Opportunities for Cooperation with USDA Forest Service

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CWA Protection Learning Exchange
Where are your National Forests and Grasslands?

http://www.fs.fed.us/locatormap/
The Forest Service at a Glance

➢ 193 million acres of forests and grasslands (about the size of Texas), about 8.5% of the total land area in the US

➢ 9 geographic regions

➢ 155 national forests and 20 grasslands

➢ 44 States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands

http://www.fs.fed.us/
The Forest Service and Water... Fast Facts

- The FS manages the largest single source of water in U.S., with 18% from National Forests.
- Forests in the U.S. provide drinking water to over 180 million people.
- Waters on National Forests provide habitat for over 140 threatened and endangered aquatic and amphibian species.
- About 15 million users/year fish for recreation on FS-managed lands, including over 220,000 miles of streams and over 2.3 million acres of lakes, ponds, and reservoirs.
Opportunities for Collaboration

➢ Overview of today’s presentation:
  ● What’s existing?
  ● Where can we improve collaboration?
  ● What more is needed (and at what levels)?
Existing Opportunities

➢ FS has MOUs/MOAs with several states
  • “..outlines the roles and responsibilities.. in implementing the nonpoint source water quality provisions..”
  • “..for managing and controlling point and nonpoint source water pollution…”
  • “…document the cooperation between the parties to implement the Montana Nonpoint Source Management Plan….”
Existing Opportunities

- FS’ Partners benefit from 319 funds to complete:
  - Post-fire restoration activities
  - Wetland/Riparian/River restoration projects
  - Social trails and roads closures
  - eDNA work to identify *E.coli* sources
Areas for Improved Collaboration

- FS has many landscape-scale initiatives:
  - Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration
  - Joint Chief’s Landscape Restoration Partnership
  - Legacy Road and Trails Program
  - ETC…

- Today, let’s focus on two opportunities
  - National Wild & Scenic Rivers
  - Watershed Condition Framework Projects
Areas for Improved Collaboration

- FS has many landscape-scale initiatives:
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- Today, let’s focus on two opportunities
  - National Wild & Scenic Rivers
  - Watershed Condition Framework Essential Projects
rivers of the United States
3,500,000 miles
dammed, dredged, or channelized
860,000 miles
designated as a WILD & SCENIC RIVER
13,417 miles
Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968

Key Water Quality Provisions

- **Section 1** - Describes water quality protection as a fundamental purpose of the Act.

- **Section 10** - Protect and Enhance

- **Section 11** - Cooperate to plan, protect and manage river resources

- **Section 12(c)** - Directs federal agencies to cooperate with EPA and appropriate state agencies to eliminate and diminish water pollution
W&S Rivers Water Quality Status

- 43% of all river miles impaired
- 19% of river miles are considered good
- 38% of river miles unknown or unassessed
- Source of impairment often originates outside the river corridor
Watershed Condition Framework

STEP A
CLASSIFY
Watershed Condition

STEP B
PRIORITIZE
Watersheds for Restoration

STEP C
DEVELOP
Watershed Restoration Action Plans

STEP D
IMPLEMENT
Integrated Projects

STEP E
TRACK
Restoration Accomplishments

STEP F
VERIFY & MONITOR
Watershed Condition
Watershed Condition Indicators

WATERSHED CONDITION INDICATORS
(12 Indicator Model)

1. WATER QUALITY
   1. Impaired Waters (303d Listed)
   2. Water Quality Problems (Not Listed)

2. WATER QUANTITY
   1. Flow Characteristics

3. AQUATIC HABITAT
   1. Habitat Fragmentation
   2. Large Woody Debris
   3. Channel Shape and Function

4. AQUATIC BIOTA
   1. Life Form Presence
   2. Native Species
   3. Exotic and/or Invasive Species

5. RIPARIAN/WETLAND VEGETATION
   1. Vegetation Condition

6. ROADS & TRAILS
   1. Open Road Density
   2. Road Maintenance
   3. Proximity to Water
   4. Mass Wasting

7. SOILS
   1. Soil Productivity
   2. Soil Erosion
   3. Soil Contamination

8. FIRE REGIME or WILDFIRE
   1. Fire Condition Class OR
   2. Wildfire Effects

9. FOREST COVER
   1. Loss of Forest Cover

10. RANGELAND VEGETATION
    1. Vegetation Condition

11. TERRESTRIAL INVASIVE SPECIES
    1. Extent & Rate of Spread

12. FOREST HEALTH
    1. Insects and Disease
    2. Ozone

Watershed Condition:
The state of the physical and biological characteristics and processes within a watershed that affect the hydrologic and soil functions supporting aquatic ecosystems.
Map of Condition Class
National Forest System Watersheds

USDA Forest Service Watershed Condition Classification
Ratings based on assessments on National Forest System land in sixth-level watersheds
MAY 12, 2011

Watershed Condition Classification
- Functioning Properly
- Functioning at Risk
- Impaired Function

https://www.fs.fed.us/naturalresources/watershed/condition_framework.shtml
Interactive Map of Condition Class and Designated Priority Watersheds

USDA Forest Service Watershed Condition Classification and Priority Watersheds
Ratings based on assessment on National Forest System land in sixth-level watersheds

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Watershed Restoration Action Plans (WRAPs)

Information contained in WRAPs:

• List of Active Partners
• Key Watershed Issues
• Important Ecological Values within watershed
• Description of Essential Projects
• Estimate of Project Costs
Additional Opportunities

➢ The FS recently compiled an inventory of “FS Source Watersheds”

➢ Sub-watersheds containing 5% NFS Lands
  - EPA’s Source Water and Wellhead Protection Areas
  - State-designated drinking water protection areas
  - Municipal Watersheds (designated by the President, Congress, or through MOU or Land Management Plan)

➢ Information will be used to prioritize
  - Landscapes for hazardous fuel reduction treatments
  - Watershed restoration projects
Looking to the Future

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
- New hires
- Wildfire risks
  - Pre/Post-Fire Risk Reduction
- Recent SCOTUS decisions
Looking to the Future

What more is needed (and at what levels)?
Questions and Discussion

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