



# Roundtable on Sustainable Forests

*A Partnership for the Future*

## Summary of Interview Responses / Plans for FY2011

*August 24, 2010*

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### **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.

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## II. RSF Mission

The mission of the RSF is:

“The Roundtable on Sustainable Forests (RSF) uses the Montreal Process criteria and indicators (C&I) as a common national framework which integrates environmental, social and economic considerations to advance understanding, assessment and reporting of forest sustainability and forest resources management. The RSF does this by engaging multiple stakeholders using collaborative efforts.”

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.

Detailed comments are presented below.

### *The Mission Pertains*

- The RSF’s mission is concise, laudable and covers a lot. We will continue to strive to achieve the mission but will never fully achieve it. We still need to figure out how to do a better job engaging stakeholders. We need better marketing techniques that engage multiple stakeholders. Don’t change the mission.
- Take or leave the mission. If it is cast in stone that is not a problem.
- The mission statement is fine and appropriate. The challenge for the RSF is to address the sentence “engaging stakeholders.” The engaging thing has floundered. We have to figure out how to do it better.
- Mission is broad and good – “motherhood and apple pie”. The themes provide more focus and clarity about what the RSF does.
- The mission is fine.

### *Switching the Emphasis from MPC&I*

- Not sure having the MPC&I as the focus in the mission is helpful. It would be better if the mission promoted SFM of America’s, and represented the MPC&I as a tool. There

are other tools that help to achieve sustainable forests as well. Focusing solely on the MPC&I is daunting to some if they are not using them.

- Flip the mission around so it reads something like, “The RSF mission is to advance understanding, assessment and reporting of forest sustainability and forest resource management by engaging multiple stakeholders using collaborative efforts. The primary means for accomplishing this is by using/applying the Montreal Process criteria and indicators etc.” This makes it more consistent with the next set of statements which start with the forum, dialog, communication, facilitation, coordination etc. – the means of communicating rather than the means towards sustainable forests which is the MPC&I.
- There is a lot of angst among people in and outside of the Forest Service because of the degree to which the Forest Service – particularly the National Forest System – has embraced the framework provided by the MPC&I. They feel the Forest Service has not done enough to insure the institutionalization of the MPC&I. Perspectives within the Forest Service differ about the best way for the Forest Service to do its work (MPC&I or some other framework). Reflecting on this and thinking about the mission – wonder if the RSF should focus more on sustainable forests and less the MPC&I. Consider reconfiguring the mission to include but not lead with a focus on the MPC&I would engage more stakeholders.
- Flip the mission. We start with the how before the what; use the MPC&I to get at sustainability instead of having the topic be sustainable forests and using CI to check our progress towards achieving. Also not sure the MPC&I is the right thing to emphasize. Most of the time the MPC&I are prominent because of the national reporting cycle. Consequently, in between reports, there is a lull and a drop in participation. The RSF might want to focus on sustaining the nation’s forests with the MPC&I as part of that discussion.
- Starting with the MPC&I in the mission gets to a method rather than a philosophy. Start with a bold and encompassing statement like, “The RSF understands and embraces the National needs for sustainable forests”... then go to the MPC&I.

### *Other Limitations and Ideas*

- The RSF has done a lot to accomplish its mission. The focus should now be to continue to foster the understanding and use of the MPC&I. As we do this, our metrics will improve as will our data.
- How well aligned is the mission, purpose and strategies? Have a meeting to match the tactics and strategies of the RSF with the mission. The mission of the RSF may be too broad.
- The mission is stale. The RSF’s focus on using the MPC&I is important and sets it apart from other organizations. Broadening the focus on the C&I and their connection with sustainability will draw more public attention to the C&I. We may need to rephrase the mission so it is more current and vital. This might help to engage younger stakeholders.
- The mission is perplexing and not fully achievable because of some of the current circumstances in the U.S. We do not have a policy on sustainable forest management and that makes a lot of what the RSF does peripheral.

- What do we mean by “advancing assessment and reporting”? Does it mean both forest resources and sustainable management or just advancing forest resources management? The RSF is doing a good job advancing reporting using the MPC&I. Participants bog down once they have the report information. We need a focused dialogue around important decisions. How do we use data to inform dialogue?
- Stakeholders were attracted to the RSF because of how the MPC&I fit into SFM. People have drifted away because we have drifted away from the focus on using the MPC&I to measure sustainability. Until the framework of the MPC&I gains more momentum stakeholders will be confused. We may see stakeholders engaging around the production of the national report, but less so in between the reporting cycles. Those that are looking for the national report will be lost among stakeholders looking for sustainability. So, the real question is about the last sentence of the mission – are we really engaging multiple stakeholders? We should preserve the RSF if we can find some way of providing leadership.
- This is a good time to reflect on the progress and status of the RSF, and in doing so, it is crucial to hear the Forest Service perspective. For things like the SFAS to move forward, we need key agencies to engage. If the RSF is the keeper of the MPC&I as a framework for SFM. However, at this point, not sure what it means to use the MPC&I other than for national reporting. We need to get to “how to operationalize” the MPC&I at all scales – local, state, regional and national. How do we do that? Similarly, not sure how we are engaging multiple stakeholders – how do we do that better?
- The MPC&I might be a bit limiting. If all goes well with adopting the MPC&I and their use becomes routine, then the need for dialogue fades away.
- A key function of the RSF is to facilitate stakeholder engagement around the national reporting cycle. This is still a good and valuable service the RSF provides. However, with the hiatus between the reports, the RSF begins to look like an expensive process.
- Producing the SFAS was like pulling teeth – not sure how much life is in that effort.
- Not sure what the other Roundtables are doing, so not sure what the value of coordinating with them would be. Are they having similar kinds of crisis? Could we learn from them?
- The RSF has done some marvelous things. Maybe the RSF has done what it set out to do and it is time to say “job well done”.
- The MPC&I process is a tool. The mission should not be a tool.

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### III. RSF Purposes

The original purpose of the RSF was:

[As described in the charter dated February 2, 2001], “to serve as a forum to share information and perspectives that will enable better decision-making in the U.S. regarding the sustainable management of our nation’s forests.”

The Roundtable does this in the following ways:

- Provides a forum for dialogue about sustainable forest issues, including the use of criteria and indicator frameworks at national and sub-national scales;
- Broadens and deepens public understanding of the importance and adoption of sustainable forest management practices;
- Facilitates the coordinated assessment and reporting of the sustainability of the Nation's forest resources;
- Communicates and coordinates data and programs within the sustainable forest community;
- Serves as a venue for connecting domestic and global forest issues; and
- Demonstrates on-the-ground benefits of sustainable forest management.

Participants of the RSF share the fundamental belief is that *better data* will lead to *better dialogue* about the sustainability of the nation's forest resources, which will in turn lead to more informed, *better decisions* by forest stakeholders and policymakers.

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.

More detailed comments are presented below.

#### *The Purposes Pertain*

- The bulleted purposes are great. They are general enough and are still applicable. The purposes provide succinct direction but are general enough. We are a forum and do not provide specific direction. The mantra is an expression of common sense and when we start talking about making decisions, this is good terminology to have. We need to figure out how we can engage people on a broader scale.

- Good list of purposes. Combined, the list of items all speak to outreach and communications. It might now be worth adding an example for each one on how this works so the reader gets a good idea about how the Roundtable operates.
- What we say in the purposes is far better than what we say in mission. The tone of the purposes (forum, share information, etc...) resonates. The MPC&I are included within the purposes with appropriate level of attention. Happy with the mantra.
- The list is good. Not sure what would change. Don't and can't do all every year – but in terms where we are going and the way we do our work it is a good list.
- When we say MPC&I, people get into a certain head space – some of which is good and some bad. In general the purposes are catchy, though the RSF is not set up to make decisions.

### *Better Alignment with Mission*

- Align the purposes with the mission and refresh them. The mantra about better data, etc. still resonates.
- Retool the purposes so they align better with the purpose and explain more accurately what the RSF actually does.
- The bulleted purposes are wordy but fairly concise.
- Make sure mission and purpose align – e.g., something like encouraging sustainable forest by increasing the awareness of the CI. Not sure – perhaps include more of an awareness, using CI as one tool that might be useful – making sure people don't overlook - versus doing everything we can do to us CI.

### *Things We Could Do Better*

- We are getting better with the dialogue through the work of the COWG and their efforts around Web 2.0 and social networking. Consider: having smaller meetings around issues important to sustainability. This will serve to engage the broader public more effectively; have web casts to engage others. We could do better on informing decisions.
- Better decision making is the extension of the mission. This is what we want to be doing – figuring out how to have this discussion. We not done a good job with the recently. We have become a passive organization. We don't do anything until we are going to meet. No one has responsibility to do the RSF, they just do it. We are not proactive. The RSF is not on the top of our needs list.
- The RSF kind of communicates about data but it does not coordinate. The Forest Service does the coordinating and data thing. Have we thought about who the sustainable forest community is in proactive way so we are able to put the data in front of them vs them finding us? Are we advertising in Hardwood magazine – Forest Landowner Magazine, Southern Journal of Applied Forestry? We are not proactive. This comes back to capacity. If the activities are going to require additional capacity – need resources.
- How do people find out about the RSF? Not sure we are doing the best job reaching out and engaging people.
- We should be encouraging our partners to participate, reference the RSF, and get the word out about the RSF to our networks.

- The RSF is doing a good job on the first, second, and fourth bullet points. Last two bullet points, the roundtable made attempts at them, but not as successful as some would have liked. Is the roundtable largely a forum for dialogue? How does it decide what to talk about? Challenge of connecting data with important decisions. What are the important decisions and how do we foster the dialogue around those? Challenge is to find the three or four most pressing questions and where we have the data to move the dialogue forward and do it. Last bullet point leaves open the question to what end? Need to add meat on the bones of last two bullet points.
- We are not successful at enabling better decision making. Why don't we discuss why we are not? If the RSF does not enable decision making, then it can still be the RSF with the important purpose to reporting to world how we are doing based on the information we do have.
- The MPC&I are not being used at different scales. Why don't we discuss that? Why has the U.S. been at this for so long and gained so little ground in terms how we practice SFM?
- Not certain that "facilitates" is the right word in regard to coordinated assessments.
- Troubled by the notion behind the mantra because not sure that better data leads to better dialogue. Sometimes it is the reverse and shuts down dialogue.

#### *What we Might Like to See*

- Would like to see shared learning opportunities much more visible throughout the RSF process. The RSF could provide a venue for clear examples of SFM using MPC&I at various scales to rally stakeholders for learning opportunities. It takes finding the hook to draw people in. [Collin Donahue, NNFP would like know how to engage in the RSF but does not have a hook to do so].
- Engage people in discussion on some of the big issues like invasives. How would this tie into the national level of forest management?

#### *Questions to Answer*

- Can we align better with participants' missions so participating in the RSF is less of an 'add on to what individuals are doing'?
- How do we make the RSF more valuable to people? Make them aware of it – begin to demand something from it.
- Have we written and publicized enough about the work that is already being done on SFM by RSF participant and others?
- How do we have the discussion on what and how to use the information we identify and build on the accomplishments to help do something?
- Is it time to migrate the RSF to different and larger funding base to better achieve its mission?
- How do we empower stakeholders to take the data and do something with it?
- How do we broaden the scope beyond the MPC&I and align better with what people are already doing?
- How to do take embracing the MPC&I as a framework and bring it to life?

- Not sure the mantra is correct unless there is a strong effort from USGS and other agencies to engage and help move us forward.
- How do we get stakeholders at different scales to rally round the MPC&I?
- Why aren't the states more visible in this dialogue?
- How do we operationalize learning together?
- The mantra has become a replacement of the mission. The RSF is a forum for dialogue it broadens the discussion, facilitates dialogue on data, and communicates – largely through the COWG. However it is currently unclear what discussion the RSF would provide a venue for. Could topics include: how the National report informs global forest issues; laying foundation for talking about more periodic annual reporting process; integrating MPC&I data to get closer to annual reporting process; IYOF; collaborate with SFI and FSC?
- Is it time to take a step back and dissolve the RSF – so for national report – just pull stakeholders together to just talk about it?
- If the Forest Service is pushing the adoption of the MPC&I but they are not using it for their own national forests, how do they expect others to use them? Might they pay them to do so?
- Has the RSF achieved its mission as well as it can and is time to let it go?
- Assume decision will come from dialogue or data – better decisions require better dialogue. Better dialogue is actually founded on better data and more mutual trust. The roundtable needs to invert the mantra. What key decisions does the forest community see coming down the road? What dialogue do we need to have around the issue? What data is needed to inform the discussion? When we know this information, have input through a series of white papers the forest community can get behind. Forest community needs to get on the bus with key issues otherwise we won't be part of the dialogue.

#### IV. RSF Thematic Areas of Activity

RSF activities generally fall under the following themes outlined in these documents:

1. Reporting and Monitoring Progress Toward Sustainable Forests
2. Coordinating with Related National Data and Indicator Efforts
3. Fostering Sustainable Forest Management through the Application of the C&I
4. Engaging the Broader Community of Forest Stakeholders at Multiple Scales

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. More detailed comments are presented below.

### *The Four Themes Pertain*

- The themes are still germane and import. Theme #4 is mushy but true.
- All of the themes make sense. Theme # 1 is important and applicable as the National Report is coming out. Theme # 3 is a key one at this time. It would be worthwhile exploring the potential for applying the MPC&I in the implementation of the new Forest Planning Rule for the National Forest System, as there is a rigorous monitoring framework in the Plan. Theme # 4 is very relevant. If we focus on bringing in new people and broadening understanding. This may be a time for integrating the younger voices, riding on the current climate in DC which is strongly connected to you, has the support and attention of the First Lady, etc. There may be opportunities to tie in with America's Great Outdoors (listening sessions on forest and natural resources) which would provide good feedback to feed into the RSF. The IYOF would be a great way to engage the broader community.
- All of the themes are important and good. To some degree the public has overdosed on sustainability. They are tired of hearing about it. Many professionals feel what they do has always sustainable and insulted others think otherwise. So it may be timely to recraft our language to keep people engaged.
- The 4 major themes are still appropriate categorizations for the work of the RSF.

### *Theme 1*

- Was hoping themes # 1 and 2 would be given at this point, and that there would be a national game plan in place on how to continue reporting and monitoring and coordinating and make improvements over time (e.g., have standing committees of people who engage in first two themes of work). Not there yet. Still think important.
- Reporting 'progress' raises red flags. Try another word?

## *Theme 2*

- Multiple indicator effort were low level meetings. Are there activities mutually important to all roundtables? Perhaps bioenergy, it used water and forests. Need a focused topic for collaborative effort. CEQ not interested in using C&I, seen as Bush project and Obama administration not interested. If the current administration has an issue the C&I might facilitate or inform, we may get traction that way.
- Not sure how much coordination with other Roundtables is done, how much is left to do, and what actual activities would be.

## *Theme 3*

- Is redundant with theme # 4 in reference to engagement at multiple scales.
- Is a tough one. The MPC&I are important but it is unclear how we get this done.
- Not sure how it is working. Using the phrase SFM can be alienating to some. Consider changing to SF. Not sure fostering is the right word.
- Is hard to grab on to. If the application of MPC&I loses luster and becomes mundane – that could be a good thing, because it would allow stakeholder focus to shift to talking about what happens with the data.
- We are still a long way from realizing themes #3 and 4. Don't know what NASF is doing in conjunction with the Forest Service to use the stewardship handbook, so rue thing others will not know either. Themes # 3 and 4 are important but the game plan is unclear.
- Suggest recrafting theme #3 to be more explicit about the approach being an all lands approach.
- Theme #3 is too narrow. Why foster only do through the application of MPC&I? Other than that, the themes are broad and OK.

## *Theme 4*

- How do we talk about sustainable forestry in a meaningful ways without confining it to MPC&I?
- The fourth theme, engage stakeholders at multiple scales, to what end? Chapter 4 of national report argues key issues that are important in the near term. By what means is sustainable forest management practiced at a landscape scale and individual landowner level? Carbon and bioenergy are interrelated key issues. Carbon marketing is part of ecosystem services. What are the steps to make progress on these issues? Spending a lot of time agreeing there are key issues but no steps or progress on those issues. Wildland urban interface or forest edge, reports predict ½ of the forest edge acreage will be impacted by development and trees will be cut. Forests will shift to suburban and we will lose stored carbon. This is one issue at multiple scales. Need dialogue with state, local, and landowners on this topic. The Roundtable needs to figure out issues du jour that fit under themes for engaging stakeholders at multiple scales. Need to pick a few issues the forestry community can get behind and make a difference.
- Sift through the national C&I report and identify 2-3 issues where we want to leave a bigger mark. Projects where a group rather than individuals can make a difference.

- What issues has the forest community grouped around? Can we reach consensus on a few issues to approach? Need issues enticing a broad range of constituents to come together. If we don't group around woody biomass, energy community will take it as their own.
- Need forums for more specific purposes. The RSF could do something on bioenergy compared to other forest purposes. The Roundtable needs to create sensitive white papers so that organizations can get behind important issues for congress to consider.
- Engaging to what end? Charge the Core Group to help specify 'to what end' then it may be easier to engage stakeholders and gage progress.

*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?*

- Blend the nine action items in the SFAS with the four themes. Place emphasis for the next two years on the nine action strategy items and show good progress on all nine fronts.
- RSF --People seem happy doing reports and getting them out. Not into doing larger issues or independent reports. We could celebrate trees or we could help urban people understand the importance of forests/trees. DC residents recently experiences energy outages due to downed limbs caused by severe weather. Energy companies pointed out tree trimming is important to reliable energy. The energy companies advocated individuals and communities consider more severe tree trimming than they are used to reduce power outages. The roundtable needs to figure out issues that will be important in a year or two. Pull together information that will be ripe in congress in 2-3 years. The roundtable needs to consider becoming issue advocates. Go after issues before they are critical.
- Will do a lessons learned for latest report. FS needs to decide whether they will continue to commit at this level -- \$800,000. Current emphasis on cutting back. Without energy, focus, and outside commitment, the program may be cut. Outside community needs to say the roundtable is important and needs to continue. Need to demonstrate we are important in a budget crisis.
- The problem with the RSF is that there has been a lot of talk but the tangible outputs are missing. We need something concrete that comes from it. What is the RSF going to be doing after the 2010 report comes out?
- Maybe the all lands approach becomes the context in which we talk about sustainability and the MPC&I become more of a monitoring activity.
- Make RSF activities correlate more directly with the themes.
- Should the RSF consider generalizing beyond the CI – more as tool than central to RSF?
- Reporting monitoring: Are there other reporting intervals or events, other than the National Report, that might yield information about sustainable forests (e.g., NE region)
- Engaging broader stakeholder at multiple scales: is it possible to build more comprehensive understanding of MPC&I application across the country through

examples like Baltimore County? Can we do more with disseminating CI to local scales, where the action will be in the future (e.g., the Front range and Chesapeake bay).

- IYOF – the more the RSF can add value the better.
- The COWG is not large group but is doing good things with social networking to try and get the word out.
- A challenge with RSF is that it relies on participants for volunteer work on the case studies and the SFAS recommendations. If people don't do these things, then all that is left is attending meetings.
- Explore and increase use of social networking tools. Enlist RSF participants to help engage the broader community using these tools.
- Devote some of the Forest Service seed money to support activities on a couple of SFAS recommendations a year.
- We should take advantage of the state assessments, many of which used the MPC&I as basis. There will be one national analysis of the assessments and several regional analyses.
- One issue the RSF consider for a dialogue is a hot topic with State Foresters - how biomass energy and plantations fit in the larger landscape of forests.
- There is an opportunity for the RSF to participate in a track at the annual SAF meeting in HI on November 2 - 6. The theme of the meeting is IYOF. The RSF could make a presentation on the 2010 National Report and the SFAS.

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#### **IV. Circumstances and Opportunities Shaping 2011 RSF Activities**

FY10 activities also shaped by three unique opportunities:

1. The stakeholder Sustainable Forests Action Strategy (SFAS) - the Roundtable's response to the draft 2010 National Report on Sustainable Forests;
2. The 2011 International Year of Forests; and
3. Collaboration between the RSF and the Sustainable Water Resources and Sustainable Rangeland Roundtables to advance the use of Criteria and Indicators to foster collaborative work on forests, rangelands, and water.

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.

Detailed comments are presented below.

### *The stakeholder Sustainable Forests Action Strategy (SFAS)*

- The SFAS should be the RSF's first priority.
- If the RSF does one thing this FY, it should bore into the SFAS and see what stakeholders can accomplish in that. The SFAS is connected with the release of 2010 National Report, what that report says and what it means.
- We need to figure out how to implement the SFAS and increase awareness about it.
- SFAS is a certainly a priority until accomplished.
- SFAS – it would be great to find a way to implement some of the SFAS by making and highlighting the connection between forests and water. Peoples interest in water to build understanding and interest in forests.
- If we are going to prioritize the SFAS, it can't just be the COWG doing the communication and outreach. The work and effectiveness of the RSF are related to how well the RSF reaches out and connects with other partners.
- The SFAS is a valuable document. It is tough getting people to implement it. The authors were hoping people would use it to justify stuff they want to do anyhow. Hope it still has traction because it is real. It might be possible build from SFAS/case study – but risk watering down – and diffusing energy. Too theoretical.

### *The 2011 International Year of Forests (IYOF)*

- Is the Forest Service getting too late a start on the IYOF?
- Instead of trying to do too many things, focus on IYOF. Highlight the stakeholder response to the draft 2010 National Report. Work within the circumstance we have.
- Take the IYOF off unless we can find some way to add value.
- Ascertain the appropriate role for the RSF and take advantage of the opportunity to enhance other things the RSF is doing and communicate about it via the webpage and other social networking tools.
- Unless there is guidance and direction about how the about the Forest Service plans to engage in the IYOF and how other stakeholders can participate, it should not be a

priority of the RSF. At this point, it is only a small circle of people from the US who are tied into the international arena who have any connection with the event.

- The Forest Service needs to be the keeper of the flame and the vision on this.
- Not sure what the IYOF what that is at this point. If the RSF has that as a focus, we will need to put some meat on it.
- IYOF 2011 is not a big priority.

### *Collaboration Between the RSF and the Sustainable Water Resources and Sustainable Rangeland Roundtables*

- We still have not seen what the Forest Service means by/what it intends to do with the all lands management approach. Is there a way to use the release of the final 2010 National Report and the SFAS as a stepping stone?
- I am less enthusiastic about collaborating with the resource roundtables. There is nothing to coordinate. Continuing to maintain an open communication is important. If we could tie this work into the all lands approach, this would be more of a priority.
- If we can add value maintain this as a priority. Otherwise, remove it and let others who can add value work it.
- This is an opportunity, but of lower priority. Collaboration between the roundtables is/should be more about fostering collaborative work and less about the MPC&I.
- The idea of collaborating across environment media is very important. Part of the problem in land management is that too frequently information is siloed.
- How can we advocate all lands/landscape scale management without including other resource areas.
- Consider matching up the SFAS with a case study.
- Not excited about collaboration of roundtables. Peter was and it was like pushing a train up hill.
- I have no fire in my belly about multiple roundtable effort. Not sure where it will get us. Feels like the Core Group is not there either. Feels like the Forest Service wants us to do this.
- The RSF has limited resources and should focus on the things that are feasible to do and would have the most impact. The multiple roundtables is a low priority.
- The idea of having a meeting to engaged people on case studies across Roundtables is a good one.
- Case studies – especially multiple roundtable – not sure what is out there to do case studies – fleshing out landscape scale conservation would be a good thing.

### *Additional Opportunities*

- Do not forget state assessments.
- Collaboration between the 3 roundtables is not a strong opportunity. Replace it with the state assessments.

- Given that the 2010 National Report will soon be available we should also make a major effort in 2011 to promote its use and values, and use the 2003 and 2010 comparative data to tell the story. It is the basic information source for many of the things we must do under the work of Web 1.0 and Web. 2.0. So I would make this item one of four rather than three opportunities.
- The all lands approach is a great idea. It has not caught on among stakeholders.
- People care about the place they live and the people that live there –that is where stuff happens and that is where the energy will be.
- We need to be explicit about the release of the final 2010 National Report and the role of the RSF.
- Focus on the MPC&I, the national reporting cycle, and what that means. The day of the MPC&I just has not come.

### *Issues*

- Other circumstances shaping RSF activities in 2011 are budget limits and available volunteer time.
- Wonder how much of lack of stakeholder energy is that there is too much focus on the use of the MPC&I? If the focus was more on fostering collaboration it might change some of the energy.
- The work of the MP Working Group on the MPC&I is not well integrated in the U.S. Our systems – federal, state, regional and local – are not aligned in their use and application of the MPC&I. What does this say about our countries approach to SFM? How does this reflect on the work of the RSF?

### *Specific suggestions for RSF activities*

- IYOF - special issue of the National Forest Magazine highlighting 100 years of progress since the Weeks Law.
- The SFAS needs to be put out into the broader public eye. The IYOF might present opportunities to highlight the SFAS in popular publications like the Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, New York Times.
- The opportunities are implicit in the statements: we have the 2010 National report as the basis for communicating about sustainable forests; we have the nine action items to work on; we have the opportunity of the IYOF but we have to crack the system to get this on the forest stakeholder radar; and we have to figure out how to combine forest, water and grazing land in a specific project that makes sense. I am guessing that there is less enthusiasm among the Core group for this one than the others. Given a very limited budget focus on a few things, including the COWG Web 2.0 development and the work Don Outen can help us do to involve us in the watershed and local level sustainability planning that can combine water and forests.
- In celebration of the IYOF, use Weeks Law as an educational and celebratory event. It is not just trees water and ranges, it is clean air, water, wildlife and habitat.
- The emphasis for the next couple of years should be on building our Web 2.0 capacity and on organizing webinars, and on participating in the activities of the other big forest

related issues. For example, we need to jump in to the conversations about carbon, biofuels, invasive species, and sustainability planning at the watershed/state levels as in Baltimore County. Involvement in each of these will spring from the work we take on for our nine action items.

- The 50 state assessments and action strategies provide a great opportunity for us to promote the use of MPC&I. The Roundtable should really jump in on the conversations with the states to see how good and how useful the MPC&I are. It might be worth convening one Roundtable meeting in 2011 to focus on the FS assessment of the assessments and invite some of the better states to talk about their work and how they are using C&I (besides Oregon and Maryland.)

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## V. 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.

Detailed comments are presented below.

### *How the RSF is of Value*

- The RSF served a very valuable function for the Forest Service as they prepared the 2010 draft report. The face to face meetings provided the FS staff with real people to encourage them to explore the new indicators, in particular. However, convening physical meetings is expensive, difficult (time demands for stakeholders from other priorities) and may not be needed until 2013 when the FS starts to do the 2015 National Report.
- Stakeholders get to learn and talk about and contribute to the knowledge base on Sustainable Forest Management. By participating in the RSF, they are able to educate stakeholders within their own networks and are better equipped to provide input to the Forest Service and other forest managers based on a broader base of information.
- Not sure who else is doing what the RSF is doing, however, the value of what the RSF does is not clear. We should be looking at how we can get our partners/stakeholders to use what the RSF does to add value to what they do. Might we focus more on how forests are important to people and less on the framework provided by the MPC&I?
- The forum for dialogue is valuable, as it may be the only forum of its kind. The RSF helps to keep the dialogue going between those who choose to participate. The RSF does not currently engage a diverse group of forest interests.

- There is always some value in having a venue for dialogue and to hear what the current thinking on critical issues is.

### *Ways to increase Value*

- The RSF's value is increased when stakeholders network, share information and collaborate on SFM. The RSF still seems more like isolated entities working together rather than a vibrant network. Things like the social networking tools and the SharePoint site which allow communication and collaboration 'real time' may help the RSF move closer to a vibrant network. Place-based work will also add vibrancy to the RSF community.
- The last few RSF sessions were a little unfulfilling because there was too much posturing of younger professionals trying to make their marks. We were dealing with name recognition rather than substance. We want to encourage youth to participate constructively in the dialogue – not just grandstand.
- It might be better to engage broader stakeholder participation in smaller chunks more frequently. We could do this cost-effectively using technology like webinars (e.g., a series of afternoon chats with RSF leadership about selected issues).
- The basic platform of the RSF is good but we need some different ways to get more players to the table. Face-to-face meetings are good – but using technology like webinars, and social networking tools to engage more is also important.
- We have seen a decline in participation because stakeholders are pulled in different directions and we have all been hit by the economic down turn so travel is harder. Look for opportunities to host more than one meeting at the same location around other meetings on compatible topics, or in locations of broader interest to participants (e.g., at a National Park).
- If the RSF mission and purposes were better aligned, the RSF might add more value. We have an opportunity now to really figure out what we want to be now, and design our structure around that. If we do not do that soon, we will just do the same thing and will still be grappling with the value of the RSF.
- The COWG has made some progress because it is a relatively small facilitated group. The RSF would benefit from more facilitated work groups (e.g., work groups on the SFAS, IYOF 2011, refreshing the mission and purposes, etc.)
- The RSF would be more valuable to a broader cross-section of stakeholders if its' mission was less bound by the MPC&I. Why didn't the Forest Service use the RSF to support dialogue on the revision of the NFS Planning Rule?
- Historically the RSF fostered more dialogue and less informing. Do we want more dialogue? Are we seeing less dialogue because of less diversity among participating stakeholders? Does the RSF still provide a valuable resource if its focus is more on informing and less on dialogue? Are we intentionally shifting the dialogue to the web and to the broader population and away from the face-to-face meetings? If we elect not to have the dialogue, the forum may be of less value to participants.
- The RSF work plan needs to be more task-focused and related to stakeholders daily lives and work if we want to see more engagement and dialogue.

- What if there was a Southern Rocky Mountain Regional meeting that focused on case studies of real action on the ground crossing the boundaries that separate stakeholders. Might this spark interest and bring people to the discussion? The web is good for some things but not this. You need to bring people face to face to talk about things that are related to their day to day lives. You won't get momentum without that.
- Bringing people together to talk about forests and climate change is way to big a topic. People are overwhelmed by a topic that large.
- Not so sure people love webinars. Webinars do not foster dialogues. Use appropriate tools and process to meet our mission. Not sure we are doing that well.
- The COWG has done a good job – but continuing on the cyber level is limited – will only work for those who are already in the choir.
- RSF needs to endorse and help the FS move towards something that continues to refine the scale of analysis and the apparatus that is in place is at the state level. A field manual about the results from the state assessments to help with decision making on the ground could be a valuable product. What other useful products could come from RSF activities – thus increasing the value of the RSF?
- A possible case study might be in the Four Corners area where they have a common set these challenges could help diffuse the current silo approach to addressing environmental issues.
- There is value in having something like the RSF out there to provide a forum to address issues that come up such as the use of wood for bioenergy, forests and climate change, and other environmental issues. At this point, however, this is not how the RSF is being used. Not sure why. The Forest Service could be the leading agency encouraging constructive dialogue on these and other similar issues.

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## VI. 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.

More detailed comments are below.

## Core Group

- I hope the Core Group uses this opportunity of reflection to refresh and expand its participation. It is important to aim at higher level participation, but expanding the breadth of interests represented is also key.
- A lot of Core Group participants are burned out. There are no new people stepping up. There is a danger of squeezing the Core Group to hard and losing them.
- A priority of RSF leadership should be identifying and acting on ways to increase the value of the RSF. This may require clarifying the problem the RSF is trying to address – the reason for being.
- RSF leadership is comprised of well-meaning people, but their leadership is ‘shallow’. This may be because they are too busy or otherwise focused to give the RSF the attention it needs. As a result, the RSF is floundering. Now is the time for leadership to take some bold steps on things that are meaningful and tangible. Forest Service leadership is integral to shaping the direction of these bold steps.
- At this point, all RSF activity presupposes funding and support from the Forest Service. Support staff are not funded adequately to support stakeholder activity on the 9 recommendations of the Sustainable Forests Action Strategy, let alone the other stated priorities of the RSF. Volunteers can do just so much.
- Forest Service leadership is distracted on other problems and seems to be not so interested in the contribution of the Roundtable participants.
- The full diversity of stakeholders interested in SFM is not participating in the RSF. Land owners, industry, and NGOs are not participating. We need to find out why. Where are they and others having conversations about forest related national and international issues? How can the RSF reengage those groups and participate in those discussions.
- How can we attract higher level people to participate in the roundtable?
- Is the Forest Service still interested in the RSF and are we really getting the participation we need to make the RSF useful?
- If there was not a RSF – would people reinvent it?
- We do not do a good job reporting on RSF accomplishments. If we did a better job at this, more stakeholders might participate and find value in the RSF.
- The RSF informs our thinking about sustainability. What do we – RSF leaders and participants – do individually to spread the word to help other people think about forest sustainability?
- Many stakeholders don’t relate to the MPC&I – they do not fit their lives and what they do. For many, the MPC&I and the RSF are artificial entities. Very few stakeholders work at the national scale so it is hard for them to relate to the MPC&I. Instead of trying to push another national meeting in FY2010, it would be more helpful and timely for the RSF to have a working meeting of the Core Group, ELT and the Communications and Outreach Work Group to map out the future of the RSF.
- Reflect on the purpose of the RSF to assess whether or not the RSF may have ‘run its course’. Do we want to reinvigorate the RSF, or accept the fact that there are low and

high periods of activity? In a way, we are revisiting the cycle following the completion of the 2003 National Report. The RSF floundered a bit after that before refocusing.

### *Leadership Transition*

- The RSF should have a strategy for leadership transitions – the RSF Co-chairs and the COWG Co-chairs. We should begin to talk about this on the next Core Group call, and the strategy transition should be a near-term focus of the ELT.
- We know Dick is retiring and Graham and Eric are stepping down from their leadership of the COWG. Who are our future leaders and motivators?
- Academic participation – particularly that of the SFP - in RSF leadership is clearly key, but when the National Association of Sustainable Foresters (NASF) stepped away it changed the dynamic of the RSF.
- Maybe the RSF should be looking at a triad leadership – Forest Service/Federal, academic, and NASF. If NASF is added as a co chair, there might be less need for dual co-chairs from each interest area. The RSF might consider establishing alternate chairs instead.
- The day to day Forest Service lead needs to have a direct and priority line of communication with Forest Service leadership to do guide the RSF effectively. They also need Forest Service leadership to allocate and prioritize their time to work on SFM and the RSF.
- Consider engaging the University of Florida in the RSF dialogue. Dr. Tim White, Professor and School of Forest Resources Conservation Director, University of Florida.

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## **VII. 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.

- RSF participants are busy and for many, the work of the RSF is an add-on to their daily work. How can the facilitation team engage leadership and participants more effectively? Social networking tools are one way to accomplish this, but what else can we be doing?
- Scheduling leadership calls is a challenge. Offer fewer choices but bigger blocks of time. People may burn out on doodle. Try contacting each individual by phone instead.
- Make sure the purpose of the Core Group calls is clear and keep the discussion focused. Keep the leadership team focused.
- Make us tackle the hard questions.
- The RSF has been on hiatus for 6 – 9 months, now it is time to get back to work with renewed energy. Where will this new energy come from? Maybe with more specific focus the RSF will regain its energy. If we do not find renewed energy, should we assume that the RSF has the end of its useful life, disband and say ‘job well done’?

- The facilitation team is doing a good/great job on a limited budget. Is it time to diversify and seek additional funding to support the activities of the RSF?
- RSF participants need to be doing more of the work.

## ATTACHMENT A

### Roundtable on Sustainable Forests Core Group Participants

As of August 24, 2010

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Keith	Argow	National Woodland Owners Association
Richard	Brinker	Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Science
Michael	Buck	National Association of State Foresters
Graham	Cox	Audubon New York
Jim	Finley	Penn State University College of Forestry
Michael	Goergen	Society of American Foresters
Joel	Holtrop	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Ruth	McWilliams	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Eric	Norland	USDA NIFA
Don	Outen	Baltimore County Dept of Env. Protection and Resource Management
Al	Sample	Pinchot Institute For Conservation
Laurie	Schoonhoven	Penn State University, Sustainable Forests Partnership
Holly	Youngbear	College of Menominee Nation