

Examples of Successful Land Management Collaboration in The West

Background paper provided by the Wyoming Outdoor Council

In recent decades, numerous collaborative approaches to planning and management have taken hold on lands managed by the BLM, Forest Service and other agencies. These local or regional collaboratives provide the opportunity to bridge traditional divides of interest groups, help leverage the knowledge, skills and funding of participants, provide opportunity for inclusion and certainty and allow for greater public access to land management decisions. Highlighted here are a few of the well-known successful community-based collaborative efforts in the West.

The Blackfoot Challenge, Montana

The group consists of private landowners, federal and state agency representatives, local government officials, and corporate landowners organized to coordinate management of the Blackfoot River, its tributaries, and adjacent lands. The group works to enhance, conserve and protect the natural resources and rural lifestyle of the Blackfoot River Valley with decades of success in sustaining grazing, forestry, land, water and wildlife conservation and controlling invasive weeds. (See attached profile) <http://blackfootchallenge.org/>

“There is a myriad of examples of federal, state, tribal, and nonprofit groups working collaboratively across the country to ensure successful management of public lands. Many of these examples are unique and representative of a region’s specific challenges and goals, and while they cannot necessarily be applied wholesale to Wyoming’s needs and issues, they illustrate the type of cooperative management that is possible.”

- *Study on Management of Public Lands in Wyoming*, 2016; Wyoming OSLI

Clearwater Basin Collaborative, Idaho

From website: “The Clearwater Basin Collaborative is a diverse group of individuals dedicated to working collaboratively to proactively find solutions and provide recommendations regarding natural resource management issues. Their collective vision is to enhance and protect the ecological and economic health of the forests, rivers and communities within the Clearwater Basin....CBC members and participants desire predictability and more effective public involvement with the Forest Service and other decision-makers... A primary long-term intent for the CBC is to be proactively involved in the development of various proposals and plans, and to ensure consideration of diverse interests so that opposition, appeals and litigation is minimized. The CBC

feels strongly that collaboration provides a valuable approach to facilitating communication between public interests and decision-makers.” <http://clearwaterbasincollaborative.org/>

The Malpai Borderlands Group

Founded in 1994 and led by ranchers who live and work primarily in Southeast Arizona and Southwest New Mexico, the Group is built around shared community goals. In cooperation with state, federal, and non-profit partners, the Group protected 78,000 acres of private land through conservation easements, preserving the land as productive ranch land and wildlife habitat. They established grass banks, allowing local ranchers who experience serious droughts to rest grazing lands and graze their cattle on neighboring lands where grass is more abundant. They have restored

native grassland and reintroduced fire as a natural landscape process, conducting prescribed fire on over 69,000 acres. <http://www.malpaiborderlandsgroup.org/>

Successful Public Lands Congressional Legislation

Due to heightened polarization, it takes a lot to successfully pass public lands legislation through Congress these days. Similar to the broad community partnership efforts described above, nearly all the major public lands legislation that has passed in Congress in recent decades has been through local or regional collaborative efforts that strived to find common ground and agreement among diverse stakeholders. Successful legislation includes more than just land conservation elements, but also components related to community or economic development needs. These “win-win” pieces of legislation provide benefits for a diversity of interests. Recent examples follow.

Clark County Conservation of Public Lands and Natural Resources Act (2002) Nevada

Conservation:

- Created or expanded 18 wilderness areas totaling 452,000 acres.
- Established two national conservation areas.
- Provided new funding for conservation.

Economic development:

- Established transportation and utilities corridor.
- Transferred BLM land to Clark County for an airport expansion.
- Terminated mineral withdrawal for I-15 corridor.
- Required sale of 860 acres of Federal land.
- Conveyed BLM lands to: Las Vegas Police Department (shooting range); Henderson (state college); Las Vegas (affordable housing); various (Humboldt Project).

Other components: Required land exchange; released wilderness study areas.

White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act (2006) Nevada

Conservation:

- Created or expanded 14 wilderness areas totaling 558,000 acres.
- Provided new funding for conservation.

Economic development:

- Required sale of 45,000 acres of Federal land.
- Conveyed over 9,000 acres of Federal land to Nevada for public purposes.
- Conveyed 1,700 acres of Federal land to White Pine County for an airport expansion and industrial park.
- Required implementation of Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project to restore rangeland health and reduce hazardous fuels.
- Required lining the All-American Canal and construction of a water storage facility.

Other components:

- Released wilderness study areas.
- Established a Silver State Off-Highway Vehicle Trail.

- Transferred 3,500 acres to Ely Shoshone Tribe.

Washington County Growth and Conservation Act (2009) Utah

Conservation:

- Established 15 wilderness areas totaling 250,000 acres.
- Established two national conservation areas.
- Designated numerous wild and scenic rivers.
- Required BLM to identify priority biological areas.

Economic development:

- Authorized sale of lands identified by BLM for disposal.
- Conveyed Federal land to St. George, Hurricane, Washington County, the Washington County Public School District for various public purposes.

Other components:

- Established High Desert Off-Highway Vehicle Trail.
- Released portions of wilderness study areas.
- Required comprehensive travel management plan.
- Required land exchange.
- Transferred land to Shivwits Tribe.

Owyhee Public Land Management Act (2009) Idaho

Conservation:

- Established 6 wilderness areas totaling 517,000 acres.
- Established numerous wild and scenic rivers.

Economic development:

- Authorized sale of lands identified by BLM for disposal.
- Established Owyhee Science Review and Conservation Center to improve rangeland management.

Other components:

- Authorized retirement of grazing permits.
- Released wilderness study areas.
- Required new travel management plans.

Northern Nevada Land Conservation and Economic Development Act (2014) Nevada

Conservation: Established two new wilderness areas totaling 71,000 acres.

Economic development:

- Sold 11,000 acres of Federal land to Yerington to facilitate copper mine expansion.
- Sold or conveyed Federal land to Carlin, Elko, Fernley, and Storey County.
- Resolved Fallon Naval Air Station housing.

Other components:

- Released portions of wilderness study areas.
- Conveyed land to Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone.
- Required land exchange.

Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act (2014) Montana

Conservation:

- Designated 68,000 acres of wilderness
- established conservation management area.

Economic development:

- Included noxious weed management component favored by ranchers.
- Coupled with legislation that exchanged coal development rights, extended hydropower and irrigation leases.
- Study on mountain biking trails

(Congressional legislation research provided by The Wilderness Society)

Resources

Sustaining Large Landscape Conservation Partnerships: Strategies for Success, 2012; Sonoran Institute, Tucson, AZ

Alternatives to the Transfer of Public Lands Act, 2016; Wallace Stegner Center - University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law by John Ruple and Robert Keiter

Study on Management of Public Lands in Wyoming, 2016; prepared for the Office of State Lands and Investments, Cheyenne, WY by Y2 Consultants

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy – examines issues relating to land management policy, planning taxation with numerous reports and resources: www.lincolnst.edu

Convening a Collaborative County Advisory Committee - Wyoming Public Lands Initiative, 2016; University of Wyoming Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, Ruckelshaus Institute

Blackfoot Challenge: Building Trust and Momentum through Consensus

Facing numerous issues of caring for the land in the late 1970s, landowners along the Blackfoot River in Montana began gathering community support for conserving and sharing the resource through public and private partnerships. The Blackfoot Challenge was established in 1993 and has since gained wide recognition for its innovative approaches that bring together landowners and governmental agency staff for community enhancement and natural resource conservation.

Through a series of public-private partnerships, the Blackfoot Challenge annually achieves a long list of on-the-ground accomplishments: conserving an average of 7,000 acres of land every year since 1993; creating fire safety for 500 acres of forest; treating 5,000 acres of noxious weeds; reducing conflicts between people and wildlife; educating 500 youth; reaching 1,500 adults with lessons learned; and conserving water and energy through increased efficiencies.

Private citizens provided the impetus for the creation of the Blackfoot Challenge, and they remain critical in enabling the organization to bring people together with land management agencies to generate positive, proactive solutions to land issues that transcend public-private boundaries. For example, the group has recently worked with The Nature Conservancy to place 89,000 acres of former private timberland into a network of public and private management.

The most important elements of collaborative leadership, according to executive director, Gary Burnett, are being inclusive, working toward consensus, thinking long-term, acting flexibly, and remaining open to the different ideas that will be brought to the table. To successfully navigate this diversity and progress toward its vision, the group operates on what they call the “80/20 Rule.”

“This rule is often articulated by one of our fifth-generation ranchers, David Mannix, who sits on our board: Try to work on the 80 percent where people come together on agreement. It’s not that the other 20 percent is not important, but if we focus on the 20 percent where we disagree, we probably won’t get much work done. Weed control was one of the early consensuses and continues to be one of the things we work on. It’s onerous and takes a long time, but we continue to work on it and we’re making some pretty good progress.”

Learn more about the Blackfoot Challenge: www.blackfootchallenge.org

