

# WHAT TO EXPECT NEXT

## The Next Phase of the Foothills Landscape Collaboration

The next phase of the collaboration for the Foothills Landscape Project will be to inform the process used to develop the proposed action.

There will be four workshops between January 31, 2017 and July 31, 2017 to accomplish this. The workshops are two day events. The first day of each workshop will be during business hours the second day will be in the evening.

The collaborative process will create an environment to build trusting relationships, promote shared learning, to foster information sharing and to create a sense of partnership.

### WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

- The broad themes of discussion will be healthy forest and wildlife habitat, sustainable recreation, caring for unique habitats and watershed health.
- The narrower topics of discussion during the breakout sessions will depend on the theme and are derived from the information shared at the Community Conversations.
- The first day of the workshop will use the World Café model to allow for discussions on each theme to happen at the same time. You will choose a theme and engage in the dialogue. After about 20 minutes the discussion will pause and allow you the opportunity to move to a different theme's session or stay right where you are and continue. Once everyone gets settled at their second theme session there the session host will summarize the previous conversations. Then the dialogue will start up again. There will be a chance to change sessions every 20 minutes.
- The evening session will have the same structure except with 15 minutes at each theme's session because of the shorter meeting time. This portion of the workshop will look to expand the ideas from the previous day's discussions.
- There will also be a workshop "Wall" where you can use sticky notes to post ideas, concerns or other comments at any time during the workshop.

### VIRTUAL COLLABORATION

- The online forum platform used during the community conversations will be used to continue discussions outside of the workshops.
- The topics will be arranged based on themes and it will be open to start discussions, reply to existing comments and to share images or links to information.
- The information on the online forum will be rolled up into the Restoration Plan developed by the Collaborative Community.

### WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

## WORKSHOP I – FINDING THE RIGHT REASONS

- Agree on expectations of participant behavior, the vision for the collaborative process
- Review the information gathered at the Community Conversations
- Discuss the desired conditions outlined in the Forest Plan and what we know about the existing conditions. This will help us identify the restoration opportunities in the Foothills Landscape
- Find opportunities to incorporate data gathered, developed or stored by the Collaborative Community into the planning process

## WORKSHOP II – DETERMINING THE RIGHT WORK

- Narrow the focus of the project by determine the greatest needs for restoration from Workshop I
- Create restoration goals using the identified needs for restoration. The restoration goals are intended to turn the restoration needs into specific, practical, reasonable and measurable statements. The goals will frame what the Collaborative Community will recommend in Workshop III and IV.

## WORKSHOP III – DETERMINING THE RIGHT WORK

- Build recommendations for actions intended to meet the restoration goals
- Discuss the sideboards or limitations that might be set (such as Best Management Practices to protect soil productivity and water quality or recommended limited operating periods for trail work to ensure it does not interrupt a holiday weekend)

## WORKSHOP IV – FINDING THE RIGHT PLACES

- Recommend locations for the proposed treatments using information shared in previous workshops
- Refine treatments discussed in Workshop III

## ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET

The Collaborative Community is encouraged to recommend field trips or focused meetings to further discuss topics of interest. These will be planned and advertised to include a broader audience as needed throughout this phase of the Foothills Landscape collaboration. Make sure you are signed up to get email updates for the project and check the [website](#) to see more details on additional meetings.

## DELIVERABLE

A Foothills Landscape Restoration Plan will be the final product of this process. It will outline the recommendations made by the Collaborative Community at the workshops, and recommendation posted on the “wall” and on the online forum. Sections within the Restoration Plan will correspond with the workshop topics. Each of the draft section will be shared about 1 month after the workshop (to allow for time to incorporate online discussions) for review by the Collaborative Community.

The Restoration Plan will also capture any need for additional study that will be necessary to develop alternatives and a discussion of contradictory science that needs to be addressed as we move forward. There will also be a section that will summarize the lessons learned from the process and areas where shared learning occurred within the Collaborative Community.

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **HOW IS THIS STEP DIFFERENT THAN THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS HELD THIS FALL?**

The Community Conversations were focused on discussing attitudes, values and concerns about the Foothills Project. It was also intended to get conversations started about the restoration needs in the project area. The next step is to delve deeper into the topics and to find solutions to the problems presented during the Community Conversations.

The structure of the meetings reflects this difference. The Community Conversations were all identical and provided an opportunity for unstructured dialogue with Forest Service employees. In this phase of the collaboration the meetings are designed as workshops that provide a structured dialogue intended to find solutions and brainstorm ideas. The meetings are progressive and dig deeper into the topics and themes. This step of the process is intended to provide a tangible deliverable, a Restoration Plan, at the end of the process.

### **HOW ARE THE COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION GOING TO BE USED IN THIS NEXT PHASE OF COLLABORATION?**

The discussion captured during the Community Conversations reflect the attitudes, values and concerns of the Collaborative Community. The information will be used as a starting point for the working group phase of the project and will guide the dialogue throughout the process.

### **WHAT WILL THIS PROJECT INCORPORATE THE FOREST PLAN INTO THE PROPOSED ACTION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?**

The Forest Plan is incorporated into the project several ways. It defines the desired conditions for the project area. It also outlines standards that projects must meet such as in the Riparian Corridor *all trail construction, reconstruction and maintenance must be accomplished in accordance with current Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control in Georgia, applicable state or local erosion control regulations, and the current Forest Service Trail Handbook direction* (Standard 11-010 page 3-179).

### **HOW CAN THE COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY INCORPORATE BEST AVAILABLE SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION INTO THE PROCESS?**

In order for restoration to be successful restoration must be science-based. The Collaborative Community will collectively share science they feel is appropriate to the restoration goals outlined for the Foothills Landscape project.

### **HOW WILL DECISIONS BE MADE IN THIS PROCESS?**

The Forest Service cannot seeking consensus during this process. Instead it will organize conversations to share information, increase understanding between participants and to gather recommendations from individuals or organizations. The Restoration Plan serves as the record of recommendations from the Collaborative Community for the Foothills Landscape project. The information will be considered in the decision making process.

Decision making authority will not be delegated to the Collaborative Community. All decisions regarding the planning, analyzing and implementing the project will be made by the Forest Service's Deciding Official.

**WHY ISN'T THE FOREST SERVICE PRESENTING US WITH A MORE COMPLETE PROPOSAL?**

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest is seeking early input into the planning process. This means that the Forest has not developed any form of a proposal yet. This gives the Collaborative Community more influence over the final project.

**HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IF I CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE WORKSHOPS?**

There will be opportunities to start or join in on the discussion using the project's online forum. Emails on when and how to post your ideas will be sent out to the project's mailing list.

**WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF BEING INVOLVED WITH THE COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY?**

Participants in the Foothills Landscape collaboration will get a front row seat as the project unfolds and have opportunities to influence the outcome. Collaborative problem solving builds longer-lasting solutions to natural resource management issues. Collaboration allows participants to learn from one another and work toward a deeper understanding of important issues and constraints. Collaboration creates new networks by promoting interaction with a diversity of people and groups.

**IF I MISS A WORKSHOP HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT WAS DISCUSSED?**

A summary of the discussions and recommendations made during the workshops will be posted on the project's webpage.

**WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR THIS PHASE?**

The workshops will be held in the beginning of February, middle of March, middle of May and the middle of July. The exact times, dates and locations will be announced soon. Immediately after the workshop the online forum will be open up for about a month. Two weeks before the next workshop the draft section of the restoration plan will be released for review and feedback. The second round of community conversations will be held in August and early September. The scoping period initiating the National Environmental Policy Act is expected to start in October 2017.

**DO I HAVE TO ATTEND BOTH DAYS OF THE WORKSHOPS?**

You do not have to attend both days of the workshop in order to provide meaningful input. The workshops are designed to allow for a member of the Collaborative Community to attend both days, one day or the other or simply drop in on the one or two of the theme sessions.

**WHAT PURPOSE DOES THE ONLINE FORUM SERVE IN THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS?**

Life is busy and not everyone who wants to be involved in shaping the Foothills Landscape project will be able to make it to all or even any of the workshops. The online forum allows for those members of the Collaborative Community to stay involved and informed on the project's development. This also allows for conversations started in the workshops to be continued after the day is over.

**WHY DO WE NEED A VISION FOR THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS? WHAT IS THE vision USED FOR AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT THAN THE PROJECT VISION?**

The purpose of this project is to create, restore and maintain ecosystems that are more resilient to natural disturbances. Specifically, the Forest Service is seeking to enhance and provide quality habitat for rare and declining species, as well as desired game and non-game species; to reduce hazardous fuel loading across the landscape to diminish damaging wildfires; to improve soil and water quality; to provide sustainable recreation and access opportunities; and to awaken and strengthen a connection to these lands for all people.

The collaborative vision is different from the project purpose. The collaborative vision will be used to guide the structure of the collaborative process. It will help the Collaborative Community define what successful collaboration looks like for this phase of the project. An example might be *the collaboration will be an inclusive process that promotes trust-based relationships, shared learning, open-exchange of ideas and information and provides opportunities to build partnerships.*

**WILL THERE BE FIELD TRIPS OR MEETINGS IN ADDITION TO THE WORKSHOPS?**

The Collaborative Community is encouraged to recommend field trips or ad hoc meetings to further discuss topics of interest. These will be planned and advertised as needed throughout this phase of the Foothills Landscape collaboration. Make sure you are signed up to get email updates for the project and check the website to see more details on additional meetings.

**WHAT IF I AM ONLY INTERESTED IN ONE THEME?**

You are welcome to attend a workshop and participate in any number of sessions including staying in the same session throughout the day. If you are feeling pressed for time stop in and sit in on one or two sessions only.

**HOW WILL THE INFORMATION SHARED AT THE WORKSHOPS BE INCORPORATED INTO THE PROPOSED ACTION FOR THE FOOTHILLS LANDSCAPE PROJECT?**

The information shared during the workshops and online will be used to develop the Foothills Landscape Restoration Plan. The plan will outline recommendations for doing the right work in the right places for the right reasons. The Forest Service will use the Restoration Plan to develop the final proposed action ready for scoping. A cross-walk will be developed to show how the Restoration Plan correlates to the proposed action and it will be shared with the Collaborative Community.

**DO I NEED TO HAVE A SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND TO PROVIDE MEANINGFUL INPUT?**

Everyone has information and knowledge that can be used to shape the Foothills Landscape project. The collaborative process is about being innovative and looking at problems from different angles to find better solutions. Providing insight, asking questions and making recommendations all contribute to the success of the project.

**HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS?**

Information on the workshops, online forums and other meetings will be posted on the project's website. You can sign up to get email updates on the website.

**WHAT IS THE COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY?**

A robust collaborative process includes people with a diversity of perspectives and ideas. The Collaboration Community includes anyone who is concerned they will be affected by the project, whose position is related to the project, or is interested in learning more about the management of National Forest Service Lands in Georgia. This includes State and Federal agencies, non-government organizations, interested members of the public, local collations, special interest groups, County governments and the Forest Service.

**WHAT WILL THE COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY DELIVER?**

A Foothills Landscape Restoration Plan will be the final product of this process. It will outline the recommendations made by the Collaborative Community at the workshops, on the “wall” and on the online forum. The sections of the document correspond with the workshop topics. The draft section will be shared about 1 month after the workshop (to allow for time to incorporate online discussions) for review by the Collaborative Community. The Restoration Plan will be used as the framework for the proposed action.

The Restoration Plan will also capture any need for additional study and a discussion of contradictory science that needs to be addressed as we move forward. There will also be a section that attempts to capture lessons learned from the process and areas where shared learning occurring within the Collaborative Community.

**WHAT HAPPENS ONCE THE PROPOSED ACTION IS COMPLETE?**

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process will begin. The proposal will be shared and comments are solicited from the public. Once the comments are received they are reviewed to determine if alternatives to the original proposal are needed. It is the Forest’s intent to continue collaboration into and through the NEPA process. Details on the structure of this step will be shared as we get closer to developing alternatives to the original proposed action next winter. If you are interested in the NEPA process the Citizens Guide to NEPA is a great resource and you can find it on the project’s website.