Stakeholder Issue Assessment Findings and Recommendations

Eldorado National Forest South Fork American River Cohesive Strategy

June 2016 [Draft v.6/9/2016]

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Under the Auspices of the
U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict
Resolution

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Executive Summary

In spring 2016, the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), a neutral nonprofit that helps groups collaborate, conducted a stakeholder issue assessment to learn about perspectives and possible collaborative approaches to fulfill the goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (cohesive strategy) in the South Fork of the American River Watershed. The overall goal of the cohesive strategy is to restore and maintain landscapes, reduce the threat of wildfire, create more fire-adapted communities, and improve wildfire emergency response. The Eldorado National Forest is interested in partnering with stakeholders to identify priority treatment areas, discuss treatment methods, and leverage ongoing work of current initiatives.

To understand and reflect the variety of perspectives on how to fulfill the goals of the Cohesive Strategy, CBI conducted 27 confidential interviews with 30 individuals from a range of stakeholder interests, including business, cattle grazing, the environment, fire safety, forestry, industry, landownership, local and state government, the local community, recreation, the Sierra Nevada mountain range, utilities, watershed management, and wildlife. During interviews, CBI invited participants to articulate their interests and concerns related to achieving the Cohesive Strategy's three main goals: resilient landscape; fire-adapted communities; and safe and effective fire response.

Interview Findings

Findings reflect stakeholder feedback on achieving the South Fork American River Watershed Cohesive Strategy goals, including the critical issues and the process.

Overview

- Establishing a high level vision, shared goals, and priorities is critical to success.
- Some interviewees express hope for developing an experimental attitude, learning and generating experience throughout the process of implementation.

Resilient Landscape

- Interviewees across all interest groups express strong support for ongoing forest management. Most interviewees support active fuels management in the SOFAR area.
- Many interviewees see the need for maintaining ecosystem services: water supply, water quality, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and commercial products.
- Many interviewees articulate support for heterogeneity, often characterized by clumps of trees and open spaces.
- Many stakeholders hope to get more fire in the SOFAR area although interviewees have differing attitudes and perceptions of fire on the landscape.
- Some stakeholders would like to look at the newest fire science and consider adapting what's happening in experimental forests to the SOFAR landscape.
- Most interviewees anticipate that more time and attention will be necessary in areas that are home to sensitive species, with some expressing concern about potential conflict.
- Interviewees believe that timber harvesting in the area is not active and could serve as a consistent funding source over time.

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- The lack of infrastructure in the region is a resounding concern.

Fire-Adapted Communities

- Interviewees express strong support for creating fire-adapted communities and see the intersection of education and awareness, funding, science, and action as the necessary elements to fulfill this strategy.
- Interviewees recognize the valuable role of Fire Safe Councils, repeatedly citing their activities to promote fire awareness and safe, clear properties.
- Funding work on individual properties is a significant challenge.

Safe and Effective Fire Response

- Interviewees demonstrate widespread understanding and support for safe and effective fire response and recognize the need to prioritize public health and safety.
- Some interviewees recognize that forest health and resilience don't always align with public safety needs, reminding that they are different missions.
- Several interviewees underscore the weight of mapping known infrastructure and potential staging areas to be ready for fire.
- From a public values perspective, several interviewees urge the need to protect the watershed first and foremost, as the number one priority, and to make explicit the link between forest health and watershed health.
- Lastly, a number of interviewees identify the need to be more proactive, spending less on response and more on the resilient landscape.

Process Recommendations

The Consensus Building Institute found a strong interest for collaborating and partnering to move forward the South Fork American River Cohesive Strategy. CBI is recommending an initial phase of activities to establish the collaborative process to support implementation of the strategy.

This effort would provide an opportunity for the Eldorado National Forest to convene and engage interested stakeholders over the next 6-8 months. Collaboration would include working concurrently with stakeholders specifically interested in the strategy and the broader public and also with large landowners and agencies with jurisdiction in the SOFAR watershed. The idea would be for all to come together with a common vision, goals, and priorities. The engagement efforts would yield a work plan and governance structure to support implementation of cohesive strategy in the SOFAR watershed.

Conclusion

Communities, infrastructure, private timber, water, power, recreation, protected species, and fire frequency are all reasons that this watershed is a priority for a cohesive strategy. Stakeholders express a sense of urgency and strong need to act. The proposed process includes initial activities to create a work plan and governance structure to support collaborative implementation. The goal is to create an effective effort with public information sharing to help the local community, the region, and the state learn and benefit from cohesive strategy implementation.

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Background

The USDA Forest Service's National Wildland Fire Cohesive Strategy, as described on its dedicated website, is "a collaborative process with active involvement of all levels of government and non-governmental organizations, as well as the public, to seek national, all-lands solutions to wildland fire management issues." In August 2014, the Eldorado National Forest was selected to begin implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy. The South Fork American River Watershed was proposed for implementing the cohesive strategy because of the many values at risk threatened by complex fire issues associated with drought, climate change, fuel loading, insects, and disease. Communities, infrastructure, private timber, water, power, recreation, protected species, and fire frequency are all reasons that this watershed is a high priority for collaborative action. The targeted landscape covers 410,000 acres in Northern California, stretching from the Sierra Crest to Placerville, California, and includes a mix of private lands, residential areas and communities, and Highway 50.

The overall goal of the cohesive strategy is to restore and maintain landscapes and reduce the threat of wildfire. The strategy is also intended to create more fire-adapted communities and improve wildfire emergency response. This new program falls within Governor Brown's insect and disease designation priority area and incorporates the Forest Service's Region 5 *Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration* by creating fire resilient landscapes.

Many in the area are interested in reducing wildfire threats and creating a more healthy forest. The Forest Service is interested in partnering with these diverse interests through a collaborative process that will foster ongoing dialogue to identify priority treatment areas, discuss treatment methods and new technologies, and leverage the ongoing work of current community initiatives.

The Eldorado National Forest engaged the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute) to provide independent, third-party neutral facilitation to assist them in initiating a collaborative process to strengthen partnerships between the Eldorado National Forest and a wide range of interested stakeholders and communities as part of the South Fork American River Cohesive Strategy. The U.S. Institute contracted with Consensus Building Institute (CBI) to provide services. On behalf of the U.S. Institute, CBI is working with the Eldorado National Forest and other interested parties to conduct an assessment and design a collaborative process to establish the partnerships needed to accomplish the goals of the South Fork American River Cohesive Strategy.

This report summarizes the assessment process methodology, the interview findings, and process recommendations to lay the foundation for a work plan and governance structure to support collaborative implementation of the cohesive strategy.

Methodology

CBI's stakeholder issue assessment is intended to understand and then reflect to interested parties, the range of perspectives, and possible process approaches to fulfill the goals of the Cohesive Strategy in the South Fork of the American River Watershed. CBI paid careful attention to selecting a diverse group of interviewees to represent a broad spectrum of interests. CBI's methodology is grounded in best practice of collaborative problem solving and realized through these core principles: (1) soliciting input that represents a range of stakeholder perspectives; (2) being transparent in the nature of the feedback and recommendations provided; (3) drawing on CBI experience and best practices to recommend an approach likely to foster effective collaboration.

CBI gathered information through stakeholder interviews. CBI facilitators Gina Bartlett and Julia Golomb conducted 27 interviews with 30 individuals with interests in business, cattle grazing, the environment, fire safety, forestry, industry, landownership, local and state government, the local community, recreation, the Sierra Nevada mountain range, utilities, watershed management, and wildlife. Conducted by phone, interviews were confidential to foster candor. A list of the interviewees and the interview protocol is included in the appendices.

CBI initially worked with Forest Service staff to identify the first round of interviewees, which proved to be the majority. Then, as part of the interview process, participants recommended other stakeholders for interviews, most of whom CBI then interviewed. CBI

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closed the interview process when Gina and Julia felt they had a thorough understanding of the issues and concerns as well as dynamics to analyze interview findings and recommend a proposed process for moving forward.

Interviews focused on a drawing out the interviewee's thoughts and ideas on interests and concerns tied to the vision for fire management in the forest, the primary goals of the cohesive strategy, technical questions, and suggestions for the process and potential collaboration. CBI developed the questions in advance, with input from Eldorado National Forest staff. The interview questions, attached in the appendix, served as a guide with some interviewees focusing on only a few questions. Also, the time spent on each question varied depending on the interest of the interviewees.

After preparing this report, CBI invited interview participants to review the draft findings and provide feedback on any major omissions and to ensure clarity. CBI will also present the draft findings and recommendations at a public workshop in June 2016. After this, CBI will finalize the report and its recommendations.

This report seeks to summarize the range of views, ideas, and concerns expressed. The assessment is not a comprehensive study of all the issues and concerns with a stake in the cohesive strategy. CBI did not attempt to independently validate the claims or concerns of the interviewees, nor is the assessment a comprehensive study of all issues and concerns with a stake in the Cohesive Strategy. This report tries to reflect back key themes and concerns that help shape the way forward. CBI has sought to present these findings, in our role as impartial facilitators, as accurately and fairly as possible. Any errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Interview Findings

The following summarizes key themes from interviews that the Consensus Building Institute conducted.

Overarching Insights

Establishing a high level vision, shared goals, and priorities is critical to success. Nearly all of the stakeholders suggest the importance of coming together to articulate a vision or mission for the South Fork American River (SOFAR) Watershed with clearly defined goals or desired outcomes as well as priorities to focus efforts, sequence work, and measure success. Interviewees recommend looking strategically at the whole landscape and mapping out resources to develop an overall plan for projects rather than individual projects. Interviewees suggest moving forward with "low hanging fruit," or efforts that have widespread support for the need to act, such as areas around homes, in plantations, and around infrastructure, while exploring efforts in areas that might have sensitive resources that necessitate a measured approach. A few interviewees talk about agreeing to a problem statement to create focus on what the cohesive strategy is trying to "fix." While using different words, interviewees consistently express the intent and hope to create momentum through an overarching plan and priorities to move forward management activities.

Interviewees articulate their goals for the forest in support of the cohesive strategy. One participant envisions, "*a more structurally diverse forest, more disease and insect resilient, creating infrastructure and stand conditions to reintroduce fire to the degree it can be done safety within the constraints of the Clean Air Act.*" Another participant talks about a landscape in which fires can start and burn at different levels of intensity while another speaks of "*small wildfires moving through a thin, more resilient forest.*" Interviewees articulate a range of goals, including:

- Stopping catastrophic wildfire,
- Reintroducing fire into the landscape,
- Protecting communities,
- Protecting water quality and quantity,
- Protecting existing ecosystems and wildlife, and
- Protecting recreation values.

Some interviewees express hope for developing an experimental attitude, learning and generating experience throughout the process of implementation. Some suggest that others who manage landscapes in the Sierra Nevada want to learn what they can from this effort. Some interviewees would like to evaluate the effects of different treatments and feed that back into the process.

Cohesive Strategy Goals

Since the focus of this effort is to develop an approach to implement the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy, as part of the interview process, the Consensus Building Institute invited participants to articulate their primary interests and concerns related to achieving its three main goals: resilient landscape, fire-adapted communities, and safe and effective fire response.

Resilient Landscape

Interviewees across all interest groups express strong support for ongoing forest management. In fact, participants express a sense of urgency and strong need to act. The 2014 King Fire that occurred in the area weighs heavily on many interviewees who view it as a call to action.

Many interviewees see the need for maintaining ecosystem services: water supply, water quality, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and commercial products. Every interviewee talks about the condition of the forest as heavily laden with fuels that are rendering it vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire and poorly functioning ecosystems. One interviewee reports that wildfire and water quality are the top two concerns in the area, as identified in a recent watershed needs assessment. Interviewees recognize the value of the watershed, including its economic value, and recommend building on that understanding to increase investment in watershed management. One interviewee reports that the condition of the watershed is affecting the water supply and increasing water treatment costs. This creates a public health issue in addition to economic and environmental concerns.

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Interviewee: "Establish shared interest in maintaining the forest. Fire has a place, and maintaining the forest is key to all our other interests: watershed, wildlife, recreation, all uses of the forest are based on having a forest."

Many interviewees articulate support for heterogeneity, often characterized by clumps of trees and open spaces. Support exists across interest groups for making plantations less uniform and more resilient. Interviewees suggest that building some varied structure back into the landscape would support a range of wildlife. One interviewee suggests that staggering future treatments and harvests is one way to start to break-up density and achieve heterogeneity. A few interviewees recommend applying the Pacific Southwest Research Station General Technical Report 220, *An Ecosystem Management Strategy for Sierran Mixed-Conifer Forests,* in the project area. Interviewees suggest field visits that include scientists and stakeholders to build understanding and consensus on these approaches, which could then be applied more broadly to the landscape. Other interviewees hope prescribed fire can also play a role in promoting heterogeneity.

Most interviewees support active fuels management in the SOFAR area. Most interviewees suggest that some form of treatment is necessary before introducing prescribed fire, recommending some form of thinning first and prescribed fire second. A few recognize that prescribed fire can be introduced first under some conditions, citing the Caples Ecological Restoration Project and other efforts on the Eldorado and Sequoia National Forests and in Yosemite. Interviewees anticipate mechanical treatment for some areas and express varying levels of comfort with this approach, depending on site-specific conditions. Some interviewees suggest looking at ways to maximize success given that conditions in the forest are overwhelmed with heavy fuel loads. The heavy, old brush and vegetation is not useful for grazing cattle. Some interviewees identify that herbicides, while controversial, could play a role in reducing brush to prepare for prescribed fire. Interviewees worry that insect infestation or bark beetles could impact the Eldorado if forest health isn't addressed.

Some interviewees have a perception that environmentalists do not believe in any management activity on the forest. However, no one CBI interviewed advocated a hands-off no-action approach to the forest.

Many stakeholders hope to get more fire in the SOFAR area although interviewees have differing attitudes and perceptions of fire on the landscape. All interviewees recognize that fire has an ecological function. Some would like fire introduced to serve ecological purposes with fire burning at different intensities. For many, the primary goal of introducing prescribed fire is to support efficient, ongoing maintenance of reduced fuel loads to prevent catastrophic wildfire. While most would recommend using prescribed fire (i.e. staff-introduced fire used as treatment on the landscape in a controlled setting) to control fuel levels to prevent catastrophic wildfire, attitudes about managed wildfire (i.e. fire ignited by lightning or other natural source and is allowed to burn under close watch) are not as clear. The recent King Fire invokes feelings of apprehension and danger. Forest conditions and the

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King Fire affect the community's level of comfort with allowing managed wildfire. There is broad agreement that the landscape is not presently ready for prescribed fire; nearly all interviewees expressed that any fire on the landscape is dangerous under present forest conditions.

Some stakeholders would like to look at the newest fire science and consider adapting what's happening in experimental forests to the SOFAR landscape. Some are unsure if the Eldorado National Forest has the staff to support prescribed fire, and one interviewee recommended developing a fire team to maximize opportunities for fire during air quality and dry condition windows. One interviewee suggests considering the Finney model of fire management, which provides for strategically placed treatments (tied to winds and canyons), to manage wildfire.

Most interviewees anticipate that more time and attention will be necessary in areas that are home to sensitive species, with some expressing concern about potential conflict. Spotted owl habitat in the SOFAR project area is a primary concern. Interviewees suggest that the approach in these areas merits discussion and robust scientific understanding. A few also suggest the need to manage and protect cultural resources. Several suggested the possibility of developing overarching guidelines regarding retention of wildlife habitats that might leave areas with existing desirable structures, for example. A few interviewees anticipate conflict between those that are hoping for more active forest management (more fuels reduction), and those that are concerned about species (such as the spotted owl, Pacific fisher, black-backed woodpecker or other threatened and endangered species). A few interviewees recommend drawing from the conservation strategies and memorandum of understanding developed between the Forest Service Region 5 and environmental organizations as part of the settlement of a lawsuit on the Sierra Nevada Framework.

Many stakeholders strongly emphasize the importance of ongoing maintenance and follow up treatment as critical. A few interviewees recommend institutionalizing a process for tracking treatment areas, and many recognize that planning for the long term for sustainable funding is essential. Some report that treatment costs go up exponentially with the increase in fuels.

Interviewee: "Everyone loves the forest…a resilient forest would be a healthy forest that reduces the chance of catastrophic wildfire."

Interviewees believe that timber harvesting in the area is not active and could serve as a consistent funding source over time. Some interviewees lament the loss of timber industry in the county and would like it revitalized. Interviewees also identify biomass as part of the solution. Interviewees report that the loss of the logging industry is still sensitive among local community members. The timber industry was a source of livelihood and connection to the forest.

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The lack of infrastructure in the region is a resounding theme. Interviewees from different interest groups express that the region needs more avenues (infrastructure and market drivers) to productively utilize biomass removed from the forest during fuels reduction or thinning. Several interviewees expressed hope that the former mill site in Camino might be revitalized, but another reports that the mill is dismantled. A few interviewees describe biomass utilization as a commercial product that can underwrite forest management. The closure of biomass facilities in California and the lack of subsidies for biomass is a frustration for many, and some interviewees report that they are actively working to address this. One interviewee articulates and some others would agree, "*No mill could survive without the Forest Service guaranteeing a certain number of board feet from the national forest.*" A number of interviewees identify local loggers who are willing to work with materials that large companies might not consider as a possible resource to support the work in SOFAR. And, some anticipate that early conversations might need to focus on the solid wood product infrastructure.

Fire-Adapted Communities

Generally, interviewees express strong support for creating fire-adapted communities and see the intersection of education and awareness, funding, science, and action as the necessary elements to fulfill this strategy. Participants highlight Fire Adapted 50 as a great example of people coming together to have direction and purpose, drawing on each other's resources and aligning vision and purpose.

> *Interviewee: "Health and safety are our primary interests."*

Interviewees recognize the valuable role of Fire Safe Councils, repeatedly citing their activities to promote fire awareness and safe, clear properties. As one interviewee recognizes, "*we allowed houses in the area, and now we have to deal with them.*" Interviewees suggest that residents need to know what actions are beneficial or can cause problems and how to mitigate conditions on their own properties. A number of interviewees believe that homeowners need to reduce fuels and do other work necessary to create and maintain a defensible zone to protect homeowner properties. Some worry that homeowners have a false sense of security and don't feel that they need to do fuel reduction work on their individual properties when the Eldorado National Forest has done treatments on the wildland-urban interface.

Funding work on individual properties is a significant challenge. Interviewees report some homeowners lack resources to do work on their property. And, the Fire Safe Council is working to receive grant funding to expand the council's work. Interviewees recommend supporting the Fire Safe Council to involve small private landowners in addition to large landowners.

A few interviewees would recommend better clarity on defining the wildland-urban interface and using the best available science to determine what is most effective, either working in the wildland-urban interface or within 200 feet around homes, which some suggest in combination with fire resistant materials, can have a significant effect on reducing damage.

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Interviewees report that the county is considering establishing an ordinance to clean up property, similar to what has been done in Tuolumne County.

> *Interviewee: "It's a community responsibility to create a buffer between it and the forest. It's the Forest Service responsibility to create a buffer between the forest and communities."*

Safe and Effective Fire Response

Interviewees demonstrate widespread understanding and support for safe and effective fire response and recognize the need to prioritize public health and safety. Interviewees urge the importance of protecting local communities, cabins, and recreation areas, emphasizing the need for increasing clear communication among fire safety agencies, emergency responders, and personnel to support effective fire response.

Some interviewees recognize that forest health and resilience don't always align with public safety needs, reminding that they are different missions. One fire fighter outlines that fire safety is protecting home structures and the population, getting people out during a fire, and the ability to get equipment and fire fighters *in* during a fire. Closely related, participants support keeping roads open to access areas that might need protection for emergency response. Others would consider reducing roads when not needed while recognizing many advocate for roads to support recreational activity.

> *Interviewee: "My mission is the population, homes, structures, egress evacuation during a fire, and the ability to get equipment and fire fighters in during a fire."*

Several interviewees underscore the weight of mapping known infrastructure and potential staging areas to be ready for fire. The SOFAR area has water and electrical infrastructure critical to the region and state. Land managers stress that maintenance around utility structures, such as power lines, can provide important fuel breaks. Interviewees view unimpeded access to water and electricity as imperative to society.

From a public values perspective, several interviewees urge the need to protect the watershed first and foremost, as the number one priority, and to make explicit the link between forest health and watershed health. Another interviewee would like to see downstream users invest in protecting upstream watersheds.

Lastly, a number of interviewees identify the need to be more proactive, spending less on response and more on the resilient landscape. No one questions the need and recognizes the response is absolutely necessary, but would advocate for proactive work as better when possible.

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Funding

CBI specifically asked for suggestions for sustaining funding for the SOFAR effort. Participants outlined varying responses, and all recognize that funding is a significant challenge. A few interviewees suggested that while the SOFAR funding is significant, it is not nearly enough to carry out the level of activity necessary for forest restoration.

Interviewees offer some ideas for generating funding by working with governmental entities to receive grant funding currently in the pipeline, meeting with local, state, and federal officials to understand the importance of funding forestry, and generating demand for and revenue from forest products. Interviewees suggest engaging the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to assist with funding generally and also anticipate grant funding from the Conservancy, State Proposition 1, and greenhouse gas funds. A few interviewees mention that local communities must work with the state to encourage federal lawmakers to support funding this work into the future.

A number of interviewees express hope that creating a resilient landscape could generate revenue from timber and forest products. Most participants understand that the infrastructure is not in place to support a robust timber-generating economy, yet many would like to see a move in that direction. A common theme is exploring infrastructure that might help support this effort.

Interviewees recognize that doing long-term work without long-term funding is difficult and recommend a funding sub-group to develop strategies on funding.
Interviewees suggest that downstream users, e.g. in the Sacramento Valley and elsewhere, have an interest in maintaining watershed health and thus forest health.

Technical Information

CBI invited interviewees to identify technical information and expertise to inform the collaborative effort. Although multiple interviewees suggest working with the Pacific Southwest Research Station, the driver is working with the best available science. These bullet points capture the key questions discussed, but are not comprehensive of all the technical information that will inform cohesive strategy implementation.

- Current conditions to understand existing stock, including board feet grown and removed in the forest.

- Target conditions to manage healthy forest, withstand drought, and avoid insect infestation. Avoid weakened forest stands through overstock. Understand forest thinning and resilience targets to manage climate change and other needs.

- Fire and air quality impacts. Learn from fire modeling of the SOFAR area.

- Spotted owl information on occupancy post-fire, treatment impacts, and Sierra Pacific Industries' data.

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- Understand mill backlog and how long before mills could take trees.

Process Suggestions

Participants have a number of process suggestions for collaborating on the cohesive strategy, summarized in brief below:

- Sharing information is critical to support. Communicating with local populations, using social media, conducting briefings, and generally making information available will help garner support.

- Clarify the process first. For the collaborative work, establish a charter and charge, purpose, and decision making to support transparency and avoid confusion.

- Confirm the role of the collaborative effort. Several interviewees express concern that the Eldorado National Forest leadership has already decided what they are doing on the cohesive strategy and question the impact of the collaborative in implementing the cohesive strategy.

- The educational process is fundamental so collaborative effort has a common background and understanding.

- Having an impartial mediator and facilitator to support active community input and help resolve conflict is helpful and could be instrumental. A strong facilitator can insure that all the voices and interests can be heard.

- Start with what work has been done and what is underway.

- Avoid getting too detailed through the collaborative effort. Dinkey as a model is too detailed.

- Avoid spending too much time negotiating the exact wording of a vision statement or mission. Find the right level of detail and move forward.

- Find representatives of different values that are collaborative. Need to get to a point where people listen and are able to compromise to establish a common management goal and realize fire resiliency within the forest.

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Recommendations for Collaboration

The Consensus Building Institute (CBI) found a strong interest for collaborating and partnering to move forward the South Fork American River Cohesive Strategy. This proposed process design is responsive to stakeholders and the Eldorado National Forest's interest to implement the cohesive strategy in the South Fork of the American River (SOFAR) watershed. To that end, CBI is recommending an initial phase of activities to establish the collaborative process to support implementation of the cohesive strategy.

This effort would provide an opportunity for the Eldorado National Forest to convene and engage interested stakeholders in several activities over the next 6-8 months. Collaboration would include working concurrently with stakeholders specifically interested in the strategy and the broader public and also with large landowners and agencies with jurisdiction in the SOFAR watershed. The idea would be for all to come together with a common vision, goals, and priorities. The engagement efforts would contribute to a work plan and governance structure to support implementation of the National Cohesive Strategy in the SOFAR watershed.

Interests in the SOFAR Watershed

- Air Quality
- Community Vitality and Local Economic Development
- Ecology and Wildlife
- Fire Safety and Community Protection
- Forestry
- Governmental: Local, County, State, Federal, and Tribal
- Homeowners and Cabin Residents
- Industry, including Biomass Processing
- Landowners
- Recreation, Forest Visitors
- Utilities
- Watershed Planning
- Youth

Facilitate Collaborative Planning Workshops

The Eldorado National Forest would hold collaborative planning workshops to provide an opportunity for early dialogue on the cohesive strategy priorities and approach to public involvement and collaboration.

Staff of the Eldorado National Forest would conduct outreach to ensure that the diverse interests in the SOFAR watershed would be able to participate in the planning workshops. Participating organizations and individuals would engage with Eldorado National Forest staff during workshops. The Forest Supervisor would consider collaborative planning workshop input to finalize the strategy within the Eldorado National Forest.

CBI would recommend that the staff of the Eldorado National Forest partner with several representative stakeholders to assist in designing workshop agendas to be responsive to the interests of the local community and other stakeholders.

Develop Vision, Goals, and Priorities for SOFAR

During the workshop(s), participants would seek to identify priority areas for protection and treatment and key issues and concerns within the SOFAR watershed. Participants would help inform the values assessment of the area and provide insights and information that would guide efforts to the all lands approach regarding the three National Cohesive Strategy tenants: *Resilient Landscapes, Fire Adapted Communities, Safe & Effective Wildland Fire Response.* The focus at this stage would be on goals and priorities. The development of the strategy is intended to inform the purpose and need statements for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analyses and review. The goal of workshops would be to develop widespread understanding of the project area and create clarity on the goals and priorities for moving forward.

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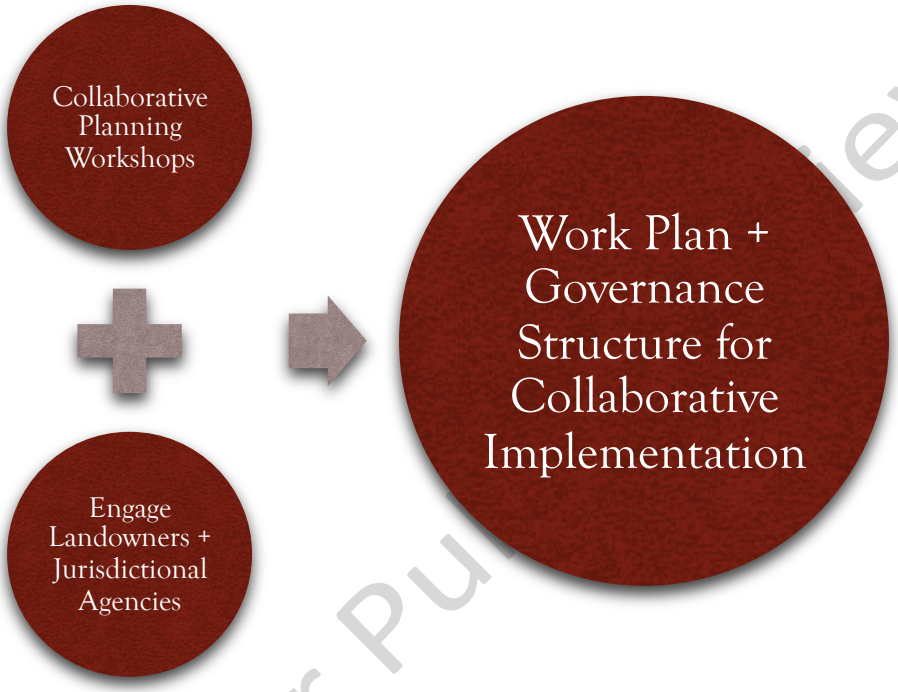
Design and Implement a Communication Plan

The Eldorado National Forest would develop a communication plan for the group to keep the broader interested publics informed about the progress and achievements within the SOFAR watershed. Ideas and input for the communication plan would be discussed at the workshops.

Phase 1 Activities (6-8 Months)



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Engage SOFAR Large Landowners and Jurisdictional Agencies

In concert with the planning workshops, staff of the Eldorado National Forest would meet with large landowners and jurisdictional agencies within the SOFAR watershed to explore their interest in fulfilling and supporting the goals of the National Cohesive Strategy. The intent of this exploration would be to stitch together the all lands approach.

Create a Work Plan and Governance Structure for Collaborative Implementation

The outcome of both the collaborative planning workshops and engagement with SOFAR large landowners and jurisdictional agencies would be to create a work plan and governance structure to support the all lands approach.

The Eldorado National Forest staff would articulate a proposed work plan for the implementation of the cohesive strategy, outlining the stakeholder opportunities for input and other forms of public information sharing.

The Eldorado National Forest staff would also identify a collaborative governance structure to support implementation of the cohesive strategy beyond this initial phase. The

governance structure would identify the roles and responsibilities of the Eldorado National Forest, large landowners, the jurisdictional agencies, interested stakeholders, and the general public. The structure would also identify other elements necessary to use everyone's time and resources effectively and support successful implementation of the cohesive strategy.

The intent of the collaborative effort would be to leverage resources and achieve efficiencies for mutual gain through dialogue and provide input on implementation of the cohesive strategy in the SOFAR watershed.

Conclusion

Communities, infrastructure, private timber, water, power, recreation, protected species, and fire frequency are all reasons that this watershed is a high priority for action and a cohesive strategy. Local stakeholders express a sense of urgency and strong need to act. The proposed process includes initial activities over the next 6-8 months to create a work plan and governance structure to support priority implementation of the strategy. The goal is to create an effective effort with public information sharing to help the local community, the region, and the state learn and benefit from cohesive strategy implementation.

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Appendix: List of Persons Interviewed

The Consensus Building Instituted conducted interviews by telephone individually and in small groups. The list is alphabetized by the interviewees' last names.

1. Creighton Avila, El Dorado County Supervisor's Representative
2. Berni Bahro, Trout Unlimited, El Dorado Chapter
3. Jon Bertolino, Sacramento Municipal Utility District
4. Jim Branham, Sierra Nevada Conservancy
5. Andrew Bray and John Rice, Sierra-at-Tahoe
6. Steve Brink, California Forestry Association
7. Mary Clarke Ver Hoeff, Recreational Residences Representative
8. Dan Corcoran, El Dorado Irrigation District
9. Sheriff John D'Agostini, El Dorado County
10. Marie Davis, Placer County Water Agency
11. Pat Dwyer, El Dorado County Fire Safe Council
12. Mark Egbert, Resource Conservation District
13. Alan Ehrgott, American River Conservancy
14. Steve Frisch, Sierra Business Council
15. Chad Hanson, John Muir Project
16. Mike Kaslin, Cal Fire
17. Jeff Mussell, PG&E
18. Howard and Tim Nielsen, Grazing Permittee
19. Rod Pimental, El Dorado Northern
20. Karen Schambach, Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation
21. Ed Smith, The Nature Conservancy
22. Kathy Smith, Local Resident
23. Ben Solvesky and Craig Thomas, Sierra Forest Legacy
24. Hardie Tatum, Associated California Loggers
25. Supervisor Brian Veerkamp, El Dorado County
26. Kevin Vella, National Wild Turkey Federation
27. Rich Wade, Sierra Pacific Industries

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Introductions

Please tell me a little bit about your (and your organization's) history in the area and involvement in fire management issues [(SOFAR landscape) and involvement with wildland fire management issues].

Future

When looking to the future, how would you envision or describe successful fire management in the area (or SOFAR landscape)?

Issues

The focus of this effort is to develop a treatment strategy to implement the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy for this landscape. The treatment strategy has three main goals: 1) resilient landscape; 2) fire-adapted communities; and 3) safe and effective fire response.

What are your primary interests or concerns related achieving these three main goals? 1) resilient landscape; 2) fire-adapted communities; and 3) safe and effective fire response.

Given that so many people have different values and concerns regarding this landscape (cultural resources, natural resources, timber, recreation, hydropower, etc.), how would you recommend planning and setting priorities for wildland fire management?

What, if any, specific recommendations might you suggest for various types of hazardous fuels reduction?

What issues would a successful collaborative process address? What issues might others raise?

What types of challenges or conflict would you anticipate might emerge during planning and implementation of the SOFAR process? How might those conflicts be addressed or resolved?

Knowing that funding is uncertain and maintenance will be necessary to realize the goals of the cohesive strategy, how might you recommend addressing long-term implementation issues, especially funding, for the SOFAR cohesive strategy? How can we build something that would sustain itself well into the future?

Process

What political issues would you recommend that I be sensitive to as this effort moves forward? Whose support is essential?

How would you recommend organizing stakeholder and public involvement to support moving this effort forward?

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The approach that is under consideration is to form a collaborative group or committee to support coordination and collaboration on visioning, planning, implementing, and funding the SOFAR Cohesive Strategy. Who might you recommend participate in this group?

How would you like to participate in a collaborative effort?

Technical
What information would you like to have or what technical questions would you like to be answered as part of this effort? Who has credibility to provide that information?

Conclusion
Is there anything else that you think I should know or advice that you might offer?
Who else, if anyone, do you think I should speak with?

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