work at large, regional scales to address issues that span land ownerships and encompass multiple watersheds, fireheds, communities, projects, and/or existing collaborative groups. These “all-lands partnerships” have a large landscape, cross-boundary focus that differentiates them from natural resources-focused collaborative groups working at smaller spatial scales or on single land ownerships issues.

Because of the scale and scope of their work, these partnerships tend to experience similar questions and needs related to their governance structures and processes. Broadly, their challenge lies in designing partnerships to work at large landscape scales while also supporting the autonomy, momentum, and individuality of local-scale partners and efforts.

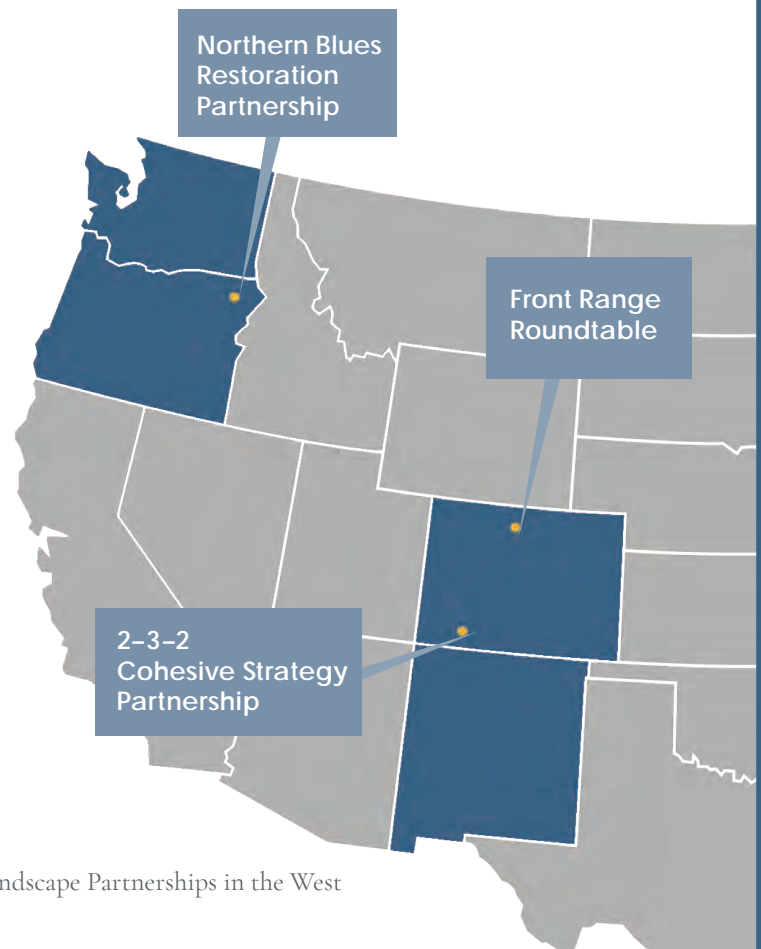
To help facilitate peer-learning on the topic of all-lands partnership governance, staff with the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition and Oregon State University Forestry and Natural Resources Extension organized four virtual peer-learning discussions in 2021 that brought together participants from five all-lands partnerships in Oregon, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. Over the course of four sessions, these discussions included the following topics:

- Defining a regional scope and purpose that complement and leverage existing smaller-scale efforts in the same area.
- Developing the type and level of structure needed for effective coordination, communication, and advancement of a shared partnership vision while allowing sufficient autonomy and flexibility for local-level groups and efforts more directly involved in planning or implementing work.
- Instituting structures, processes, or strategies for determining or organizing who should be involved in the partnership and how.

- Creating documents and institutionalizing processes that provide governance support without overbuilding.
- Adapting in response to major policy direction and incentives related to strategic landscape-scale restoration.

Participants came up with a number of takeaways from our discussions, several of which are captured in this [initial summary document](#). Additionally, participants indicated that it would be valuable to have summaries of how individual partnerships have developed their governance structures and processes. The following case studies address that suggestion through an exploration of key governance features of three all-lands partnerships:

- **The 2 Watersheds – 3 Rivers – 2 States Cohesive Strategy Partnership (2-3-2 Partnership) in southwest Colorado and northern New Mexico**
- **The Front Range Roundtable in northern Colorado**
- **The Northern Blues Restoration Partnership in northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington**



About Our Focal Partnerships

Our focal partnerships share several similar features, including a focus on large geographic areas, which range from 1.5 million acres to 10.4 million acres and span multiple counties, watersheds, national forests, and – in two cases – multiple states. They also bring together partners working at different scales and across different land ownerships and coexist with a number of place-based collaborative groups working on ecological restoration and fire risk reduction at the watershed, community, or individual project level.

As another commonality, every partnership has adapted in some way after their landscape of focus was selected for inclusion in the Forest Service’s Collaborative Forest

Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), a well-known policy tool used to support collaborative approaches to landscape-scale restoration. At the time this document was written, each of these partnerships were at different points along the 10-year timeline of the CFLRP funding opportunity. As these partnerships continue to move through and past the CFLRP cycle and evolve in their purpose, goals, and partner participation, aspects of their governance will likely change as well. Important documents may get revised, structures may be shifted, or functions may be reinvisioned. This document should thus be taken to reflect only where the partnerships were during the time of its publication.

Important Distinctions and Terminology

This is how we use the following terms in this document. Others may use them differently.

Governance

Governance refers to the processes, arrangements, people, and systems related to making and implementing decisions within a particular setting or institution. In this context, elements or aspects of governance include the roles and responsibilities of entities within a partnership, their established ways of working and making decisions together, and documents that articulate these arrangements.

Collaborative Group

A group of entities representing diverse interests and/or backgrounds that come together for dialogue around issues of common interest. Collaborative groups often have agreement-seeking and collective action goals related to public benefit outcomes. Our definition of collaborative groups includes watershed councils, fire safe councils, resource conservation districts, natural resources-focused collaboratives, and other regularly convened groups that exhibit the traits mentioned above and are focused on community, watershed, or project-specific outcomes.

All-Lands Partnerships

Groups or efforts that bring together partners from multiple agencies and organizations to coordinate, communicate, and implement a shared vision across large landscapes (multiple forests, counties, states, watersheds, and/or fireheds) and multiple land ownerships. Because they operate at larger spatial scales, these partnerships often act as “meta-collaboratives,” coordinating between or otherwise connecting collaborative groups or partnerships operating at smaller scales.

Underserved Groups¹

Populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. This could include Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

1. Based on President Biden’s Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government

Influence of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program

As discussed earlier in this document, our profiled partnerships are similar in all having an association with projects selected for funding through the Forest Service's Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). Notably, the program requires the Forest Service to collaboratively engage with partners throughout the life of the project – from the development

of an initial proposal through implementation and monitoring. Following the award of CFLRP funding for their landscape's restoration project proposal, each of these partnerships adapted their governance structures in some way to effectively function as a collaborative partner to the agency.



2-3-2 Partnership



In 2020, the 2-3-2 Partnership received word that its collaboratively developed Rio Chama proposal was on the short list for CFLRP funding. The announcement prompted the group to begin developing more explicit processes and structures to lean on when making decisions about applying for and allocating major funding amounts. For example, the group developed and documented its consensus-based decision-making process, established written expectations and commitments for both the partnership and the Forest Service, and formalized agreements for co-ordination of the partnership. Once CFLRP funding was awarded in 2022, the group turned its attention to designating certain partners as points of contact for various aspects of the CFLRP (e.g., monitoring, economics, coordination) and establishing processes for how the partnership would work with the Forest Service on key functions like planning, prioritization, monitoring, reporting.

Front Range Roundtable



Upon the announcement of the Front Range CFLRP project in 2010, the Front Range Roundtable formed a Landscape Restoration Team (LRT) under the umbrella of the broader partnership. The LRT was intended to operate as one of several subgroups within the Roundtable's overall structure and was focused on tasks such as defining desired conditions, establishing monitoring metrics and methods, and engaging with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning for work related to the CFLRP. Thanks to strong attendance from research scientists and technical experts, the group was able to address collective gaps in knowledge about subjects such as monitoring measures, reference conditions, and treatment design. While the Roundtable's other subgroups dissolved over the life of the CFLRP, the LRT remained active during and beyond the project's 10-year timeline.

Northern Blues Restoration Partnership



In northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington, the selection of the Northern Blues CFLRP project in 2020 spurred partners to establish an entirely new partnership – the Northern Blues Restoration Partnership – rather than modify an existing group. Before CFLRP, existing groups included the national forest-focused Northern Blues Forest Collaborative, the private lands-focused My Blue Mountains Woodlands Partnership, and watershed councils. All were working toward similar goals but were not well-coordinated. The federal advisory committee that reviewed the region's CFLRP application pointed to this fact as a potential shortfall and recommended that the partners better clarify the roles of various groups and how they relate both to one another and regional restoration goals. Because of the desire for the CFLRP to maintain an all-lands focus, partners decided it wouldn't make sense to reorient one of the existing groups to become the collaborative partner on the project, so they set about creating a new partnership. A small working group started with a rapid assessment of relevant entities and their geographic and thematic scope, then spent about a year working through different configurations before proposing and getting full-partnership agreement on the structure explained in this document.



All-lands Partnership Profile: 2 Watersheds – 3 Rivers – 2 States Cohesive Strategy Partnership

Summary

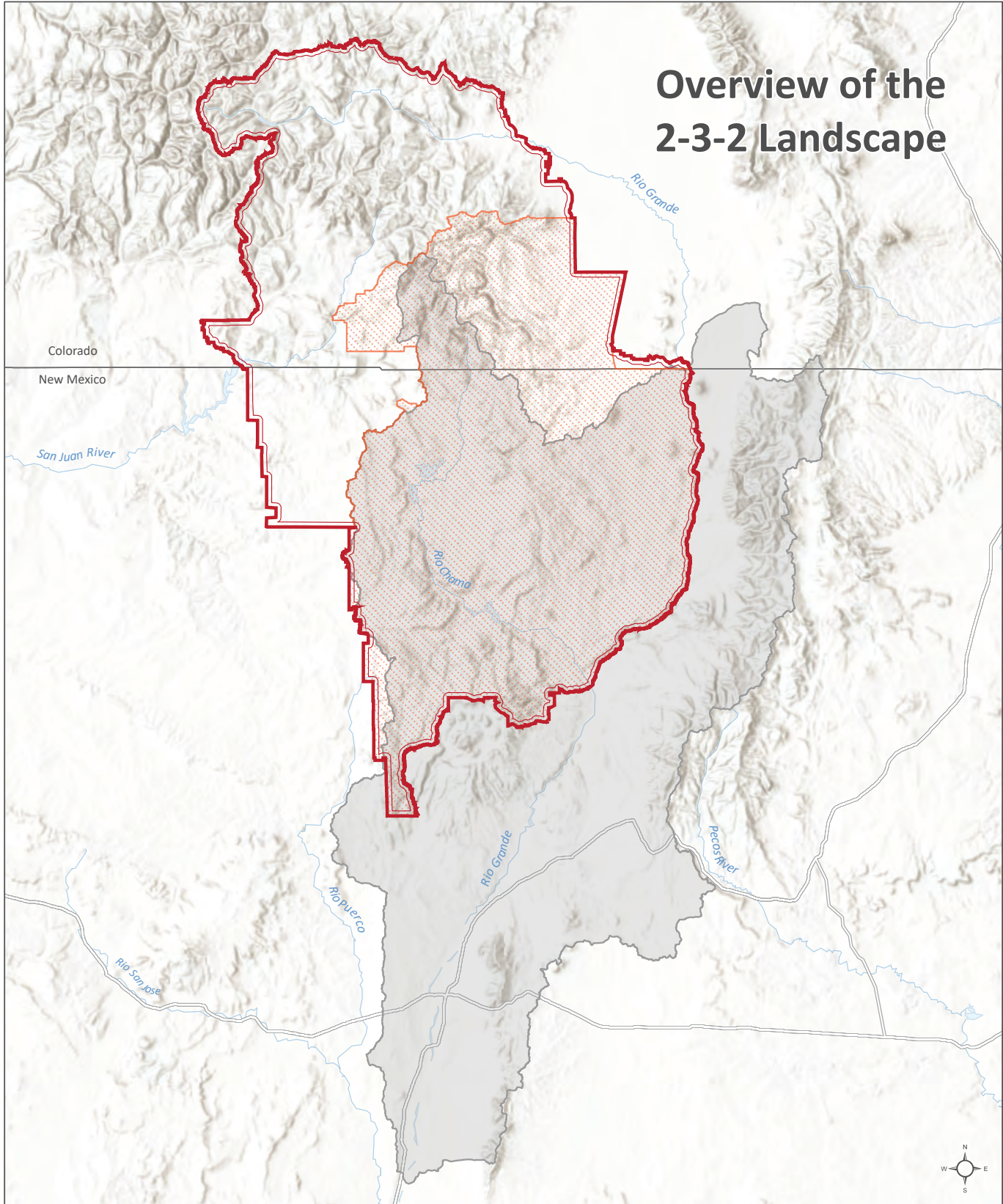
The 2 Watersheds – 3 Rivers – 2 States Cohesive Strategy Partnership (2-3-2 Partnership) includes land managers, nonprofits, and private landowners in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. The partnership began in 2016 with the goals of strategically increasing the scale of forest and watershed health activities across boundaries and elevating the needs of the region's place-based collaboratives. At the time, several of those place-based collaboratives were well-established in the 2-3-2 Partnership's footprint and had experience with a number of landscape-scale, cross-boundary projects via programs such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program and the Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Partnership. The 2-3-2 Partnership entered a new phase of its work when, in 2022, the Forest Service selected the Rio Chama CFLRP proposal that the group collaboratively developed with local forest units. As the CFLRP project's 10-year funding timeline begins, the partnership has turned its focus to solidifying key elements of its governance, including decision-making and prioritization processes, so that it can identify how to best collaborate with the Forest Service on activities such as project planning, funding allocations, and monitoring.

Profile Elements




- » Partnership Structure
- » Partnership Function in Relation to Existing Groups and Efforts
- » Influential Factors in Partnership's Governance
- » Engagement with Underserved Groups
- » Strategies for Coordination, Communication, and Alignment across the Landscape
- » Important Documents
- » Lessons Learned



Overview of the 2-3-2 Landscape



0 50 100 Miles

-  2-3-2 Cohesive Strategy Partnership
-  Rio Chama CFLRP
-  Rio Grande Water Fund

Map created by Julia Ledford, Mountain Studies Institute
New Mexico State University, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, Esri, USGS

Partnership Structure

Executive Committee: The Executive Committee supports the basic functions and advancement of the 2-3-2 Partnership, with responsibilities that include administrative work, standing up implementation teams, working with subcommittees, and promoting greater engagement and participation. The Executive Committee takes its direction from the full partnership but is a smaller, more nimble body that can be responsive to time-sensitive issues such as requests for letters of support or legislative issues. Executive Committee members are selected to represent interests such as community wildfire protection, and agriculture, and to include representatives from Tribes in the region.

Working groups: Working groups are topic-specific groups (e.g., biomass and markets; fire management, capacity and efficiency; and technology, research, assessment and monitoring) that offer a chance for members to advance projects, initiatives or efforts within a particular arena of the partnership's work. Working groups vary in level of engagement and activity, depending on interest and external drivers such as the needs of the CFLRP.

Task-specific groups: Task-specific groups convene on an as-needed basis for time-limited tasks such as organizing events.

Membership: The full 2-3-2 Partnership membership is composed of active members and participants. Active members are involved in partnership decision-making and direction-setting. They must abide by ground rules for meeting behavior and collaboration, read and express support for the partnership's guiding documents, and participate in quarterly meetings. Participants are members of the public that do not meet the criteria for active membership and are not involved in decision-making.

Partnership Function in Relation to Existing Groups and Efforts

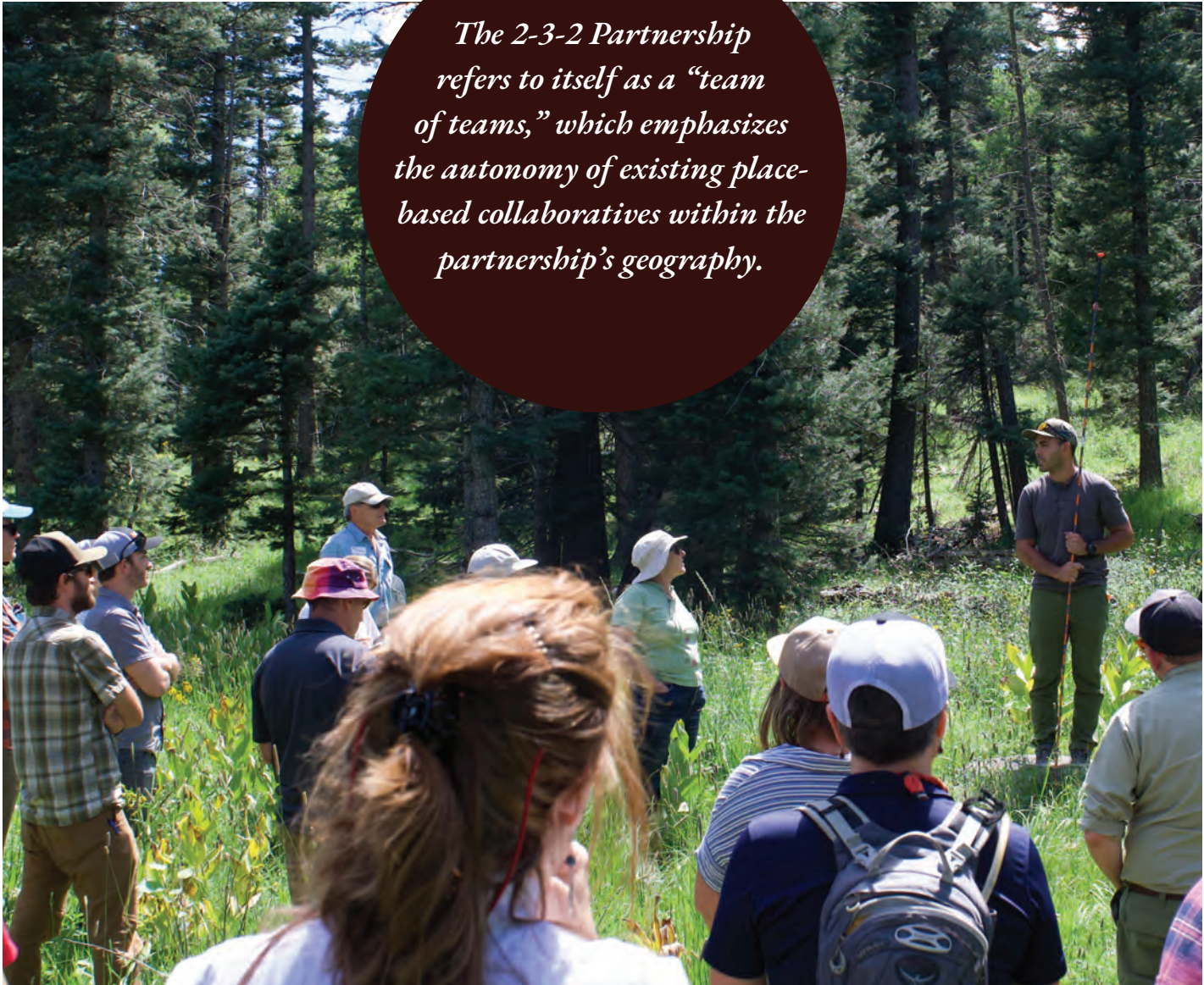
The 2-3-2 Partnership refers to itself as a “team of teams,” which emphasizes the autonomy of existing place-based collaboratives within the partnership's geography. As a convener of these local-scale “teams,” the partnership focuses its work on opportunities and challenges that are most effectively addressed at a regional scale such as biomass utilization and industry development, national and regional public messaging, and opportunities to work strategically across boundaries. It also aims to facilitate networking and relationship-building between local groups.

Influential Factors in the Partnership's Governance

- **Existence of place-based collaboratives:** Because many place-based collaboratives were already in existence when the 2-3-2 Partnership formed, the partnership aimed to limit the extent of its formal governance structures and processes. The intent was to avoid imposing on, or forcing alterations to, how place-based groups were already working.
- **Watershed boundaries:** The 2-3-2 Partnership defined the geographical areas and participants to include in its work based on the boundaries of two key watersheds in the area: that of the San Juan River and that of the Chama River. Establishing clear boundaries helped the coordinators and executive committee identify relevant projects and potential partners. However, even with these geographic sideboards, one coordinator shared that it continues to be challenging to determine the best scale at which to pursue projects and engage stakeholders (local, watershed, regional etc.) in order to accomplish desired outcomes.

Engagement with Underserved Groups

- **Elevating Tribal priorities:** The 2-3-2 Partnership has worked closely with at least one Tribe in the area, including hosting multi-stakeholder field trips to places that are priorities for the Tribe, incorporating those priorities into landscape priorities for the partnership, helping the Tribe find options for satisfying funding match requirements, and offering letters of support for funding proposals.
- **Reinforcing federal consultation requirements:** When Tribes participate in any meetings, field trips, or other events hosted by the partnership, the 2-3-2 Partnership’s facilitators make it clear that all discussions are for information-gathering only and cannot be used in any agency decision-making process or document. Setting those parameters help reinforce Tribes’ sovereignty and the need for agency decision-making to include formal government-to-government consultation, which has helped Tribal representatives feel more comfortable participating.

A photograph of a group of people, including men and women of various ages, standing in a lush green forest. They are dressed in casual outdoor attire like hats and backpacks. In the center of the image, there is a large, dark brown circular graphic containing white text. The text describes the 2-3-2 Partnership's approach to engagement, emphasizing a 'team of teams' structure that respects local autonomy.

The 2-3-2 Partnership refers to itself as a “team of teams,” which emphasizes the autonomy of existing place-based collaboratives within the partnership’s geography.

Strategies for Coordination, Communication, and Alignment across the Landscape

The 2-3-2 Partnership is developing a process for prioritizing projects and funding at the scale of the Rio Chama CFLRP landscape, but in a way that builds on and elevates local-level priorities and values. Under the current vision, the project area is divided into four sub-regions and partners within each sub-region have been tasked with, through their own process, collectively proposing three to five priority areas for consideration in the upcoming two to three years. Some limitations to this process have already arisen, including the ability of sub-region leads to inspire robust and continued engagement, challenges posed by introducing arbitrary boundaries into a landscape-scale project with a primary

goal of fostering connectivity, and the variability in the way end-results are communicated and potentially applied to prioritization frameworks. In keeping with the partnership's all-lands focus, the current prioritization process – and any other future iteration of it – intends to encompass all land ownerships, not just Forest Service-managed lands. These place-based processes are intended to keep local values at the forefront of prioritization, but will need to be supported and supplemented by prioritization modeling tools, which are currently being explored by partnership members and staff for application in planning, implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management.

Important Documents

- [Map of the 2-3-2 Partnership's boundaries](#): The map clarifies the partnership's boundaries and key values of interest within that footprint. This easy-to-access visual helped the partnership identify different groups and individuals who were working on those values and better visualize their connectivity and shared interests.
- [The 2-3-2 Guiding Document](#): This document includes the partnership's mission, vision, membership expectations, organizational structure, decision-making process, and ground rules for collaboration. The partnership's coordinator has tried to present core elements of the document at every meeting, a practice that grounds the discussion in agreed-upon principles and shared vision and helps orient newcomers to the foundational features of the partnership.
- [3-year Strategy & Action Plan](#): A series of tables that list the partnership's main goals and specific strategies for achieving those goals, along with associated metrics, timelines, and responsible entities.
- **2-3-2 Partner Co-Working Table**: A table that breaks down the 2-3-2 Partnership's scope of work as it relates to the CFLRP project, including specific tasks and deliverables associated with facilitation, communications, coordination, and monitoring. The table helped the partnership's coordinators develop a workplan, along with estimated funding levels, that was included in their agreement with the Forest Service for the CLFPR project. It also helped identify roles and responsibilities for upcoming work, and in the future can serve as a tool to measure success.



Lessons Learned

- **Thoughtful design of governance structures and participation can help establish connections between scales.** The membership of the 2-3-2 Partnership's Executive Committee includes diverse stakeholder representation, including that of local-scale collaborative groups and other entities. While not formalized, one member said that setup serves to “hardwire” valuable engagement and interaction between local-scale groups and the landscape scale partnership.
- **Large landscape partnerships that touch numerous groups and efforts may well experience a wider range of desired engagement among participants.** The 2-3-2 Partnership established different membership levels – active members and participants – which encourages transparency and participation from interested parties (participants) while reserving decision-making for those partners that are more engaged (active members). Though well-intentioned, coordinators noted that in practice, the system can be hard to track and enforce.
- **Knowing that funding sources and projects often require some basic governance structures, it may be worth initially developing those structures with a light touch, then adapting as needed.** Before being announced as a CFLRP finalist, the 2-3-2 had operated with relatively minimal governance structures - partners were working alongside one another as opposed to planning and implementing projects together. Once the announcement was made, the partnership's coordinators developed several potential workflow and decision-making processes involving various combinations of and interactions between active members, sub-committees, and a steering committee. The proposal received some resistance from members who felt their less-formal processes were working well. However, after several months of natural evolution, the partners eventually took up a similar structure to one of those that the coordinators proposed. For the 2-3-2 Partnership's coordination team, the experience demonstrated the importance of focusing first on facilitating partner relationships, trust-building and collective decision-making, and then creating structures that reflected – and didn't dictate – how the group had found ways to successfully work together.

All-lands Partnership Profile: The Front Range Roundtable

Summary

The Front Range Roundtable (the Roundtable) was established in 2004 as a large-scale regional collaborative focused on increasing the pace and scale of treatments to reduce wildfire risk to forests and communities on the Front Range of Colorado's Rocky Mountains. When it formed and through its early history, the Roundtable was the sole collaborative venue for Front Range stakeholders working on the issues of landscape-scale forest restoration and wildfire risk reduction. The Front Range project proposal was selected for CFLRP funding in 2010 and in the years since, the Roundtable has seen significant change. What began as a formal, multi-tiered partnership dedicated to planning, prioritizing, and implementing forest restoration and wildfire risk reduction strategies, has become a loosely organized group focused more on networking, information-sharing, peer-learning, and monitoring. The transition occurred as other place-based or issue-focused collaborative groups in the region emerged and gained traction as alternative spaces for Roundtable participants to accomplish forest restoration and wildfire risk mitigation projects. Most recently, two new regional collaboratives, the Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative and the Upper South Platte Partnership, have formed to more formally support and connect place-based partners and to focus Roundtable participants' resources and actions. The Roundtable's evolution and the shifting of roles between regional collaboratives on the Front Range offers an example of how one partnership's function and governance approach changed over the course of the CFLRP's 10-year timeline.

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Partnership Structure

- **Full membership:** The FRRT membership includes more than 40 stakeholders including federal, state, and local government agencies, nonprofits, research and academic institutions, community groups, and water providers. The full membership meets two to three times per year. These meetings do not include any specific action items, decisions, or deliverables, but instead serve as a venue for peer-learning and networking. Often, they include presentations on broad or more conceptual topics such as integrating recreation management into forest management or reviewing data on post-wildfire impacts.
- **Working groups:** The Roundtable has had various issue-specific working groups throughout its history, though the Landscape Restoration Team (LRT) is the only remaining active working group. This group of researchers, nonprofits, and land managers focuses on collaborative monitoring and adaptive management of the last remaining CFLRP activity area. Additionally, the group takes field trips to focus on specific landscape management questions or strategies and hosts an annual “jam session” where scientists share recent studies and monitoring data. The group discusses and, in some cases, makes informal recommendations about how to incorporate research findings into management actions.

The FRRT membership includes more than 40 stakeholders including federal, state, and local government agencies, nonprofits, research and academic institutions, community groups, and water providers.



Partnership Function in Relation to Existing Groups and Efforts

Over the course of the Roundtable's existence, the region has seen the emergence of numerous collaboratives, coalitions, and working groups with spatially smaller areas of focus (watersheds, firesheds, or specific NEPA projects). The Roundtable currently does not take a directive or larger organizing role in the work of those local-scale groups nor does it have a strong or formalized relationship with them beyond serving as a peer-learning and networking venue.

Influential Factors in the Partnership's Governance

- **Emergence of new actors:** The Roundtable's more recent shift in function reflects a recognition that other place-based working groups and regional collaboratives such as the Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative, have largely assumed the role the Roundtable once held in directly advancing forest restoration project planning and implementation. The Roundtable intentionally turned its focus to peer-learning and networking at a larger scale in order to complement the work of these other groups.
- **Shifting of scope:** The Roundtable's structure, with the LRT as the only active entity, came about because the partnership struggled to retain a clear, inclusive purpose and scope as it became involved with CFLRP. The Roundtable originally had several working groups with focus areas that included both landscape-scale restoration and community-focused wildfire mitigation. As the CFLRP began, a subset of the group formed the LRT to support CFLRP monitoring and treatment design. However, neither the LRT nor the larger partnership had developed governance documents, strategic plans, or agreements with the Forest Service that could serve to reinforce the partnership's more expansive focus, nor the



connections between the work related to CFLRP and that of the larger roundtable. As a result, groups working on policy; biomass; and community planning, protection and outreach eventually found themselves without a clear role in relation to the CFLRP and within the partnership as a whole. They experienced declining engagement and fizzled out over time. The LRT continues to be active due to high interest among members and the CFLRP's requirement that monitoring continue for five years after the end of the project's funded timeline.

Strategies for Coordination, Communication, and Alignment across the Landscape

- The LRT has helped align partner efforts across the Roundtable’s footprint by producing and sharing research findings and discussing adaptive management strategies that are relevant to the entire Roundtable landscape.
- Early in the Roundtable’s existence, a working group of government agency technical specialists and university, nonprofit, and government scientists developed a map of areas – 400,000 acres in total – where forest treatments would accomplish both fire risk mitigation and ecological restoration goals. Many saw the map as an important reference to guide various partners’ prioritization of forest treatment activities across the region. However, subsequent work on the ground only sometimes aligned with those agreed-upon acres, in part because there were no formal mechanisms to ensure land management agencies would prioritize restoration treatments in that geographic zone of agreement.

Important Documents

- **Goals, Roles, and Commitments Matrix**: The matrix provides a simple framework for detailing each partner’s specific actions (or roles) and commitments toward achieving stated goals or outcomes in a particular project. In practice, the matrix provided guidance and accountability for the LRT’s work with the Forest Service on post-NEPA collaborative monitoring and adaptive management.
- **Recommendations of The Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Roundtable for Protecting Communities and Restoring Forests**: This report presented a set of concrete, broadly supported actions that partners agreed could accelerate progress toward the Roundtable’s dual goals of protecting communities from the risks of wildfire and restoring forest health.
- **Living with Fire: Protecting Communities and Restoring Forests. Findings and Recommendations of the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Roundtable**: This document articulated both the overall purpose of the Roundtable’s work and Roundtable members’ consensus related to the rationale for what and where forest vegetation treatments should occur.
- **Front Range Roundtable Statement of Membership**: New members were expected to sign this membership statement, which committed participants to a baseline standard of participation in Roundtable affairs.

Lessons Learned

- **Building in regular opportunities for the partnership to revisit and modify its overarching goals and governance structures can help it remain relevant and aligned with present needs and opportunities.** When the Roundtable began, stakeholders were primarily focused on discussing and developing priorities for landscape scale restoration and fire risk reduction around communities. The group produced several foundational documents and prioritization maps that identified general zones of agreement. When the area was awarded CFLRP funding with its associated focus on implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management, the Roundtable designated the LRT to serve as the implementation-focused collaborative body and venue to move from general zones of agreement to project-specific silvicultural prescriptions and monitoring protocols. However, the Roundtable didn't establish how the CFLRP-focused LRT would interact with the larger Roundtable group. This made it difficult for the larger group to engage in implementation and the work of the LRT, leading to a growing disconnect between the two groups and between the Roundtable's more conceptual peer-learning and the project-specific implementation happening through the CFLRP.
- **When developing a partnership's governance (or when revisiting and adapting governance) it can be helpful to start by defining the group's purpose, then tiering other elements – organizational structure, decision-making process, partner roles – to that core intent.** By the middle of the CFLRP's 10-year timeline, the Roundtable's function had naturally evolved toward networking and information-sharing, with less focus on outcomes-specific collaborative efforts due to the disconnect between the larger Roundtable and the LRT. At the same time, several active leaders within the Roundtable transitioned out of their positions in their respective home organizations and no longer attended Roundtable occurrences, leaving a vacuum in key topic areas, such as policy outreach and community wildfire protection planning. When a new facilitator tried to engage the group in goal-setting and work planning, members' reactions ranged from resistance to ambivalence. Instead of pushing against the will of the group, the facilitator pivoted to maintain a less structured approach that still retained an executive committee, but didn't include elements like decision-making processes or annual work planning objectives, deliverables and roles and responsibilities. The experience highlighted that governance structures and approaches that are suited to active decision-making may be less relevant for the more passive information-sharing and learning functions that collaboratives can also fulfill.
- **Member participation and representation can play an important role in supporting or detracting from the partnership's purpose.** The Roundtable deliberately included representation from program managers from government and non-governmental organizations, and academic researchers in its membership, which created a valuable emphasis on science-based planning and consideration of current research. However, the group did not have strong representation from people who would be designing and implementing the work on the ground. As a result, agency implementers ended up selecting projects that did not align with the stakeholders' understandings and expectations, fell outside of the Roundtable's zones of agreement, or were not vetted by the stakeholders at all. The lack of governance parameters specifying Roundtable membership and "plug-in" points for translating planning ideas into actual implementation created a disconnect and, therefore, tensions between agency and non-agency stakeholders.

All-lands Partnership Profile: The Northern Blues Restoration Partnership

Summary

The Northern Blues Restoration Partnership (NBR Partnership) works across a 10.4 million-acre landscape in northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington. The region has a strong history of collaborative efforts and partners have implemented a number of forest and fire resiliency projects that spanned public, private, and tribal land ownerships. In 2021, the NBR Partnership formed to serve as a primary collaborative partner for the region's newly selected CFLRP project. The partnership embodies the region's cross-boundary focus and intends to help make partner connections, coordinate resources, leverage funding, and add capacity to local-level implementation efforts. Its organizational structure encompasses several existing groups, including a federal forest collaborative and a private lands-focused partnership, as well as newly established groups focused on emerging priorities such as strategic communications, monitoring, and forest industry support. Governance documents and processes encouraging a more defined and integrated relationship between these groups aim to help enshrine an all-lands approach to the CFLRP project moving forward.

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Partnership Structure

- **Project teams:** These place-based teams are intended to be the driving force of the NBR Partnership, which reflects the bottom-up approach that guided its creation. Project teams are focused on developing, coordinating, and implementing public, private, and tribal forest and watershed restoration and stewardship projects. These teams are expected to emerge, evolve, and eventually phase out as projects are initiated, undertaken, and completed. Many of the project teams had histories of working together on an ad-hoc basis within each county, a fact that the NBR Partnership incorporated into its structure.
- **Resource teams:** Six resource teams with specialized expertise in key areas provide targeted support to project teams on an as-needed basis. Some resource teams were newly created to fill cross-partnership needs such as communications, workforce development, and monitoring. Other resource team roles are filled by existing groups like the My Blue Mountains Woodland Partnership, which supports landowner-focused outreach, and the Northern Blues Forest Collaborative, which serves as the venue for engagement in national forest management-related topics. Resource teams are intended to be in close communication with project teams, given that their work is directly shaped by project team needs.
- **Operations Team:** This group of about 10 individuals serves as the partnership’s “central nervous system.” Team members – mostly coordinators from resource teams – liaise between project teams, resource teams, and the Leadership Team, helping with coordination and communication, connecting partners with resources, promoting shared learning, and generally maintaining momentum. This team also oversees full-partnership meeting organization, annual planning, and budget responsibilities.
- **Leadership Team:** This team is composed of top leadership from entities with management responsibilities and/or key resource providers, including the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Natural

Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), state natural resources agencies, and the Eastern Oregon Counties Association. Tribes in the region also were invited to participate in the Leadership Team. As high-level decision-makers and direction-setters, the members of this team are responsible for supporting the establishment and alignment of priorities at the landscape level, then committing resources within their agencies and organizations to ensure follow-through on the ground. They also play an important role in maintaining commitment to the all-lands approach over time and within various levels of each agency and organization through their supervision of staff who are part of the operations, resource, and project teams. The Leadership Team meets twice a year but also provides input on partnership operations more frequently via email communication with a liaison from the operations team.

Partnership Function in Relation to Existing Groups and Efforts

The NBR Partnership's primary purpose and structure is focused on supporting project teams as the primary initiators and drivers of the group's work. Governance documents emphasize that the partnership is designed to help project teams collectively increase scale and alignment to achieve desired ecological and economic outcomes, and ensure their ability to sustain work for the long term.

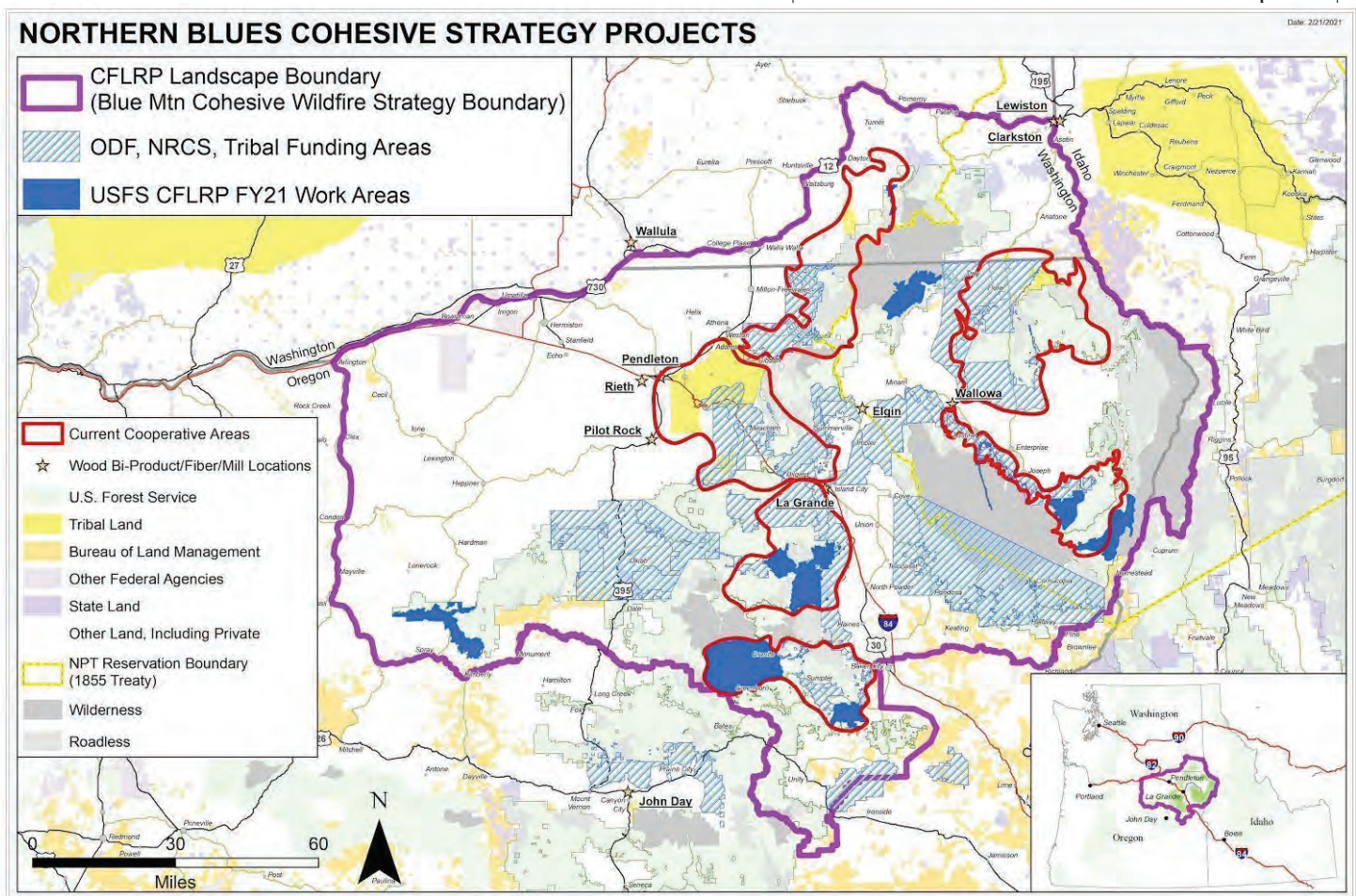


Influential Factors in the Partnership's Governance

- Prior successful all-lands project experience.** The East Face project, a widely supported cross-boundary fire risk reduction project in the area, generated early support and provided a replicable model for the NBR Partnership's all-lands focus.
- Existing cross-boundary frameworks.** Instead of going through a new process to define its landscape of focus, the partnership adopted the boundaries of the preexisting Cohesive Wildfire Strategy pilot area. The Cohesive Strategy is a national framework that encourages enhanced communications, coordination, and collaboration among local wildfire risk mitigation and wildfire suppression entities. Pilot areas are intended to be places where those entities commit energy and resources to implementing the
- Existing place-based collaboratives and issue-focused working groups.** Because of the many existing collective efforts in the Northern Blues region, the design of the partnership's organizational structure focused on how to better synchronize and build from this foundation, rather than duplicate or replace them.

framework on the ground. The fact that cross-partner coordination was already occurring within an area that roughly matched the scale and scope of the NBR Partnership made the Cohesive Strategy area a logical choice to build from.

Overview of the Northern Blues Landscape



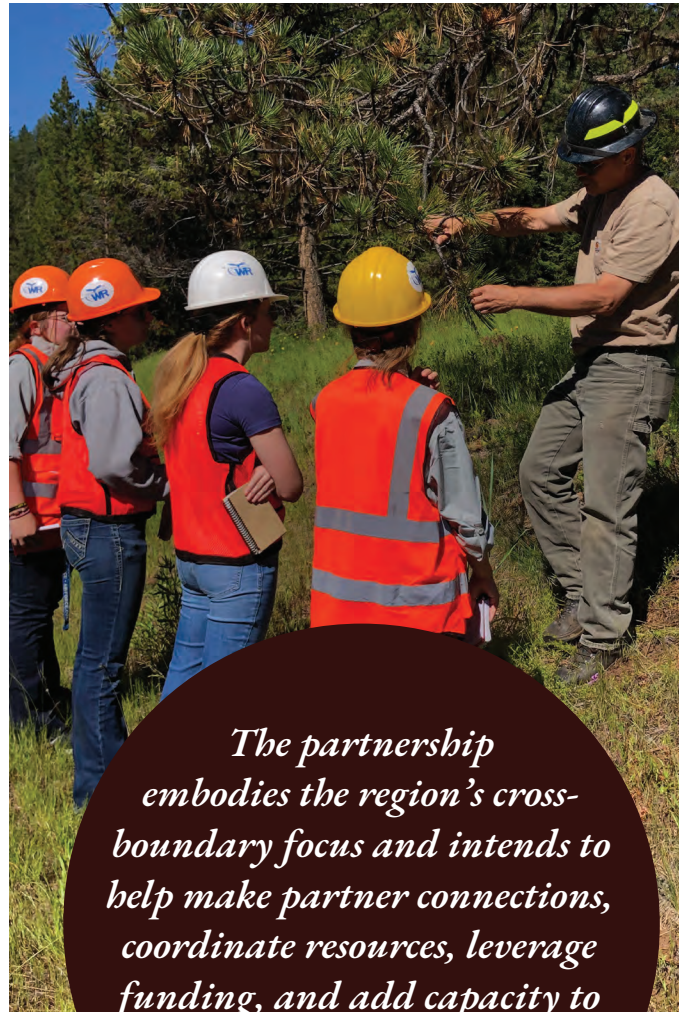
Engagement with Underserved Groups

Evaluating equitable distribution of project benefits. The partnership's Stewardship Workforce Training & Forest Product Resource Team conducted surveys of workforce and log utilization capacity, including regional forestry and natural resource contractors and wood processing facilities. This work provided a better picture of who those industries employ and how local communities were or were not benefitting from forest restoration.

Encouraging Tribal participation in partnership leadership. The partnership invited Tribes with reservation lands and ceded lands within and adjacent to the partnership's footprint to participate in the Leadership Team. Partnership members also continue to build relationships with Tribes in hopes of encouraging future participation in the group's work.

Strategies for Coordination, Communication, and Alignment Across the Landscape

- The partnership established the Operations Team in order to have an entity dedicated to ensuring clarity in direction, coordination, and multi-way communication. Having a team of people rather than a single person fill this role helps spread the workload, brings a greater diversity of skills and perspectives, and aids the continuation of this crucial function through employee turnover.
- The resource teams, with their cross-landscape focus, aim to establish systems and approaches for monitoring, communications, and other activities that encourage alignment between local-level projects.
- Project teams are encouraged to use standardized Project Action Plans to capture key elements of



The partnership embodies the region's cross-boundary focus and intends to help make partner connections, coordinate resources, leverage funding, and add capacity to local-level implementation efforts.

projects. The completed documents then provide easy-to-reference snapshots of the range of projects happening across the Northern Blues landscape.

- An internal newsletter helps build awareness within the partnership and includes general updates and a summary of current projects and recent accomplishments.
- The Operations Team has plans for an onboarding packet to help new partners better integrate into the partnership's work. The packet will include resources such as an organizational chart, list of partner contact information, copy of the Memorandum of Understanding, and an introductory video.

Important Documents

- [Partnership Memorandum of Understanding](#): This agreement represents the partnership's foundational governance document. It captures the partnership's strategy, guiding principles, structure, participation criteria, and other details. It also details each partner's scope of work and their anticipated contributions to the partnership, which serves as a reminder that each has resources to bring to bear and a stake in the partnership's outcomes.
- [Northern Blues Participation Criteria](#): This self-evaluation tool guides users through a few questions to help them determine if they would align with the partnership's goals and level of required engagement.
- [Partnership Organizational Structure](#): Similar to an employee organizational chart, this visual shows how various groups and teams within the partnership are related to one another. It serves as a useful reference for those inside and outside the partnership and helps explain how decisions are made and how each of the teams support each other in moving projects forward.
- [Project Action Plans](#): In order to facilitate project-related planning and communication, project teams prepare Project Action Plans. Based on standardized templates, Project Action Plans include anticipated project timeline, goals or objectives, main partners and project leads, geography, and coordination and capacity needs. Action plans are relayed to the operations team, which can then coordinate with the various resource teams to provide support when and where needed.



Lessons Learned

- **Buy-in from leadership is often crucial for sustained commitment to the partnership's mission and vision.** The NBR Partnership found that participation from agency leadership in the region (e.g. USFS supervisors, NRCS basin team leads, Oregon Department of Forestry district foresters) was crucial to scale up from isolated, one-off projects to a cohesive and sustained cross-boundary restoration effort. Having commitment from leadership – commitment that has been documented in a MOU – has helped institutionalize a partnership-oriented, all-lands approach within each partner entity's staff and decision-making so it was less likely to lose momentum through turnover.
- **It can be easy to overbuild governance structures.** The Operations Team has made a concerted effort to minimize the amount of process and documentation it creates for the partnership. For example, the team intentionally avoided making the memorandum of understanding too detailed and hasn't been prescriptive about who should participate in project teams nor how they operate. Operations Team members said that approach can be challenging given the tendency toward documentation among both agencies and other partnerships. But committing to less structure has been key to promoting innovation and the sense of local-level autonomy and flexibility.
- **Transparent processes and engagement of partners at all levels can bolster prioritization strategies.** As with other large landscape partnerships, project and funding prioritization have been major focus areas for the NBR Partnership. Partners found that aligning priorities across jurisdictions and agencies depends on partner entities being transparent about their own internal prioritization processes, so everyone can understand where each other is coming from. One partnership member suggested that agencies consider opening parts of their internal deliberative processes, such as NEPA interdisciplinary team meetings, to other representatives from the partnership to facilitate this shared understanding. It has also been important for local-level implementation-focused staff to be included and bought into the partnership's prioritization process to maintain the bottom-up ownership and organization of projects.
- **In developing governance structures and processes, it may be wise to be selective about who to engage, how, and at what stage in order to be inclusive without overwhelming people with information and requests for input.** In the case of the NBR Partnership, a small, self-selected group of people passionate about governance did much of the heavy lifting to establish foundational governance structures. Before putting anything on paper, the group researched other governance approaches and held many small group and one-on-one conversations to gather information about partners' governance-related needs, challenges, and ideas. Group members then developed a rough concept that they introduced to the full partnership over four meetings that included small-group breakout room discussions and workshopping. After months of work, the full partnership approved the new governance structure.



Conclusion

Partners working within our focal large landscape partnerships emphasized that they continue to develop, learn from, and adapt their approaches to governance. With a continued rise in political and environmental pressures to expand the pace and scale of ecological restoration, RVCC sees great value in continuing to track and learn from efforts to scale up how partners work together across landscapes.



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