Handbook ONE

What is multiparty monitoring?
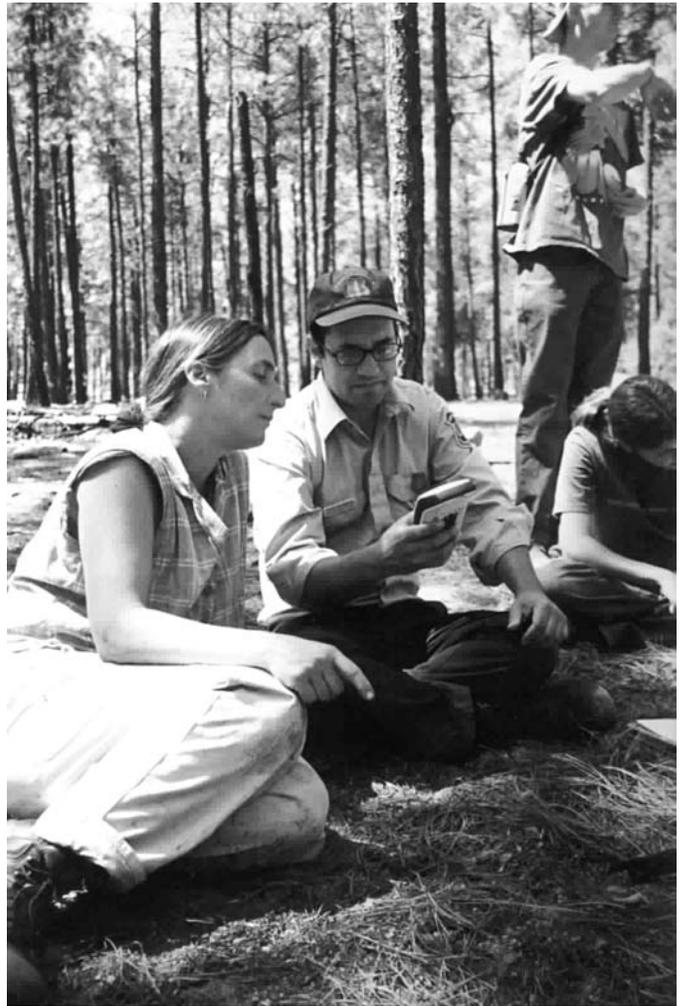
Steps for developing a multiparty monitoring process for
Collaborative Forest Restoration Program projects

The multiparty monitoring handbook series

This multiparty monitoring handbook is part of a series of guides to monitoring collaborative forest restoration projects. The series was written specifically for projects funded through the USDA Forest Service's Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP). The Handbooks in the series are:

> *Handbook 1* – What is multiparty monitoring?
> *Handbook 2* – Developing a multiparty monitoring plan
> *Handbook 3* – Creative budgeting for monitoring projects
> *Handbook 4* – Monitoring ecological effects
> *Handbook 5* – Monitoring social and economic effects
> *Handbook 6* – Analyzing and interpreting monitoring data

Multiparty monitoring is required of all CFRP grantees; however, the methods and approaches presented in these workbooks are to serve as guides and references only. The specific methods are NOT required. Because there is a wide diversity of projects funded through the CFRP, many grantees will have different requirements for monitoring and/or monitoring assistance.

The content of these handbooks was largely conceived at a series of workshops held in 2003 that were sponsored by the following: Ecological Restoration Institute, Forest Trust, Four Corners Institute, National Forest Foundation, Pinchot Institute for Conservation, USDA Forest Service – Collaborative Forest Restoration Program.

Copies of the multiparty monitoring handbooks are available on the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program Web site at www.fs.fed.us/r3/spf/cfrp/monitoring. For more information on this series, contact the Ecological Restoration Institute, Box 15017, Flagstaff AZ 86011-5017.

In addition to these handbooks, CFRP grantees are eligible for multiparty monitoring training workshops and technical assistance from the CFRP monitoring team (2004–2006) by calling 866.614.8424 or contacting any of the team members:

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Why multiparty monitoring for forest restoration projects?

There are many reasons for monitoring your project and using a multiparty approach. Multiparty monitoring will increase your understanding of the effects of restoration actions, support adaptive management, and set a course for future management. Multiparty monitoring also helps build trust among partners and establish project accountability in the broader community.

Why monitor forest restoration projects?_____

Resource management often follows an "adaptive management" approach, which allows people to review whether or not they are making progress toward the goals of their project. This review and feedback allows project managers to learn more about how their projects are working and to adapt treatments or plans along the way so that they better meet project goals. Feedback is particularly important for pilot programs like the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program because it helps forest managers, scientists, and practitioners learn more about new approaches to resource management like restoration forestry and collaborative management.

Adaptive Management is a process that allows people to review and change a project as it is taking place so that the project can continue to meet project goals even as conditions may change.

Monitoring is an essential part of adaptive management because it provides reliable feedback on the effects of a project. Monitoring involves repeated measurements over time to determine if actions have caused expected or unexpected changes. As opposed to casual observation, monitoring is designed to help identify changes and determine whether or not these are due to our actions.

What is multiparty monitoring?_____

Multiparty monitoring involves a diverse group of community members; individuals representing community-based groups; local, regional, and national interest groups; and public agencies. Involving people with differing backgrounds, experiences, and

perspectives helps project managers meet the interests and objectives of many different people who care about the project.

The multiparty process is designed to promote mutual learning, as participants work together to better understand project efforts and impacts. Participants can expect to gain a greater understanding of ecological health, the local community's economic and social well-being, and the interconnections between the environment, the economy, and social conditions. They will also learn more about others' perspectives on the project and its potential outcomes.

Multiparty Monitoring involves diverse groups of people—individuals, community groups, agencies, and local, regional or national organizations.

A diverse group is more likely to develop a comprehensive list of issues to be monitored, can help avoid duplication of efforts and unnecessary competition among stakeholders, may promote greater efficiency, and could help build positive relationships and prevent potential conflicts among those involved.

One should keep in mind, however, that this approach is not just a way to promote "buy-in" or reduce conflict. Multiparty monitoring can also be used to identify good questions to ask, assess how well a project is meeting desired outcomes and responding to diverse concerns, and identify how management can be adapted to improve results. In many ways, multiparty monitoring reflects a national trend toward broader participation in environmental management, especially on public lands.

Developing a multiparty process_____

There are five steps to developing a multiparty monitoring process:

A stakeholder is anyone who has a "stake" in the project's implementation or results.

    1 – Identifying and engaging stakeholders;

    2 – Building a common understanding;

    3 – Defining project goals, indicators, and measures;

    4 – Developing and implementing a monitoring plan; and

    5 – Learning from monitoring and assessing the process.

As you proceed through the steps, it is important to be flexible. You may already have accomplished one or more of these steps in the development of your Collaborative Forest Restoration Program proposal. As your project gets underway, it may be appropriate to revisit one or more of these steps as others join the project so they have an opportunity to help shape the process.

Step 1 – Identifying and engaging stakeholders

The first step in developing a multiparty process is to identify stakeholders and clarify everyone's interests and expectations. A stakeholder is any person, group or institution that affects or is affected by a project.

Stakeholders may be private landowners, individual citizens, non-government organizations (NGOs), businesses, public agencies, church and school groups, labor organizations, or others who have a commitment to community or location of a project.

Ideally, a multiparty group will have at least one individual who represents each type of stakeholder affected by a project. A single person may represent more than one stakeholder group, however. Stakeholders may vary by the type of project and its location.

Stakeholders may want to participate in monitoring because the project's results will affect their lives or their work. Their interests may center around aesthetics, recreation, the local economy, jobs, government policies, the environment, worker rights, or any number of other issues. To identify stakeholders, project participants should ask:

- "Who is affected by project activities and outcomes?"
- "Are relevant political or cultural groups represented?"

In some cases stakeholders may choose not to participate because of financial or time limitations, bad past experiences with groups, or other reasons. Engaging these stakeholders may require extra efforts on the part of the project leaders to ensure that, to the

Examples of stakeholders:

- Individual community members and groups
- Landowners
- Local, county, state, and federal agencies
- Tribal governments
- Neighborhood associations
- Community elders
- Mobile and in-place forest workers
- Environmental and conservation organizations
- Academic institutions and researchers
- Commodity interests
- Industry and small businesses
- Recreation and sporting interests
- Religious leaders
- Community groups

extent possible, representatives of all stakeholder groups become involved. Project leaders and participants should ask themselves:

- "Are there stakeholders who should be involved but may need support to participate?"
- "What support is required and how can it be provided?"

Your project should form a multiparty monitoring team, a group of stakeholders who will be engaged in each of the steps of multiparty monitoring. Multiparty monitoring groups need to be creative and flexible about involvement. A thorough identification of stakeholders does not necessarily translate into active participation by all of those interested. Individual involvement in monitoring may vary over time due to changes in funding, time constraints, work focus, and other factors. These changes may affect the structure and functioning of a multiparty monitoring team.

Step 2 – Building a common understanding

Many times when diverse groups come together to work on a project, people assume that the words they use mean the same thing to everyone else. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. For example, sometimes people have different definitions or understandings of what "restoration" means. If all participants do not have a common understanding of the words they use, this can lead to misunderstandings and frustrations as a project grows. Sometimes it is useful to ask people to explain the terms they use so that there is shared understanding among everyone in a group.

All stakeholders should have access to the same information about a project and should make sure that they understand the language that each party uses in talking about the project.

Another important factor to ensuring a broad collaborative process is accepting that different types of data are useful and important. Many Collaborative Forest Restoration Program projects are managed by or in collaboration with Native American tribes or with land grants or other Hispano communities. These groups sometimes face difficult decisions in developing a monitoring strategy that can address both CFRP project goals and traditional cultural ways of learning and knowing. It may be important to

It is up to the stakeholders to decide what and how to monitor.
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Native American or Hispano communities may want to include elders, religious leaders, or other traditional groups in discussing and monitoring culturally important effects of a project.

include people such as elders and religious leaders who hold a great deal of indigenous knowledge in discussing a project and how it will be monitored. It is up to the stakeholders to decide the types of knowledge that may be used in monitoring. Tribes and other groups may need to be creative in how they set up a monitoring project to include traditional forms of knowledge.

Step 3 – Defining project goals, indicators, and measures

Once a multiparty monitoring team has formed and relevant knowledge has been shared, the next step is to define project goals, indicators, and measures. This process, while time consuming, will ensure that all stakeholders have similar expectations and that they remain committed to monitoring. During this step, it is important to develop a common definition of what "success" looks like, so that the group can agree when it has achieved its goals.

See Handbooks 4 and 5 for more information on choosing goals, indicators, and measures for project monitoring

The Multiparty Monitoring process should engage <u>all</u> stakeholders in deciding exactly what will be monitored, and how it will be monitored.

Multiparty monitoring groups must collaboratively choose the indicators of change they will monitor. Monitoring groups may be faced with limitations of time and money, and they will have to carefully consider which indicators will provide them with the most useful information. A good place to start is by examining project goals, as defined by the local community and others, including project funders and managers.

Step 4 – Developing and implementing a monitoring plan

Once project goals and indicators are clear, the group must develop a monitoring plan. The monitoring plan describes who will collect what information and when. Special care should be taken to ensure that the plan can be easily understood and used by all stakeholders.

Gathering and recording monitoring data can be time-consuming. For monitoring efforts to succeed, it may be necessary to hire a monitoring coordinator, or to allocate a certain amount of a project member's salary toward this goal. While each CFRP grant should include some funding to carry out monitoring, it may be necessary to supplement these costs through other sources, such as youth conservation corps programs, collaborative work with schools or other projects, or additional fund-raising from foundations or public funding sources.

Realistic budgets and adequate funding are essential to a successful monitoring program.

See Handbook 2 for more information on putting together a successful plan
See Handbook 3 for information on how to establish realistic budgets, examples of budgeting for CFRP monitoring, and potential sources of funding to supplement monitoring efforts

Step 5 – Learning from monitoring and assessing the process

During data collection and analysis, it is important to remember that multiparty monitoring is a group process. Stakeholders should review data and results as a group, together reflecting on what they can learn from the data and what, if anything, they will need to change in response to what they have learned. If a monitoring team determines that its monitoring is not meeting its needs, it should be flexible enough to revise its monitoring plan.

Multiparty Monitoring doesn't end when the data are collected.
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It is important that all data be discussed and analyzed by the stakeholders, as a group.

See Handbook 6 for more information on what can be learned from monitoring data

Outreach and communication_____

Throughout a project, it is a good idea for multiparty teams to communicate with people who are not part of the monitoring efforts. There are several reasons for reaching out to the broader community, including:

- to attract and engage diverse parties, including skeptics and critics,
- to raise the visibility and openness of the monitoring process,

- to keep everyone informed about monitoring progress and issues that arise during implementation and monitoring,
- and to get an outside perspective of the project's progress.

Making information and data accessible to all stakeholders, whether or not they are part of the monitoring team, is essential to the success of multiparty monitoring. This means the multiparty team must create and maintain a place to store data and reports so that they are accessible by all. Making information available maintains the *transparency* of the project, which can help to build trust among those who may have different perspectives, interests or backgrounds.

Some ways to provide transparency include:

- Use a variety of tools to disseminate information, including community and town meetings, face-to-face discussions, private consultations, field trips, newsletters, newspaper articles or editorials, progress reports, websites and listserves, and regional and national meetings. Information can also be shared in non-traditional ways, such as through performance art.
- Use training as an outreach method. For instance, a project can include training workshops to help increase stakeholders' ability to monitor ecological and social conditions. This could encourage shared learning among stakeholders.
- Give special consideration to ways to reach ethnically diverse and geographically dispersed residents of rural areas, such as by providing information in simple, clear terms or in multiple languages when relevant.
- Publicize where project information and data are kept and who is responsible for maintaining them.

- Bring team members and other stakeholders to the restoration site. Consider involving not only team members but also the media, outside interests, policymakers, and others.

Credibility of the monitoring process and results_____

Credibility of monitoring begins with identifying and engaging stakeholders, and is maintained by following all the steps in the monitoring process. Monitoring efforts are most credible when they maintain diversity, a common understanding, openness, flexibility, and transparency.

The more diverse the monitoring team, the greater the potential for broader acceptance of results. Similarly, the more open and accessible the monitoring process, the more likely people are to trust it. When a monitoring team has considered several different approaches and perspectives, its plan will have greater legitimacy.

Glossary

Adaptive management. A resource management approach that combines science and practical experience by treating management actions as experiments. Adaptive management involves carefully observing human and ecological system responses to management actions, and adjusting future management based on what is learned.

Constraints. Problems that limit a project and may keep it from succeeding, such as lack of time, money, trained personnel, and social or political opportunities.

Data. A set of observations collected through monitoring. Information is derived from data through analysis.

Ecosystem. An interacting system of living plants and animals and the nonliving parts of their environment.

Goal. A general summary of the desired state that a project is working to achieve. A good goal meets the criteria of being visionary, relatively general, brief, and measurable. A goal is typically less specific than an objective.

Implement. To put a plan or agreement into action.

Indicator. A unit of information measured over time that documents changes in a specific condition. A good indicator meets the criteria of being measurable, precise, consistent, and sensitive.

Information. Knowledge that is extracted from data through the process of analysis.

Information need. What a specific audience wants to know about the project.

Measure. Item used to determine change in project indicators.

Monitoring. The periodic collection and evaluation of data relative to stated project goals, objectives, and activities.

Implementation monitoring is important for multiparty monitoring groups because it simply asks, 'did we do what we said we would do?' *Effectiveness monitoring* helps determine whether or not the project goals were attained by asking the question 'did it work?' Reducing the small trees that compete with old-growth ponderosa pine, and increasing forage for deer are examples of project goals that can be measured through effectiveness monitoring. *Validation monitoring* involves checking the assumptions upon which our restoration efforts are based. 'Did reducing crown cover actually reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire?' is a validation monitoring question. These concepts are discussed in *Handbook 2*.

Monitoring plan. An outline for the steps you will undertake to ensure that the project is on track. It lists a project's audience, their information needs, the strategies that will be used for data collection, the indicators, the methods that will be used to collect data, and when, by whom, and where data will be collected.

Multiparty. Involving members from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives.

Outcome. The result of an action or set of actions.

Participation. Active involvement in the design, management, and monitoring of a project.

Resources. Items that a project needs, such as staff time, managerial time, local knowledge, money, equipment, the presence of trained people, and social and political opportunities.

Stakeholder. Person who has vested interest in the natural resources or who potentially will be affected by project activities.

Transparent. Easily accessed and understood; obvious in structure and meaning. Transparency means that all project information, including goals, process, actions, and accomplishments, is available to all and clearly understood by everyone

Treatment. A management action intended to address a forest health problem; often used synonymously with *prescription*.

Trend. Direction of change.

Variable. A particular characteristic that an observer is interested in measuring.

Acknowledgments