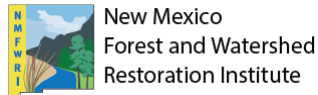


Collaborative Governance Assessment Report

FOR THE NORTHEAST WASHINGTON FOREST VISION 2020 CFLRP

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August 2024



Document Development: In FY21, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (Forest Service) led a collaborative process to develop a Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Common Monitoring Strategy that will be required for all newly authorized and reauthorized projects under the CFLRP. The Forest Service Washington Office requested assistance from the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) in developing and deploying an assessment tool to track collaborative governance within and across CFLRP projects through time. The collaborative assessment is intended to assess whether CFLRP is encouraging an effective and meaningful collaborative approach, a component within the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy. We developed an online, confidential survey that was administered to CFLRP project participants. With support from the Forest Service Forest Management, Range Management, and Vegetation Ecology program, SWERI conducted regional webinars to introduce the assessment and identify project-level points of contact, which were followed by in-depth engagement with key contacts to determine recruitment strategies, administration timing, and project-specific questions. In FY22 and FY23, SWERI will be collecting baseline information for all newly authorized and reauthorized projects. SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects.

Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI)

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes include three university-based restoration institutes: the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWR), the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI), and the Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI) in Arizona. These institutes were congressionally appointed in 2004 by the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act (PL 108-317), and the institutes work together to develop a program of applied research and service to help create healthy forests, prevent uncharacteristic wildfires, sustain the resiliency of water supplies to wildfires, and create jobs. The SWERI receive funding from five primary sources: 1) federal appropriations; 2) additional federal funding (e.g., the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act); 3) state appropriations; 4) in-kind support from host universities; and 5) extramural funding such as grants and agreements. The SWERI receive federal appropriations under the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act administered through the Forest Service. In accordance with federal law and USDA policy, these institutions are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights Room 326-A, Whitten Building 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC, 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice & TDD).

Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI), Northern Arizona University (NAU)

The Ecological Restoration Institute is nationally recognized for mobilizing the unique assets of a university to help solve the problem of unnaturally severe wildfire and degraded forest health throughout the American West. ERI serves diverse audiences with objective science and implementation strategies that support ecological restoration and climate adaptation on western-forest landscapes.

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Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI), Colorado State University (CSU) The Colorado Forest Restoration Institute is a science-based outreach and engagement organization hosted by the Department of Forest and Rangeland Stewardship and the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University. Colorado State University (CSU) is a land-grant university with a mission to provide teaching, research, public service, and engagement that CFRI strives to uphold. CFRI was established by Congress as part of the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes to serve as a bridge between researchers, managers, and stakeholders working to restore and enhance the resilience of forest ecosystems to wildfires in Colorado, the Southern Rocky Mountains, and the Intermountain West. CFRI leads collaborations between researchers, managers, and stakeholders to generate and apply locally relevant, actionable knowledge to inform forest management strategies. CFRI's work informs forest conditions assessments, management goals and objectives, monitoring plans, and adaptive management processes.

NAU Land Acknowledgment: Northern Arizona University sits at the base of the San Francisco Peaks, on homelands sacred to Native Americans. We honor their past, present, and future generations, who have lived here for millennia and will forever call this place home.

CSU Land Acknowledgment: Colorado State University acknowledges, with respect, that the land we are on today is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations and peoples. This was also a site of trade, gathering, and healing for numerous other Native tribes. We recognize the Indigenous peoples as original stewards of this land and all the relatives within it. As these words of acknowledgment are spoken and heard, the ties Nations have to their traditional homelands are renewed and reaffirmed. CSU is founded as a land-grant institution, and we accept that our mission must encompass access to education and inclusion. And, significantly, that our founding came at a dire cost to Native Nations and peoples whose land this University was built upon. This acknowledgment is the education and inclusion we must practice in recognizing our institutional history, responsibility, and commitment.

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Executive Summary

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) developed a collaborative governance assessment as part of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Common Monitoring Strategy. The collaborative governance assessment was designed to assess the following questions:

1. Do participants perceive the collaborative exhibits characteristics generally associated with healthy, well-functioning, and resilient collaboratives?
2. To what extent do participants feel the project is meeting process, socio-economic, and ecological goals?
3. What challenges or disruptions affect collaborative performance and durability? How did collaborative groups respond to those disruptions?
4. What do participants need or recommend to improve the process?

The SWERI administered an online survey to members of the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 CFLRP in summer 2023, which included members of the Northeast Washington Forest Coalition ([NEWFC](#)), employees of the Colville National Forest, and other participants recommended by key points of contact.

Overall, there was a wide range of responses regarding the collaborative process and achievement of desired goals. Half of the respondents thought that a representative cross-section of individuals who had a stake in the issues were involved in the CFLRP project, although respondents did not identify themselves as representatives from the forest products industry and other groups despite these groups' involvement. A strong majority of respondents were from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (Forest Service hereafter), and thus, the results may reflect federal perceptions with limited input from other sectors who played a large role in the CFLRP project. Most respondents answered all the quantitative questions; less than half answered open-ended questions, but those who did often expressed strong opinions about improvements. A majority of respondents agreed that there was a shared understanding of the strategies used to address problems that impact the landscape and the purpose of the CFLRP project, although just half of respondents thought that there was agreement on what those key problems were. Respondents strongly agreed that the collaborative process had built trust, relationships, and mutual respect; half trusted the group to achieve desired actions and outcomes. A strong majority of respondents believed that they were committed to the collaborative process, yet a slight majority thought other stakeholders were committed,

and half of respondents thought the Forest Service staff were committed. A majority of respondents indicated that leaders worked well across organizations and entities and helped maintain a common vision, but fewer thought that leaders motivated others to work together. Most respondents agreed that there were opportunities to co-generate knowledge and share information, work toward adaptive management, and be flexible in the face of landscape or personnel changes. Most respondents felt that the CFLRP project had adequate technical expertise, facilitation skills, and funds, but not adequate time. Half of respondents perceived that there were protocols in place to hold CFLRP project participants and the Forest Service accountable; that protocols were fair, equitable, and used appropriately; and that they understood how to inform Forest Service decisions. A majority also thought the Forest Service was clear about their decisions and responsive to feedback.

A strong majority of respondents thought that the CFLRP project was moving toward achieving many collaborative process, ecological, and socio-economic goals, including but not limited to enabling cross-boundary and landscape-scale planning, reducing fuel hazards, improving restoration pace, scale, and fire use, offsetting treatment costs, reducing community wildfire risk, supporting local employment, and accomplishing work on adjacent lands. There was not agreement that progress had been made on the goals of minimizing litigation, restoring old growth, improving habitat and watershed function, or controlling invasive species. Factors that facilitated achieving these goals included having a facilitator, collective interest, local contracting capacity, funding, and flexibility in approaches, although several respondents noted that collaboration between the Forest and NEWFC was much stronger in the past.

Respondents indicated some areas where there was room for improvement and made pertinent recommendations. The responses reflected that litigation had been brought against the Forest Service by a former member of NEWFC at the time of the survey, leading to less active collaboration between the Colville National Forest and NEWFC than in previous years. Less than a third of respondents thought the collaborative process had created a neutral space to openly discuss controversial issues. Only a minority of respondents' expectations were met in collaborating with the Forest Service in planning, implementation, and monitoring, and a minority's expectations for the CFLRP project overall were met. Open-ended comments indicated that expectations for the Forest Service's commitment were largely not met due to a lack of engagement, confusing objectives, and little public involvement. A minority of respondents felt that

existing collaborative protocols were understood. The CFLRP project had dealt with several disruptions, such as legal challenges, personnel turnover, conflict among participants, limited agency capacity, and biophysical disruptions (i.e., wildfire). Commenters emphasized the disruption of litigation, and also identified a lack of engagement by the Forest Service with NEWFC, a lack of diversity in the Collaborative, conflicting priorities, changes in staff, and heavy workloads as additional disruptions. Most respondents felt that not enough had been done to address disruptions, although Forest Service representatives noted that they had pivoted to rebuild a new collaborative. Three key recommendations emerged largely from qualitative comments, reflecting this period of litigation and collaboration changes: 1) rebuild and create new relationships to return to more active collaboration, 2) diversify participation and invest in stakeholder engagement, and 3) utilize facilitators and clarify expectations, goals, and protocols.

The SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects, with the goal of gauging capacities and identifying areas for improvement.

Introduction

The Forest Landscape Restoration Act (FLRA) was passed in 2009 and established the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). The purpose of the CFLRP was to “encourage the collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes”¹ through a competitive funding program administered by the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service). In 2021, CFLRP coordinators, Forest Service personnel, and partners led a collaborative process to develop the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy, a set of ecological and socio-economic monitoring questions and indicators that will supplement local project multi-party monitoring plans and will be required for all newly authorized and reauthorized projects.²

One core component of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy relates to monitoring collaborative governance.³ While the CFLRP requires projects to collaborate throughout planning, implementation, and monitoring, “collaboration” was not defined in the FLRA or CFLRP requirements, nor did the CFLRP provide specific guidelines by which collaborative groups convened and engaged in collaborative restoration throughout the life of the CFLRP project. This has resulted in a multitude of collaborative structures, processes, and practices

implemented in diverse social and ecological contexts across the country. Also, collaborative groups are nested within and impacted by changes that occur within their group, external changes in social and ecological conditions, and a fluid institutional environment, all of which require groups to adjust and evolve their structures, practices, and processes (Beeton et al., 2022; Ulibarri et al., 2020). Yet, a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating attributes of collaborative governance and resilience is lacking. Systemic evaluation could lead to better understanding of what factors promote or challenge collaboration across different contexts, help target what kinds of investments are needed, and where to maintain and enhance collaborative capacity.

To address this need, the Forest Service Washington Office requested assistance from the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) in developing and deploying an assessment tool to track collaborative governance.³ During the development of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy, CFLRP coordinators from the Washington Office elicited feedback from CFLRP practitioners, CFLRP coordinators, and subject matter experts to identify monitoring questions, indicators, and available data sources. With respect to collaborative governance, partners wanted to address the question, how well is the CFLRP encouraging an effective and meaningful collaborative approach? CFLRP practitioners, coordinators, and subject-matter experts expressed interest in documenting collaborative health, function, and resilience, as well as performance (perceived outcomes). CFLRP practitioners, coordinators, and subject matter experts also emphasized the need for a tool that is straightforward, not time-consuming, easy to administer, and longitudinal.

We incorporated stakeholder feedback and questions of interest developed while drafting of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy to directly inform the components of the collaborative governance assessment. Our objectives are as follows:

1. Develop a rigorous, systematic, and longitudinal assessment of collaborative governance that is grounded in the science and practice of landscape-scale collaborative forest restoration.
2. Support program-wide evaluation of collaborative progress and performance, and report on findings to Forest Service staff and Congress.
3. Facilitate project-level engagement, reporting, and peer-learning to inform local collaborative work and adaptive management.

¹ PL 111-11 CFLRP Authorizing legislation - <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/110th-congress/senate-report/370/1>

² CFLRP National Core Monitoring Strategy - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/restoration/documents/cflrp/CMS-Fact-Sheet-final-20221013.pdf>

³ Here, we define governance as “the system of institutions, including rules, laws, regulations, policies, and social norms, and organizations involved in governing environmental resource use and/or protection” (Chaffin et al., 2014).

4. Contribute to the theory and practice of collaborative governance through the synthesis of findings and lessons learned.

The SWERI administered the collaborative governance assessment—an online survey—to the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 CFLRP, which included the Northeast Washington Forest Coalition ([NEWFC](#)), the Colville National Forest, and other participants recommended by key points of contact, in summer 2023. While NEWFC was founded in 2002, this CFLRP project was first approved in 2012 and later received an extension after the initial 10-year period ([NEWFC “Who We Are”](#)). The report herein summarizes findings from the collaboration assessment. We have also integrated, where appropriate, feedback from a presentation of the survey results and open discussion with NEWFC, as well as information gathered during group interviews on the collaborative context with both NEWFC and the Forest Service. See Appendix 1 for a report brief summarizing our findings, and Appendix 2 for a presentation we led with the NEWFC. We briefly highlight the approach, followed by a baseline assessment of findings and document recommendations from respondents to improve the collaborative process.

Approach

We developed an online survey to assess:

1. Do participants feel the collaborative exhibits characteristics generally associated with healthy, well-functioning, and resilient collaboratives?
2. To what extent do participants feel the project is meeting process, socio-economic, and ecological goals?
3. What challenges or disruptions affect collaborative performance and durability? And how did collaborative groups respond to those disruptions?
4. What do participants need or recommend to improve the process?

Framework

The survey was structured using concepts from an integrative collaborative governance framework ([Emerson et al., 2012](#)), resilience and adaptability literature ([Emerson and Gerlak, 2014](#); [Folke et al., 2005](#); [Gupta et al., 2010](#)), and empirical findings from the first 10 years of the CFLRP ([Beeton et al., 2022](#); [Butler and Schultz, 2019](#); [McIntyre and Schultz, 2020](#); [Schultz et al., 2018](#)).

Collaboration dynamics – To assess collaboration dynamics, we operationalized the Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance ([Emerson et al., 2012](#)). The framework incorporates multiple components of

collaborative governance that are grounded in collaborative practice, link collaboration dynamics to socio-economic and ecological outcomes, and promote assessment of collaboratives across settings and time. The components include principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action ([Emerson et al., 2012](#)).

Principled engagement refers to ensuring the right people are involved, i.e., a representative cross-section of people and entities who have a stake in the issue participate. Principled engagement also emphasizes the principles of open and inclusive communication and negotiation, where individuals with diverse perspectives and knowledge work together to identify shared problems, agree on strategies to solve those problems, and agree on the purpose or scope of the collaborative.

Shared motivation refers to the interpersonal and relational elements of collaborative dynamics. Shared motivation includes the sub-components mutual trust, understanding, and commitment. It is often referred to as social capital, or the “glue” that holds groups together through networks, norms, rules, and trust that promote collective action ([Pelling and High, 2005](#)). This glue is crucial for effective collaboration; social capital is built through investments in social relationships and can be expressed through mutual commitment of individuals and groups to common collaborative goals.

Capacity for joint action comprises four sub-components: leadership, knowledge and learning, resources, and institutional arrangements ([Emerson and Gerlak, 2014](#)). Leadership is essential for managing collaboratives, and leaders can fill many roles including convener, sponsor, public advocate, facilitator, and others. They are important for: building trust; sensemaking; bringing people together; initiating partnerships; motivating people to work together; compiling, generating, and disseminating knowledge; developing visions of and support for change; and managing conflict ([Folke et al., 2005](#)).

In a collaborative setting, participants should work together to co-create and co-develop shared understanding and knowledge through social learning; knowledge and information should be equally accessible to all members of the collaborative; and learning and knowledge should be used to inform flexible, adaptive management ([Emerson and Gerlak, 2014](#)). Social learning occurs through repeated interactions and joint problem solving among participants. It emphasizes testing, monitoring, and reevaluating participants’ assumptions and understanding of ecosystem responses and feedbacks to learn and adapt management actions

(Folke et al., 2005; Lebel et al., 2010; Sharma-Wallace et al., 2018). Collaboratives often pool and share resources to accomplish tasks and get work done, including funding, personnel, science and technical expertise, facilitation, and coordination.

Institutional arrangements are the processes, protocols, and structures needed to manage collaboration over time, i.e., the rules of the game. Collaborative structures, processes, and protocols should be clearly understood, transparent, perceived as fair and equitable, and include mechanisms of accountability (Emerson et al., 2012; Gupta et al., 2010; Stern and Coleman, 2015). Capacity needs change through time, and the relative amount of these four capacity types is contingent upon the local context – e.g., history of conflict, people involved, purpose and objectives of the group, among others (Imperial et al., 2016).

Perceived outcomes – Our assessment focuses both on perceived “process” outcomes (e.g., did the collaborative process reduce conflict, or increase the ability to plan at a landscape scale?), as well as perceived socio-economic and ecological outcomes. The outcome metrics chosen for evaluation were derived from several sources: the intent of the FLRA of 2009 and the CFLRP; project proposals; and conversations with local, regional, and national CFLRP coordinators while developing the Common Monitoring Strategy.

Challenges or disruptions that affect collaborative performance and durability – Disruptions—i.e., personnel turnover, legal or policy changes, and biophysical disturbances like wildfires or insect outbreaks—can happen at any time. These disruptions may impact collaborative progress and performance, and/or force groups to adapt. We developed a list of common challenges that CFLRP projects and other landscape scale forest collaboratives reported in: 1) breakout group discussions and focus group sessions at the 2020 SWERI Cross-boundary landscape restoration workshop (SWERI, 2020) and the 2020 Idaho forest collaborative shared stewardship workshops; 2) the 2020 CFLRP Collaboration Indicator Survey administered by the National Forest Foundation⁴; and 3) a survey administered to Forest Service staff engaged in 2010 and 2012 CFLRP projects (Schultz et al., 2018). Identifying current challenges or disruptions that CFLRP projects are grappling with can support strategic investment towards solutions to maintain collaborative performance and durability.

Needs or recommendations to improve the process – We captured respondents’ perspectives on needs and

recommendations to improve the collaborative process by including an open-ended survey question.

Data Collection and Analysis

We developed a standardized survey in the online survey tool Qualtrics that consisted of 21, mostly closed-ended statements using Likert scales. SWERI piloted the assessment with and elicited feedback from the Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership and Northern Blues CFLRP project participants (n=37), as well as participants of the Colorado Front Range CFLRP (n=3) in FY21 (Beeton et al., 2022). SWERI and the USDA Forest Service held regionally-focused webinars to introduce the assessment and identify key points of contact for each newly authorized and reauthorized project to help with recruiting participants, scheduling the assessment, and identifying project-specific questions of interest that were appended to the standardized survey, which is outlined in our standard operating procedures document.⁵

Key contacts with the Colville National Forest and the Northeast Washington Forest Coalition (NEWFC) provided support in recruiting participants and administering the survey through the NEWFC listserv and with Forest Service contacts in May 2023. The survey was open for just over 7 weeks. We received 17 usable responses, representing 28.8% of those emailed. We used the statistical software program Statistical Software for Social Sciences (SPSS) to document mean responses and variation in responses. Open-ended questions were analyzed using a thematic analysis (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Small sample sizes prohibited further statistical analyses, though this will be possible when more data has been collected.

Findings

Our results are organized as follows. The first section includes responses related to respondents’ affiliations, motivations for being involved in the CFLRP project, level of engagement, and the degree to which respondents felt the project was collaborative. We then provide a description of findings related to collaboration dynamics (i.e., **principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action**). We provide a short description of each collaboration dynamic construct in italics to orient the reader. We follow with findings on perceived outcomes, disruptions that are challenging to collaborative progress and performance, and recommendations to improve the process. Finally, we present results from the appended question set that was developed in coordination with key points of contact

⁴ <https://www.nationalforests.org/assets/pdfs/Collaboration-Indicator-Survey-Results-2020-publish.pdf>

⁵ <https://cfri.box.com/s/hfu5cdk599j5gp5ixphm2qj7gdp4h1ef>

affiliated with the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 CFLRP. For clarity, we describe majority or strong majority results as greater than or equal to 60% agreement and slight majority as greater than 50% agreement. Some participants did not respond to certain questions or chose the option, “don’t know/not applicable,” and thus, their responses were removed from the analysis of those questions.

Introductory questions

The majority of participants represented the Forest Service (73%), with a few responses from state agencies (13%), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs, 13%); two respondents did not answer this question but did answer other parts of the survey (Figure 1). Responses thus reflect these three groups, particularly the Forest Service. The most frequently reported motivations for being involved in the CFLRP project were to restore forest resiliency (62.5%) and reduce wildfire risk to communities (43.8%) (Figure 2). The level of engagement in the CFLRP project during the past 12 months varied among participants – 62.5% reported that they were moderately to highly engaged, while 31.2% reported low engagement, and 6.2% reported that they were not engaged (Figure 3). Respondents reported an average length of involvement with the CFLRP project of just over 5 years.

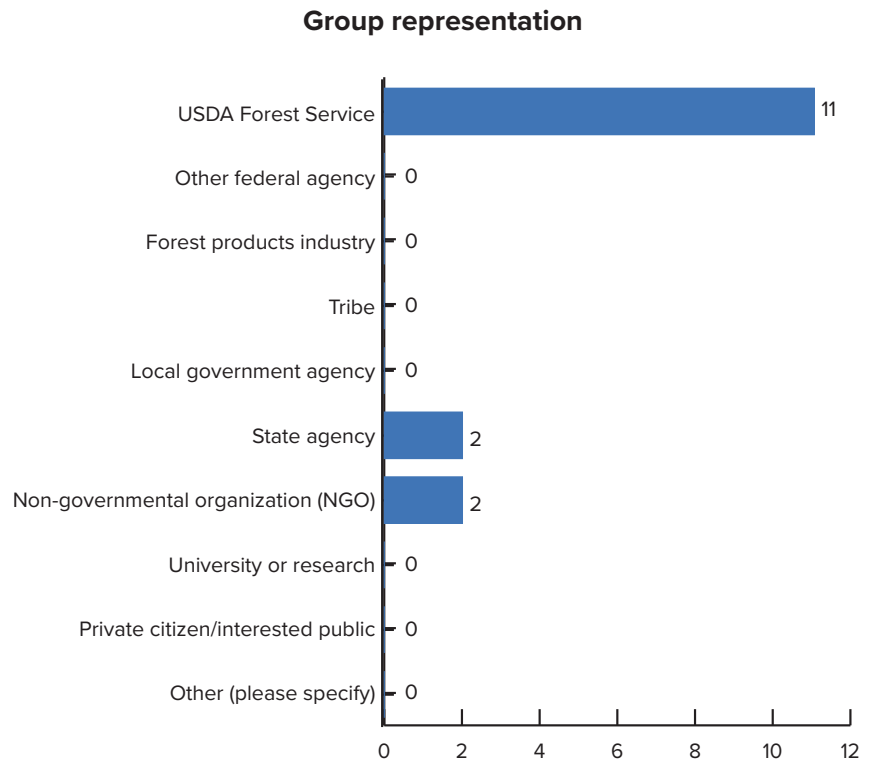


Figure 1: Respondents' self-identified representation with associated organizations.

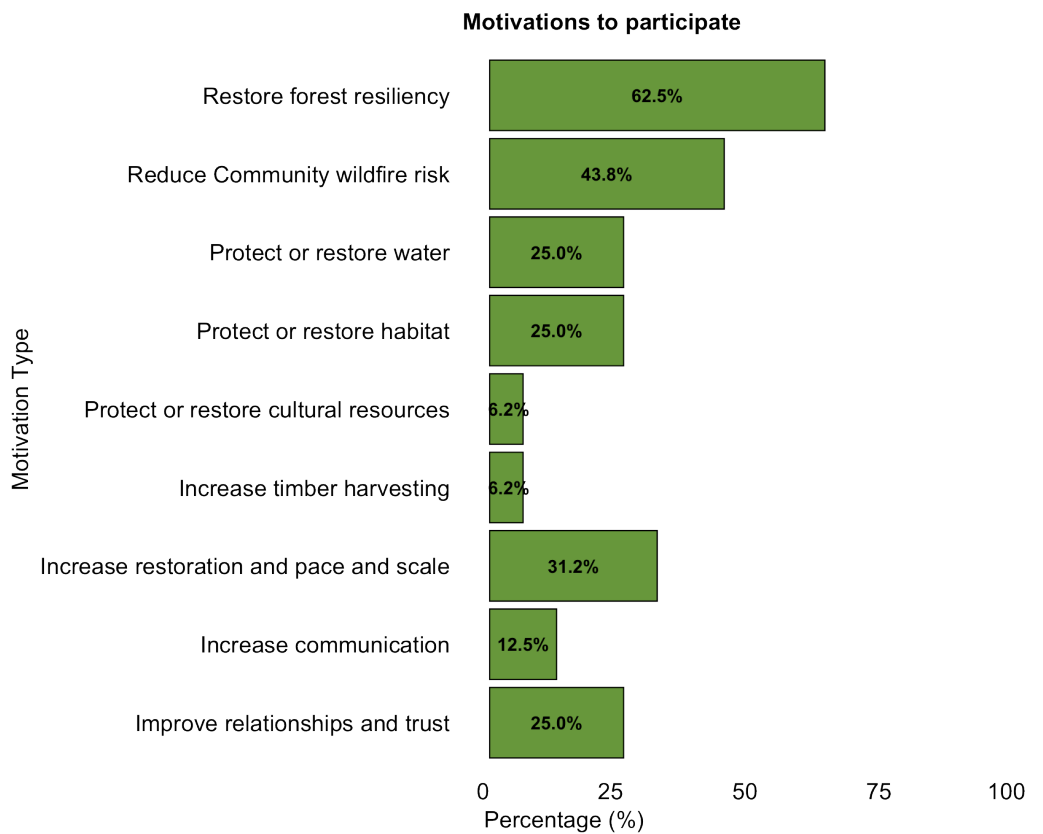


Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who identified the associated motive as reason for their participation in the collaborative.

We asked respondents to reflect on the degree to which they thought the CFLRP project was collaborative (on a scale from not collaborative at all to very collaborative), which we defined in the survey as:

Collaboration occurs when multiple parties come together to address problems that could not be achieved by acting alone. Effective Collaboration should typically include: inclusive and diverse stakeholder interaction throughout the process; venues for open communication and negotiation about values, interests, and appropriate management actions; and opportunities for social learning.

A slight majority of respondents (57.1%) indicated the CFLRP project had been collaborative, none said it was very collaborative, and 7.1% said it was not collaborative (Figure 4).

Principled engagement

Principled engagement refers to having the right people involved in iterative and inclusive dialogue to determine shared problems, identify shared strategies to solve problems, and agree to the shared purpose of the project.

Half of the respondents (50%) agreed that a representative cross-section of individuals who had a stake in the issues and outcomes of the project were involved, and there was a sizable minority (40%) that disagreed (Figure 5). Representatives from the forest products industry, tribes, the university community, or private citizens did not identify themselves in the survey, so their opinions may not be included despite their inclusion in NEWFC or in collaborating with the Colville National Forest. NEWFC is composed of representatives of conservation and land nonprofits (i.e. Conservation Northwest, Sustainable Northwest, The Lands Council, Sustainable Obtainable

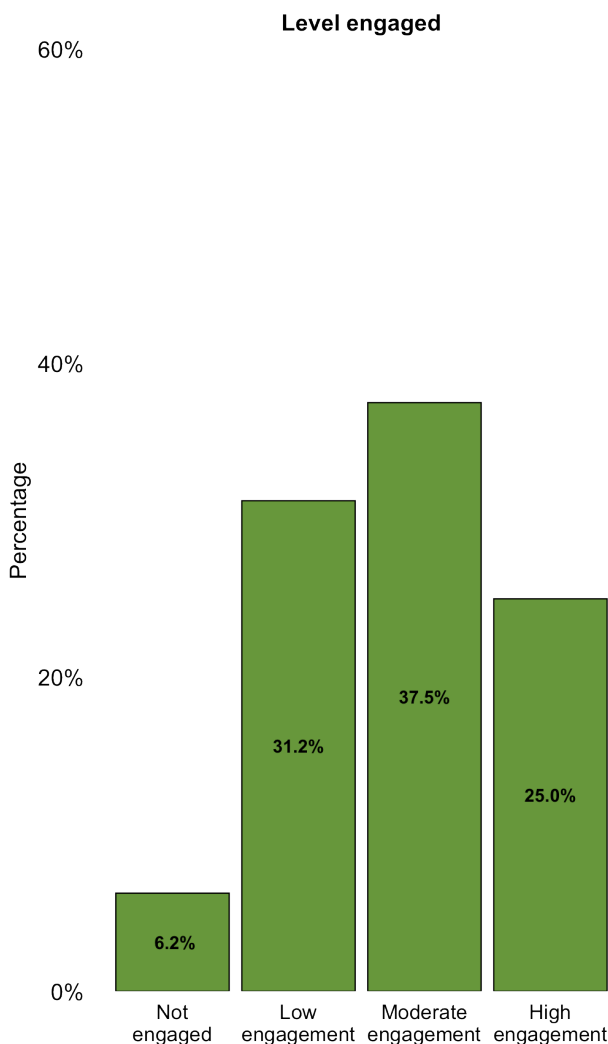


Figure 3: Percent of respondents who rated their involvement in this project as “Not engaged,” “Low engagement,” “Moderate engagement,” or “High engagement.”

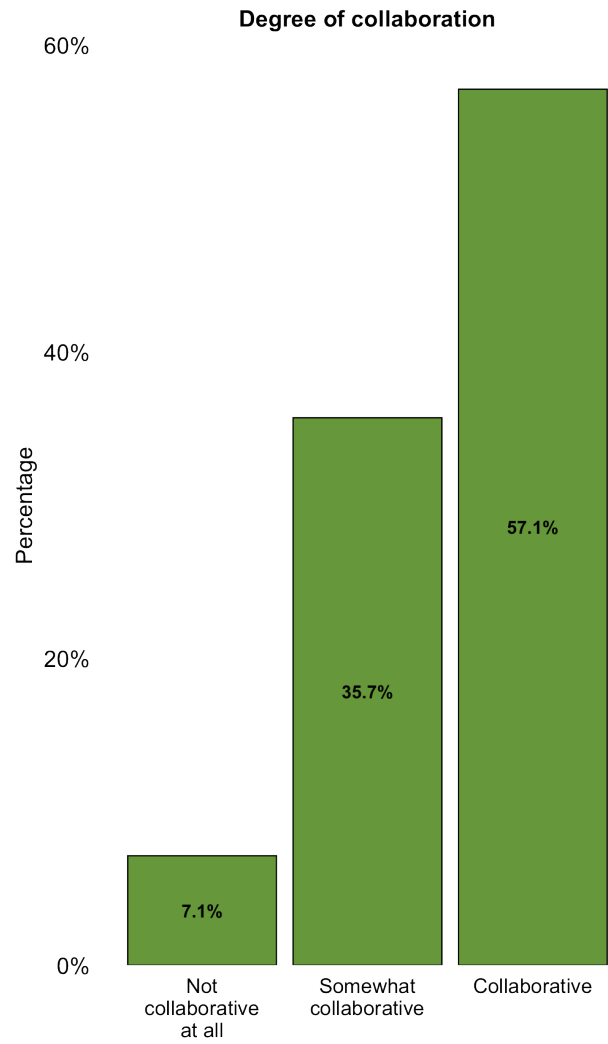


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who reported this project to be “Not collaborative,” “Somewhat collaborative,” “Collaborative,” or “Very collaborative.”

Solutions), the forest products industry (Avista, a utility company that runs a biomass plant, Ponderay Newsprint Company/Resolute Forest Products, Vaagen Brothers Logging), consulting foresters (Williamson Consulting), nonprofits related to recreation and hunting, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, and the Forest Service ([NEWFC “Who We Are”](#)). The Colville National Forest also works with local tribes outside of NEWFC to maintain government-to-government relations, particularly the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in the CFLRP landscape, as well as the Kalispell Tribe and Spokane Tribe. A couple open-ended responses also indicated a desire from some to see more diversity in the Collaborative (see “Recommendations to Improve the Collaborative Process” below).

A strong majority of respondents (60%) agreed that participants worked together to identify shared interests and concerns, but only a minority felt the collaborative

process created a neutral space for CFLRP participants to openly discuss controversial issues (27.3%) (Figure 5). It is important to note that this CFLRP project had experienced recent litigation at the time of the survey brought by a member of NEWFC who subsequently left NEWFC ([Kettle Range Conservation Group vs. US Forest Service 2023](#)). The litigation challenged the Colville National Forest’s 2019 forest management plan and the Sanpoil restoration and logging project because of the elimination of the Eastside Screens 21-inch rule (which previously prohibited cutting trees greater than 21 inches in diameter at breast height in selected Washington and Oregon forests east of the Cascade Mountains). After many years of working together, the collaboration in planning and implementation between the Forest Service and NEWFC reduced during this litigation process, although they continued to work together on monitoring. Shortly after this survey closed, the litigation was resolved in favor of the plaintiff in June 2023, ruling that the Forest

Principled engagement: collaborative environment

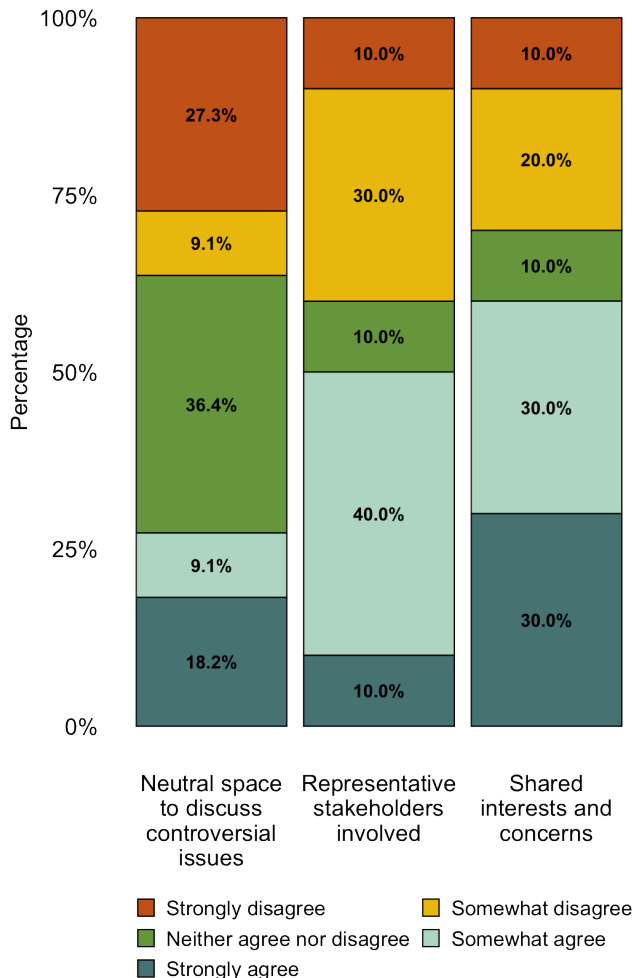


Figure 5: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree that representative stakeholders are involved, stakeholders have shared interests and concerns, and the collaborative is a neutral space to discuss controversial issues.

Principled engagement: agreement

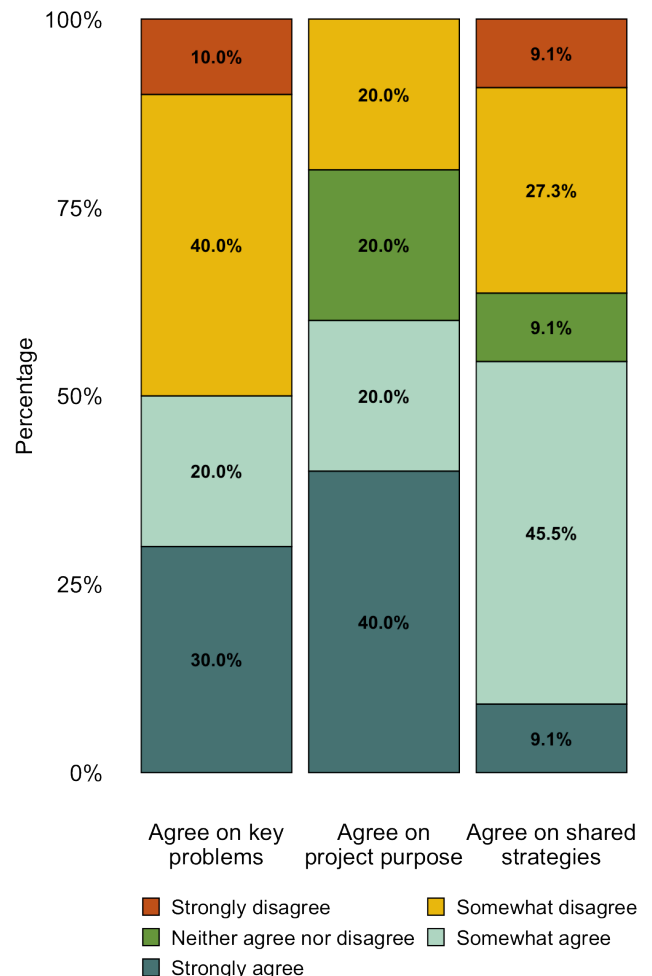


Figure 6: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree on the key problems that impact the landscape, strategies to solve problems, and purpose of the collaborative.

had violated the Administrative Procedures Act (APA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). Open-ended comments provide more details in the “Disruptions” section below.

A strong majority of respondents indicated that participants agreed on the purpose of the CFLRP project (60%). However, half of respondents felt that participants had a shared understanding of the problems that impacted their landscape (50%) and a slight majority felt there was agreement on the strategies to solve these problems (54.6%) (Figure 6).

A minority of respondents felt that the level of collaboration between the Partnership and the Forest Service met their expectations during planning (40%), implementation (30%), and monitoring (36.4%) (Figure 7).

Shared Motivation

Shared motivation refers to trust, mutual understanding, relationship-building, and commitment to the collaborative process.

A strong majority of respondents thought that the collaborative process helped build mutual respect of others’ positions and interests (60%), relationships (90%), and trust in each other (70%) (Figure 8). Half of the participants (50%) trusted in the group’s ability to achieve desired actions and outcomes, although a sizable minority (40%) disagreed (Figure 8). A strong majority of respondents indicated that they were committed to the collaborative process (83.4%), and a slight majority felt other project participants were committed to the process (55.5%) (Figure 9). Half of respondents, on the other hand, thought the Forest Service was committed to the collaborative process, and 30% disagreed that the agency was committed (Figure 9).

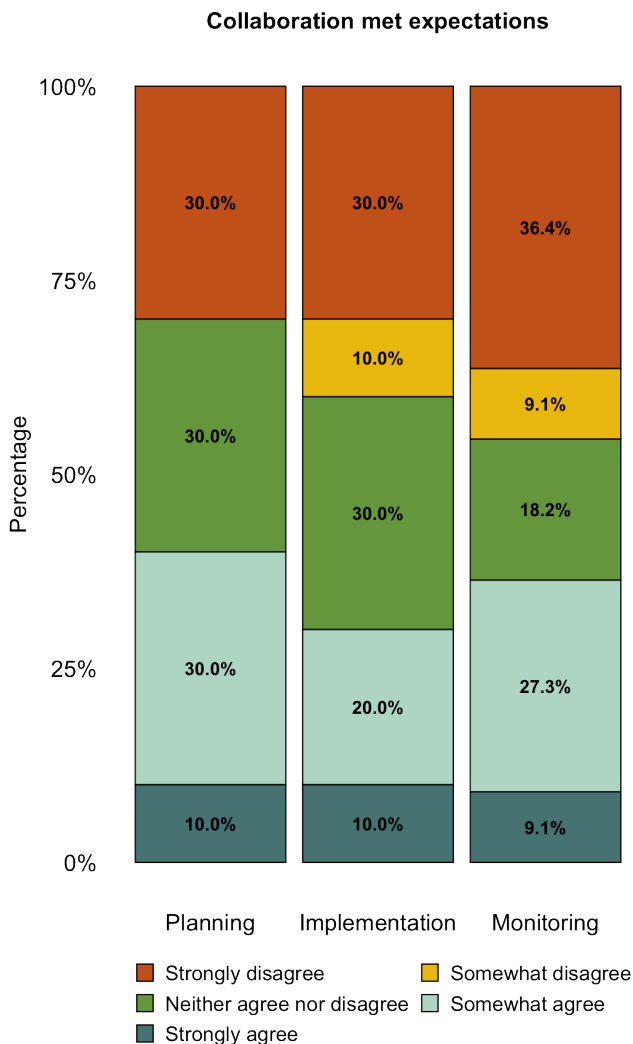


Figure 7: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree that the Forest Service collaborates during planning, implementation, and monitoring stages.

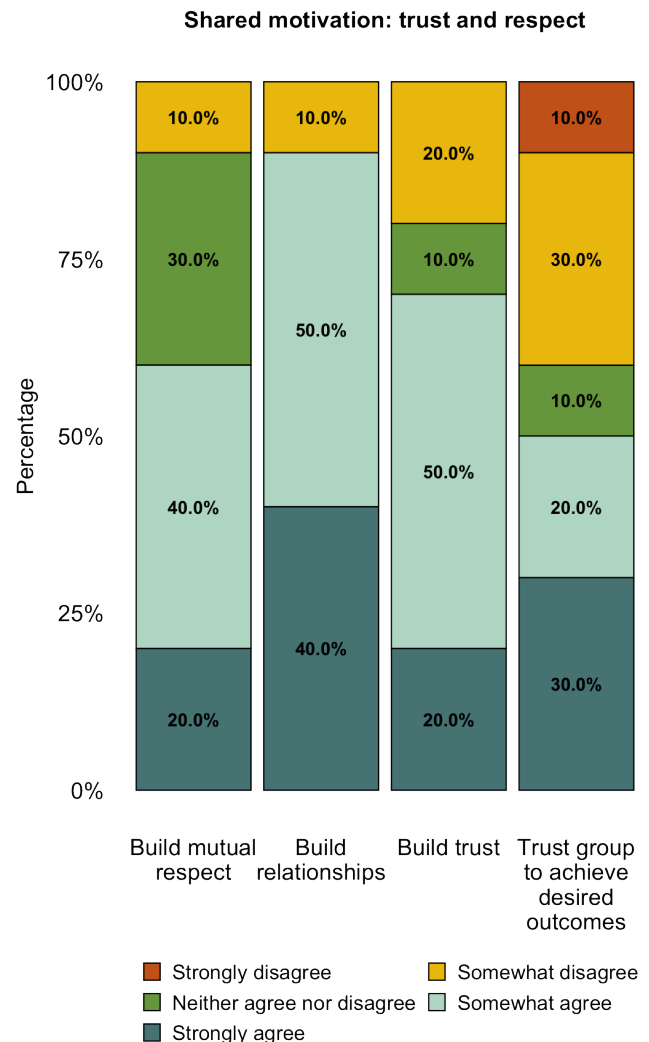


Figure 8: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree that the collaborative process has helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect, as well as the extent to which participants trust the group to achieve desired outcomes.

Capacity for Joint Action

Capacity for joint action includes four components: collaborative leadership, knowledge and learning, resources, and institutional arrangements that support fair governance.

Leadership

Leadership is a critical component for collaborative governance. Leaders are needed to convene partners, communicate a shared vision, and motivate people to work together.

A strong majority of respondents agreed that the CFLRP project had leaders who maintained and communicated a common vision and direction (63.6%) and worked well with other people (81.8%) (Figure 10). A minority, however, felt the leaders motivated others to work together (44.4%) (Figure 10).

Knowledge and Learning

Collaboratives should engage in a knowledge generation and social learning process for joint action. Knowledge should be co-produced, equally available to all partners, and be used to implement adaptive management.

A strong majority of respondents agreed that the CFLRP process provided opportunities to co-generate knowledge to learn and solve problems together (75%), that participants were committed to informing adjustments to management practices based on learning and feedback, i.e., adaptive management (66%), and that knowledge and information were shared equally among participants (60%) (Figure 11). Fewer respondents felt that participants had the flexibility to alter course when the collaborative changed (e.g., new faces or priorities; 55%) or when landscape conditions changed (e.g., wildfire affects a planning unit; 50%) (Figure 11).

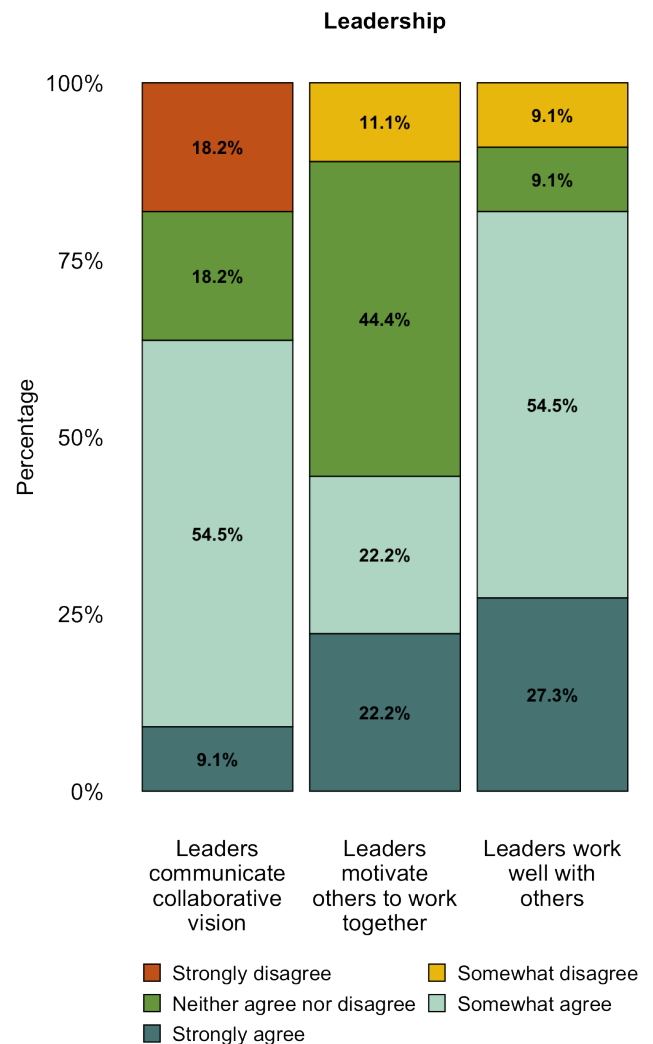
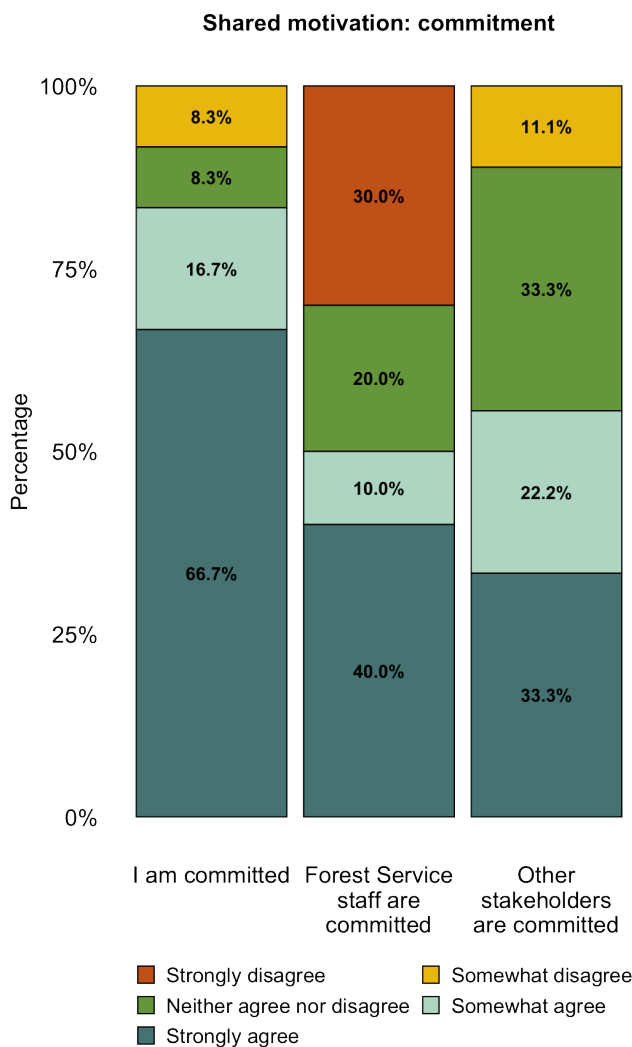


Figure 9: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree that they, the Forest Service, and other stakeholders are committed to the process.

Figure 10: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree that the leaders work well with others, communicate a common vision and direction, and motivate others to work together.

Resources

To accomplish tasks and get work done, collaboratives often pool and share resources, including funding, personnel time, technical expertise, and facilitation, which, in turn, can support buy-in.

A strong majority of participants agreed that the project had adequate access to funds (88.8%), technical expertise (70%), and facilitation skills (70%) to get work done (Figure 12). Meanwhile, only 45.5% agreed that the group had adequate time to carry out tasks and accomplish their work (Figure 12).

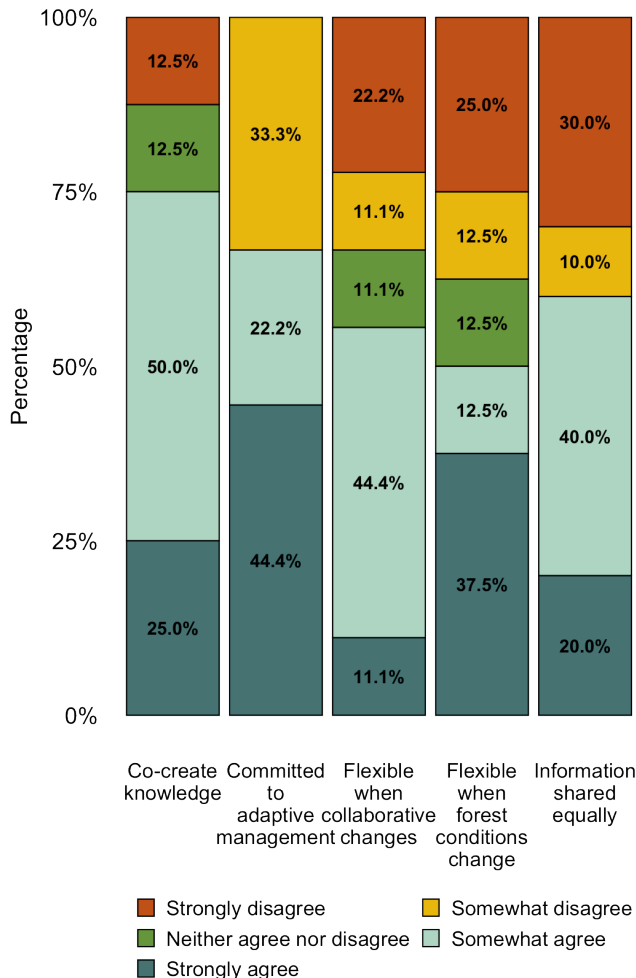
Institutional Arrangements

Institutional arrangements are the rules of the game. They include processes, protocols, and structures needed to manage collaboration over time. They should be clearly understood, perceived as fair and equitable, and include accountability mechanisms within and between entities.

Half of respondents agreed there were protocols in place that promoted accountability among CFLRP participants (50%) and between the Forest Service and CFLRP project participants (e.g., decision rules, charters, memoranda of understanding; 50%), although the other half of participants disagreed (Figure 13). Likewise, half agreed existing protocols were fair and equitable (50%) and used appropriately (50%) (Figure 13). Less than half felt that protocols were clearly understood among participants (42.9%) (Figure 13).

Half of the respondents felt that project participants understood when and what collaborative input was useful to inform Forest Service decisions (50%), although a sizable minority (40%) did not agree (Figure 14). A strong majority reported that the Forest Service was responsive to collaborative input (60%) and that the agency was clear with CFLRP project participants about the decisions they make and why they make them (70%) (Figure 14).

Knowledge, learning, and adaptive management



Resources

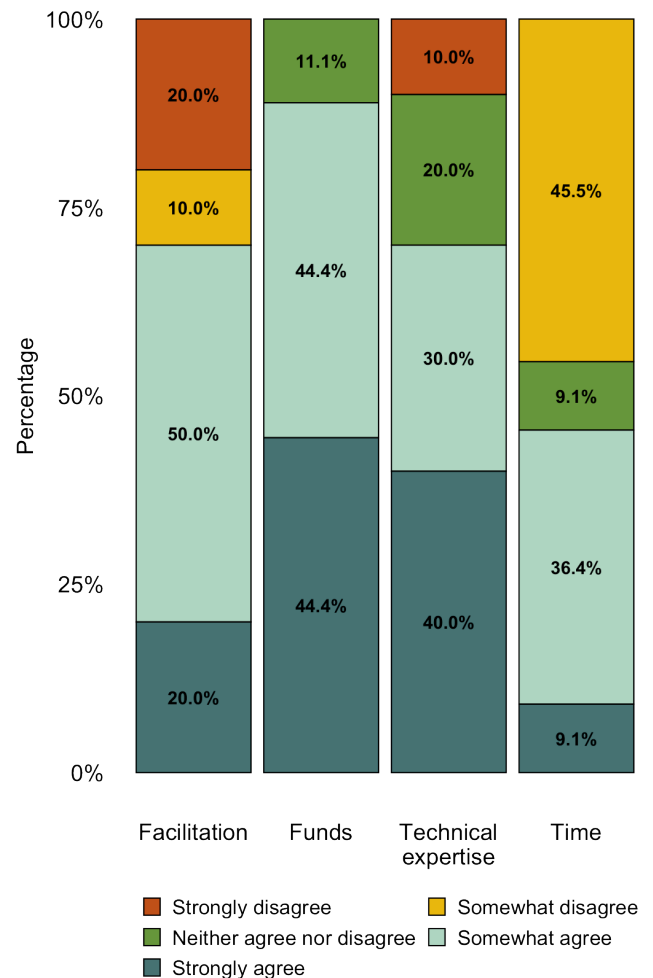


Figure 11: Percentage of respondents that agree to disagree that knowledge and information is co-generated by participants, shared equally, and used by participants to adjust management practices.

Figure 12: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree that the collaborative has adequate: funds, time, technical expertise, and facilitation skills to accomplish work.

Outcomes

We assessed perceived progress on collaborative process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes for the CFLRP project. Notably, the assessment was administered over a decade after the start of the project but in the middle of litigation, capturing recent developments in outcomes.

A strong majority of respondents agreed that the CFLRP collaborative process enhanced communication among participants (60%) and enabled landscape-scale planning (77.8%) and planning across boundaries (87.5%) (Figure 15). A slight majority agreed that the process had minimized conflict among stakeholders (55.5%), led to enhanced decision making (55.5%), and included diverse interests, perspectives, and knowledges (55.5%), although substantial minorities disagreed (Figure 15). None agreed that the process had reduced or improved outcomes of litigation (Figure 15).

With regards to ecological goals, a strong majority reported moderate to substantial progress in improving the use of planned or unplanned wildfire (i.e., prescribed or managed; 71.4%), maintaining or improving the pace and scale of restoration (71.4%), and reducing fuel hazards (85.7%) (Figure 16). Less than half indicated progress in improving habitat for focal species (42.9%), maintaining or improving watershed function (e.g., aquatic habitat, water quality, soil productivity; 42.9%), restoring old-growth stands (42.9%), and contributing to treatment or control of invasive aquatic or terrestrial species (28.6%) (Figure 16).

In terms of socioeconomic goals, a strong majority of respondents reported the project had made moderate to substantial progress in offsetting treatment costs with restoration byproducts (e.g., woody biomass; 83.3%), reducing the risk of wildfire to communities (71.4%), supporting local employment or training opportunities

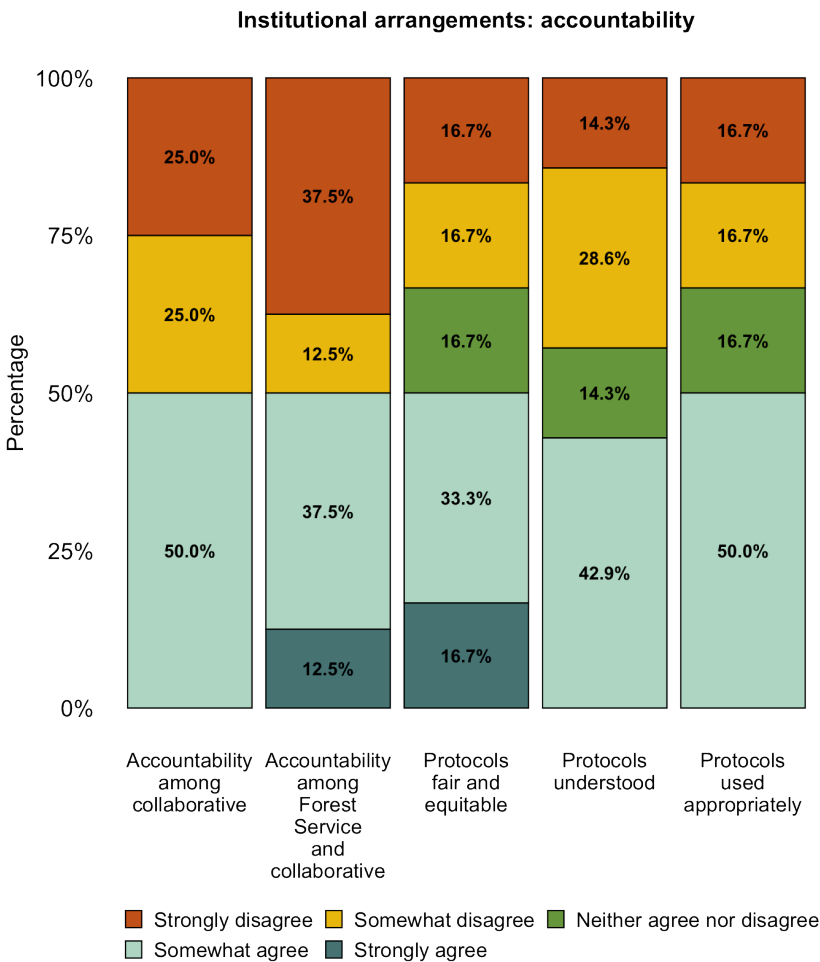


Figure 13: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree that protocols promote accountability among participants, between the Forest Service and the collaborative, and that protocols are understood, fair and equitable, and are used appropriately.

Institutional arrangements: transparent and responsive

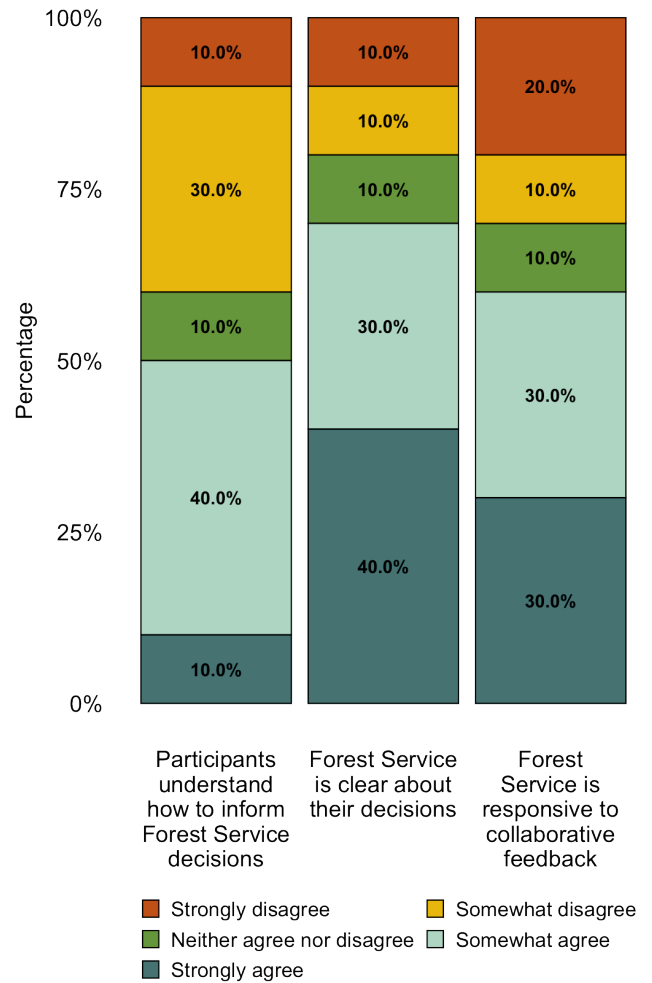


Figure 14: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree that they understand how to inform Forest Service decisions, the Forest Service is responsive to feedback, and the Forest Service is clear about their decisions.

Perceived outcomes: collaborative process

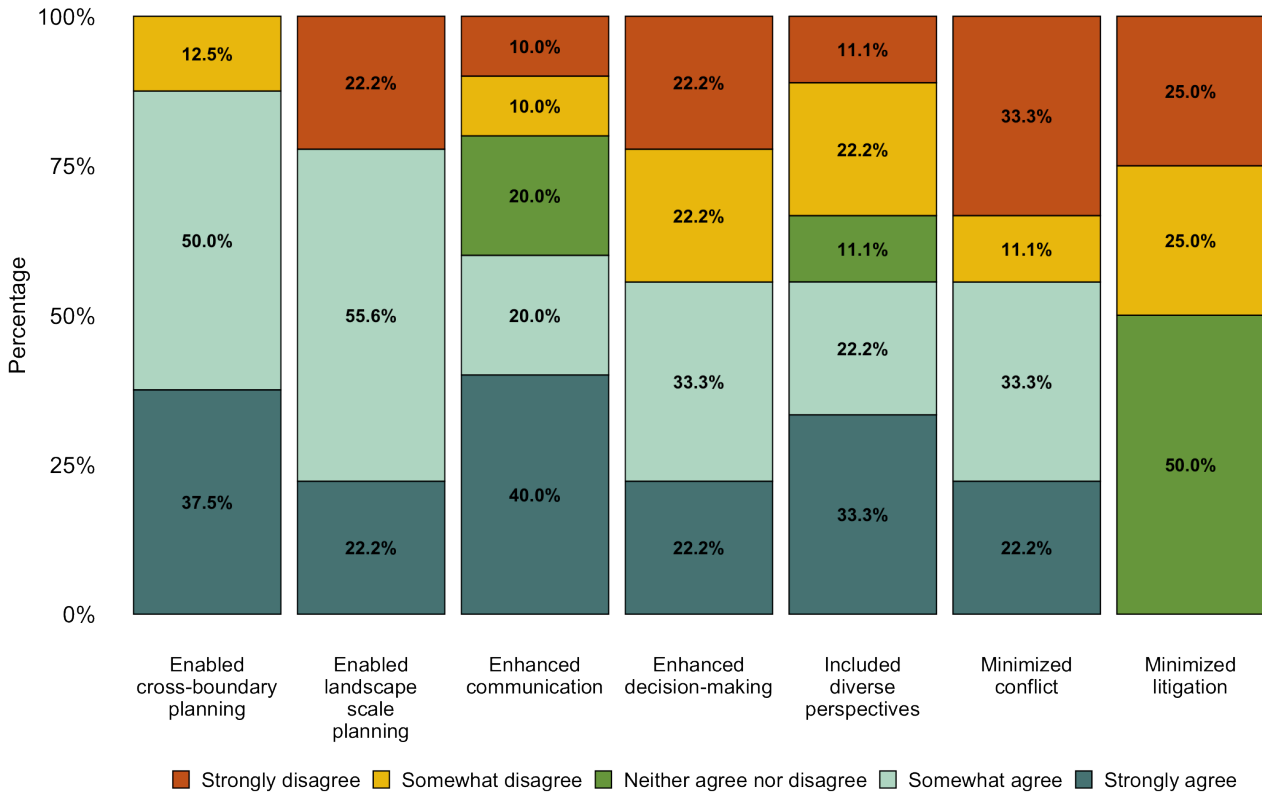


Figure 15: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree that the collaborative process has impacted the function and capacity of the collaborative.

Perceived outcomes: ecological goals

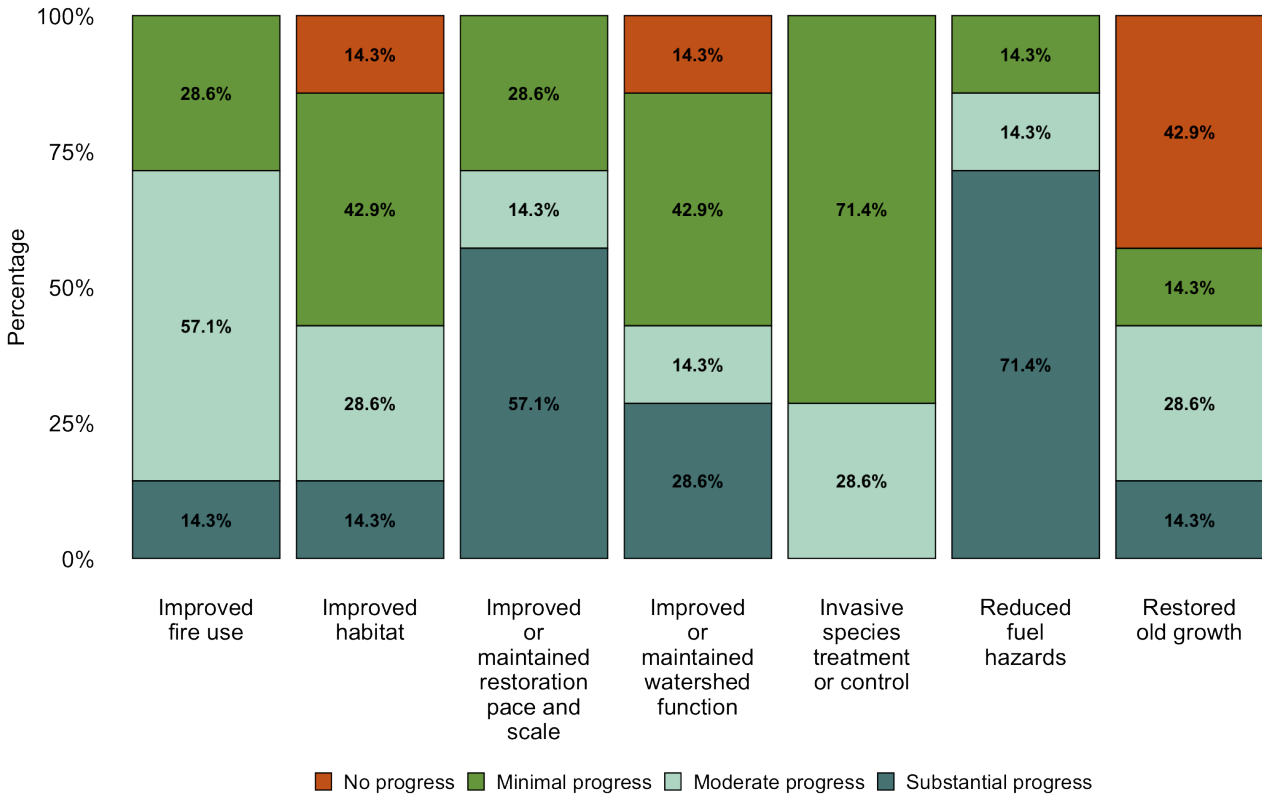


Figure 16: Percentage of respondents who reported no, minimal, moderate, or substantial progress toward ecological goals..

(e.g., forest products industry, youth/citizen science; 71.4%), and accomplishing more work on adjacent lands (e.g., tribal, state, private lands; 66.6%) (Figure 17).

Appended Questions: Expectations

A few appended questions were developed with Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 CFLRP partners, particularly NEWFC, and are not part of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy. A series of these appended questions sought to understand expectations of the CFLRP project as a whole and factors that contributed to perceived success. On average, just over 40% of respondents included answers to open-ended questions throughout the survey (5–8 respondents per question), including for questions in the subsequent “Disruptions” and “Recommendations to Improve the Collaborative Process” sections. These qualitative opinions were collected from the survey respondents who opted to include open-ended comments, and thus, likely represent those with the most passionate viewpoints.

More moderate opinions regarding recommendations, disruptions, and other open-ended responses may not be captured by the survey.

Respondents were divided in their perception of the CFLRP project meeting their expectations: half were neutral, and the other half of respondents were split between somewhat agreeing (20%) or disagreeing (30%) that their expectations were met (Figure A5).

When asked whether the CFLRP project had met respondents’ expectations for collaboration, most respondents who wrote open-ended comments said their expectations were not currently met. A few respondents were disappointed with the current state of collaboration, although previously their expectations had been met. For example, one respondent argued that “the Colville National Forest has changed direction, is not collaborative,” and has shifted back to an outdated logging approach. Further, another respondent recounted that “over the years, the CFLRP project has increased pace and scale of treatments and helped put the landscape on resilient trajectory.” However, they went on to lament the changing social relationships within the CFLRP project:

Perceived outcomes: socio-economic goals

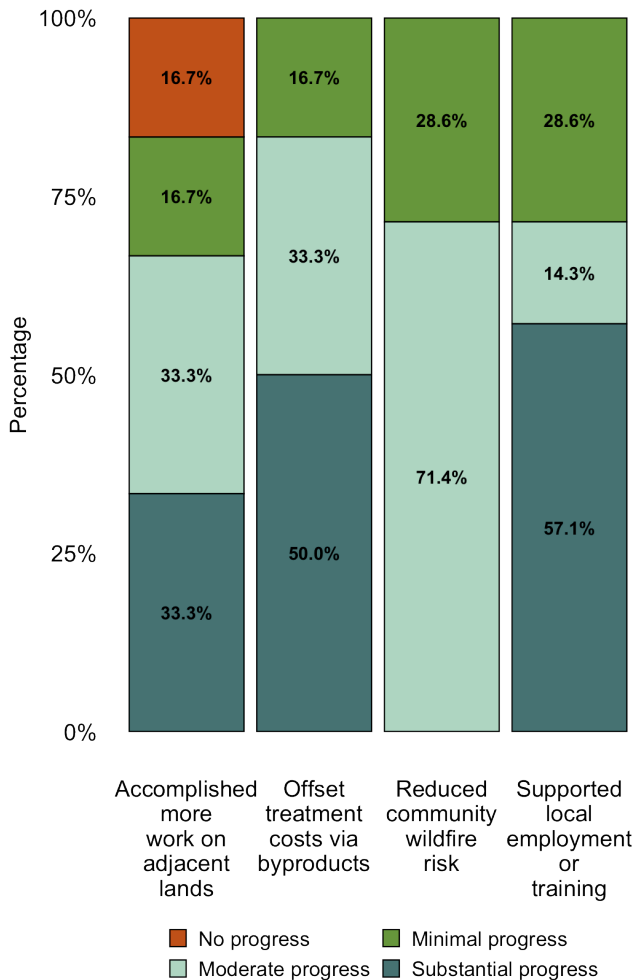


Figure 17: Percentage of respondents who reported no, minimal, moderate, or substantial progress toward socio-economic goals.

This CFLRP project has met expectations

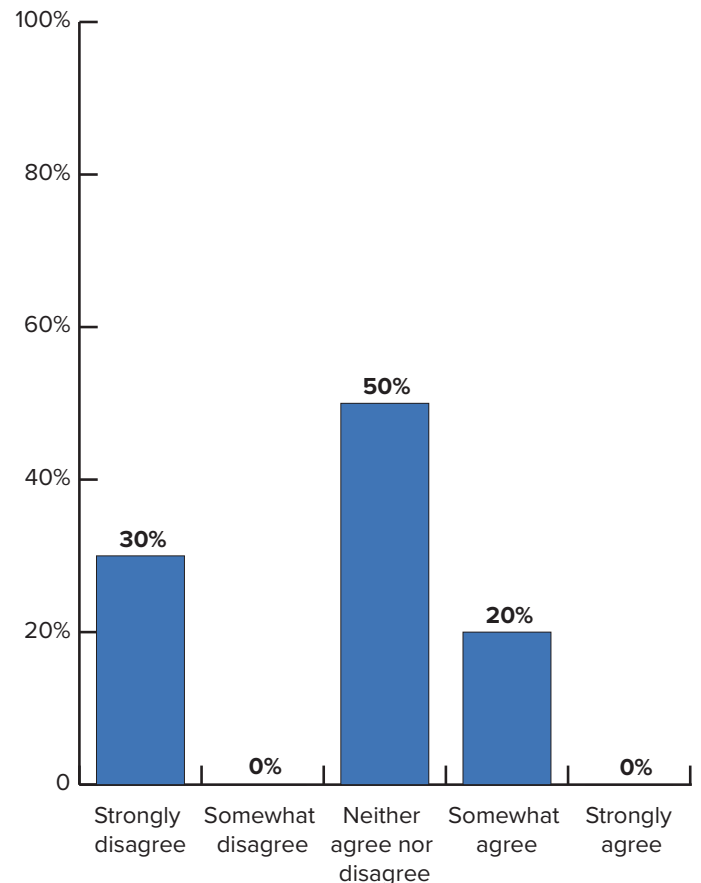


Figure A5: Percent of respondents who reported that this CFLRP had met their expectations.

“it also helped relationship building for several years, but the past few years those relationships have struggled due to recent litigation.” An additional respondent said their expectations for leadership had not been met, and that a facilitator was necessary, although NEWFC hired a facilitator after the survey was closed.

One respondent detailed positive outcomes associated with the CFLRP project, yet hoped to see a broader-scale impact in accomplishing on-the-ground work:

The work that gets completed is great! How it compares to the rest of the landscape is that it doesn't have the scope/scale of impact when you are talking about large areas. Pocket of greatness I think is a term that could apply to the work being done!

Respondents were also asked if Forest Service staff had met their expectations for engagement, capacity, and/or commitment. Overall, the few responses received indicated that the Forest Service did not meet respondents' expectations for various reasons. A couple respondents suggested that they were disappointed in the disengagement in collaboration of the Forest Service. For example, a respondent stated, “the Supervisor and District Rangers have stopped collaborating and are putting the Colville National Forest at risk by their actions,” and another commented on being excluded by the Forest Service because of disagreements regarding cutting large trees. Meanwhile, other respondents indicated their expectations for engagement were not met because “the public has very little involvement in the collaborative” and their expectations for communication “were not met because there is little detail in the CFLRP progress reports” or the project’s “overall objectives” were still confusing. On the other hand, one respondent did suggest that their expectations were met. Specifically, they highlighted how “USFS staff are great at getting things organized and putting projects together. They ask pertinent questions to fully address CFLRP application guidelines,” although they also noted confusion over direction on who to contact regarding coordinating on monitoring questions.

A couple respondents highlighted various factors that contributed to the success of the CFLRP collaboration process. One respondent attributed collaborative success to the hard work and dedication of a collaborative facilitator: “the CFLRP collaborative process has been elevated by a dedicated facilitator to bridge conflict in a hostile agency culture.” Meanwhile, another respondent saw collaborative success as associated with a broad spectrum of factors unique to this Forest, including “funding, commitment, working knowledge of natural resources, opportunity to complete work, administrative

components and land base have lined up, flexibility that other Forests may not have.” It was further noted that collaborative success could be attributed to “a collective interest in action, forest restoration and local infrastructure and contractors available to meet our need and implement projects.”

A few additional respondents suggested that the NEWFC had previously contributed to the success of the collaborative process, but recent events have diminished their ability to do so. It was suggested that the collaborative success occurred because “in the beginning, NEWFC and the Forest worked well together.” Further, a respondent noted how NEWFC contributed to collaborative success because “NEWFC had worked very hard, and the CNF met us partway. NEWFC helped innovate new approaches to planning and implementation. NEWFC defended the CNF in court.” The respondent then went on to state, “Once [NEWFC] challenged them [the CNF], they severed ties because ... they already had everything they needed from NEWFC, i.e., cover from closer public scrutiny.”

Disruptions

We developed a list of common challenges that CFLRP projects and other landscape-scale forest collaboratives reported in: 1) breakout group discussions and focus group sessions at the 2020 SWERI Cross-boundary Landscape Restoration Workshop (SWERI, 2020) and the 2020 Idaho forest collaborative shared stewardship workshops; 2) the 2020 CFLRP Collaboration Indicator Survey administered by the National Forest Foundation ; and 3) a survey administered to Forest Service staff engaged in 2010 and 2012 CFLRP projects (Schultz et al., 2018). Based on that list, legal challenges (e.g., appeals or litigation; 87.5% of respondents found this to be a moderate to significant challenge), frequent personnel turnover (80%), and conflict among project participants (75%) were the most substantial challenges the CFLRP project faced at the time of this survey (Figure 18). Additional challenges included limited agency capacity (60%) and biophysical disruptions (55.5%) (Figure 18).

We also asked respondents what additional disruptions and challenges impacted the CFLRP project's performance and durability. Litigation was once again most frequently mentioned as disrupting relationships and demanding capacity that may have otherwise been directed toward collaboration because of the open litigation during the survey response period. Respondents noted in some comments that previously collaboration had been successful (see “Appended Questions: Expectations” above for more detail), and that it was unfortunate this survey was capturing a snapshot in time where the collaborative relationship had deteriorated. Respondents noted

challenges the litigation brought in moving forward with collaboration:

One member of the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition sued the Forest. Due to litigation, there were topics that could not be discussed between the Forest Service and the Collaborative members. This caused major division in the relationship between the FS and the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition (NEWFC).

There was a lack of agreement among respondents on how the litigant represented the views of the NEWFC. Some respondents argued that the litigant – who was a member of the collaborative and left once the litigation began – did not represent the collaborative itself but rather represented only the Kettle Range Conservation Group. Other respondents, on the other hand, felt this created a perception that the litigant was representing NEWFC, arguing that the litigation stemmed “from organizations directly represented by members of the collaborative.” While NEWFC representatives argued that the litigation was not brought by them as a collaborative even if they aligned with the substance of complaints, it is clear that the perception of their involvement ruptured some collaborative relationships. Respondents also noted that before litigation, distrust had formed

over disagreements about the Forest Plan and decisions around several themes where NEWFC felt that their input had not been taken into consideration:

The idea was basically, the EAs [environmental assessments] that have come out since the forest plan. And basically, “we [the Forest Service] will be doing this [cutting old growth or mature trees]. Trust us. There’ll be a certain amount removed. We can’t tell you what, how much, we can’t tell you where, we can’t tell you what percentage will be left. It’s just gonna happen.” And that lack of clarity, lack of transparency, and the “trust us,” when we weren’t in a position of having rebuilt that trust that we needed, that’s been problematic.

We weren’t being listened to in wilderness, we weren’t being listened to on large trees, weren’t being listened to on wildlife viability, weren’t being listened to on acreage cut. There’d be agreements that there’d be five-acre patches, and then there’s a 68-acre clear cut instead. There were a lot of trust violations, and it goes both ways. There are some things that NEWFC numbers did that were not commendable. But the bottom line is it just was a downward spiral from the Forest Plan decision. And we participated fully in the objection process and exhausted our administrative remedies to no avail.

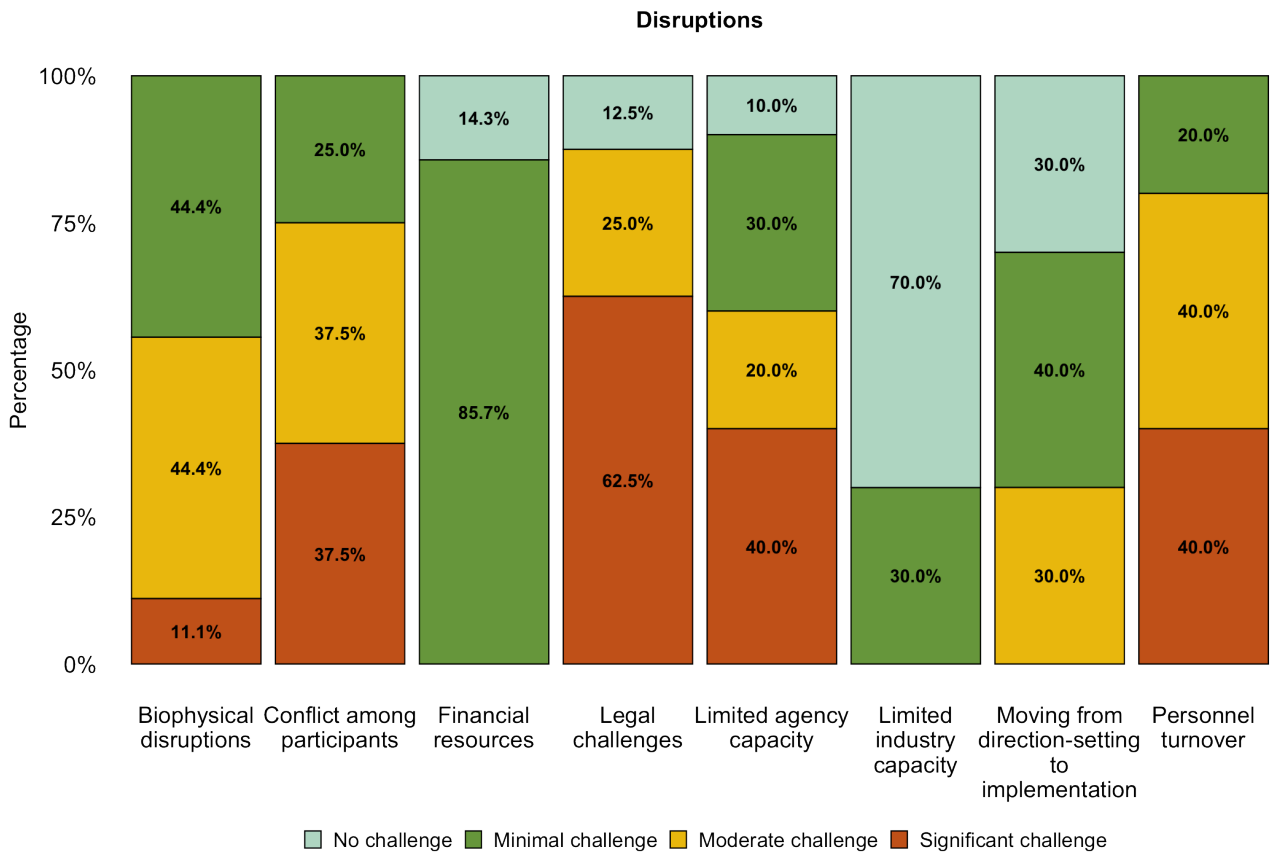


Figure 18: Percentage of respondents who reported no, minimal, moderate, or significant challenges to collaborative performance and durability

Related to this litigation, a major disruption that other respondents discussed was the lack of collaborative engagement on the part of the Forest Service with NEWFC. For example, respondents argued:

By refusing to collaborate and disrupting our forest coalition, the Colville National Forest is attracting lawsuits, and their projects are threatening forest restoration and water quality.

It worked well for the first 9.5 years. Then, despite NEWFC playing a decisive role in the grant applications for both the original project (now renewed) and the brand new CFRLP project, we have been excluded (except for wanting our signature to pretend they were collaborating).

The last respondent went on to detail how NEWFC had sent a letter to national-level Forest Service leadership (the Deputy Chief and national CFLRP program coordinator) in May 2022 outlining the current collaboration challenges and questions about what happens to a CFLRP project if “the collaborative of record is not allowed to collaborate” and had not received a response at the time of the survey.

Other disruptions identified by respondents included homogeneous collaborative representation, where a “lack of diversity is negatively impacting collaborative performance.” Meanwhile, a couple respondents also discussed how “conflicting priorities,” “changes in staff,” being “short staffed,” and a “heavy workload” reduced the capacity of agency personnel to adequately and effectively engage in collaboration. A member of NEWFC also noted: “it’s really hard to keep up with the volume of work of the Forest Service with a hundred-plus employees, all cranking out projects ... And a handful of us [with NEWFC], doing this as kind of a side thing.”

When asked what, if any, ways the CFLRP project has responded to disruptions mentioned above, most respondents said either nothing had been done or were not satisfied with the response. For example, a couple respondents were still disappointed because they felt that the Forest Service had limited engagement with NEWFC during litigation. Another respondent, in contrast, viewed the disengagement from previous relationships and engagement with other entities as action to remedy ongoing collaborative disruptions: “the FS pivoted and rebuilt a newer collaborative.” This response by the Forest Service in rebuilding a new collaborative was the only comment on any sort of tangible response to disruptions.

Recommendations to Improve the Collaborative Process

We asked participants to suggest recommendations to improve collaborative process, durability, and performance. We identified three key themes for improvement based on open-ended and quantitative survey results, group interviews with key participants, and feedback from a presentation of preliminary results with NEWFC. These recommendations included: 1) rebuild and create new relationships to return to more active collaboration; 2) diversify participation and invest in stakeholder engagement; and 3) utilize facilitators and clarify expectations. These recommendations indicate some differences in desired approaches between those who hope NEWFC and the Colville National Forest rebuild collaboration and others who were turning toward collaborative partners outside of NEWFC, but many respondents were seeking to establish stronger relationships for collaboration even while differing in perceptions of who should be included. Once again, it is worth noting that this survey took place during events that challenged the collaborative process and unfortunately does not adequately capture the nature of the collaboration that took place before recent litigation.

Rebuild and create new relationships to return to more active collaboration

Some respondents called for re-engagement of the Colville National Forest with NEWFC. One respondent hoped to reestablish collaboration through open, honest, clear, bidirectional, and meaningful communication between the Forest Service and NEWFC partners. This respondent also criticized the Forest for labeling meeting “with various people, organizations, and governments” as collaboration rather than public involvement. They argued that the Forest Service shared information with others, but “there’s no back and forth or attempt to resolve things. It’s just feedback ... It’s helpful for relationship building and helpful for everybody to hear everybody else. But it’s not a collaborative.” On the other hand, a Forest Service respondent emphasized, “the main thing is participants don’t just automatically get everything they want.”

In light of these comments, some indicated optimism for relationship-building. There had also been some engagement after the survey closed between the Colville National Forest and NEWFC.

Locally there are some struggles with the collaborative process, but I think opportunity exists to build new relationships and move forward together. No specific

recommendations at this time other than we will continue striving to maintain and improve relationships.

We [NEWFC] always assumed we were going to get back to the table eventually. And we've been very clear that we're holding no grudges. We're not pouting. We accept our responsibility in the breakdown. But everybody needs to put on their big boy and girl pants, and move forward because there's a lot of work to be done.

Additionally, a newly engaged respondent hoped for more in-person workshops so they could meet more people and build relationships.

Diversify participation and invest in stakeholder engagement

Some respondents also called for a greater diversity of participants and putting more concerted effort into cultivating long-term relationships with stakeholders. One noted, “the public has very little involvement in the collaborative. It seems as if leadership are making convenient decisions that adhere to top-down objectives and directives” and called for increased stakeholder engagement. They went on to note that “frankly stakeholder engagement is an onerous and crucial task to which we should be diligently assigning the most appropriate professional to achieve, and unfortunately this is not the case.”

Other Forest Service respondents noted that they were working on “rebuilding the collaborative with a more diverse group” and argued, “collaboration ... does not need to be specifically related to a formal collaborative group. If one exists it should be diverse, and the effort should be made to maintain a diversity of interests in the group.” Tribes, for example, engage with the Colville National Forest directly on a government-to-government level rather than through NEWFC. Other groups such as state Fish and Wildlife and recreational interests (hunting, fishing, off highway vehicles) have also started working with the Forest outside the NEWFC collaboration process. There were comments that the monitoring planning process had extensive input from both NEWFC and a broader community, such as trail and mountain biking interests. One NEWFC member commented on the monitoring plan, “I think that it really has been well done. There are many meetings, many opportunities for input.”

Additionally, one commenter also wrote that in the past year, NEWFC has “revitalized our methodologies, expanded and diversified our membership, and increased our public outreach,” indicating that they were already working on these concerns.

Utilize facilitators and clarify expectations

Several respondents mentioned the benefit of and need for facilitation to navigate these challenges, and NEWFC hired a facilitator since the closing of the survey. Respondents also called for clarification of expectations, goals, and protocols including more communication at the Forest level to navigate seemingly conflicting priorities. For example, one respondent commented:

There are many areas for improvement in our collaborative. The main solution being to hire a third-party facilitator to organize collaborative meetings full-time so that we can engage equitably and efficiently. There needs to be more organization and clarity around objectives and expectations. We need transparent protocols and procedures.

Discussion and Conclusions

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) deployed an online survey to the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 CFLRP in summer 2023 to assess collaborative health, function, and resilience, as well as perceived outcomes of collaborative work. Specifically, we assessed: whether the CFLRP project exhibited characteristics generally associated with healthy, well-functioning, and resilient collaboratives; the extent to which the project has made progress on meeting collaborative process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes; what challenges or disruptions affected collaborative performance and durability; and actionable recommendations to improve the collaborative process from respondents' perspectives. The assessment serves as the collaboration assessment for the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy (question #12).

Overall, there was a wide range of responses on indicators regarding the collaborative process and achievement of goals. This CFLRP project was originally approved in 2012 and recently received an extension, and thus, these results provide interesting insights into the impact of the CFLRP project after more than a decade of funding. Of note, however, is that there was open litigation at the time of the survey that led to a deteriorated relationship between the Colville National Forest and the collaborative in the CFLRP proposals, NEWFC. Thus, this survey was a snapshot that captured current sentiments but not previous years of more successful collaborative efforts. A majority (57%) of respondents thought the CFLRP project was collaborative overall, and 7% thought it was not collaborative. Half of respondents agreed that a representative cross-section of individuals who had a stake in the issues were involved. Respondents did not identify themselves as representatives from tribes such as the Confederated

Colville Tribes (who have participated in the CFLRP landscape working with the Forest Service, but were not formal members of NEWFC) or the forest products industry, the research community, or private citizens despite their inclusion in NEWFC. A strong majority (73%) of respondents were from the Forest Service, and thus many quantitative results may mostly reflect federal perceptions. Less than half of survey participants included open-ended comments, and thus the qualitative data likely include the most passionate viewpoints. These comments indicated a desire to diversify collaborative participants, although it was not specified what interests were missing. Including a broad swath of participants can help strengthen the Collaborative's adaptive capacity by encompassing a diversity of interests, perspectives, capacities, and proposed solutions from a variety of partners and creating redundancies, and can make collaborative function more resilient ([Beeton et al. 2022](#); [Folke et al. 2005](#); [Gupta et al. 2010](#)).

A majority of respondents agreed that there was shared understanding of the purpose of the CFLRP project and strategies used to solve problems, and half believed that there was agreement on key problems affecting the landscape. A strong majority of respondents agreed that the collaborative process helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect. Half of respondents trusted the group to achieve desired outcomes. A strong majority also believed that they were committed to the collaborative process, although fewer thought other partners and the Forest Service were committed, and several open-ended comments indicated that the Forest Service had not met participants' expectations. Mutual commitment, especially among those with decision-making authority, is critical for collaborative durability. The Forest Service retains decision-making authority in treatment planning and implementation on Forest Service-managed land. The agency also gives substantial discretion in decision-making to local units; thus, it is often up to Forest Service unit-level line officers to make or not make collaboration a priority by providing staff, resources, etc. ([Beeton et al. 2022](#)).

There was some agreement that aspects of capacity for joint action were strong. The perception of leadership was largely positive, with a majority of respondents indicating that leaders worked well with others and maintained a common collaborative vision and direction, although a minority thought that leaders motivated others to work together. A majority also agreed that there were opportunities to co-generate knowledge, there were commitments to adaptive management, that information was shared equally, and there was flexibility when forest conditions change. A strong majority of respondents felt

that the CFLRP project had adequate funds, facilitation skills, and technical expertise. Half of respondents thought that there were protocols in place to promote accountability among project participants, that protocols were fair, equitable, and used appropriately, and that they understood how to inform Forest Service decisions. A strong majority thought the Forest Service was clear about their decisions and responsive to feedback.

Respondents' perceptions of the CFLRP collaborative process having made progress on collaborative and ecological goals varied, although a strong majority thought most socio-economic goals were being met. A strong majority thought the project had enabled cross-boundary planning and landscape-scale planning, enhanced communication, improved restoration pace and scale and fire use, reduced fuel hazards and community wildfire risk, offset treatment costs, supported local employment, and accomplished more work on adjacent land. In contrast, no respondents thought the collaborative process had minimized litigation, and only a minority thought it had made progress in restoring old growth, improving habitat and watershed function, and controlling invasive species. Several factors were identified as facilitating this forward movement, such as external facilitation, funding, collective interest, and local contractors, although commenters noted that collaboration between the Forest Service and NEWFC had been much stronger in the past.

Respondents indicated some areas where there was room for improvement. Less than half of respondents agreed that there was a neutral space to discuss controversial issues. Only a minority of respondents' expectations were met with regards to the CFLRP project overall and in collaborating with the Forest Service in planning, implementation, or monitoring. Open-ended comments indicated that expectations for the Forest Service's commitment were largely not met due to a lack of engagement, confusing objectives, and little public involvement. A minority thought that there was enough time to accomplish tasks, and qualitative comments noted heavy workloads and understaffing. Just under half thought protocols were clearly understood.

The CFLRP project has dealt with several disruptions, most notably the recent litigation. Other significant challenges indicated by respondents included personnel turnover, conflict among participants, limited agency capacity, and biophysical disruptions. Turnover in particular can undermine relationships and trust, slow progress, and lead to lost institutional knowledge ([Beeton et al. 2022](#); [Coleman et al. 2020](#)). Collaborative engagement is often not part of primary job duties for agency staff; when

combined with vacant positions and multiple, sometimes conflicting, mandates and priorities, agency staff may not have the capacity to engage to the extent that stakeholders expect or desire (Beeton et al. 2022). The impact of high turnover can be alleviated through redundancies and overlapping job duties to create continuity (Beeton et al. 2022). Qualitative comments also emphasized the disruption of litigation, as well as lack of engagement by the Forest Service with NEWFC, limited diversity in the collaborative, conflicting priorities, changes in staff, and heavy workloads. Most respondents felt that not enough had been done to address disruptions, although one respondent noted that the Forest Service had pivoted to building a new collaborative.

Three key recommendations emerged from the less than half of respondents that chose to write qualitative comments, although there were differing opinions on best approaches. First, some respondents suggested rebuilding and creating new relationships to return to more active collaboration, namely reestablishing connections between the Colville National Forest and NEWFC. Secondly, some respondents argued for diversifying participation and investing in stakeholder engagement. To some, this meant collaborating with participants beyond those that have participated in NEWFC, although a respondent noted that NEWFC had recently diversified their participation. Respondents also argued for putting effort into cultivating long-term relationships with the public and additional key stakeholders. Third, respondents argued for the need for facilitation assistance and clarification of expectations, goals, and protocols; NEWFC had hired a facilitator since the closing of the survey.

This report provided a baseline assessment of collaborative health and performance among CFLRP project participants. Collaboratives are dynamic - they continue to adapt and evolve as needs or priorities change, and in response to internal and external disruptions (Imperial et al., 2016). Thus, it is important to continue to self-assess collaborative progress, durability, and resilience, so that groups can identify what is working well, what may need some work, and what support and/or guidance is needed to address challenges to maintain performance. The SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects. There will be multiple opportunities locally, regionally, and nationally for peer-networking and learning events to share successes and challenges and learn together about how to encourage healthy, durable, and resilient collaboration.

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Appendix 1: CFLRP Brief



CFLRP collaborative governance assessment: Summary of findings for the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 CFLRP

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) developed a collaborative governance assessment as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service) Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Common Monitoring Strategy.¹ The collaborative governance assessment was designed to evaluate collaborative health, function, resilience, and perceived outcomes of collaborative work. The SWERI administered an online questionnaire to members of the Northeast Washington Forest Coalition (NEWFC), employees of the Colville National Forest, and other participants recommended by key points of contact in summer 2023. We received 17 usable responses (28.8% response rate). Figure 1 illustrates what groups were represented in the questionnaire. The purpose of this brief is to:

- Summarize high-level findings from the collaborative governance assessment; and
- Document participants' recommendations to improve the collaborative process and progress.

Findings

What is working well for the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 CFLRP?

Overall, there was a wide range of responses on indicators regarding the collaborative process and achievement of

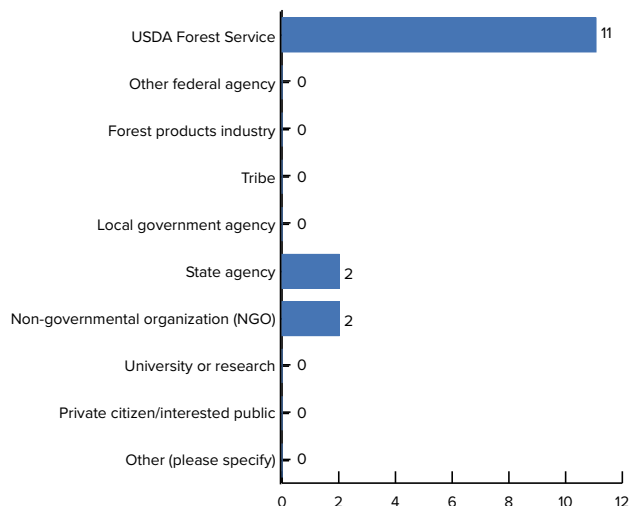


Figure 1: Respondents' self-identified representation with associated organizations.

goals. Half of respondents thought that a representative cross-section of individuals who have a stake in the issues were involved in the CFLRP project, although no respondents identified themselves as representatives from the forest products industry (Figure 1). A strong majority of respondents were from the Forest Service, and thus the quantitative results mostly reflected federal perceptions. Fewer than half of respondents included open-ended comments, which may capture the most passionate viewpoints. Respondents strongly agreed that the collaborative process had built trust, relationships, and mutual respect. Respondents felt that the CFLRP project had adequate technical expertise, facilitation skills, and funds, but not sufficient time. Half of the respondents thought there were protocols in place to hold participants accountable; that protocols were fair, equitable, and used appropriately; and that they understood how to inform

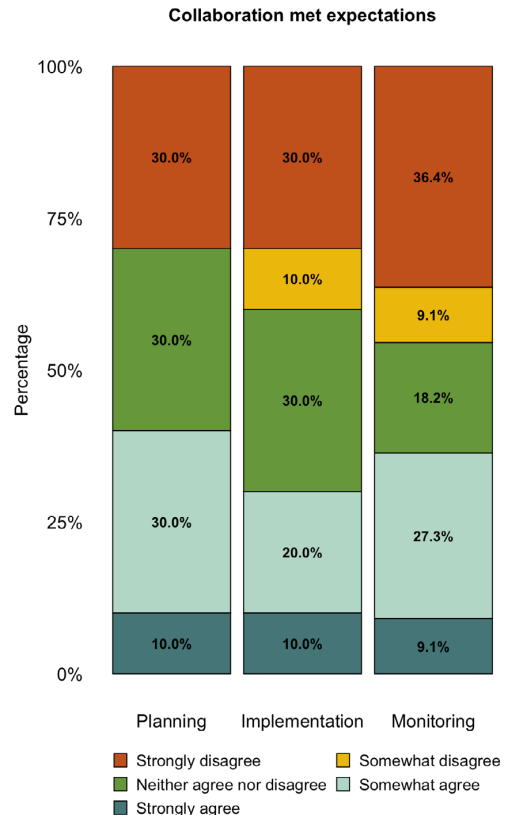


Figure 2: Percentage of respondents that disagree to agree that the Forest Service collaborates during planning, implementation, and monitoring stages.

Forest Service decisions. A majority thought the Forest Service was clear about their decisions and responsive to feedback.

What disruptions and challenges have affected collaborative progress and performance?

Only a minority of respondents' expectations were met in collaborating with the Forest Service in planning, implementation, and monitoring (Figure 2), and overall, most respondents' expectations of the CFLRP project had not been met. A minority of respondents felt that existing collaborative protocols were understood. Open-ended comments indicated that expectations for the Forest Service's commitment were largely not met due to a lack of engagement, confusing objectives, and little public involvement. The CFLRP project has dealt with several disruptions, such as legal challenges, personnel turnover, conflict among participants, limited agency capacity, and biophysical disruptions (i.e., wildfire). In particular, at the time of the survey, there was pending litigation brought against the Colville National Forest by a former member of NEWFC, which caused deterioration of the collaborative relationship. Some respondents commented that the timing of this survey did not capture previous successful collaborative history. Commenters also noted a lack of engagement by the Forest Service with NEWFC, limited diversity in the collaborative, conflicting priorities, and heavy workloads as additional disruptions. Most respondents felt that not enough had been done to address these disruptions, although one noted that the Forest Service had pivoted to building a new collaborative.

Progress toward desired process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes

A majority of respondents indicated that the CFLRP project has moved toward achieving a variety of desired collaborative, ecological (Figure 3), and socio-economic goals, including:

- Enhancing communication and enabling landscape-scale and cross-boundary planning
- Improving restoration pace and scale, reducing fuel hazards, and improving fire use (Figure 3)
- Reducing community wildfire risk, offsetting treatment costs, supporting local employment, and accomplishing work on adjacent lands.

In contrast, only a minority perceived the CFLRP as making progress on minimizing

litigation, restoring old growth, improving habitat and watershed function, and controlling invasive species. Several factors were identified as facilitating forward movement toward goals, including external facilitation, funding, collective interest, and local contractors, although collaboration between the Forest Service and NEWFC had been much stronger in the past.

Recommendations to improve the collaborative process and performance

Respondents provided a number of recommendations to improve the collaborative process and performance, including:

- Rebuild and create new relationships to return to more active collaboration with open, clear, and bidirectional communication.
- Diversify participation in the collaborative process and invest in stakeholder engagement through cultivating concerted outreach efforts to the public.
- Utilize facilitators and clarify expectations, goals, and protocols.

Next steps

Results from this questionnaire provided a baseline assessment of collaborative governance among the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 CFLRP. The SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects to identify where capacities lie and areas of improvement to support resilient and durable collaboration.

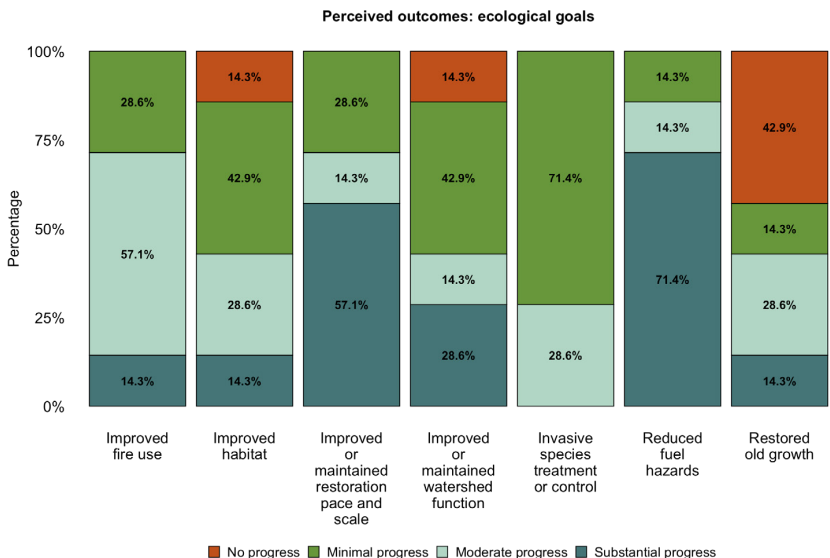


Figure 3: Percentage of respondents who reported no, minimal, moderate, or substantial progress toward ecological goals.

Appendix 2: SWERI presentation to the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 CFLRP

This document can be found online at: <https://cfri.box.com/s/dh6zv1nlq9501m7sb5tku7sojdfmoatt>



SWERI Southwest Ecological
Restoration Institutes

Northern Arizona
University

Colorado State
University

New Mexico Highlands
University

CFLRP collaborative governance survey: Summary of findings for the NE Washington CFLRP

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November 16, 2023

Presentation to NEWFC – Northeast Washington Forest Coalition

Objectives for Today



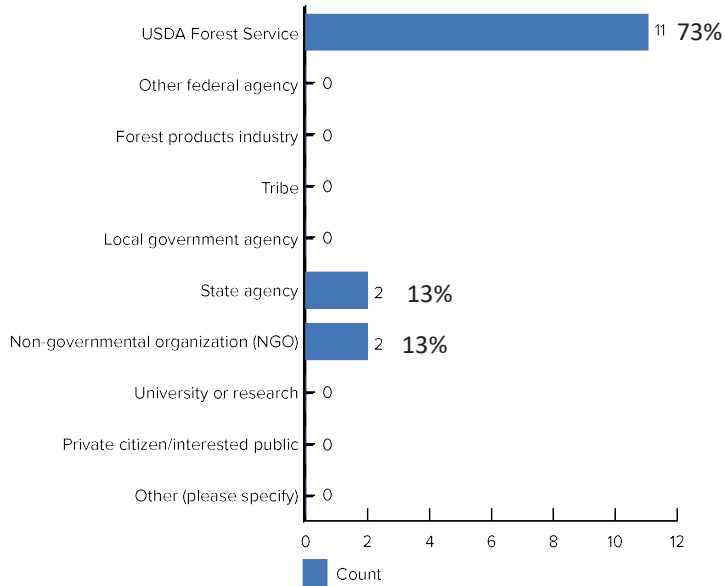
- Background on the survey development and rollout
- Show survey results on a few key themes
- Next steps and deliverables
- Discuss if/how results resonate with the collaborative and feedback on the survey



Respondents



Group representation



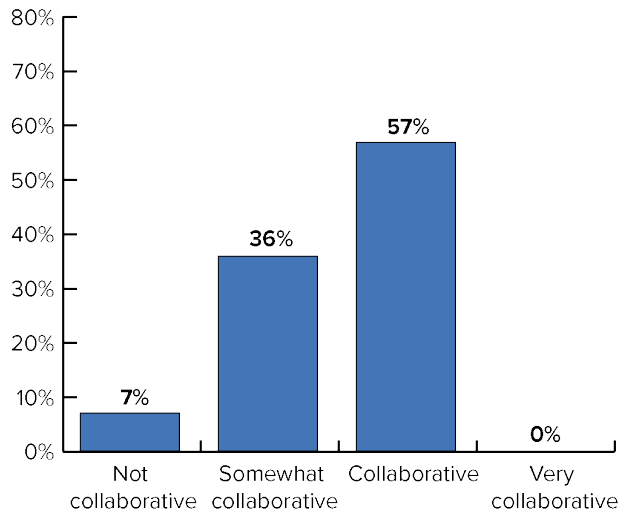
- Discussion:
 - Did the major players take the survey?

Overall, how collaborative?



- 57% of respondents say this CFLRP is collaborative
- 7% say this CFLRP is not collaborative

Degree of collaboration

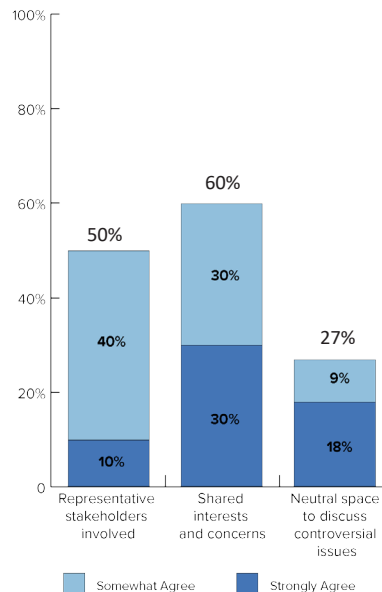


Stakeholder Engagement



- Moderate agreement on engagement of a representative cross-section of stakeholders and that participants work to identify shared interests/concerns
- Low agreement that the collaborative process creates a neutral space for discussion

Principled engagement: collaborative environment

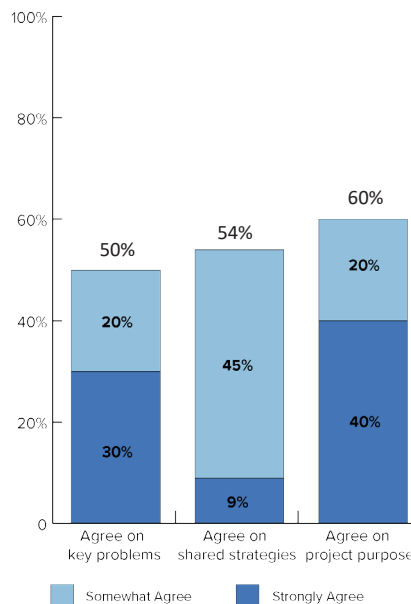


Stakeholder Engagement



- Moderate agreement that participants agree
 - About key problems
 - About shared strategies
 - About the purpose of the CLFRP project

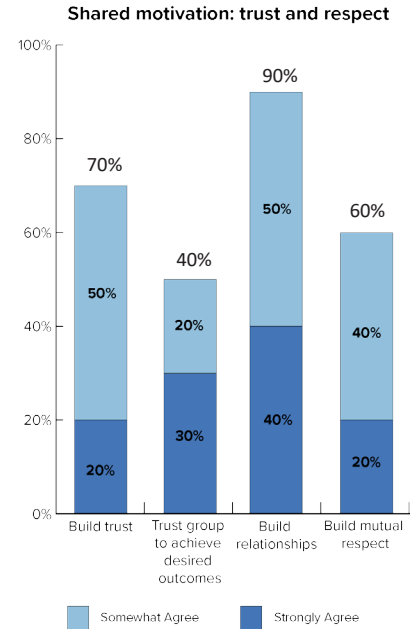
Principled engagement: agreement



Shared Motivation: Trust



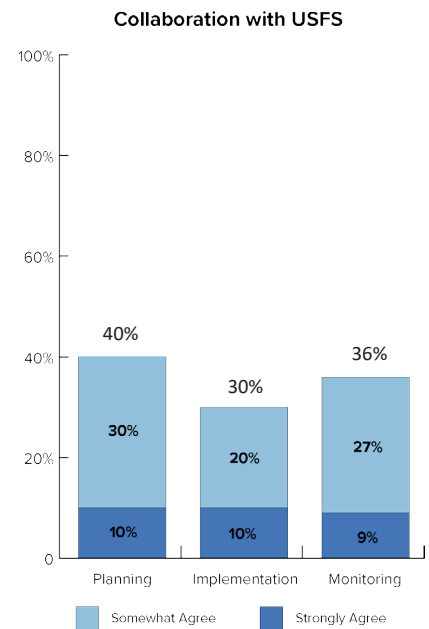
- Social capital – the “glue” that holds groups together
- High agreement that the collaborative process builds working relationships and trust
- Moderate agreement that the collaborative process builds mutual respect
- Lowest agreement that there is trust in the group achieving desired outcomes



2. Aligning expectations: USFS collaboration



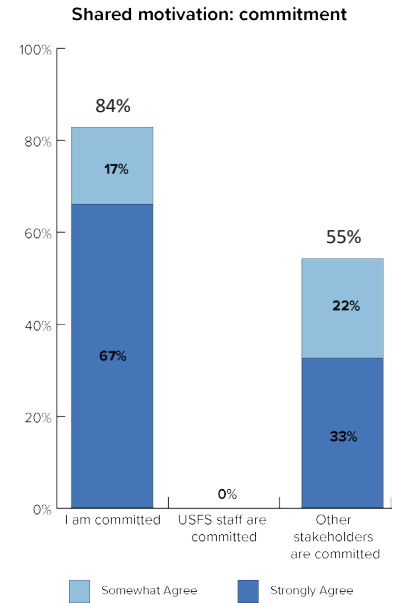
- Collaboration between CLFRP participants and the USFS has largely not met expectations during:
 - Planning (e.g., environmental analysis, NEPA)
 - Implementation (e.g., post-NEPA, operations)
 - Monitoring
- Collaboration is required in all of these, yet not defined in CFLRP/FLRA
 - Expectations may differ



Shared Motivation: Commitment



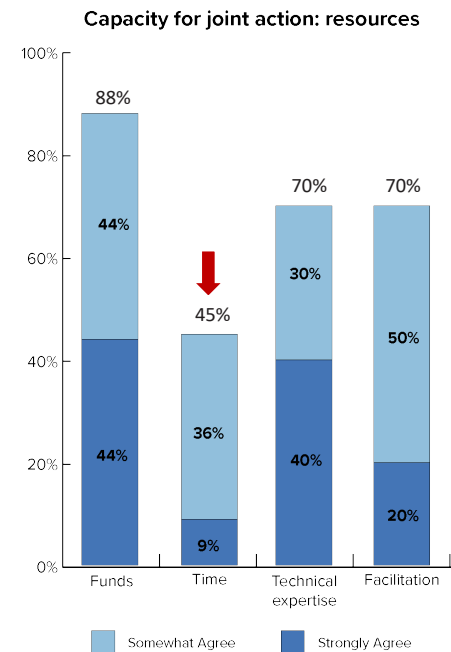
- Commitment among USFS especially important because of their decision-making authority
- High levels of stated commitment by individuals
- Perceived low levels of commitment by USFS staff
- Perceived moderate levels of commitment by other stakeholders



3. Capacity for Joint Action: Resources



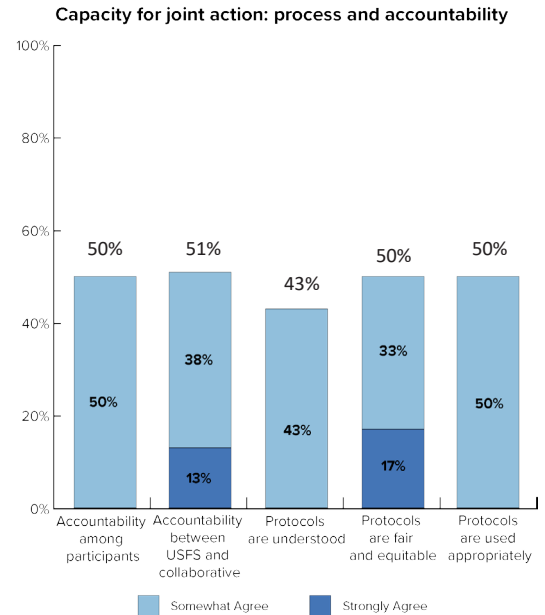
- The CFLRP project has adequate...
- Time to carry out tasks and accomplish work: 45% agree
 - Most limiting resource
- Moderate to high agreement that funds (88%), technical expertise (70%), and facilitation (70%) are adequate



3. Capacity for Joint Action: Process and Accountability



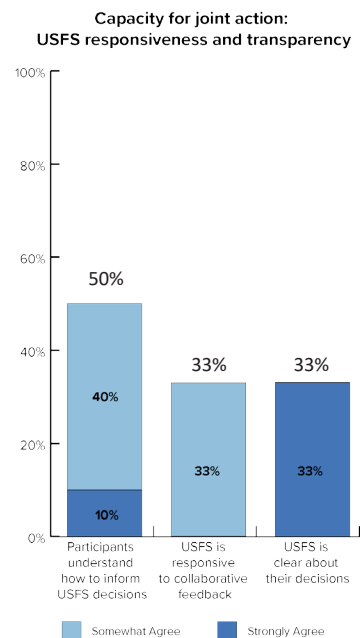
- There are protocols in place that promote accountability (e.g., decision rules, charters, MOUs)
 - *Among* CFLRP project participants: 50% agree
 - *Between* CFLRP project participants and the USFS: 51% agree
- Collaborative protocols
 - Are clearly understood: 43% agree
 - Are fair and equitable: 50% agree
 - Are used appropriately: 50% agree
- → Moderate/low agreement that processes and accountability are sufficient



3. Capacity for Joint Action: USFS Process and Accountability



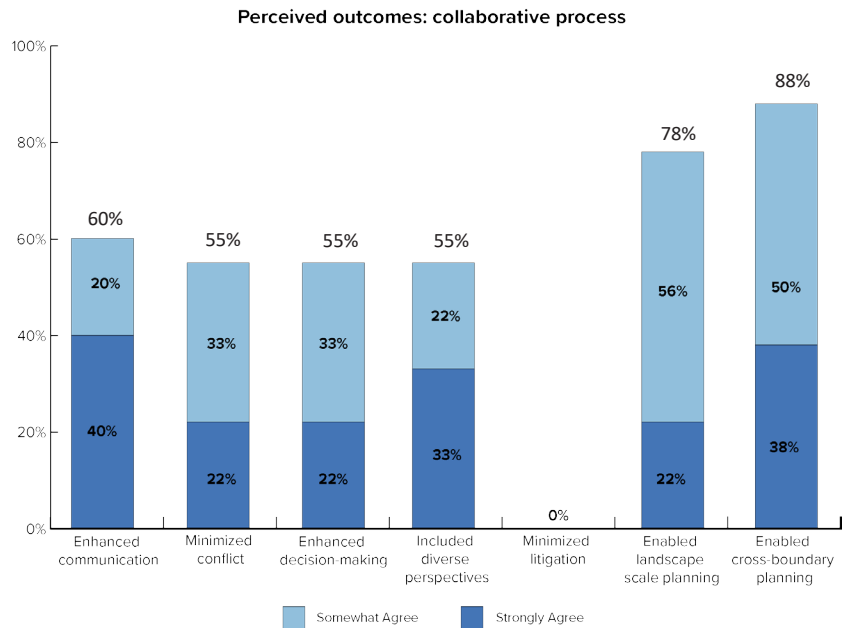
- Moderate agreement that
 - Project participants clearly understand when and what collaborative input is useful to inform USFS decisions: 50%
- Low agreement that the Forest Service is
 - Responsive to CFLRP project participant feedback: 33%
 - Clear with project participants about the decisions they make and why: 33%



4. Perceived Outcomes: Collaborative Process



- The CFLRP collaborative process has not minimized litigation
- High agreement that:
 - The CLFRP collaborative process has enabled landscape scale and cross-boundary planning



4. Perceived Outcomes: Recommendations to Improve or Maintain Collaborative Progress

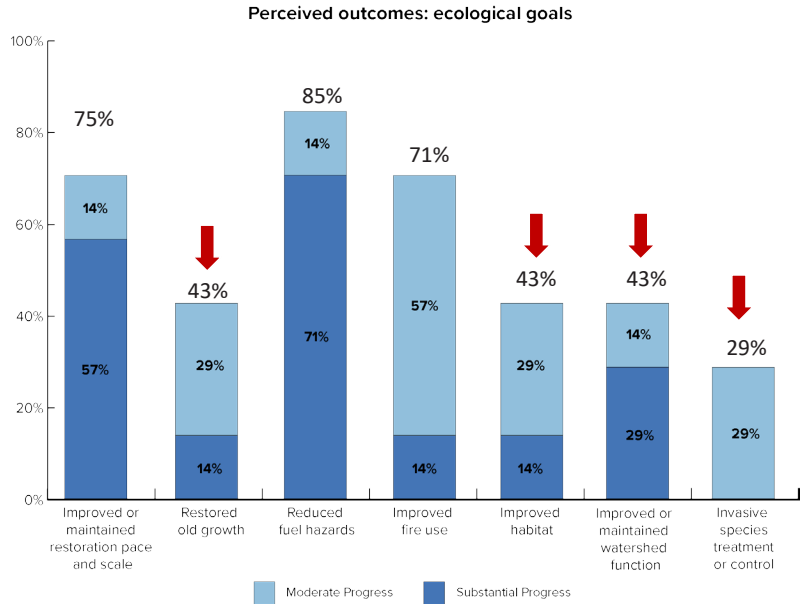


- 8 respondents (47% of survey respondents)
- USFS improvements
 - Increase transparent communication and collaborative engagement with all stakeholders, including the existing Collaborative that had not been fully included in collaboration recently (at the time of the survey)
 - Build new, stronger relationships with collaborative partners
- Collaborative improvements
 - Hire a neutral facilitator to manage collaborative interaction with the USFS
 - Increase organization, clarity, and transparency regarding objectives, protocols, and procedures

Perceived Outcomes: Ecological Goals



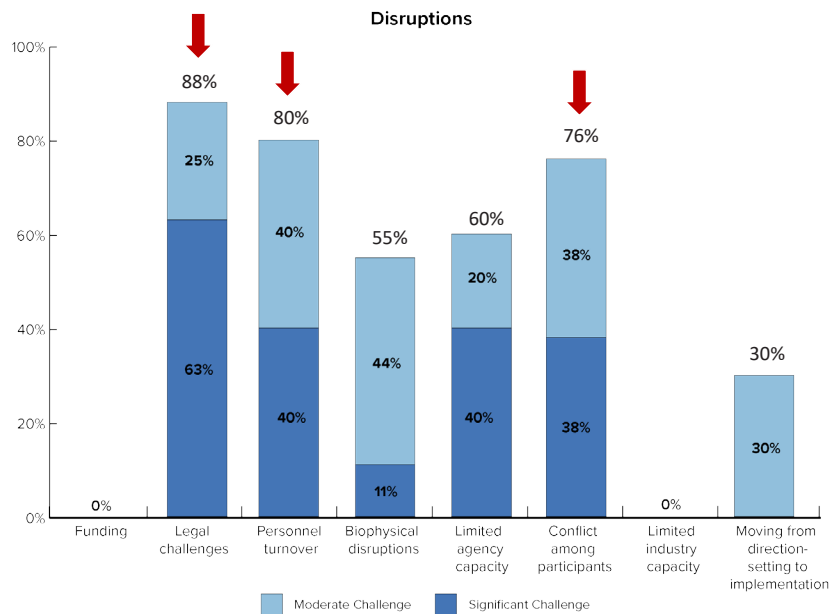
- High agreement that the CFLRP project has made progress on several ecological goals
- Lowest agreement that the CFLRP project has made progress on:
 - Invasive species treatment or control (29%)
 - Improving habitat (43%)
 - Restoring old growth stands (43%)
 - Improving or maintaining watershed function (43%)



5. Challenges and Disruptions



- Did these disruptions pose challenges to the CFLRP's performance and durability?
- Most significant challenges:
 - Legal challenges
 - Personnel turnover
 - Conflict among participants
 - Limited agency capacity



Additional Challenges and Disruptions



- Ongoing litigation
- Forest Service not engaging the Collaborative
- Conflicting priorities between partners
- Lack of diversity within the collaborative
- Lack of time and staffing capacity to accomplish goals
- A steep learning curve and heavy workloads for new collaborative members

Collaborative Response to Challenges and Disruptions



- There has been a lack of engagement and response to these challenges
 - The USFS is perceived by some respondents as responsible for this lack of response to challenges

Appended Question: Met Expectations?



- Collaboration worked well initially, but has struggled recently due to litigation and challenges with relationships between the USFS and partners (3 respondents)
- The work that gets completed is great but needs a broader scope (1 respondent)
- Expectations have not been met; a facilitator is needed (1 respondent)
- Need in-person workshops to get to know participants (1 respondent)

Appended Question: USFS Expectations?



- The USFS has not met expectations because: (4 respondents)
 - Stakeholders have not been meaningfully engaged
 - Communication and collaboration are lacking
 - They no longer wish to include partners
 - Confusion over overall objectives
- The USFS staff are great at getting things organized, putting projects together, and asking pertinent questions (1 respondent)

Appended Question: Factors that Contribute to Success?



- A dedicated facilitator (1 respondent)
- Creating a monitoring plan as a collaborative with the forest (1 respondent)
- NEWFC and the CNF meeting each other partway in the past (1 respondent)
- Collective interest in action and availability of local infrastructure and contractors (1 respondent)
- Funding, commitment, working knowledge of natural resources, and flexibility that other forests may not have (1 respondent)
- More successful in the past than present (2 respondents)

Conclusions



- Our final report will include responses to other survey questions
- Conclusions:
 - Split on whether a representative cross-section of stakeholders were involved
 - Most said their expectations have not been met in collaboration between the Collaborative and the Forest Service
 - High agreement that the collaborative builds working relationships and trust; low agreement that there is trust in the group achieving desired outcomes
 - Perceived low levels of commitment by USFS staff, but high levels of stated personal commitment
 - Time is the most limiting resource
 - Low to moderate agreement that processes and accountability were sufficient
 - Low agreement by respondents on the USFS's responsiveness and clarity
 - High agreement that the CFLRP enabled cross-boundary and landscape scale planning
 - Recommendations included improving communication with the Collaborative, building relationships, using professional facilitation, increasing transparency, including diverse interests
 - Higher levels of agreement on achieving socio-economic goals
 - Major disruptions included legal challenges, personnel turnover, and conflict among participants

What to expect next



- Short-term
 - Presentation slide deck
 - 2-page fact sheet of findings
 - Report on responses
- Longer-term
 - Larger report/publication on responses across CFLRPs
 - Peer-learning among CFLRP community of practice
- Happy to engage in follow-up conversations and/or provide support if/when needed!

Feedback on Survey



- This assessment will be completed every ~3 years
 - Needs, capacities change – iterative process
- What worked well?
- What could we improve?
- Is there anything we did not ask that we should have?

Discussion on major themes



- Do these results resonate with you?
What might we be missing?
- Do any recommendations mentioned seem feasible and desirable? What help is needed?

Appendix 3: Appended questions

The results to the following questions reported here were developed in coordination with local CFLRP project staff, coordinators, and partners affiliated with the Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 CFLRP, particularly NEWFC. These questions were not part of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy.

Respondents were asked to identify which local group they were affiliated with and had the option to select more than one response. Most respondents (8) were with the monitoring team, followed by 6 each representing the implementation team and the project interdisciplinary team (Figure A1).

Respondents also indicated how many times they attended CFLRP project meetings or activities in the past year. The most common frequency was 1-3 times (36% of respondents), followed by 27% of respondents attending 4-7 times and 27% of respondents not attending any CFLRP meetings or activities in the past year (Figure A2).

Respondents were asked their opinion about the frequency of engagement opportunities and were able to select more than one option. The most common response (7 respondents) was that their perception varied by project (Figure A3).

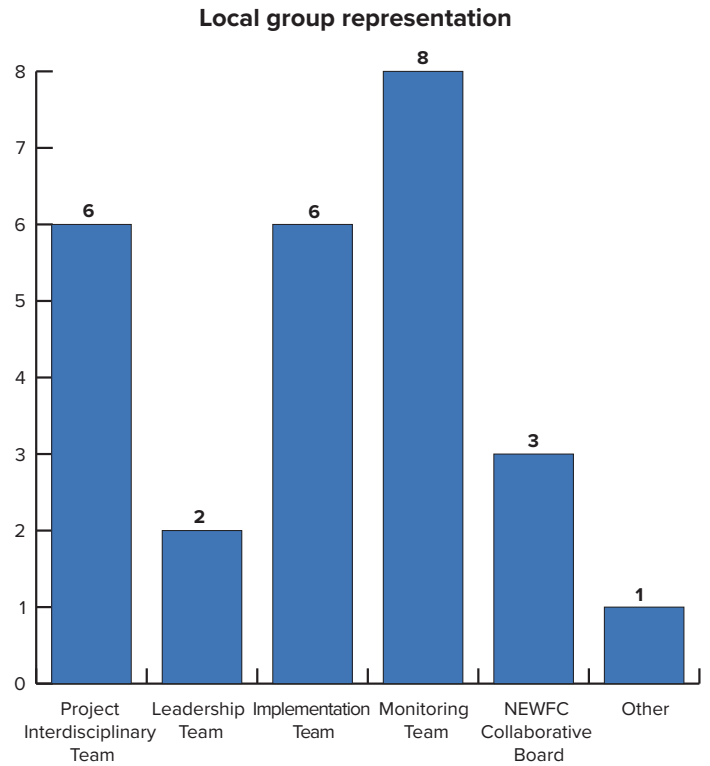


Figure A1: Percent of respondents who identified a specific group they were affiliated.

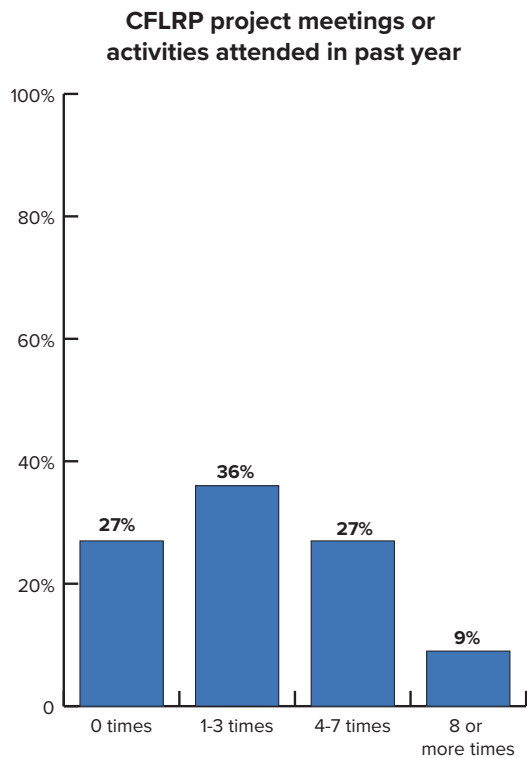


Figure A2: Percent of respondents who reported attending CFLRP project meetings or activities in the past year by number of events attended.

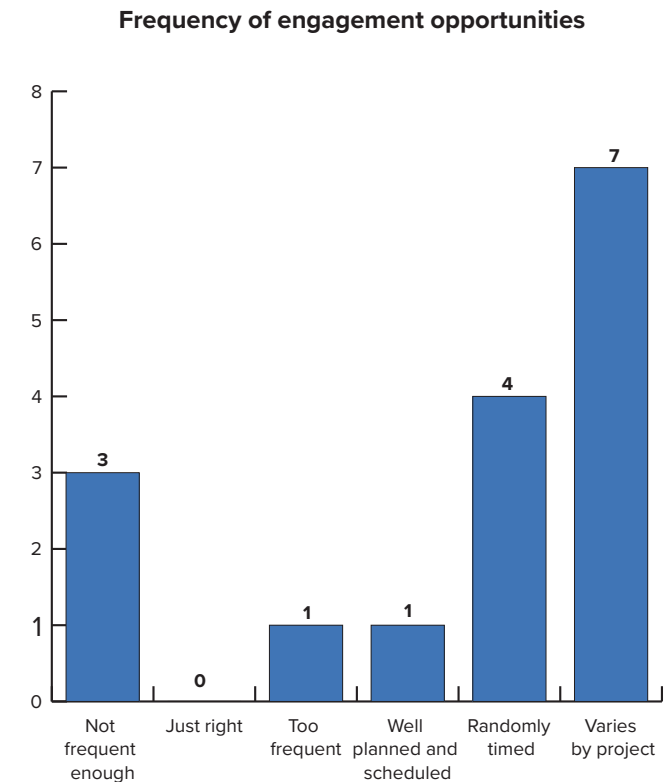


Figure A3: Percent of respondents who reported this project has “Not frequent enough,” “Just right,” or “Too frequent” engagement opportunities.

Respondents also indicated their preferred forms of engagement. The most common answer (7 respondents) was field trips (Figure A4).

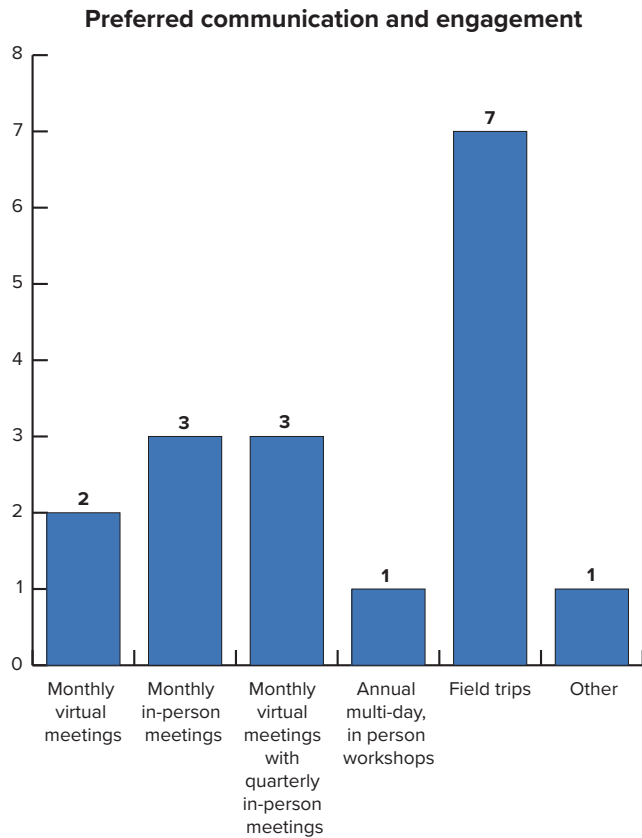


Figure A4: Number of respondents that indicated a preferred form of communication and/or engagement.

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