



Roundtable on Sustainable Forests

A Partnership for the Future

Summary of Interview Responses / Plans for FY2011 Executive Summary

August 24, 2010

I. Introduction

In consultation with RSF leadership, facilitation staff with help from a volunteer from the Communications and Outreach Work Group (COWG), initiated series of interviews with RSF leadership to develop the foundation of the 2011 RSF Work Plan. Interviews were held between August 3 and August 19, 2010. Fifteen of seventeen individuals from the RSF Core Group (CG), listed in attachment A, were consulted. Each was asked to answer the following seven questions:

1. What, if any, modifications might you suggest to the RSF mission?
2. What, if any, modifications might you suggest for the purposes of the RSF?
3. Are the four major themes of the RSF still appropriate categorizations for the work of the RSF? What, if any, modifications would you suggest? What specific suggestions do you have for RSF activities in some or all of these areas for 2011, and briefly, what is your rationale for suggesting the activities?
4. What circumstances or opportunities would shape 2011 activities? In view of circumstances you might identify, what do you think the RSF priorities should be in 2011 and why? What specific RSF activities might we plan to address these priorities?
5. What value do you see in the forum provided by the RSF? If you were able to make changes in the structure of the RSF, what might they be and for what reason?
6. What other guidance do you have for RSF Leadership?
7. What guidance or other comments do you have for the facilitation team going forward?

Most interviewed answered most of the questions. The results of the responses are compiled below, organized by question.

II. RSF Mission

Some interviewed felt the mission of the RSF should remain “as is”. Comments used when referencing the mission were: good, concise, laudable, fine and appropriate, and take or leave. A couple of these individuals also observed that an ongoing challenge to the RSF is engaging stakeholders. Others suggested preserving the intent of the mission but refreshing or making more vital the language of the mission.

A similar number of participants talked about shifting the emphasis of the mission from using the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators (MPC&I) to engaging participants in dialogue about sustainable forests or sustainable forest management. A couple of individuals commented that a mission should not be about a tool.

Others comments were diverse, and ranged from reflecting on the limitations to the breadth of the mission.

Several participants wondered if the RSF hadn’t completed its mission.

III. RSF Purposes

Some participants felt the purposes as written were pertinent. Their comments ranged from: they are good, great, applicable, better than the mission, generally good and catchy.

A good number of comments did not suggest the need to change the purposes, but focused on how the RSF could do a better job on achieving its purposes. These comments ranged from doing better at fostering dialogue, to contributing more to decision making, to expanding the use of the MPC&I at different scales, and doing better with outreach.

In their reflection on the purposes and the RSF mantra of better data, dialogue and decision, Core Group participants raised a number of questions. Their queries ranged from how increase the value of the RSF to forest stakeholders, to why different stakeholder groups are not more engaged, to whether or not the RSF should focus solely on gathering stakeholder input on the National Report, to whether or not the RSF has met its mission.

Some participants also talked about what they would like to see more of in the work of the RSF, including more opportunities for shared learning and using the RSF to foster dialogue on more controversial and substantive forest-related issues like invasives.

IV. RSF Thematic Areas of Activity

A few Core Group participants agreed that the four themes of the RSF continue to characterize the desired focus of RSF activities appropriately.

A number of participants seemed not to disagree with the general direction of the themes, but raised questions and concerns about whether the wording accurately reflected the intent, whether the RSF was actually doing work in individual thematic areas.

Of the four themes, participants had most to say about the third on fostering SFM through the application of the MPC&I. Their concerns ranged from its apparent redundancy with the fourth theme, to the theme being too narrow and harder to grasp.

Participants made a number of suggestions about RSF activities in 2011. Several of their comments focused on aligning the themes better with the mission and purposes of the RSF. Others specified additional targeted RSF activities on the SFAS, IYOF, the state assessments, and the release of the 2010 National Report. Several encouraged continued efforts of the COWG on social networking and other outreach.

V. Circumstances and Opportunities Shaping 2011 RSF Activities

Most of the Core Group participants suggested the SFAS remain a RSF focus in 2011, and at least a few individuals viewed the SFAS as a priority for the RSF. Several individuals talked about the SFAS but did not specify whether it should shape RSF activities in 2011.

A number of participants recognized the International Year of Forests as an important event that should shape RSF activities in 2011. However, many of these individuals also noted that, until the Forest Service sets the tone for the national acknowledgement and celebration of the event, it will be hard for the RSF to shape and implement its own activities in this arena. For that reason, they viewed the IYOF as less of a priority for the RSF. A few individuals felt the RSF should proceed in some small way with recognition of the event.

Many participants recognized the value of collaboration between the RSF and the Sustainable Water Resources and Sustainable Rangeland Roundtables to foster collaborative work on forests, rangelands, and water. Some saw it as an avenue to address some of the Forest Services priorities, including an all lands management approach and the importance of water. No one identified this opportunity as a priority of the RSF, and a number of individuals felt that, of the three opportunities, this generated the least stakeholder energy.

Several participants felt the release of the final 2010 National Report on Sustainable Forests was a substantial enough event that its release should be identified as a fourth opportunity shaping

RSF activities in 2011. A few individuals also viewed the State Assessments completed at the end of June 2010 as an opportunity for the RSF to draw from in its Work Plan for 2011.

VI. Value in the Forum provided by the RSF and Suggestions for Change

Some Core Group participants recognized value in the RSF's forum for dialogue. They also acknowledged the importance of the function the RSF provides for stakeholder input as the Forest Service prepares the National Report.

Core Group participants made a number of comments on how the RSF could increase its value. Comments included: expanding the diversity of RSF participation; continuing to explore and use other ways to engage stakeholders like social networking tools; engaging more participants in smaller groups to talk about issues of importance to them; limiting the degree to which the MPC&I shaped RSF dialogues; and taking on more controversial issues.

VII. Guidance for RSF Leadership

Core Group comments on RSF leadership focused generally on input to the Core Group, Executive Leadership Team and the Forest Service, and planning for leadership transitions.

In their comments, participants talked about a series of challenges to leadership. They observed the apparent drop in participant diversity and attendance, loss of Core Group energy and direction, potential for the MPC&I to limit participant interest in the RSF, and lack of resources to fund RSF activities as some of the challenges.

Looking towards the near-term leadership transitions, participants saw the need to quickly prepare for these changes. They recognized the ongoing importance of Forest Service leadership and the strength of shared leadership. They also noted the apparent lack of ideas for leaders to fill the gaps.

VIII. Guidance and Other Comments for the Facilitation Team

Core Group participants provided some constructive comments for the RSF staff. All comments will be considered seriously and used to improve support of the RSF going forward.

