

Sierra Cascades Dialog #7 Recreation

Breakout Group Notes

Sept 27, 2012

The following pages summarize the flip chart notes taken during breakout discussions at the Dialog.

Table Key Ideas

Motorized off-roading is the most difficult issue; vehicles going off road, ignoring signs, going thru meadows. How do we support that?

People aren't aware of trail etiquette; need to address that with more education.

Trends: kids will volunteer only if they're housed in a place with walls. Tents or open-air camping won't work. What does that mean? How do we adapt to that?

Some cultures don't hunt; some just like to be near/in water, harvest edibles, etc.

Educational component needed to teach, address standards of behavior on forest lands. Outreach to young.

Opportunities: capture the public's imagination. Use YouTube, technology outreach. Need a national template to our website.

Balancing rec resources; consider all elements to exist and value the forest.

The key to a viable public land is balance and compromise; heavy impact on local economy. Y Gen demographic has a significant impact on rural economies.

All users should be able to reach balance to use it equally.

FS culture doesn't reward collaboration and outreach.

Forest Service needs to be better at collaborative resolution rather than rule enforcement. It should harness the skills of the people in this room.

Collaborative resolution should be a mandatory training with the FS.

Damage to land by off road vehicles is a major concern.

It's hard to work with OHV folks, but okay with mountain biking folks. We need to have a new value system of public lands with the youth; a notion of Citizen Stewards. The future of the FS involves educating the youth.

FS capability is limited in resources. Money down each and every year, closure of rec facilities, offices, etc.; it's a constant downward spiral.

She sees a future in having local/regional Universities adopt Forests/Parks and work collaboratively in partnership.

Change the culture to work together

FS planning needs to have recreation as an essential activity, otherwise they won't act to protect it. Need to understand its usage and benefit. What can be encouraged?

Recognize impact on recreation to gateway communities. Plumas County has 20%+ unemployment; shop local, keep money there in the home communities.

Get users to pay to use the lands.

Need to push legislators to adequately fund the outdoors.

Table Key Ideas

The group started out the discussion with one participant wondering if it is possible to achieve collaboration with the "public land manager (PLM)."

There was a resounding answer of yes from the ED of Pacific Crest Trails (PCT) and the Outdoor Alliance participant that they and others have worked in collaboration and partnership with the USFS to achieve their objectives. They said they would not have been able to do the work they do without the partnership of the USFS!

One pointed to using successful models like the Winter Travel Transportation Management Plan on the Clear Water National Forest in Colorado. This model was an example of the point addressed by Tom Ward of getting the users together to come up with a solution and bring that to the PLM, rather than operating in "silos" of the user's special interest in interacting with the PLM.

The Outdoor Alliance has a MOU nationally with the USFS in which they operate in the NFs to promote their organization's objectives.

Another explained their programs and how they work in collaboration with the USFS to achieve their goals.

How were organizations connecting with the groups identified by Emilyn Sheffield: Boomers, Families, Millennial?

One group said the boomer population was a large percentage of their volunteer base and served as their strategy for connecting with that group.

PCT and Outdoor Alliance said they have youth programs that they use to connect to the millennial.

Both groups were concerned that the reduction in outdoor experiences would reduce the support for environmental issues one noted that the environmental movement is based on people's connection with a place and with nature.

The USFS's social scientist highlighted a study that identified the needs of each demographic type He highlighted the need to understand what kind of "experience" each user wants and not just assume you know based on demographics alone His point was what drives behavior are preferences/values/attitudes.

The Amador County participant said the people in his county are 4th generation landowners he did not know how to connect them to the land they were reclusive.

The conversation moved to how other organizations are trained in how to coordinate and work with volunteers and partnership programs and that this is really lacking in the USFS.

Consensus that the USFS needs to have more focus on staff that is: 1) Trained as volunteer and partnership coordinators, and 2) Have metrics to track their success.

Conversation on how to build relationships with communities: 1) Look at success models, 2) Invest in the communities (buy land to support user groups), 3) Become part of the community, 4) Participate in local economy, 5) Involve the board of supervisors and work with them, 6) Become part of the culture, 7) Have events like "clean up the park, have local official give speech, invite the community, 8) Provide something for the community to participate in, 9) The idea was to "move forward together" in building the support and culture, 10) The Summit of Partnership identified the key to a successful community event is "good people" and "baked goods."

How do you engage the older and somewhat antisocial older generation community members?

Many examples of successful, collaborative models could be resources for each other.

Table Key Ideas

Focus on the connection of people to place and the connection of cause and effect.

Develop shared vision and goals for recreation in consideration of a generation ahead and a generation behind, embrace technology and strong land ethic, and provide examples to the younger generation on how to resolve problems rather than planning their future.

Build partnerships through a collaborative planning process (the Giant Sequoia National Monument (GSNM) Association is an example of a great partnership that grew out of a successful collaborative effort during the GSNM plan amendment process).

Create a transparent process to assess what people care about (their values) to determine where there is generally agreement and where there are challenges and ensures people are heard.

Create tools that help people understand trade-offs.

Listen for understanding and common interests.

Build on what works.

Draw economic benefit from shared recreation values, and never underestimate the power of volunteerism in connecting people to places.

Recreation is about freedom and ownership.

Need additional data to substantiate changes (referring to Emilyn Sheffield's presentation).

Citizen involvement through stewardship is critical to achieving the triple bottom line.

Need a funded and supported way to reconnect people to the land, especially the younger generation.

Congress needs to be lobbied for additional resources to the Forest Service in order to support citizen stewards and volunteers.

Participants need to drop prejudices.

If you plan for it from the start, it invites people to the table and makes implementation more possible.

Collaboration needs to continue through implementation, not just the planning phase.

Affected people are not in the room – we need to go to where they are and not make assumptions or decisions on their behalf.

Need to balance local and national interests, as well as be mindful of FACA (Federal Advisory Committee Act).

Locals believe they are stewards of the land.

Alignment between marketing, social media, and actual trends needs to occur.

Need to sponsor a dialog with a stronger linkage of people to place.

A willingness to explore is imperative.

“People restoration” is as important as “ecological restoration.”

Table Key Ideas

Don't overlook recreation! Recreation is too low on the list of priorities. Recreation shouldn't have to fight so hard to get into the plans.

USFS lacks the experiential management.

If you plan the experience from the start, the entire process works better.

Cost is still a big issue to solving use problems and sustainability.

Planning ahead is of prime importance to sustainability.

Plan correctly from the beginning.

Multi-use landscapes – manage for the experience.

If you change the quality of the land, you change the experience.

Point: Trails open to everyone allows everyone the full experience of the forest.

Counter: Trails used by the higher levels of technology will displace lower levels of technology.

Rather than assigning the experience as “quality” recognize that each person values experience differently.

When you assign a “value” you tend to then prioritize one groups experience over another.

Planning enables the user to then decide what experience they have in the forest.

Table Key Ideas

Usage conflicts have been worsening with higher crowds and patronage.

Distribute recreation for safety and impact management.

Access to trails is important.

Respect, courtesy, notices, awareness of use... Can technology help us?

With potential to deal with safety issues as well to get more trails re-opened, get groups talking more, e.g. park water, barcodes, and apps.

Will forest service be able to implement solutions to all these issues, financial constraints and other obstacles?

Need sound feedback to stakeholders so everyone feels heard and understood why certain discussions are made.

Relationships provide stability, visibility, and activity.

Concerned that the community and stakeholders will not believe planning and discussion are taking place sincerely and with reflection on comment review.

User groups sponsor dialogue at local level.

Table Key Ideas

There is a need to increase access to funding by the Forest Service and other agencies, possibly leverage funding through partnerships.

Solving the triple bottom line issues will help the Forest Service better address the local ecological and economic support issues. It was pointed out that people need to acknowledge the Forest Service’s limitations.

User conflict is an important issue to address. There is a need for user groups to come together, and address access and resource protection issues. There is a need for user commitment to “Do No Harm” – Must have **more user responsibility**. The Forest Service seems to need resources to address the user conflict. Create a user-guide/tools book, or does that already exist? User groups can work together to develop a best practices guide for the forests, to share with the agency.

At the county level, the first priority is the community needs, not recreation. **Public safety based needs take first priority of county resources.**

The economic value of recreation can be overlooked by a community. There is a perception that small communities have limited opportunity for economic benefit from recreation users. Recreation users can provide economic support to the community. The community and other users lose recreation opportunities due to fires; all users not just single users such as through-hikers. Some communities have incomplete knowledge. There is a need to dispel the myth of little economic benefit from recreation to rural communities.

There was a request for a facilitated discussion environment or forum to build relationships among agency, recreation and community members. There was a request to have a **trusted neutral facilitator** for the discussion(s). Do not have a Forest Service agent/official as the facilitator, instead allow the Forest Service to be a participant in the discussion.

Table Key Ideas

Public Participation

Role of public in forest planning needs to be increased. How can we begin thinking of the concept of “citizen” as front and center in what we do in the future? How can citizens play a bigger role in achieving the bottom line?

“Vision 2020” is needed. Suggest creating concise vision statement to articulate how various communities want to see and work within forests. Would be great to have a strong vision statement articulating what the “vision” is for recreation in the region.

Dialogues need to be broader and less exclusive.

Need to find a path / process for addressing the conflicts that are coming up.

Need 3rd party facilitator/convener to help groups work together. University staff could help with dialogs.

Would like all forest decisions to consider social, environmental and economic “SEE” factors

Need for Increased Accessibility

Making forest the accessible is important. Americans with disabilities need more access and how do we include blind individuals. Need to include all disabilities.

How do we allow increased access? There is not point of discussing how to allow additional user groups until we determine how to increase access of the groups that are already trying to access the lands.

What are the incremental actions that can be taken now to increase access?

Sylvia explained that Lassen Forest denied disabled volunteers from doing project for unknown reasons and suggested that advocates sue forest if they wanted to do something. Volunteers have been denied access. How can we re-engage the American people?

Public Activities on the Ground

Using younger citizens for on-the-ground stewardship projects is desirable. Need for Forest Service to take active role in setting up more stewardship opportunities.

Use local media and articles in small papers to put the word out on projects and opportunities. Need for more regional efforts to engage greater audience.

Tourism boards can play a role in sharing information and building local dialogs.

Considering incompatible uses, how do we address inappropriate restrictions from some group's perspective?

Advocate groups need to work collaboratively together to create proposals.

PCT runs through entire Region 5. Most users are day users only small numbers actually hike through. Trail corridor is very important for the overall experience. Desire a consistent management approach along the PCT corridor. Can visioning process address this?

TABLE Key Ideas

Collaboration

Dialogues should continue between the users of public lands in order to find common ground amongst various interest groups, integrate different interests, and "make a difference."

A consensus amongst various users groups should be reached on the new forest plans to avoid litigation and to provide for all types of recreational use.

Concessions were willing to be made regarding the use/access of private property, as long as it was part of a voluntary process and not forced upon them.

People concerned about protecting the environment would be more willing to make concessions regarding the use of public lands, and have more trust in that process; if they knew a minimum baseline of protection would be in place regardless of the outcome of any such discussions.

If the Forest Service wants to build trust with the public there needs to be a dialogue and an opportunity for "give and take" amongst the various interest groups rather than a single "decider." All interest groups and representatives of our diverse society need to be brought in.

We need collaboration amongst state and local agencies.

Education and Outreach

Outreach and education on ecosystem services are paramount not just for children, but also adults. The more we understand ecosystem services and the benefit they provide everyone the more interested people will become in recreation, and protecting (and giving back to) these natural areas because people will feel like they have an ownership interest in these lands and protecting them.

Need education on stewardship and “ethics” of land use. Many people do not feel like they “own” public land because they feel like the Forest Service is always saying they can’t use it in the way they would like (e.g., camping, parking, etc.). Outreach on why the Forest Service is closing areas or limiting access to certain types of uses might both alleviate opposition to closures/restrictions and bolster a sense of ownership.

The agency needs to support its resource scientists to do outreach, not just on the politically acceptable things like fire prevention, but also on the importance of the public lands as ecosystems and the services they provide us all (e.g., carbon sinks, water purity, etc.).

The agency as a whole should be more geared towards education. This will help bring in users of all groups, and help everyone understand the value of our public lands.

There needs to be more outreach to underrepresented groups. Many people do not even know that these dialogues are taking place; we should make more effort to bring them in and give them a voice to help guide our decisions on how to use public lands.

Pacific Crest Trail

The Pacific Crest Trail is a case study in the issues discussed in the Recreation Dialogue: it attracts visitors because of its unique recreational experience; it supports local economy as many businesses, such as B&Bs, are set up to be integrated into the experience of hiking it; and it provides environmental services, such as protecting the headwaters that flow through it.

We need to protect the trail corridor from those things which threaten to impair its value (such as the encroachment of development as California’s population increases). The trail corridor needs to be mapped, a plan developed to protect the viewshed, and uses managed to protect the area surrounding the trail.

Access

If one type of recreational area is closed, then an area used for the same type of recreational area needs to be made available for access or it will lead to overcrowding.

Other

Recreation is not just for fun, it is also essential and part of a healthy lifestyle. Less emphasis should be put on the economics of recreation itself and more emphasis on the health benefits to people and how healthier people will save money for the communities in which they live.

The Forest Service needs to be accountable to locals. There is a difference between “stakeholders” and “Stakeholders.” Those who live closest are most affected by the use of these public lands.

Private property rights need to be respected. There is an inequity between those who own land and those who use the land. Accountability to the locals by the Forest Service will lead to a mutual respect and a greater willingness on behalf of the local property owners to work with the Forest Service.

BISHOP Key Ideas

The 3 aspects (soc, env, econ) are not competing, but complimentary of each other; approach issues in a way that not one wins/loses, but the 3 complement each other; groups need to anticipate each of the needs.

Set up collaborative effort, getting input from all participants has been good, but some participants haven't stood by their earlier commitments in the collaborative process. Once they got back to their "silos" they folded to peer pressure and back to one-dimensional interests. Lesson learned: keep collaborative groups together through implementation.

Collaborative planning groups need an assigned role throughout life of a project, not just in planning stage.

Agency needs to anticipate initial support and buy-in; can't undermine the effort by making commitments but then not supporting those commitments made

ALL participating parties need to know the rules of FACA and local government constraints on things that can and can't be done in a collaborative process.

Acknowledge that special interests tend to operate in own silos but work towards breaking the silos.

Need to better develop local understanding of effect of tourism on local economy; there is no marketing strategy for public lands; missed opportunity; need to get information out and build social and environmental aspects of public land messaging.

Need to consider growing use of technology as a bridge to provide information about what people want and need to know.

Most users of public lands enjoy multiple activities but data tends to show that users enjoy one activity to the exclusion of others. Need to have sense of awareness that most folks are multiple users.

Need to invest time to review data presented and then determine how the data can inform management decisions and opportunities.

Collaborative processes and groups can lead to successful decisions, but follow-through is needed. Success can fall apart if participants are allowed to go back to their silos.

What are the priorities of the USFS? Group participants think recreation should be a key priority for USFS. How does that fit into overall USFS management priorities?

There is room for all interests at the table. People like being outside; it doesn't matter what the activity is, it's all recreational.

There has to be a commitment to collaboration as well as self-management.

Need to champion work in progress and acknowledge that it takes time for things to be accomplished.

Need a marketing strategy to promote successes and opportunities.

If there is going to be movement, participants have to drop prejudices.

The public needs to understand what is possible rather than assume they know what is not possible. Realistic expectations need to be established.

Pro vs. Anti Wilderness debates: seems unconstructive since motorized access is illegal in wilderness. Noted that even in wilderness there are different levels of access.

Current access doesn't meet future needs. Need to identify what we have right now, what we need, what can we do and how are things going to be fixed.

Don't re-invent the wheel; utilize what is already in place: OHV Management Guidelines, mountain bike organizations have ideas on how to manage multiple use (IMBA); provide more opportunities for recreation that meet future cultural needs.

Success needs to be defined and measured: how close is each participant's opinion reflected in actual tangible work on the ground?

Need to develop real tools that can assist with access such as safe crossings of Hwy 395, loop trails, developed picnic areas. Give up the old, historic fights and battles.

Must take people from their perceptions to true reality: control vs. trust.

Need to address disabled access and make sure their interests are represented.

The panel discussion contained siloes; not a way to present land management needs.

Travel management plan process worked, but now that implementation has begun, participants aren't sticking to their commitments. Collaborations need to stay together through implementation and be used to assist community-wide responsibility for implementation.

Collaboration needs to be ongoing and not disband after a plan is completed. Lesson learned: Make sure there is support and buy-in for consensus reached during the collaborative process. Without ongoing commitments, credibility for future efforts is lost.

Need to know up front how decisions will be made – is it consensus driven? Is it a vote? Who has authority to make final decisions?

FACA impact – What is the role of local vs. national interests? Do local interests have a privileged interest?

Use technology to overcome FACA restrictions: allow wider participation through use of technology.

Legal funds are tapped, which makes negotiation and consensus all the more important.

Need to do more outreach to LA/Southern California (technology and social media).

Recreation generates \$650M to Inyo/Mono Counties; locals don't really cater to this segment; no marketing strategy for counties; no labor force developed to support recreation outside of gov't agencies = missed opportunity.

Recreation trends need marketing and social media alignment; use existing tourism boards; great opportunity for communication and education to visitors; align what people say they want with what we already have (messaging).

Accepting culturally diverse visitors is a challenge for some people in this area.

How data is presented tends to make us think in "siloes."

Questions submitted

Users that recreate in multiple activities are the majority – how can we develop a more holistic view of data and identified uses instead of being segmented/compartmentalized?

How can we have an extensive and well-maintained system of OHV trails in the face of declining USFS budgets?

How will county supervisors in the future be less combative with the UFS and more co-creators for the triple bottom line?

For communities in the Eastern Sierra, what are the unique responsibilities for those communities and citizens living in those rural areas where recreation takes place?

The title of Dr. Sheffield's presentation was Social and Economic Opportunities & Impacts for the Sierra Cascades...we heard nothing about what impacts recreation has on the ecosystem.

What are the trends of motorized recreation?

Has Dr. Sheffield uncovered any impacts to people's recreation experiences and/or choices with declining federal capacity (rangers, interpretive, maintenance)?

What happens when there is increased usage but less in-field personnel? Lower satisfaction?

To what extent is the Eastern Sierra different in terms of increasing urbanization?

What are declining or static recreational activities on public lands and what are the fastest growing?

Is there any dialog addressing wilderness and technology?

Given increasing use by inexperienced users of recreational users, how can the USFS promote education and enforcement of laws that protect the resources? Is there mandate and funding for educational programs and partnerships with private conservation groups? Is there any support for increased law enforcement on the NF's? These are both needed to cope with increase recreation use.