SAGEBRUSH PARTNERSHIP MODEL DEVELOPMENT FINAL MATERIALS

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Sagebrush Partnership Model Development Executive Summary

The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), in partnership with Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV), and other key conservation partners is developing a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy (Conservation Strategy) to guide collective efforts to conserve the sagebrush biome.

As part of these efforts, the National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (National Center), working in coordination with a Core Team consisting of representatives from WAFWA, IWJV, BLM, USFWS, and the University of Montana, conducted a situation assessment (*Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance Assessment*) of individuals from NGOs, user groups, and Tribal, Federal, and State agencies to identify the needs, issues, priorities, and obstacles associated with sagebrush biome partnership. Not surprisingly for such a diverse group, support for a partnership governance structure ranged from strongly enthusiastic to opposed, but the most common response was supportive with caveats. Caveats primarily focused around respecting jurisdictional authorities and maintaining local autonomy. Other themes heard from assessment interviewees highlighted the need for continuity, increased and dedicated resources and staffing, the need for broad participation at all levels, and coordination across scales, the need to build on successes while also leaving room for innovation, and attention to data, monitoring, and landscape prioritization.

The National Center also completed a research report (*Review of Models for Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance)* that reviewed and provided lessons learned from other large landscape collaborative governance models. Lessons learned from successful partnership models included attention to goals and measurable impact - having a compelling vision and agreed-upon quantitative goals that are viewed within the larger system context to appropriately evaluate their success. In addition, successful partnerships have an effective system to track and report on progress as well as adjust goals and management approaches over time, balanced and inclusive representation, access to needed knowledge and scientific or technical information, sufficient and sustainable funding, dedicated leadership and staffing, a structured approach to decision-making and conflict resolution, attention to relationship building and incentives for involvement at all partnership scales.

Following the assessment and research reports, facilitation team members from the National Center and Ross Strategic guided sagebrush biome stakeholders and Tribal partners through a collaborative process from March to July 2021 to develop the potential partnership models best suited for conservation efforts in the sagebrush biome.

Building on these results, three partnership model options were generated by the collaborative process. The first partnership model option is a Governor-Convened Representative group at the biome level consisting of representatives appointed by the executive level of State and Federal wildlife agencies, NGOs, industry, and Tribal Nations. The second partnership model option is an NGO partnership, composed of a biome-level coordinating group with an NGO as the convening entity. The third partnership model option is a Federally led Coordination Committee with Federal agencies from USDI and USDA as joint conveners of a biome-level coordinating body and states helping to set priorities. Elements in common across all partnership model options include tribal engagement, diverse representation, engagement of different levels of representation, sufficient funding and staffing, and science, technical, and communications support. The three partnership model options, and the process leading to their development, are outlined in this package.

The participants in the partnership models development process have expressed the hope that these products will be a springboard for further discussion among the larger sagebrush community about the formation of a collaborative partnership, followed by decision-making around forming such a partnership.

Sagebrush Partnership
Problem Statement, Vision Statement, Principles
4/27/21

Problem

Sagebrush now occupies less than 55 percent of its historical extent, and more than 350 species of plants and animals associated with sagebrush are considered species of conservation concern. Several species considered sagebrush obligates have been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, including greater sage-grouse, Gunnison sage-grouse, and pygmy rabbit. Spurred to prevent the sagebrush biome from degrading to the point where it can no longer support the needs of wildlife and humans, there are over 500 organizations working on all aspects of sagebrush conservation and science, from treating invasive plants to fighting fires, cutting conifers, restoring burned or degraded areas, and many other activities. Many of these groups are working independently of one another and resources are limiting on all these fronts. There are some existing coordination bodies working effectively at/between local and regional scales, but they are not synchronized across scales or at a biome-wide level. Approaches across jurisdictions (e.g., policies, regulations) in the sagebrush ecosystem are not necessarily complementary**.** To date, there has not been a concerted effort at engaging Tribes and incorporating Tribal sovereign territory, inherent rights, reserved treaty rights, values, and Indigenous knowledge (in a way that respects Tribal data sovereignty and confidentiality) into existing regional or large-scale collaborative efforts.

As a conservation community, we are likely less effective and efficient because we are not leveraging resources; sharing experiences, a common language, methods, or data (and may not even be aligned on the relevant body of science); nor are we oriented towards or accountable for common goals. At times, we may even be working at cross-purposes. The community has not yet explored whether we could develop a voluntary set of broad, common goals (or parallel pathways) on priority landscapes on the biome-wide scale that could be adjusted and adapted as needed on local and regional scales. Can a partnership model help fix that, while resulting in the desired conservation outcomes and ensuring that work continues to get done on the ground?

Partnership Vision

We envision a future where 500+ organizations and regional coordination bodies are partnering on sagebrush conservation across jurisdictions and scales. With integrity, the partnership incorporates Tribes and Tribal organizations, supports their capacity to engage, and acknowledges the status of Native American Nations as sovereign, holders of inherent rights and treaty rights, co-managers of resources, and stewards of this land for thousands of years. These partner organizations and sovereign entities are supporting each other to work on the right problems in the right places with the right tools and sufficient resources, are aware of each other's efforts, and are accountable for their own efforts. They are coordinating efficiently and effectively to preserve the sagebrush biome and its ecosystem role in meeting the needs of humans and wildlife who depend upon it.

[The below Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation Lifeway diagram from the Climate Change Strategic Plan is an example of an attempt to portray a tribal perspective-that all things are connected, and that people are part of the whole. Impacts to one-will impact all. Disturbances including drought, flood, wildfire and Invasives will have impacts to tribal cultural resources, traditions, foods, and spirituality. Impacts are expected to be place-based and at various scales, both temporally and spatially.]

Guiding Principles for Sagebrush Partnership (adapted from the Enlibra Principles)

- *National Standards, Neighborhood Solutions* – Assign responsibilities at the right level
- *Collaboration, Not Polarization* – Use collaborative processes to break down barriers and find solutions
- *Reward Results, Not Programs* – Move to a performance-based, instead of process-based, system
- *Science for Facts, Process for Priorities* – Separate subjective choices from objective data gathering, which includes observations from Western science and traditional knowledge
- *Markets Before Mandates* – Pursue economic incentives whenever appropriate
- *Change a Heart, Change a Nation* – Environmental education and understanding are crucial, and must include the braiding together multiple ways of knowing
- *Recognition of Benefits and Costs* – Make sure all decisions affecting infrastructure, development and environment are fully informed
- *Solutions Transcend Political Boundaries* – Use appropriate geographic boundaries to resolve problems while recognizing the sovereignty of Tribes and states and finding ways

to work together in mutually beneficial relationships

- *Reciprocity – ensure that actions and decisions are mutually beneficial and acceptable to partners and that capacity to participate in the partnership is supported as needed*

SAGEBRUSH BIOME PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT

National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution
Udall Foundation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) is coordinating the development of a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy (Conservation Strategy) with Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and other key conservation partners. As part of these efforts, the National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (National Center) was asked to identify potential models for a partnership governance strategy to improve coordination of conservation efforts in the sagebrush biome. To support this objective, the National Center conducted a neutral situation assessment identifying the needs, issues, priorities, and obstacles associated with sagebrush biome partnership governance. The assessment also helps identify what's working well with existing sagebrush biome partnership governance, identifies recommendations and opportunities for sagebrush biome partnership governance strategies, assesses support for anticipated workshop panel (Panel) member composition—those who will tailor and refine a sagebrush biome partnership governance structure—and identifies any additional members who should serve on the Panel.

The finding in this report include general themes that were identified from the assessment interviews. These themes summarize the diverse perspectives of the interviewees and may be used to better understand what is needed to build a successful collaborative governance structure going forward. The findings are categorized and summarized below:

Sagebrush Executive Oversight Committee:

- There is disagreement as to whether the current composition of the Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) needs to change.
- Major challenges of the EOC are consistent prioritization from its members and connection to work on the ground.
- Most stated that there are limitations to how much the EOC can accomplish with its current structure.

Support for a Sagebrush Partnership Governance Entity:

- There were a range of views from supportive, supportive with caveats, feeling the status quo was sufficient, and unsupportive.

What Has Worked Well in Sagebrush Biome Conservation:

- Specific, positive actions from BLM, EOC, Intermountain West Joint Venture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, State of Oregon, Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, and Western Governors' Association were mentioned by interviewees.

Barriers to Effective Sagebrush Biome Conservation:

- Insufficient funding and staffing
- Communication silos and jurisdictional boundaries
- Data and monitoring limitations
- Wasteland perception
- Funding structures
- Inconsistent and insufficient priority
- Threats to the biome (Fires, invasive plants, etc.)

Learning from Other Collaborative Efforts:

- Broad partnerships
- Ecosystem focus
- Storytelling
- Dedicated staffing
- Core area planning
- Bottom-up efforts
- Inclusion of local people
- Attention to incentives to participate
- Sufficient time and resources
- Collaborative efforts lead to better outcomes

Critical Actions for Successful Coordinated Actions of Sagebrush Conservation Efforts at the Landscape-Level:

- Federal agencies – leadership and priority setting
- Tribal agencies – Tribes should be included and are likely interested to participate
- States and State agencies – increase and facilitate coordination
- Private sector and landowners – willing to represent issues in a common venue

Interviewee Recommendations for Sagebrush Conservation Governance:

- Landscape prioritization
- Inclusive representation
- Dedicated staffing
- Recognize and highlight successes
- Connecting landscape-level coordination to local work on the ground
- Data and monitoring
- On the ground empowerment and incentives
- Sagebrush conservation leadership – who should lead this effort
- Sagebrush Workshop Panel member suggestions

Recommendations for Next Steps

In order to develop and refine a governance model or models for sagebrush, it's critical that a diverse, inclusive, and broad cross section of private landowners, Tribes or inter-Tribal organizations, industry and user groups (oil, gas, solar, mining, etc.), Governor's office representatives, NGOs, representation from those with fire and invasive plants responsibilities (State departments of agriculture and forestry, County weed districts, etc.), State wildlife agencies and Federal land management agencies, partnership organizations (IWJV, WGA, etc.), academics from states with sagebrush habitat, and other identified stakeholders is engaged.

Building on themes heard from interviewees, key areas of focus as a governance model for sagebrush conservation is being developed and refined include:

- Building on successes and leaving room for innovation
- Continuity, dedicated resources, and staffing
- Broad participation at all levels, and coordination across scales
- Data, monitoring, and landscape prioritization considerations

BACKGROUND

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) is coordinating the development of a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy (Conservation Strategy) with Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and other key conservation partners. Part I of the Conservation Strategy is a contextual analysis of the human and wildlife needs from the sagebrush biome, and a scientific review of the threats and related conservation challenges (restoration, adaptive management and monitoring, communication). Part II, which will contain strategies that can be employed at biome-wide and local scales to conserve sagebrush landscapes, is in progress. BLM and WAFWA sought assistance from the John S. McCain III National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (National Center) in identifying potential models for a governance strategy for conservation of the sagebrush biome as a key strategic element of Part II of the Conservation Strategy. An expanded governance model is needed to ensure that all actors (State wildlife agencies, State departments of agriculture, State oil and gas conservation commissions, State land boards, Federal agencies, NGOs, industry, landowners, and others) are effectively using their authorities and resources towards a shared responsibility to conserve the sagebrush biome and the ecosystem services humans derive from it.

Throughout the literature, there are sometimes overlapping definitions for terms such as "network," "partnership," and "collaborative." For the purposes of this report, we chose the term "partnership" to emphasize the focus on retaining existing authorities within individual member organizations, using the following definition: an informal or more formalized arrangement (e.g., based on an agreement or legislation) where two or more autonomous entities "come together to exchange ideas, build relationships, identify common interests, explore options on how to work together, share power [and/or resources], and solve problems of mutual interest."[1] For "governance," we use the definition put forward by Emerson and Nabatchi, "the processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private, and civic spheres to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished."[2]

The National Center is an independent Federal program established by Congress to help Federal agencies build consensus and enhance collaboration in resolving environmental, natural resource, and public lands issues. The National Center serves as an impartial, non-partisan third-party institution providing professional expertise and services to all involved, including facilitation, situation assessment, mediation, collaborative process design, capacity-building, and project management.

To support the development of Part B of the Conservation Strategy, the National Center conducted a neutral situation assessment identifying the needs, issues, priorities, and obstacles associated with sagebrush biome partnership governance. The assessment also helps identify what's working well with existing sagebrush biome partnership governance, identifies recommendations and opportunities for sagebrush biome partnership governance strategies, assesses support for anticipated workshop panel

[1] Scarlett and McKinney, "Connecting people and places," 116. Our definition is adapted from this network governance definition.

[2] Emerson and Nabatchi, Collaborative Governance Regimes, 18.

(Panel) member composition—those who will tailor and refine a sagebrush biome partnership governance structure—and identifies any additional members who should serve on the Panel.

This report is a neutral, third-party assessment and reflects the perceptions, concerns, and suggestions heard from those interviewed. The National Center strove to reflect the perspectives and concerns of all parties equally and as neutrally as possible.

ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The National Center worked with the Core Team, Pat Deibert, USFWS; Ali Duvall, Intermountain West Joint Venture; Shawn Johnson, University of Montana; Ken Mayer, WAFWA; Karen Prentice, BLM; Tom Remington, WAFWA; and San Stiver, WAFWA , to define the approach and scope of the assessment, identify interviewees and interview questions, and determine an approach for reporting the results.

The purpose of the assessment was to help identify what is working well within sagebrush partnership governance, identify recommendations for additional sagebrush partnership governance strategies, identify barriers that exist, assess support for anticipated Panel member composition and various existing partnership governance model concepts, and identify any additional members who should serve on the Panel.

WAFWA and the National Center contacted 26 representatives from 20 organizations. One-hour phone interviews were conducted with 19 individuals representing 15 organizations between December 2020-January 2021. The Core Team developed a preamble which was read to all interviewees at the beginning of each interview. Each interviewee was then asked a standardized list of pre-determined questions, with additional follow-up questions unique to each interviewee emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee as the interview progressed.

A list of interviewees (Appendix A) and assessment interview questions (Appendix B) are included for further reference.

FINDINGS

SAGEBRUSH EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

EOC'S ROLE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

The EOC was formed by WAFWA in 2008 as an outgrowth of the 2006 Sage-grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy. The EOC consists of leadership of State wildlife agencies and Federal agencies with responsibilities and authority for management of sagebrush dependent wildlife or their habitat.

Most people stated that there are limitations to how much is possible in the current structure of the EOC. Some noted that they were not sure how the EOC could do more than it's already doing given the challenges of coordinating work across a wide range of organizations with different authorities and across states with different politics.

Speaking to the goal of implementing the Comprehensive Sage-grouse Conservation Strategy, one person reflected that they have never heard reference to the Strategy helping shape anyone's work in anything other than in a very broad sense. One person also mentioned the EOC is mostly focused on sage-grouse populations and the science and technical side of the work without playing a role in coordinating, mobilizing, communicating, building capacity, or leveraging funding. Another interviewee noted that the EOC has been a good forum for discussion and relationship-building but has not been effective in prioritizing and implementing work.

Challenges with the current structure of the EOC are consistent participation, continuity of effort, resources, inclusive representation, and relationships because of lack of organizational prioritization. When administrations at various levels do not prioritize sagebrush work, directors focus elsewhere because they are already overextended. This results in diminished efficacy of the EOC, with meetings not well attended, and meetings becoming forums for re-reporting rather than making progress on goals. Interviewees indicated that this challenge was particularly relevant during the last presidential administration. The challenge of connecting the work of the EOC to on-the-ground folks at the local scale was also noted by interviewees. Some noted that while the group may be visionary, if it doesn't have connections to implementers on the ground, it won't be effective.

Moving forward, it was suggested for the technical team to include a more topically based structure (for example: creating a wildlife sage-grouse tech team, and an invasive grass tech team). It was noted that they need the right expertise to be able to fill in information gaps and provide guidance on topics for those who have the purse strings.

People also stated the need for organizations in the EOC to act on sagebrush conservation, even though it may not be perfect, and to adaptively manage by hearing feedback and incorporating feedback as work moves forward. One interviewee highlighted that it could be counter-productive to give the EOC the authority to articulate to members specific actions, and that care needs to be taken to respect jurisdictional autonomy and authorities, because what works in one state will not necessarily work in another.

Specific areas of focus for the EOC that interviewees suggested would be value-added included:

- bringing a national focus to sagebrush conservation
- providing tools and science
- sharing ideas and potential actions
- carrying a unified and consistent message across agencies to Secretary of Interior about importance of sagebrush conservation, especially relevant now that there is a new presidential administration
- technical committee work on prioritizing and implementing
- developing a vision for what needs to be done that can be communicated to those who can dedicate resources to implement
- large-scale rehabilitation and support

COMPOSITION OF THE EOC

Views on EOC representation seem to be of two minds; some think current representation has the right people at the table while others are dissatisfied with the current level of diversity . Those who think the current representation is sufficient mentioned that the EOC has never been an exclusive group and has always involved as many as want to be involved. These interviewees also indicated that all the relevant Federal and State agencies that have sage-grouse are there and in their mind that is sufficient.
Some do not know who else they would broaden the group to, and some specifically think the group needs to remain a governmental body with State wildlife agencies maintaining leadership, and with non-agency organizations remaining non-voting.

Those who are dissatisfied with the lack of diversity in representation mention wanting to see on-the-ground practitioners, NGOs, energy and other industry representatives, Tribes, ranchers, State departments of agriculture, State divisions of forestry, etc., included. They see these vacancies as disrupting connectivity and reducing the ability of the EOC to coordinate sagebrush conservation across all those who are impacted and/or have management authorities. A few individuals mentioned having approached the EOC at different times to suggest broadening stakeholder representation without success. They also mentioned their understanding of the challenge of getting work done when there are too many people at the table but that nonetheless not including these others is a weakness that should be addressed. Moving forward, some suggested that a discussion of the purpose of the EOC is needed to determine what the best composition is to meet that purpose. Some suggested starting with broader representation, specifically contacts in every state and connectivity to the local level, and then getting buy-in on reorganization suggestions from that broadly represented group. The broader group would then determine the appropriate venue moving forward, determine staffing, reimagine the technical team, etc. Alternatively, there was a suggestion for an independent group to assist with this purpose and assess the membership of the EOC after the purpose and goals are clearly articulated.

Since the EOC currently serves largely as an information-exchange body, interviewees shared some thoughts about the kind of venue needed for coordination, planning, and implementation of landscape-level sagebrush conservation efforts. Since partnerships have evolved and there is a broader ecosystem focus, some believe that large-landscape conservation work is beyond the purview, capacity, and authority of being run by wildlife agencies, and needs to be done in an arena that reflects the full range of relevant players in sagebrush conservation.

SUPPORT FOR A SAGEBRUSH PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE ENTITY

Interviewees were asked if their organization's sagebrush conservation effectiveness would be enhanced if there were a leadership/coordination body, whether the EOC or another body, that developed a common set of objectives for sagebrush conservation, a common prioritization scheme for conservation emphasis of sagebrush landscapes, facilitated access to the latest science on restoration, etc., and implemented a common monitoring and adaptive management system for evaluating effectiveness of conservation.

Several interviewees were energetically supportive of such a leadership body, sharing that there necessarily needs to be a way to organize all the efforts. One interviewee stated their frustration with seeing uninformed efforts leading to entirely ineffective results, and others discussed the need for common schemes for prioritization, monitoring, etc.

The most common response from interviewees was support, with a caveat. The largest caveat idea centered around a system that allows for localized tailoring and autonomy and avoiding a one size fits all approach that will likely not fit the individual cultures of different areas of the sagebrush biome. A concern around respecting jurisdictional authorities was mentioned, as well as the unique political structures within each state. Distrust of top-down prioritization and of Federal Government agencies by community-level folks were also mentioned. Others indicated yes; they would support a leadership body if it:

- Brings a national focus to the biome
- Focuses efforts on already established high priority areas
- Allows more work on the ground to get done and is not a distraction
- Recognizes stakeholders have their own responsibilities. Provides more benefit than if stakeholders are working without the leadership.
- Engage Tribes and integrates Tribal input into the process
- Focuses on national strategy and funding and does not focus on the other actions as listed above (developing a common set of objectives, prioritization schemes, etc.). It was noted by this interviewee that the EOC executive level is not the right level for work on those issues.
- System is streamlined, efficient, and sustainable with workloads and monetarily

A couple of interviewees felt these described actions were already being fulfilled through the EOC and expressed no need to form another coordinating body within sagebrush conservation work or further tailor the EOC in this way.

A couple of interviewees did not support a coordinating body for a few different reasons. One interviewee noted that there must be a partnership with communities and that top-down prioritization has not been successful in the West. Another interviewee indicated that another body would be excessive when what is needed, from their perspective, is simply a sustainable monitoring protocol that is not overly burdensome.

WHAT HAS WORKED WELL IN SAGEBRUSH BIOME CONSERVATION

Interviewees identified numerous examples of what's working well in sagebrush biome conservation efforts. Examples that were mentioned are detailed below:

WHO	WHAT
BLM	• Working model for landscape prioritization • Financial resources dedicated to sagebrush work • Work together across state boundaries
EOC	• Consistent meetings force higher-level coordination, discussion, and priority
Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV)	• Works directly with users on the ground and bridges lack of trust for those who make a living on public land and don't trust the Federal Government • Well-staffed (13 staff, many full-time) with high quality people. • Sufficient resources • Diverse participation, including industry and private landowners • Voluntary, incentive-based design
Inter-State Wildlife Agency Coordination	• Meetings between groups of State fish and wildlife agencies (ex: WY, ID, MO, CO, UT) or two states (OR and NV) for regional coordination on wildlife and habitat issues
Natural Resources Conservation Service	• Since 2010, voluntarily and proactively targeted Farm Bill resources to help landowners address sagebrush ecosystem threats • Voluntary 15-year strategic commitment to sagebrush conservation
Rangeland Fire Protection Associations	• Tremendous job at keeping fire starts small; number of fires starts static while number of acres burned has declined • Utilizes local knowledge of the landscape (more effective than someone coming in from out of state) • Communication and relationship building • Connecting training and resources with willing private landowners
State of Oregon Land-use Planning	• Sage-grouse core habitat identified by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. • Aggressive State land use planning build around identified core habitat, including statutory described goals, e.g. big game winter range that counties must protect • Consistently supportive political environment

Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative (restoration work in the sagebrush ecosystem)	• Over 50 partners with $20 million a year running through the organization. • Centralized coordination, funding (50-60 sources), seed mixing, equipment supply, etc. • Nimble contracting ability at state level to do archeological surveys. • Online, transparent accounting system that accounts for all projects with extensive monitoring and reporting • Support from Governor's office and legislature • Bottom-up hierarchy: 1 of 5 Regional teams identify and develop projects, elect their own leaders, set goals, and establish focus areas. Statewide team provides State-level prioritization, sideboards, and resources for the projects. • Widely supported and well-funded because of success history
Western Governors' Association	• Numerous interviewees indicated that it was extremely helpful when sage-grouse conservation was identified as a Western Governors' Association initiative

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE SAGEBRUSH BIOME CONSERVATION

INSUFFICIENT FUNDING AND STAFFING

Insufficient funding and staffing were strong themes in the interviews. Nearly everyone brought one or both up as a barrier within their own or within other organizations to effective sagebrush conservation. With additional resources, interviewees imagine they would see more coordination across jurisdictions, local implementation teams getting off the ground with sufficient staffing, more local engagement with private landowners already willing to help, and more resources available for proactive planning by private landowners.

Understaffing in Federal agencies was noted by several interviewees. "*Agency people are usually just treading water with their day to day responsibilities. They don't have time to be proactive."* Similarly, insufficient capacity, insufficient contracting capacity, and lack of leadership support was mentioned for both Federal and State agencies. Several interviewees also noted significant capacity issues for Tribes and Tribal natural resource departments, who are often forced to pick and choose between issues to focus on.

An interviewee noted that getting Federal legislative funding for sagebrush conservation may be difficult, in part, because of the ecosystem's size. It's not small enough in scope to require targeting only a handful of legislators, like the Chesapeake Bay Program, but it's also not national in scale, like the international focus of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. Interviewees noted that the scope and scale will require creativity.

COMMUNICATION SILOS AND JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES

Interviewees agreed there are communication silo problems on and between every scale of the sagebrush biome. Local people often work only within their own district or county. State direction on sagebrush and sage-grouse conservation is significantly influenced by Governors' offices and State legislatures, and coordination across state lines, while it occurs, is limited. And Federal agencies are impacted by their own jurisdictional boundaries, whether those are state lines, or forest, district, and regional boundaries.

Even interviewees from partnership organizations pointed out how they would like better communication between themselves and other organizations. The only interviewees not reporting to have these issues are NGOs, who see themselves as able to bridge those jurisdictional gaps.

DATA AND MONITORING LIMITATIONS

Several interviewees noted challenges around data and monitoring systems. Keeping track of all data was mentioned as a challenge, and that there is room for improvement in repository systems that are used. It was also noted that although some monitoring matrices are used in common by multiple entities, states have been doing data collection and monitoring efforts differently, leading to a need for these methods to be universal. In addition, data reported by individual states varies, and challenges with accurate and consistent reporting from Federal agencies to states was noted. It was also noted that monitoring requirements can be overly burdensome for those doing the monitoring. In addition, collecting data around disturbances was specifically noted as a challenge, and a need was identified for data to reflect what's on the ground in reality rather than data that was collected in the permitting process. It was noted that the goal of adjusting management of industry and grazing based on wildlife and vegetative respones is only effective when sufficient monitoring data is collected (and that often it is not).

WASTELAND PERCEPTION

The interviewees strongly focused on sagebrush land being percieved by the general public or those not from the region as wasteland. Some hear it labeled as *"sheer nothingness"* and one interviewee likes to call it the "*Rodney Dangerfield of biomes"* after the comedian that often said "I get no respect." Compared with forests and even grasslands, sagebrush seems to attract less national public interest.

Interviewees were quick to point out that the sagebrush landscape is an indicator habitat that is deeply intertwined with other habitats and that recognizing that interconnectedness is critical. For example, you could not enjoy wildlife in forested landscapes if that wildlife didn't have the sagebrush and prairies to winter in. Some interviewees emphasized the need for public education about what is special about the sagebrush landscape.

FUNDING STRUCTURES

A few interviewees cited the barriers and constraints created by budget silos and by funds being tied to different budget line items. For example, the way many agencies and programs are funded, there is a lot of duplicative effort and competition for the same funds. For example, funding for sagebrush conservation competes with other often more glamorous or urgent priorities such as fire suppression. Another example would be the existence of specific fire restoration funds but not general restoration funds. If general restoration funds were available, those funds could be used in low fire years toward other priority restoration. Some agency budgets are also becoming increasingly centralized, with higher level offices making decisions without an understanding of the local culture or ecosystems.

INCONSISTENT AND INSUFFICIENT PRIORITY

Interviewees mentioned inconsistent priorities both between different agencies and State Governors' offices. The will to protect the sagebrush habitat is much stronger in some areas than others at any given time.

This patchwork priority map also changes over time as Federal and State administration changes bring different levels of interest for the sagebrush landscape. Many interviewees noted a complete pendulum swing from one presidential administration's priority in sagebrush to the next and had a feeling of starting all over. Staff turnover also precludes a long-term vision and commitment to the work.

Interviewees also mentioned a lack of priority generally once there was no longer a threat of listing sage-grouse as an endangered species. This loss of attention slowed the work and removed a unifying objective from otherwise different groups such as the livestock community and the environmental community. It was noted that the threats to the sagebrush biome are well understood and that what's needed is for the community to "stop talking and start implementing" conservation efforts on a large scale.

It was noted that at times competing priorities can also be in direct conflict with conservation goals, and that there's a need to subsidize public benefits. Specific examples of competing priorities cited included increasing road access for energy interests which can worsen the spread noxious weeds, and the lack of inclusion of sufficient conservation considerations in extractive analyses.

THREATS TO THE BIOME (FIRES, INVASIVE PLANTS, ETC.)

Nearly all interviewees noted significant challenges to sagebrush conservation posed by fire and invasive grasses and agreed that efforts to address these issues must be bold and occur at a massive scale. Many interviewees noted how fire damage is massively outpacing fire reduction work and how this trend will most likely continue given climate change. Fire seasons are now much longer. With the amounts lost now, either the systems don't recover, or they take a great deal of resources to recover. Therefore, fuel reduction and reducing fire risk must be top priorities and are critical to addressing sagebrush conservation. Some also noted, this heavy lift must be made by the Federal Government as states would never be able to afford restoration on this scale. One interviewee mentioned how proper mapping of cheatgrass "fire highways" must also be part of overall fire strategy.

Hand in hand with fire concerns, nonnative species, and invasive weeds like cheatgrass and medusa head were a central focus for interviewees. All agreed aggressive focus and treatment will be needed to get ahead of the spread. There were different thoughts on how to battle invasive weeds, such as whether to use native grasses for restoration or whether to utilize a non-native plant community, like crested wheatgrass, that has a history of success at stabilizing the plant community. And a few interviewees mentioned how there will need to be patience and a long-term view, the willingness to apply multiple treatments, and adaptive management before seeing results.

It was noted by one interviewee that at this point no existing landscapes are natural and that all are coupled human-natural landscapes. As a result, what kind of landscape is considered a "problem" or not and which landscape to manage towards depends on who you are and what kind of landscapes you prefer.

Degradation of habitat by wild horses and wild horse overpopulation were also mentioned by several interviewees as concerns that spans the entire sagebrush biome.

LEARNING FROM OTHER COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Interviewees pointed to several lessons learned from other collaborative efforts that should be applied to sagebrush conservation efforts. Interviewees cited ocean and arctic conservation efforts, the Intermountain West Joint Venture, the North American Waterfowl Management Planning process, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC), the Payette National Forest management planning process, Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, and the Blackfoot Challenge as examples to learn from. Lessons learned that were mentioned included:

Broad partnerships	The Intermountain West Joint Venture's inclusion of industry and private landowners in addition to states and Federal agencies was cited as key to its success. It was noted that Tribes are not currently involved in IWJV but need to be.
	The Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC) model included ranchers, private landowners, Native peoples, and a whole range of stakeholders which was cited as effective. However, interviewees noted that critical parties such as states and other organizations were not deeply involved in developing the model which ultimately led to challenges.
Ecosystem focus	Collaborative efforts with a more holistic rather than a single-species focus were noted as more effective in the long run.
Story telling	Highlighting stories of successes can garner momentum, gain media attention, and increase bipartisan support for efforts.
Dedicated staffing	The Intermountain West Joint Venture's dedicated, full-time staff was mentioned as another key factor to the group's effectiveness.
Core area planning	Delineating the strongest places and keeping them strong is a principle from the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.
Bottom-up efforts	Interviewees noted that LCC's effectiveness was limited because they were too top-down.

Inclusion of local people	Key to the Blackfoot Challenge's success was laying the proper foundation of first going to the community and asking community members what was important for their future.
	Based on research on international environmental policies and local responses to those policies if local people are not invited to be involved in the effort they will often ignore or resist the policies.
Attention to incentives to participate	Long-term initiatives tend to home in on incentives for participation, understanding that people participate in collaborative efforts because they get more out of it than they would if they didn't participate. Focusing on what's in it for each stakeholder and why they should care is critical to implementing a long-term collaborative effort that folks will think is useful to participate in.
Sufficient time and resources	Patience and sufficient resources were noted as key to successful collaborative efforts.
Collaborative efforts lead to better outcomes	The Payette National Forest management planning process was noted as an example of a complex and high stakes collaborative process leading to a better outcome on the Forest.
Dedicated funding sources	It is easier to bring people to and keep them at the table when there is a known set amount of money or ability to compete for money. It was also noted that most, if not all, examples of successful collaboratives have multiple funding streams.

CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL COORDINATION OF SAGEBRUSH CONSERVATION EFFORTS AT THE LANDSCAPE-LEVEL

FEDERAL AGENCIES

Many interviewees noted the need for leadership, priority-setting, and recognition of the need for sagebrush conservation at top levels of the Department of Interior and by political appointees, Congress, and State senators and representatives. It was also noted that Congressional authority to work beyond the politics of each administration would greatly support agency sagebrush conservation work. A need to empower managers at all levels was also noted by several interviewees.

Additional ideas for critical actions required by Federal agencies for successful sagebrush conservation efforts include:

- Develop a common, range-wide vision for sagebrush conservation; Identify barriers to vision and work to address them
- Prioritize resources (funding, capacity, etc.) for sagebrush conservation and work across agencies, and in coordination with states, to develop joint, unified priorities to garner support for conservation work

- Commit to addressing invasive species and wild horse issues that have hindered sagebrush conservation work
- Ensure good science and good policies to protect the remaining core habitat
- Fulfill Federal Trust responsibilities to Tribes, engaging Tribes, discussing issues and potential actions
- Commit to implement priorities across the entire agency (across all forests, ranger districts, State offices, etc.)
- Ensure Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is invited to all post-fire rehabilitation meetings so private land considerations are included in planning
- Clearly state what success looks like in this endeavor
- Use public NEPA process to ensure transparency and opportunities for public input
- Streamline the NEPA permitting process, prioritizing approved projects on Federal land
    - Concerns were noted that the effects of streamlining NEPA processes would be to remove protection and engagement if NEPA processes were streamlined, pointing to the need to ensure good science, a thoughtful decision-making process, and public engagement.
- Provide capacity-building opportunities (example: training to Rangeland Fire Protection Associations , etc.)
- Create monitoring metrics and programs that that will not be overly burdensome to private landowners
- Educate the public on the need for sagebrush conservation
- Embrace EOC work and continue to improve coordination across agencies
- BLM – increase boots on the ground, continue partnership-based approach to sagebrush conservation, modify disturbed habitat reporting to reflect actual project implementation data rather than proposed permit data, and more flexibility and ease in permitting (example: making extended grazing permits easy to apply for so that they can be used more frequently in high-moisture times to lessen the grass per acre and ultimately reduce fire danger)
- FS – increased attention and priority at the Washington Office on sagebrush rangelands
- FWS – develop unified vision of work across regions; reduce burden of monitoring Candidate Conservation Agreements and Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances so that program is more sustainable
- NRCS – create programs to reach beyond one producer's fence line
- USGS – put resources into translating and communicating their science, and putting it in the hands of managers and users

TRIBAL AGENCIES

The overwhelming response from many interviewees was that they have limited to no experience working for or with Tribes on this issue and thus do not have an opinion on actions needed from Tribal agencies. Along with that, many emphasized how critical it is for Tribes to be included at the table and expressed their confidence that Tribes are interested in participating. Several interviewees also noted that sagebrush conservation efforts need to reflect Tribes' cultural values and needs, and that these values need to be integrated in prioritization processes. Tribal input needs to be integrated into strategic planning efforts so that Tribal lands are not islands that are not considered in the overall

strategy. Many interviewees acknowledged barriers to Tribal participation including sufficient capacity to engage, resource issues, changes in leadership, and bureaucracy. Several interviewees noted that Tribes should be invited to participate in the EOC.

Several interviewees point out that they feel the responsibility is on those with management authorities and those who are affected by sagebrush issues to reach out to Tribes and help reduce their barriers to participation in sagebrush conservation efforts. One interviewee suggested that the Department of Interior needs to identify critical Tribes managing large amounts of sagebrush habitat and fund their participation in coordination efforts and implementation activities.

Suggestions were made to engage with the Intertribal Agriculture Council, and other similar associations like the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, Native American Timber Council, and Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission, who have capacity, expertise, and an ability to share Tribal perspectives on these issues. The National Association of Conservation Districts' Tribal Outreach and Partnership Group was cited as an example of successful partnership example between conservation districts, Tribal conservation districts, Tribes, Tribal associations, and other partners.

STATES AND STATE AGENCIES

General themes of actions required by states and State agencies for successful sagebrush conservation efforts include a willingness to embrace recommendations from the EOC or other leadership body, looking beyond jurisdictional boundaries, increasing coordination with State departments of agriculture and land, playing a critical role of facilitating coordination across partner organizations, committing resources on a sustainable basis, and influencing leadership commitment to lessen the impact of political pendulum swings.

Additional ideas for critical actions required by states and State agencies for successful sagebrush conservation efforts include:

- Governors' Offices working with others to provide a joint unified briefing to incoming Department of Interior leadership on the importance of sagebrush conservation
- Protect what's left, limit solar farms and oil wells in sagebrush habitat under State jurisdiction
- Recognize the pinon/juniper encroachment problem
- Empower landowners to have fire associations and fund local implementation teams, modeled after Oregon's successful programs
- Establish a central hub within the Governors' Offices to coordinate planning and funding aspects of the state's sagebrush conservation response (for example: Sage-Grouse Conservation Partnership (SageCon) efforts in Oregon).
- Coordinate through the Western Governors' Association; focus on sagebrush as an initiative
- Recognize that there's a long-term need for engagement on sagebrush and sage-grouse issues
- Educate the public on sagebrush habitat and what is at stake; Publicize the collaborative work that is happening.
- Prioritize resources for sagebrush conservation; for example, a branch dedicated to on-the-ground rehabilitation work
- Hold a holistic ecosystem approach rather than a single species focus to connect with broader issues and communities

- Acknowledge that no state has the authorities to address the issue alone; look to regional priority setting bodies to continue focus on priorities that last beyond individual Department of Wildlife Directors and governors' administrations.

PRIVATE SECTOR AND LANDOWNERS

Overall, interviewees agreed that the private sector and landowners need to be willing to represent their issues in a common venue. Interviewees emphasized that it is important to highlight for these groups why their involvement matters and understand how it will benefit them in the long run. Private sector and landowners also need to be involved in collaborative partnership efforts with others to further conservation efforts and share best practices that work practically. One interviewee mentioned the importance of increasing understanding between different user groups, be they mining, livestock, timber, recreationalists, environmentalists, etc. Another interviewee suggested continued education for the private sector and landowners on incentive program such as conservation credit systems, informing them of the tools that encourage proactive conservation on their private land.

Specifically speaking about the private sector, several interviewees noted that mineral, oil, gas, solar, and wind companies by and large, follow the regulations and laws required of them. Highlighting and applauding biodiversity or good stewardship programs will encourage their growth and their becoming a part of the industry culture. It was noted that one area of focus should be private urban development, where there is opportunity to affect local planning and zoning permitting and educate on urban sprawl concerns.

Interviewees focused on similar themes regarding landowners, highlighting the need to realize the threats to their property and how to make them healthy and resilient, the need to be adaptive, and the need to be willing to come to the table. This includes commitment to fire reduction and invasives work on their lands. Many interviewees see landowners as already understanding the importance of healthy land and naturally having a vested interest. Where they need help is with adequate funding, technical expertise, and incentives —especially seeing how it can benefit their bottom-line and keep lands working, increasing ways to implement plans economically, and educating on how to contribute to healthy landscapes at a broader scale. Other partner organizations can also highlight successful model and examples of working with landowners. Landowners can also explore tools for voluntary conservation such as Candidate Conservation Agreements (CCAs) and Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs). One interviewee also pointed out that many of these landowners know their State and Federal legislative representatives and can push for support for sagebrush conservation efforts from the bottom up.

INTERVIEWEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAGEBRUSH CONSERVATION GOVERNANCE

LANDSCAPE PRIORITIZATION

Interviewees nearly all agreed that spatial targeting of priority landscapes is critical to avoid completing, as one interviewee noted, "*random acts of conservation kindness*". Almost all indicated that prioritization of the landscape needs to be based on preserving strong, core sagebrush habitat areas

first. There was some variation in answers about whether those core areas still need to be identified. One interviewee mentioned that the 2015 BLM land use plan amendments for sage-grouse already sufficiently identify the core areas. Two interviewees mentioned a matrix to help make this determination, one mentioning a resistance/resilience matrix and another mentioning a high vs. low probability of success matrix developed by BLM and a Boise-based fire group. A suggestion was also made that prioritization needs to allow for local actions to continue to some extent with a specific portion of the effort (10-20% of available resources) focused on the highest priority efforts.

After initial prioritization of the core sagebrush habitat areas, there were some differing opinions of where to focus next. Some interviewees suggested that the focus should turn to non-natural conditions in fuel loads, invasive species threats, and areas degraded by wild horses. It was noted that while prioritization is critical, there is also great merit in addressing areas that are shrinking or disappearing. Another interviewee thought the second priority should be on the areas surrounding the high priority areas. It was suggested that focus on work in priority areas shouldn't become so narrow that opportunities for making gains in non-priority landscapes are missed.

Interviewees suggested areas where there is room for improvement. One area is in ensuring that planning is expansive and inclusive so that none are marginalized. Another area that was suggested as value added is in charting wildlife uses of the landscape and suggested focusing on migration corridors, citing that many times those migration corridors are areas where infrastructure projects are often pushed because they are lesser quality sagebrush areas. They noted that more wildlife data will support defending conservation efforts in those areas when conflicts arise between various interest groups.

INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

There was a strong theme of the need for diverse, inclusive, and broad partnerships to coordinate sagebrush conservation efforts at the landscape scale. One interviewee expressed that there is generally a lack of diversity of ideas within Federal and State agencies. Another interviewee shared their research experience which shows that if the local community are not included, there is a good possibility of failure as the local community either ignores or undermines efforts. One interviewee worded it this way, "*If you create [a house] without the people who are going to live in the house, you're going to have a structure that everyone throws stones at and nobody wants to live in.*"

Several interviewees raised concern with the lack of Tribal and private landowner participation. One interviewee pointed out that there is a vested interest for them to be involved if they can see resources to be applied. Another interviewee suggested that there's opportunity for increased engagement by Tribal associations and other representatives such as the Intertribal Agriculture Council, the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, the Native American Timber Council, the Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission, and land grant universities such as New Mexico State University and their Range Improvement Task Force. It was suggested that lessons could be learned from the way other strategic efforts such as the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy group included Tribes and tribal input. Additionally, several interviewees mentioned how important it is to have industry involvement. Lastly, another interviewee was concerned with the lack of representation from the Forest Service, because they have a lot of forest and timber lands adjacent that could contribute to fire in the sagebrush area.

DEDICATED STAFFING

Several interviewees indicated that dedicated staffing could make or break an effort. In the absence of dedicated staffing, coordination efforts can be just another duty on top of everyone's already existing duties. One interviewee phrased it, "*When it is someone's job to wake up every day and think about how to stitch things together across the landscape, I've seen amazing things come alive."* It was noted that the EOC does not have many dedicated staff to move its work forward, and that increasing staffing could help with its effectiveness.

RECOGNIZE AND HIGHLIGHT SUCCESSES

Several interviewees emphasized that significant coordination is already occurring and that those efforts need recognition. They posited for framing efforts to improve coordination of sagebrush conservation efforts as "*better understanding current coordination and empowering all*" so as not to be perceived as, "*another attempt of others telling me what I should be doing*."

Other interviewees indicated the power of highlighting successful projects in support of furthering conservation efforts. Recognizing successes can show what's possible, garner further support and resources, and increase momentum. Rewarding success can be enough motivation for some, e.g., publicly traded companies, that need to show they are good environmental stewards. People want to support successful projects, and it was noted by several interviewees that there are a lot of existing projects that have worked well and could be highlighted as successful models.

CONNECTING LANDSCAPE LEVEL COORDINATION TO LOCAL WORK ON THE GROUND

A strong theme throughout the assessment interviews was the inherent tension between a centralized structure and overarching leadership which is needed to plan and coordinate this work on a large scale, and implementation, autonomy, and decision making at the local level with those on the ground. Most interviewees noted that large-scale coordination across the entire sagebrush biome is needed, and that it is critical for that large scale work to be connected to State and Local levels; others thought that top-down efforts were off base and that all work should be left to State or Local levels. Many pointed to the need for overarching leadership, which then trickles down to lower levels for implementation. Those that supported a decentralized approach noted that benefits include that there is room for more responsiveness to local conditions, and that the structure creates resilience – i.e., one area failing does not mean that all areas fail.

Many interviewees expressed that the ultimate objective is for broad discussion of all jurisdictional authorities—fire, weeds, habitat, species, Local, County, State, Federal—that blends jurisdictional boundaries, and utilizes all authorities. The need for participatory decision making at the local level, skillfully facilitated meetings, and bringing people together for these discussions in a safe environment is key. It was also noted that local level input will also help alleviate distrust of government in general.

DATA AND MONITORING

The need for a sustainable and not overly burdensome monitoring system was noted. Regarding data, one interviewee suggested more homogenized data collection across states and coordination of incoming data. The interviewee suggests a staff position at the EOC to apprise the body of incoming data, create a repository of data, and interpret data and relay it to the broader audience.

Interviewees suggested various recommendations for how to measure success, including:

- Reduced acres lost annually
- Increase in species using conserved or restored habitats
- Well-being of all species, including humans
- Sustainability for species, which is an indicator of land and aquatic health
- Positive responses from both plant and animal species

A couple of interviewees discussed incorporating Indigenous knowledge and Tribal input. One stated there is a lot of lip service to integrating traditional ecological knowledge, but there are questions that remain of how to best integrate that knowledge.

Finally, an interviewee suggested certain tools for more centralized monitoring such as Terra-pulse, a satellite imagery tool that looks at snowpack through time. It can look across the whole biome and understand water, drought, vegetation growth and decline, surface water, etc. It was suggested that there is a large role for academics to play in long-term data, research, and monitoring efforts, and that these types of partnerships should be explored.

ON THE GROUND EMPOWERMENT AND INCENTIVES

Several interviewees strongly emphasized making this work about people and their connection to the land. They cited seeing successes when there are common benefits to people and nature. The relevant question is, "*How can we do things that benefit people who work and live on this landscape?"* These interviewees did not think there has been enough listening to local people to better understand how to more successfully coordinate what local people are already doing. Local people know what works, what does not, and what the possibilities are. They are the ones who have been living and working on the landscapes. Ultimately, the best possibility for success is understanding that people associate lands with experiences they have had there: producing, hunting, fishing, bird watching, recreating. These experiences are what they value. The coordinating body must communicate the purpose of sagebrush conservation efforts as trying to protect those experiences for the next generation.

One interviewee notes different people will have different motivations, be it money, a public showing of being a good environmental steward, or knowing their kids and grandkids can see sage-grouse. They advised recognizing and using all of these tools to reward and motivate people to stay in the work.

Interviewees also noted specific ways to incentivize involvement of landowners in fire suppression and fuel reduction efforts, such as streamlined permitting processes for temporary non-renewable grazing for fuel reduction, retiring fire equipment to landowners sooner so it has a longer lifespan for fire reduction, and providing needed infrastructure for landowners to coordinate on fire suppression efforts.

SAGEBRUSH CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP – WHO SHOULD LEAD THIS EFFORT

Interviewee responses to who should lead sagebrush conservation efforts were mixed, and numerous different leaders were suggested. However, many interviewees focused on the importance of connecting large-scale priority and coordination with local-scale autonomy and implementation. Responses, as well as the reasons why, are below:

WHO SHOULD LEAD	WHY
All / Horizontal Leadership	• All should agree on a venue and way to coordinate. Needs to be a flexible approach. Those doing work on the ground should determine who best to lead the effort.
BLM	• They're the lead partner. • They're facilitating bringing entities together in partnerships. • They manage a significant amount of sagebrush habitat. • **It was noted that BLM needs rebuilding before it can get back to where they need to be to manage these issues.*
Communities impacted by future of the ecosystem	• A community-driven approach to leading and designing is needed. It's important to listen to what's worked well and build relationships. • Governance structures can be perceived as top down. • Community voice should even trump current structures.
EOC	• EOC should lead but they need a recommitment and a reboot. They need buy-in from all partners or they need to determine what another appropriate venue is. • Since EOC is mostly high-level leadership, it should create another group with authority to act, get things done on the ground. Needs to be inter-agency, lots of partners, directors + staff level.
Federal Agencies	• More than 60% of sagebrush land is Federal land.
Federal funding + local implementation	• Federal funding is needed to support efforts. • However, implementation needs to be local.
Multiple leaders at different scales	• The idea of a single leader is not sufficient. Need efforts at all levels. If you do not have local involvement, local communities will look at the efforts as misguided. • National level leadership plays role in empowering state and local people to be successful. Need to ensure flexibility for state and local communities to have enough flexibility to make decisions. • Provide national infrastructure, coordination, and policy
NRCS	• They have a lot of funding going toward habitat work.
States	• States have a lot of influence in DC. • They can identify sagebrush conservation as a priority and request commitment from the Federal Government.
State + Federal	• BLM because of how much sagebrush habitat they manage. • States because of their stewardship.
State Fish and Wildlife Agencies	• They have staff embedded in these communities and know how to relate. It is their mission to conserve wildlife populations.
State Fish and Wildlife Agencies + Land Management Agencies	• States have critical role in sage-grouse conservation. • Land management agencies have authorities in habitat issues.
States + Federal + Counties	• All have significant acreage of sagebrush habitat.
Western Governors' Association (WGA) or similar level	• WGA is the appropriate level to oversee other State offices that are essential pieces of the puzzle. Inter-state coordination.

PANEL TO REFINE GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR SAGEBRUSH HABITAT CONSERVATION EFFORTS ACROSS LANDSCAPES

Generally, most interviewees were confident and fairly satisfied with the list presented to them; though, they would often have additional suggestions.

One person expressed their hopes that from this group will come a unified message, specific assignments, policy, legislation, a short-term plan with real actionable items, and not just produce a report.

Several echoed a theme that developing a governance model without the input of those implementing the model on the ground can be dangerous and might unravel the work. To this point, one person stated, *"I have grave concern if the community's private landowners and people on the ground are not part of this panel. Right now, it seems like a repeat of agencies and academics…. A repeat of exclusivity without community representation."*

General suggestions are mostly encompassed in the specific recommendations list below. Suggestions not directly covered in the list below include Tribes, private landowners, those who manage land, all State and Federal agencies with science and jurisdictional backgrounds, and those who affect land management decisions on a national level.

Specific recommendations included:

- Universities
    - Colorado State University
    - Idaho State University
    - Montana State University
    - Oregon State University – specifically their rangeland program
    - University of Idaho
    - University of Wyoming
    - Utah State University – specifically Dr. David Stoner
    - Dr. William Lauenroth, Yale University
- NGOs – including those who are proactive partners on sagebrush conservation work
    - Audubon Society
    - Center for Biological Diversity
    - Mule Deer Foundation
    - National Wildlife Federation
    - Natural Resources Defense Council
    - Nature Conservancy
    - Sierra Club
    - Pheasants Forever
    - Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
    - The Nature Conservancy
    - Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
    - Wilderness Society

    - Wildlife Management Institute*
- Tribal
    - Bureau of Indian Affairs*
    - Intertribal Agriculture Council – Zach Ducheneaux, Executive Director*
    - Native American Fish and Wildlife Society
    - Native American Timber Council
    - Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission
- Associations
    - Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies – specifically authors of the President's Task Force on Shared Science and Landscape Conservation Priorities Report
    - Intermountain West Joint Venture
    - Western Governors' Association
- User Groups
    - Industry, including wind and solar
    - National Cattlemen's Beef Association
    - Robbie LeValley – rancher, county commissioner, range scientist in Colorado
- State
    - Department of Agriculture
    - Department of Wildlife
    - Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (e.g. in Oregon or Idaho) – they also have connections to private landowners
    - Governor's Office, Economic Development Representative
- Federal
    - Forest Service National Forest systems science people
    - Former Landscape Conservation Cooperative coordinators – lessons to learn from them
    - Jeanne Chambers, Forest Service
    - Natural Resources Conservation Service
    - United States Geological Survey lab in Arizona

*other interviewee(s) did not agree with this recommendation

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

Assessment interviewees pointed to the need for diverse, inclusive, and broad partnerships in order to coordinate sagebrush conservation efforts at the landscape scale. Interviewees also pointed to the challenges of top-down approaches that leave out community-level input and those doing work on the ground at the local scale. Many assessment interviewees also indicated a general lack of familiarity with work done by Tribes and Tribal agencies on sagebrush conservation efforts, and noted that Tribes, Tribal lands, and Indigenous knowledges are often left out of conservation strategies and planning processes. We also heard a desire for representation from universities in all states with sagebrush habitat, representation from Governor's offices, and from those with responsibilities for invasive plants and fire. Our recommendation is to invite a broad list of affected parties at all levels to participate in a webinar

and workshop process to develop and provide input on refining sagebrush conservation governance models for inclusion in the Sagebrush Conservation Strategy. Due to COVID-19, these engagements will be virtual. We recommend obtaining input from a cross section of private landowners, Tribes or inter-Tribal organizations, industry and user groups (oil, gas, solar, mining, etc.), Governor's office representation, NGOs, representation from those with fire and invasive plants responsibilities (State departments of agriculture and forestry, County weed districts, etc.), State wildlife agencies and Federal land management agencies, partnership organizations (IWJV, WGA, etc.), academics from states with sagebrush habitat, and other identified stakeholders.

Building on the results of the assessment, the group may want to consider the following recommendations and questions during the webinar and workshop process as they further develop and refine partnership governance model(s) for landscape-level sagebrush conservation:

Building on Successes and Leaving Room for Innovation:
Interviewees discussed the many existing successes in sagebrush conservation efforts and noted numerous examples of effective relationships and coordination efforts that are working well. They stressed the importance of building on and learning from what's going well already while also working to address any gaps. They also noted that efforts to date have not been sufficient to conserve sagebrush at a massive scale, and that unprecedented and creative efforts will be required to do the work that's needed. Interviewees also discussed the importance of highlighting successful efforts in service of completing additional conservation work. They noted that highlighting successes builds momentum and rapport, garners additional support, gains media attention, celebrates milestones along a larger process, and develops bi-partisan support.

- How can the governance model(s) identify and build on successes that already exist in sagebrush conservation and coordination efforts? How can successes and successful projects be highlighted throughout to build momentum and rapport, garner additional support, gain media attention, celebrate milestones along a larger process, and develop bi-partisan support?
- How can the governance model(s) integrate best practices as well as leave room for innovation to meet challenges in new and creative ways?

Continuity, Dedicated Resources, and Staffing:
We heard from interviewees that sagebrush conservation is a long-term effort, and that insufficient and inconsistent funding, staffing, and priority have been significant barriers to successful coordination of sagebrush conservation efforts. Dedicated funding, staffing, patience, and sufficient time were all highlighted as key aspects of other successful large-landscape scale collaborative efforts. A successful partnership governance model will need to include mechanisms to ensure long-term priority and continuity across individual staffing and administration changes, as well as dedicated and sufficient funding and staffing.

- How can the governance model(s) be designed in ways that maintains continuity regardless of change on the individual level and that is durable in the long term (100+ years) for sagebrush conservation efforts?

- What mechanisms can be integrated into the governance model(s) to provide consistency in funding, participation, and priority across changing administrations at Federal and State levels?
- How can sufficient and dedicated staffing for sagebrush conservation efforts be ensured?

Broad Participation at All Levels, and Coordination Across Scales:
Interviewees pointed to the need for diverse, inclusive, and broad partnerships to successfully coordinate sagebrush conservation efforts across landscapes. At the grassroots scale, participants were incentivized to participate in conservation efforts if it aligns with their missions and brings more resources to the table. Interviewees suggested that connecting sagebrush conservation work to people's connection to the land and why they care is critical. At the agency level, people were motivated to participate if given direction and priority by their leadership. A successful partnership governance model will therefore need to have a mission that encompasses that of those working on the ground and will also need to engage high-level agency leadership in a sustainable way. Interviewees also noted the need to balance large-scale planning with regional and local-level autonomy and implementation. Different organizations have different strengths to bring to the table (ability to serve as a bridging organization, resources, ability to quickly administer contracts, etc.) and the partnership governance model(s) should utilize these strengths.

- How can participation at all scales be incentivized? How can the issue(s) and solutions be framed to incentivize participation, help people realize what is at stake, and make participation worth their time? How can authorities and responsibilities at all levels be utilized to further landscape-scale sagebrush conservation efforts?
- How can the governance model integrate strengths of both centralized approaches (national priority, coordination across the entire sagebrush biome, etc.) and decentralized approaches (autonomy, flexibility, responsiveness to differing landscapes, politics, and needs, etc.)? How can conservation efforts at the landscape level be coordinated with conservation efforts done on the ground?

Data, Monitoring, and Landscape Prioritization Considerations:
Interviewees pointed to the need for prioritization of landscapes in order to use available resources in the most effective way possible. We also heard from interviewees that numerous challenges exist around data and monitoring systems, including keeping track of all data, the use of different matrices, data collection methods, reporting, and monitoring by different organizations. Some interviewees noted that monitoring could be overly burdensome, indicated the challenge of collecting data around disturbances, and noted a need for data to reflect what's on the ground in reality rather than data that was collected in the permitting process.

- What's working well in current data, monitoring, and landscape prioritization efforts in sagebrush conservation? How can existing challenges in these areas be addressed?

APPENDIX A – ASSESSMENT INTERVIEWEES

Abbie Josie	Utah Deputy State Director – Resources, BLM
Ali Duvall	Director of Strategic Partnerships, Intermountain West Joint Venture
Amy Lueders	Regional Director, USFWS
Arthur "Butch" Blazer	Board Member, National Wildlife Federation; Previously Deputy Under Secretary – Natural Resources and Environment – Forestry, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); Previously President, Mescalero Apache Tribe
Brian Nesvik	Director, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Brian Rutledge	Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative Director, National Audubon Society
Chris Jasmine	Manager, Biodiversity and Rangelands - Nevada Gold Mines
Curt Melcher	Director, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
David Jenkins	Assistant Director of Resources and Planning, BLM
Jeremy Maestas	Sagebrush Ecosystems Specialist, USDA-NRCS
Joe Tague	Retired; Previously BLM Forests, Rangelands, Riparian, and Plant Conservation Division Chief
John O'Keeffe	Cattle Rancher; Oregon Cattlemen's Association; Landowner Representative, Oregon's SageCon
Marvin Vetter	Rangeland Fire Protection Association Coordinator, Oregon Department of Forestry
Miles Moretti	President and CEO, Mule Deer Foundation
Neil Thagard	Director, Nez Perce Tribe Natural Resources Wildlife Program
Raul Morales	Retired; Previously BLM NV Deputy State Director Resources, Lands, and Planning
Rory Reynolds	Deputy Director, Utah Department of Natural Resources
Steve Torbit	Retired; Previously USFWS Assistant Regional Director for Science
Tony Wasley	Director, Nevada Department of Wildlife

APPENDIX B – ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you characterize your experiences and/or your organization/agency's involvement in coordination of sagebrush habitat conservation efforts across landscapes? (please include experiences from previous work if your current position does not involve sagebrush conservation activities, or if you have retired).
   How have you individually, (and if applicable, your organization,) been involved with sagebrush habitat conservation efforts?
   a. Do you think your organization's efforts for sagebrush conservation are sufficient given its authorities?
   b. How can conservation activities be better coordinated across organizations and scales? What are your thoughts on prioritizing landscapes?

2. WAFWA coordinates meetings of the Sagebrush Executive Oversight Committee. Have you or your agency participated on this Committee?

   a. The EOC and its technical arm, the Range-wide Interagency Sagebrush Technical Team, or RISCT, were originally formed to implement the Comprehensive Sage-grouse Conservation Strategy, which called for prioritizing landscapes and implementing a series of conservation actions under an adaptive management and monitoring framework. Do you think the EOC as presently configured has done this? If not, why not? Do you think the EOC should play more of a role in coordinating and implementing conservation actions across entities and scales?
   b. Do you think the EOC has the diversity of representation needed to do this, and if not, would you support broadening the EOC to include other parties?
   c. If your agency has not been involved in the Sagebrush EOC, do you think your agency's sagebrush conservation efforts would be more effective if you were invited to participate? Why, or why not?
   d. Whether through the Sagebrush EOC or another leadership/coordination model, would your agency's sagebrush conservation effectiveness be enhanced if there were some body that developed a common set of objectives for sagebrush conservation, a common prioritization scheme for conservation emphasis of sagebrush landscapes, facilitated access to the latest science on restoration, etc., and implemented a common monitoring and adaptive management system for evaluating effectiveness of conservation emphasis?

3. What are the key challenges/what needs improvement within existing sagebrush habitat landscape level conservation governance and coordination efforts?

4. What are the critical factors and priorities that would need to be reflected in successful sagebrush habitat conservation efforts across landscapes?

    a. What do you see as the biggest obstacles to successful efforts to coordinate sagebrush habitat conservation efforts across landscapes?

5. If durability were guaranteed, what are the critical actions that would need to occur by the following players to successfully coordinate sagebrush habitat conservation efforts across landscapes?
    a. By Federal agencies
    b. By Tribal agencies
    c. By States and State agencies
    d. By private sector
    e. By landowners

6. What does your organization/agency need to participate in sagebrush habitat conservation efforts across landscapes?

7. What are some of the lessons learned from other large-landscape collaborative conservation efforts that should be applied to sagebrush habitat conservation efforts across landscapes?

8. How do you see sagebrush conservation efforts related to other conservation efforts in forests, grasslands, etc.?

9. Whom do you think should lead sagebrush conservation efforts, and why?

10. A series of virtual workshops will be conducted to build on the results of this assessment and refine/develop considerations for sagebrush habitat conservation efforts across landscape for inclusion in the Sagebrush Habitat Conservation Strategy. Anticipated panel organizations include: [*read list of organizations*]:
    a. Do you think there is any critical organization/expertise missing from this list?
    b. In your opinion, do you think that this panel would have the combined expertise to identify considerations for successful coordination of sagebrush habitat conservation efforts across landscapes? Do you have any concerns that would prevent you from supporting considerations for coordination of sagebrush habitat conservation efforts across landscapes that were developed by this group?

11. Is there anything else that you'd like to add that wasn't covered here?

Quick Link to Explanatory Narrative for Sagebrush Partnership Model Options

ELEMENTS OF PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE IN COMMON ACROSS OPTIONS In this first section of the table, elements of a partnership structure are described that would need to be present in any partnership model.	
Tribal Engagement	For the biome scale, create a Tribal-convened Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) [initially convened by Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes or another Tribe with similar capacity], composed of Tribal representatives currently active in sagebrush conservation across the biome. The TAC will choose and accept a facilitator who is Native American. The purpose of the TAC is to provide the biome-level partnership table with advice and recommendations, and to serve as a conduit to and from Tribal Nations not represented on the TAC. Follow this link to the Essential Tribal Engagement Commitment narrative. Mid-scale Tribal representation would be accomplished through the creation of a Tribal Technical Committee (TTC), initially convened by each State, to invite participation from one representative from all the Tribes in the State as they have interest and capacity in doing so. Group members will be currently active in sagebrush conservation across the biome, with associated technical skills. The TTC will choose and accept a facilitator who is Native American. The purpose of the TTC is to provide mid-scale level advice to the TAC, and to serve as a technical conduit to individual Tribal Nations not represented on the TTC.
Diverse Representation	The partnership structure tables at the biome and mid-scales would include representation from Tribes, commercial business, industries, WGA, State and Federal wildlife and land management agencies, conservation NGOs, policy-level decisionmakers, Local/county representatives, and landowner interests. Level of agency representation may vary by option / model, see below. State, NGO, and potentially Tribal representation may need to rotate for a manageable size.
Level of Representation	At biome scale, there is a continuum of options from (a) top executives of departments, NGOs, Tribes, etc., (Secretary of USDOI, USDA, governors, etc.,) to (b) agency and NGO heads (Director of BLM, Director of USFWS, Director of Nevada Department of Wildlife) to (c) senior management levels of agencies, NGOs, and Tribes (Under Secretary of Interior for Lands and Minerals, BLM Wildlife or Lands Chief, Assistant Director for Habitat, Nevada Department of Wildlife, etc.) to (d) appointees designated by any level described here. Input is needed on which of these options (or integrated combinations) is most desirable. At mid-scale, representation would fall to appropriate regional leadership (Regional Director of USFWS or designee, State Wildlife Agency Director or designee, etc.).

Project Funding	Funding provided at Federal level on an annual or earmark basis (Congressional appropriation with integration into Federal budget process). This would be "new" funding. Anticipate other funding sources/in-kind funding opportunities from partners at all scales (e.g., State, NGO, private), as well as a cost-share requirement to match Federal dollars for conservation projects. A mechanism is needed to provide gap funding until a more established funding mechanism is in place. A redirection of existing conservation funds to this "higher need" by Federal and State agencies and NGOs, supplemented with conservation grant funding, could serve as seed money to get this off the ground while also moving the needle on sagebrush conservation.
Science, Tech, Comms Support	A team of scientific and biome-wide experts (Science Advisory Committee) or other means (contract with USGS, university, etc.) of obtaining GIS support, other technical support, and inputting new science and data into planning and adaptive management constructs (including monitoring) over time will be necessary, particularly at the biome scale. Communications, both external and within the Sagebrush Partnership, is also a needed function that could be handled through a Communications Support Team formed from participating entities or be assigned to partnership staff. The intent is that science, technical, and communications efforts would both feed-up / be informed by the mid- and local scales as well as feed-down / inform the mid- and local scales. Science-based technical advice is essential for establishing range-wide priorities amidst political changes. Ensuring standards that reflect conditions throughout the biome, rather than biome-wide standards that don't reflect different ecologies, is critical.
Funding for Partnership Administration	At the biome and mid-scales, funding for administering the partnership table would need to be secured and would be new across all models. Funding would be provided at Federal and/or State level on an annual or earmark basis (from existing agency budgets) or through "dues"-assessed members. Like the other models, the NGO model could be a recipient of such Federal and/or State funding or "dues" funding, or it could be supported through direct capacity building grants (from the philanthropic or government sector) at the startup, eventually shifting to indirect on pass-through grants or State-Federal funds.

ELEMENTS OF PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE THAT VARY ACROSS OPTIONS

In this second section, three different options for partnership models are described. The models are presented as independent alternatives but any of these biome-wide alternatives could be paired with any of the mid-scale options and/or potentially integrated / combined across one another into more hybridized concepts.

Role	Description	OPTION 1 – Governor Convened Representative Group	OPTION 2 – NGO Partnership	OPTION 3 – Federally led Coordination Committee

Biome Level Convener / Leadership—Steering Committee	Entity or entities that have the authority or gravitas to bring people together to a partnership table, command attention, and motivate engagement. Need not be one entity / person—could be jointly shared. "Leadership intent" to mid-scale	Governor-convened biome-level group with representatives appointed by executive level of State and Federal wildlife agencies, NGOs, industry, Tribal Nations (appointed by TAC). Options: • A set of governor's representative of different views, and capable of behaving in a bipartisan manner • Governors in partnership w/ Secretaries (Interior and Agriculture) • Governors in partnership w/ DOI, USDA, plus BIA / DOI	Biome-level coordinating group with an NGO as the convening entity (form a new NGO, rather than have an existing NGO lead). Would require: • Endorsement/support of Governors / Tribes / Federal entities • Include a strong "back out provision" • Come from an invitation or request from governing bodies or Federal agencies Options: • Retooled WAFWA as the NGO Could be convened by a neutral party such as an academic institution (Ruckelshaus Institute, Andrus Center for Public Policy, Salazar Center for North American Conservation, etc.)	Federal agencies convene biome-level coordinating body. USDOI/USDA as joint conveners. States help set priorities.

Biome Level "Functional Support" / process and project management	Entity that would ensure functional meeting organization, facilitation, and work getting done on behalf of partnership members between meetings; facilitate the "governance" and funding side (create the "safe space" for collaboration for all); tees up/Implements/helps inform the big picture decisions; communication and outreach specialist functions that support mid/local scale effort	Options: • Contracted entity (private independent entity or university-affiliated) • Staff from WGA or State-affiliated entity w/ capacity • Fed/State/other "career" agency staff (institutional knowledge) as well as other dedicated process-oriented/communications staff	Options: • Paid executive director, communications specialist, and support staff (grant specialist, accounting, etc.) as needed. • Contracted facilitation or process management roles	Options: • NISC model, executive director and operations manager located within the Office of the Secretary at the U.S. Department of the Interior. • Federal and/or State staff with existing agencies (or entity like WAFWA) provides support • Contract out certain roles solely dedicated to partnership
Mid-Scale Level Coordination (the role may be combined with "mid-scale level functional support" for some options)	Entity or entities that have the relationships to motivate engagement and bridge the biome and local scales. Need not be one entity / person—could be jointly shared.	States/Tribes. Project delivery coordinated through State-led programs such as Oregon SageCon, WY Sage-grouse Implementation Team, an expanded Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative and similar new or derivative programs in other States.	"JV-like," organized at ecoregional level. Establishes a Coordinating Committee to 1) establish objectives that step down from and support biome-wide objectives; 2) rank project proposals for funding consideration; 3) develop and implement communications	"JV-like" organized at ecoregional level and staffed by Federal employees to establish a Coordinating Committee to: 1) establish objectives that step down from and support biome-wide objectives; 2) rank project

			Plan. Generally same categories of representation as above. Stay connected with other mid-level "JVs" (either through biome direction or through mid-level horizontal coordination, stay connected with local scale through NGO and agency contacts at that level. Project delivery coordinated through State-led programs such as SageCon, WY, WY Sage-grouse Implementation Team, an expanded Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative and similar new or derivative programs in other States.	proposals for funding consideration; 3) develop and implement communications plan; Generally same categories of representation as above. Stay connected with other mid-level (either through biome direction or through mid-level initiative.

Mid-Scale Level Functional Support	Objective entity/third party that would ensure functional meeting organization, facilitation, and work getting done on behalf of partnership members between meetings; facilitate the "governance" and funding side (create the "safe space" for collaboration for all). "Staff Role"—two or three people who know where	Presumably, State entities (governor's office or DOW) already have staff responsible for conservation delivery with local entities, would be a need to add a responsibility to existing staff or a new staff person within each State and participating Tribe to coordinate mid-level activities with biome scale.	Could be new employees of new NGO, additional employees of members of NGO collaborative (TNC, Audubon, Sierra Club, etc.), or duties assigned to existing employees of these groups.	USDOI and/or USDA employees who staff offices at ecoregional levels (Great Basin, Pacific Northwest, Wyoming Basin, Colorado Plateau, etc.). Could be co-located with JVs (IWJV, Prairie Pothole, Northern Great Plains) or Federal Research Stations.

	conservation actions are happening, ensure reporting is being uploaded into a shareable database, QA/QC upload of data, facilitate/coordinate local collective action			
Authority	Level of authority the partnership body has with respect to funding or other decisions, etc.	Prescriptive at the biome and mid-scale	Advisory for Federal funding/priorities, but prescriptive for NGO-specific (unless provisions provided in statute…e.g., Congress specifies)	Prescriptive at the biome and mid-scale in that projects supported must support goals established at biome and ecoregional scales.
Interim/Transition Steps Required	Steps that may need to be taken when initiating the new partnership (in addition to rows above identifying clarity needs around funding availability and how functional support will be provided)	Place / time for governors to come together to set this up (could be at the request of a higher power / Sec. of Interior, or on their own via WGA) Process and structure for governors to make appointments	Need entity with the standing to establish the new biome-scale NGO entity and compel participation (e.g., EOC, TNC, IWJV, WGA, WAFWA). NGOs could move quickly with capacity building grant(s) and this model could be a transitional step ultimately replaced by one of the other models or it could persist.	Secretary or Congressional - level action to direct the creation of the entity (and potentially analogous acts in State legislatures). Clarity on convener (joint at the Fed. level; with States / govs)? FACA exempt or FACA-chartered?
Operating Principles	The intended "charge" or direction for partnership body members (i.e., the north-star people would be expected to work for and represent)	• Shared objectives and values that transcend boundaries • Understanding of the challenges/opportunity of economic impacts	• Shared objectives and values that transcend boundaries likely achievable with mainstream NGOs • Understanding of the challenges/opportunity of	• Top-down structure and government administration may impede development of shared objectives and values that transcend boundaries

		• "Watershed agreement" that makes it difficult to back out later; this may be important to making it not politically dependent in the long term • Dependable, predictable funding	economic impacts may shift towards primary funder • "Watershed agreement" may be difficult in this model and viability will likely depend on achieving progress.	• Understanding of the challenges/opportunity of economic impacts, • A "watershed agreement" is very achievable in this scenario given Federal funding leverage and ability to tie success to not warranted decision for sage-grouse.
Data Mechanisms (could be a role of mid-scale functional support)	To ensure accountability and for effectiveness monitoring to support adaptive management – QA/QC assurance check, contact for local level	Accountability aspect (did local groups do what they proposed to do with funding) could be assigned to local agency staff who are likely cooperating on proposals anyway. Effectiveness monitoring roles negotiated through partnership.	Reliance on local employees of affiliate NGOs to collect and forward data to ecoregional mid-scale; need to make it a condition of project funding to obtain assistance from others.	In addition to reliance on local collaborators, USDOI and USDA bureaus can assign data collection and reporting to their employees.
Authority/Mechanism Required	This mechanism would be used to evaluate the viability of the model options	Governors and Tribal leaders have broad authorities to create something like this but would have to get agreement across most or all of 13 States through an entity such as WGA which could be difficult and/or time consuming. New funding at national or State level would require legislative approval.	Authority vested in NGOs now in that consistent with mission, easy to do, agencies, Tribes, industry, etc., would likely participate initially but not likely to surrender any of their own authorities to the biome or mid-scale entities and "bleed-over" into other agency policies and programs likely to be minimal.	State and Federal governments have a rich tradition of supporting collaborative conservation, so authorities and mechanisms in place; constraint may be their regulatory authorities may in some respects get in the way.

Essential Tribal Engagement Commitment[1]:

To achieve successful, collaborative partnerships between Tribes, Federal, State, and Local entities under any and all models, Sagebrush Conservation Partners commit to the following:

- **Acknowledgement** that Tribes are sovereign nations with rights accorded through the Trust Doctrine and its assurance of Federal responsibility to Indians requiring the Federal government to support Tribal self-government and economic prosperity, duties that stem from the government's treaty guarantees to protect Indian Tribes and respect their sovereignty. Treaty rights and other trust doctrine obligations must be respected and honored by sagebrush conservation partners and prioritized in partnership conservation actions.[1]
- **Protection** of Tribal data, consistent with Tribal Historic Preservation Officer/Cultural Officer guidance and Tribal data sovereignty.
- **Support** for a cultural shift in how partners and indigenous people communicate and interact. Such a shift can only be realized through training and practice in collaborative, interpersonal interactions that emphasize humility and honesty within a diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice (DEISJ) framework to create safe and inclusive spaces for indigenous people.
- **Compensation** that enables Tribal participation in partnership activities, builds Tribal capacity, provides for soliciting Tribal Elder advice, and acknowledges the unique contributions indigenous people bring to sagebrush conservation.

[1] First draft of legal language describing these relationships. Final language will be reviewed and refined by a Native American Tribal Law expert.

Explanatory Narrative for Sagebrush Partnership Model Options

The Drafting Work Group attempted to construct alternative models that could accomplish biome-wide and mid-scale Sagebrush Partnership functions based on input or support from the assessment interviewees, Partnership Models Report, Advisory Group members, and workshops to date (see *below*). These models are intended to stimulate thought and discussion and serve as a starting point for decision makers to develop a partnership structure in concert with stakeholders. Although we show linkages from biome and mid-scale structures to the local level, we did not describe partnership structural options at the local (community or project level) scale because of a broad consensus for the partnership to support and facilitate conservation actions at that scale but maintain autonomy and independence at that level.

Option assumptions and guiding principles**.** The options developed for a partnership structure at biome-wide and mid-scales assume those responsible for - or deeply committed to - sagebrush conservation would stand up these structures, namely State and Federal agencies, NGOs, and Tribes. All these entities have strengths in collaborative conservation, and we view all these models as potentially viable approaches to improving coordination and enhancing effectiveness. The models are presented as independent alternatives but any of these biome-wide alternatives could be paired with any of the mid-scale options or potentially integrated into more hybridized concepts.

All the models assume substantial additional funding for sagebrush conservation in the future. A significant function of this partnership and these structures is to distribute those funds from the biome-level through the mid-scale to local communities and projects in a manner that maximizes probability of achieving mid-scale and biome-wide scale conservation objectives. There is strong concurrence among all participants that additional funding (and related partnership coordination) is necessary to conserve sagebrush so that we can continue to derive ecosystem services from it and keep sagebrush obligates like greater sage-grouse and pygmy rabbits off the Endangered Species List. The ability for partners to obtain or leverage additional funding through the partnership is also a strong and needed incentive for participating in the partnership. Historically for large-scale conservation efforts, this funding has been Federal and Congressionally appropriated from a variety of sources. It is anticipated that all partners including industry, NGOs, and State and Local Governments will contribute significant funding to sagebrush conservation in the future.

These partnership models are designed to enhance and improve effectiveness of voluntary, collaborative conservation efforts and are not intended to substitute for regulatory aspects of government agencies such as issuance of permits for grazing, oil and gas development, mining, or renewable energy development permitting by State, Federal, Tribal, or Local Governments, etc. There is a hope, however, and perhaps an expectation, that with an improved understanding of human and wildlife needs from the sagebrush system and the threats to that system, along with common objectives for conservation, that some of these positive conservation aspects will “spill-over” and indirectly impact how agencies at all levels approach threats to sagebrush.

To the extent possible and practical, we sought to use existing conservation structures rather than create new ones and believe the structure that is implemented should build on and integrate successful aspects of existing effective conservation models (such as SageCon, the Wyoming Sage-grouse Implementation Team, Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, the Sage-grouse Initiative, etc.).

Option 1: Governor-led

In this model, Western State governors and Tribal leaders convene the biome-wide coordinating committee and governors and Tribal leaders from each State would establish a Sagebrush Conservation Coordinating Committee as well as State/Tribal Implementation Teams that function at the mid-scale. Representation on these groups would be diverse, broadly representing stakeholders and those in a position to address threats. Presumably, in States that already have programs in place for sage-grouse or watershed conservation (Oregon SageCon, Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, Wyoming Sage-Grouse Implementation Team, etc.), these programs, with slight modifications to increase diversity of representation and focus (sagebrush vs. sage-grouse for instance) could serve as the mid-scale coordinating and/or implementation team. In this model, governors and Tribal leaders, with Federal representation and support, would oversee sagebrush conservation objective setting, planning, and implementation, including monitoring and adaptive management, at the biome and State/Tribe level. Decisions about how best to allocate Congressionally appropriated funding would be made by the Sagebrush Biome Conservation Coordinating Committee consistent with objectives and plans they develop, and distributed (and matched to some degree) through States and Tribes.

Advantages: This model recognizes that Governors and Tribal Leaders as CEOs of their State or Tribe are the ultimate conveners and can compel participation and increase the attention their State or Tribe pays to threats to sagebrush. Governors and Tribal Leaders oversee Departments and/or Commissions responsible for oil and gas and renewable energy permitting, mining and mine reclamation, noxious weeds (including invasive annual grasses), fire suppression, and management of State or Tribal lands and wildlife. State or Tribal response to many/most of the significant threats to sagebrush aggregate at the level of Governor or Tribal Leader, and this broad authority and influence lend credence to an invite to participate, so level of participation likely to be high ranking individuals. This is a natural extension for those States and Tribes with active programs to conserve sagebrush landscapes and takes advantage of existing strong connections to local communities at the State or Tribal level.

Disadvantages: Governor/Tribal Leader dominance at the biome scale diminishes Federal involvement and potentially impact, a serious concern when well over half the sagebrush occurs on Federally owned or administered lands. There may be a tendency to develop 13 (or more if Tribes develop independent plans) different sagebrush plans and objectives and presume the sum of those cumulatively conserves sagebrush which is very unlikely to be the case. Maintaining focus and continuity over time may be difficult with elected officials, given frequent turnover and the inevitably of priorities and policies shifting with each new administration. There is no regional planning or coordinating structure in this model above the State level, which may impede, or at least reduce the incentive for a coordinated response across States and Tribes to regional issues such as the invasive annual grass and fire cycle in the Great Basin.

Option 2: NGO-led

Conservation NGOs would convene the biome-wide Sagebrush Conservation Coordinating Committee and provide staffing at the biome level. It is unlikely any single existing NGO will take this on alone, given the scope, scale and complexity of the conservation needs and the potential for this to compete for, rather than complement existing funding, but a new non-profit NGO formed specifically for sagebrush conservation could be formed. Representation on this Coordinating Committee would be broad as well, and this group would develop biome-wide conservation goals and priorities, develop, and administer a monitoring and adaptive management construct, and make decisions about distributing funding to local scales after a review of rankings and priorities established at the mid-scale. A Congressional appropriation directly to this group is possible, as are obtaining other funds through grants, charitable contributions, member contributions, mitigation banking, etc.

This model has a split mid-scale, a regional or ecoregional group (several States, constructed around ecological or sociological aspects of sagebrush conservation, or both) to develop regional objectives and priorities that step down from the biome-wide objectives and priorities and to evaluate and rank proposals submitted from local scales against those objectives and priorities. The other mid-scale structural component is a State/Tribal implementation group that would be responsible for administering conservation grants to local entities. Again, in States that already have programs in place for sage-grouse or watershed conservation (Oregon SageCon, Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, Wyoming Sage-Grouse Implementation Team, etc.), these programs, with slight modifications to increase diversity of representation and focus (sagebrush vs. sage-grouse for instance) could serve as the mid-scale implementation team.

Advantages: NGOs can move quickly and respond nimbly to challenges, more so than Government can for a variety of reasons. An NGO-led Coordinating Committee is probably the most likely to develop strong, litigation-proof objectives and priorities for sagebrush conservation since they are relatively free of political pressures. Similarly, assuming this new NGO entity is viewed as a 3rd party neutral advocating for sagebrush and human uses/needs from that landscape, this model may be relatively freer of partisan influences to derail it. Turnover of staff within this model, assuming equitable pay, is likely to be low. This structure may facilitate interaction and coordination from biome through mid to local scales given that many of these NGO groups that may form this new entity already have staff stationed in State offices or local communities. It may be easier for an NGO to raise funds than for a government entity as people may be reluctant to contribute to the government.

Disadvantages: State, Federal, Tribal and industry reps will likely participate in Coordinating Committees established by an NGO group at biome and mid-scales because of the importance of the issue and consequences if we don't act, but the level of representation from these groups may be lower than if a Governor and Tribal Leader or the Secretary of Interior or Agriculture were to ask. Congress may be reluctant to appropriate funding directly to a new NGO collaborative without a proven track record. With more staff level participation, the potential for objectives and priorities to bleed over into agency/Tribal regulatory actions will be reduced.

Option 3: Federal Government led

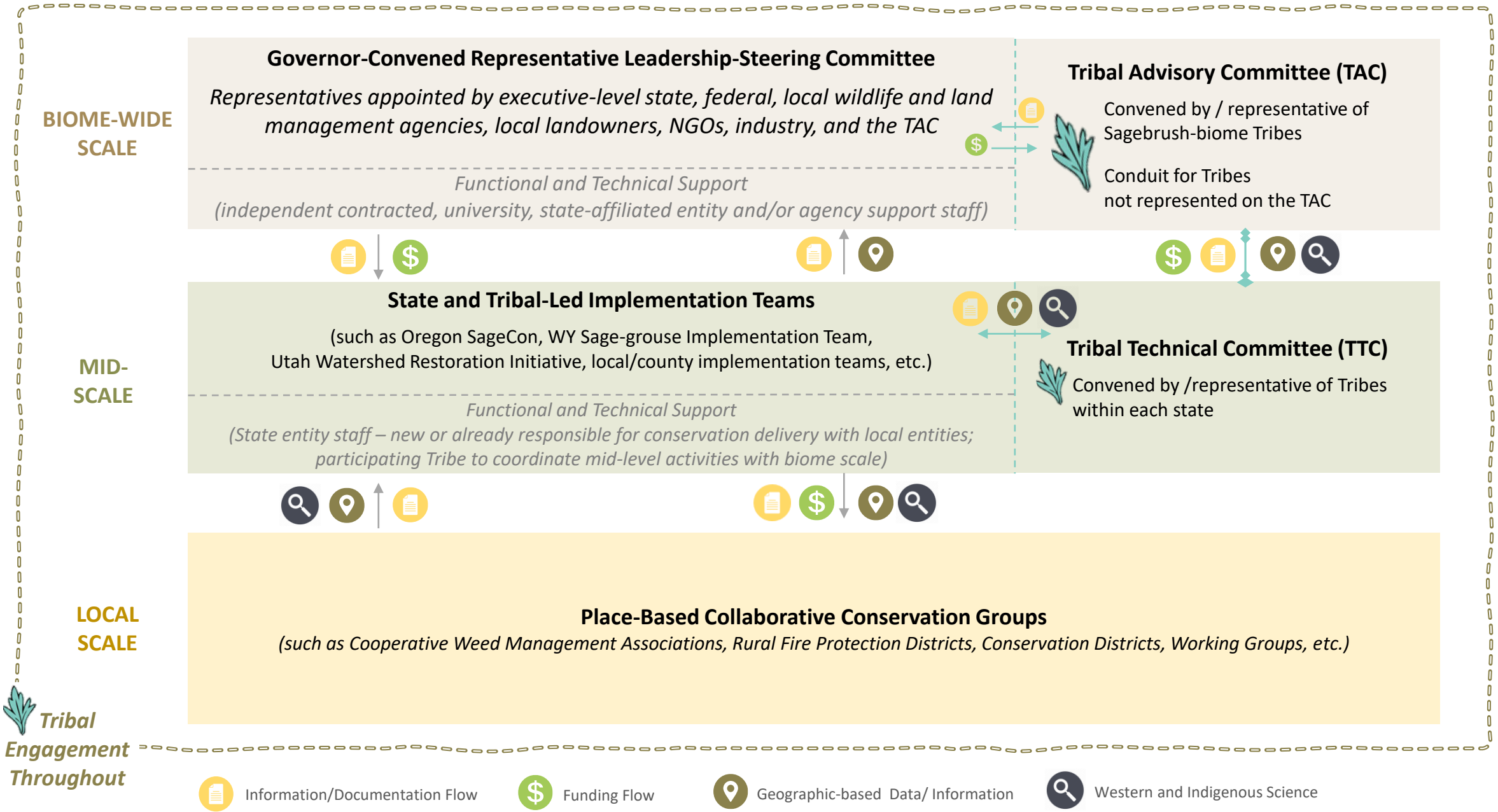
This option is probably the most traditional, and in many respects resembles the structure used to implement the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and administer funding under the North American Wetland Conservation Act. It envisions a Federal entity developing and maintaining a biome-wide Steering Committee with diverse representation. This Steering Committee would set policy, including biome-wide goals for sagebrush conservation, and identifying priority areas for conservation. This group would approve distribution of Federal funds to local projects based on rankings established at the mid-scale. Several options make sense for which Federal entity coordinates the biome-wide partnership effort including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).

This model also has a split mid-scale, a regional or ecoregional group (several States, constructed around ecological or sociological aspects of sagebrush conservation, or both) to develop regional objectives and priorities that step down from the biome-wide objectives and priorities and to evaluate and rank proposals submitted from local scales against those objectives and priorities. The other mid-scale structural component is a State/Tribal implementation group that would be responsible for administering conservation grants to local entities. Again, in States that already have programs in place for sage-grouse or watershed conservation (Oregon SageCon, Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, Wyoming Sage-Grouse Implementation Team, etc.), these programs, with slight modifications to increase diversity of representation and focus (sagebrush vs. sage-grouse for instance) could serve as the mid-scale implementation team.

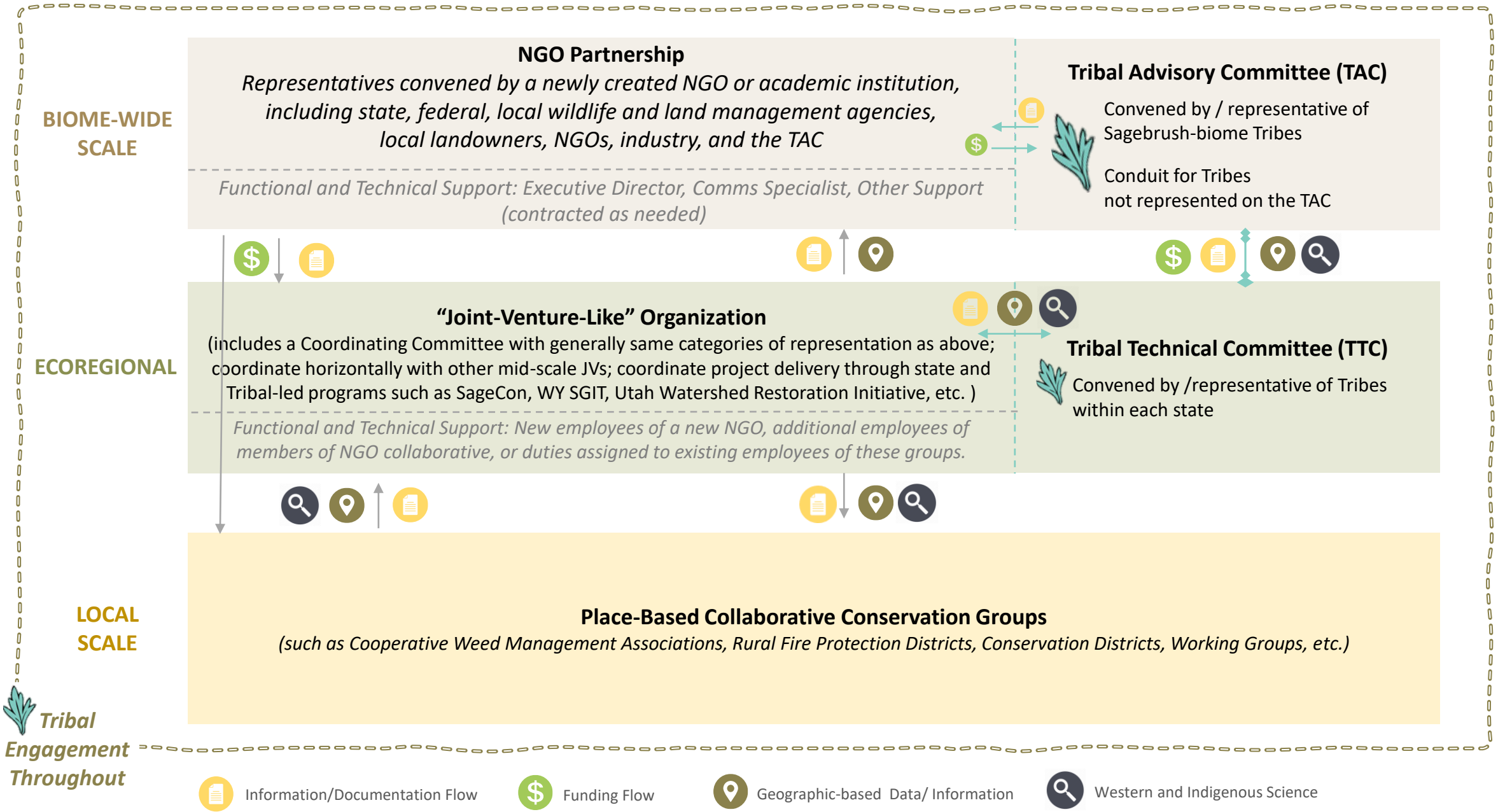
Advantages: Biome-wide scale structure could be stood up relatively quickly and managed very competently by Federal agencies if there is high enough level support given their experience in these areas and their size. The Landscape Conservation Cooperatives are both an example of this, and a cautionary tale that both support from collaborators for this structure and additional dollars for conservation delivered through the partnership are necessary components. Keeps administration of Federal funding at biome-wide scale within Federal oversight and takes advantage of structures/systems already in place to deliver grants to mid and local scales.

Disadvantages: Federal oversight means sagebrush conservation efforts have some potential, unless mandated explicitly by Congress, to wax and wane with changes in administrations. Federal agencies with regulatory responsibilities (USFWS – ESA, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, etc.; BLM – Mineral right leasing, grazing and other land use permitting, etc.) may be put in awkward positions when regulatory and voluntary, collaborative conservation aspects conflict.

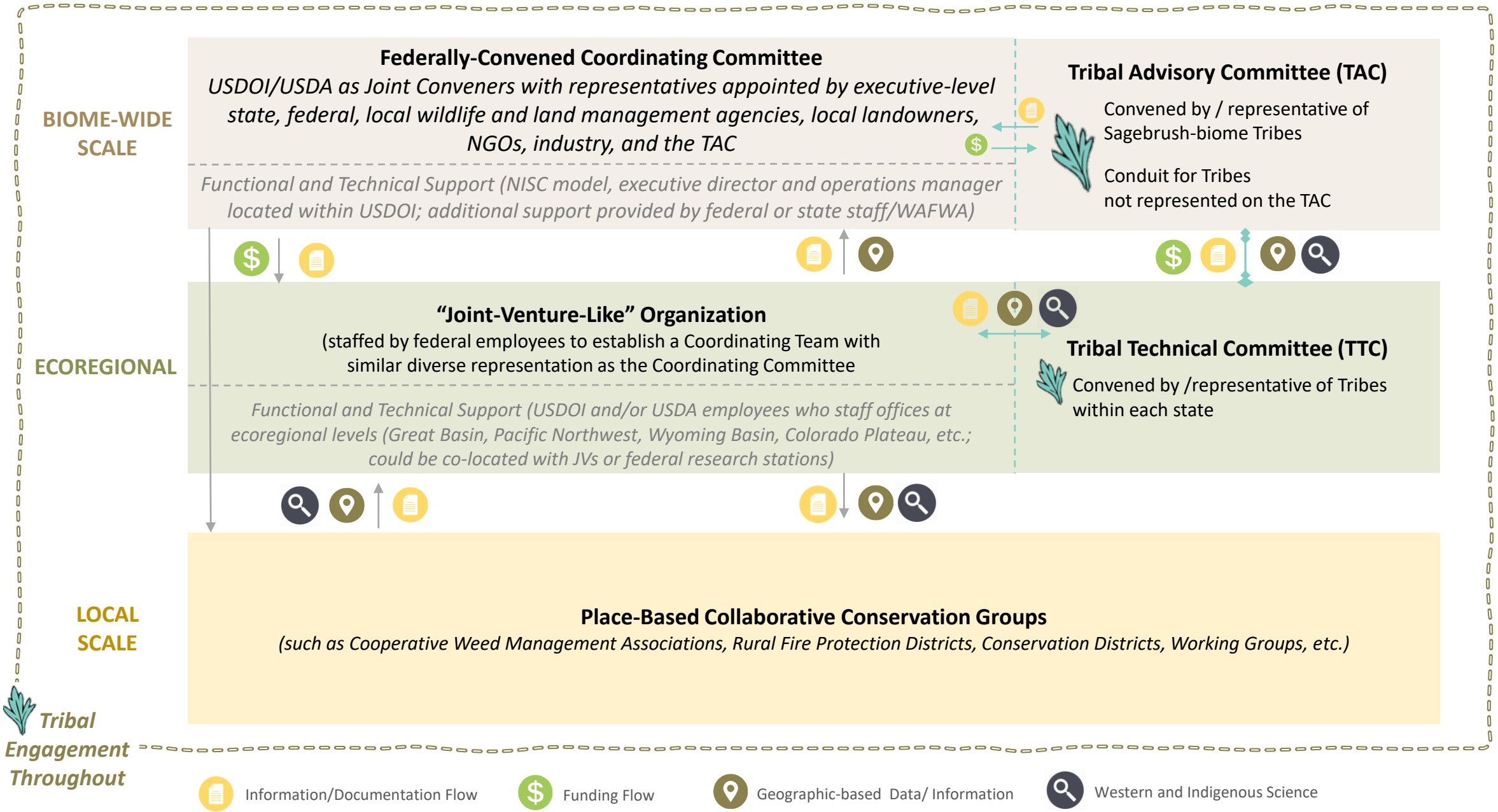
Conceptual Wireframe Model #1: Governor-Convened Representative Group



Conceptual Wireframe Model #2: NGO Partnership



Conceptual Wireframe Model #3: Federally Convened Coordinating Committee



Sagebrush Partnership Model Development Process Summary

The process kicked off through a March 10, 2021, webinar with the larger sagebrush community to discuss the partnership model development effort and review information gathered by the National Center through the assessment and partnership models reports. The National Center also presented this information to the Sagebrush Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) in their meeting that same day.

After the webinar, the Sagebrush Partnership Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) was convened to advise on the direction of the model options development and give input from a broad stakeholder membership. The first Advisory Committee workshop on March 18th focused on needed elements of vision and problem statements, as well as valuable functions of a partnership model across scales.

Concurrent with the first Advisory Committee workshop, an initial online comment period in March gathered perspectives from the larger sagebrush community about the National Center's assessment and partnership models reports, as well as ideas around coordinating between scales and providing incentives for collaboration.

Drawing on data from the first Advisory Committee workshop and the online comment process, the Drafting Work Group was convened to integrate the input received into draft partnership options. The first Drafting Work Group meeting on March 29th focused on reviewing and refining the vision and problem statement and needed functions of partnership options. The second Drafting Work Group meeting on April 16th finished the discussion on the needed functions of partnership options, as well as developed options for partnership structures that included key aspects such as funding, leadership, and a coordinating body.

A second Advisory Committee workshop on May 11th focused on giving feedback on the proposed partnership structures created by the Drafting Work Group. From there, a few volunteers from the Drafting Work Group met for several working sessions to finalize the partnership options. Those options were then presented for a second online comment process in June to get feedback from the larger sagebrush community. Online commenters were asked questions such as, "which of these models do you think would work best and why?".

A final Drafting Work Group meeting was held on July 1st, 2021, to review the partnership structures table and accompanying narrative as well as determine how to incorporate online comments and any further refinements. The National Center then presented the work on partnership models to-date to the Sagebrush Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) at their July 15th meeting.

REVIEW OF MODELS FOR SAGEBRUSH BIOME PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE

National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution
Udall Foundation

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

AFWA - Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
AMI - Adaptive Management Initiative
BLM - Bureau of Land Management
CBP - Chesapeake Bay Program
DOI - Department of Interior
EC - Executive Council (of the Chesapeake Bay Program)
EPA - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
GAO - General Accounting Office
GIT - Goal Implementation Team
IK/TEK - Indigenous Knowledge/Traditional Ecological Knowledge
IWJV - Intermountain West Joint Venture
JV - joint venture
LCC - Landscape Conservation Cooperative
NAS - National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
NAWCA - North American Wetlands Conservation Act
NAWMP - North American Waterfowl Management Plan
NISC - National Invasive Species Council
NGO - nongovernmental organization
NRCS - Natural Resources Conservation Service
NWBP - Northwest Boreal Partnership
PLJV - Playa Lakes Joint Venture
PSC - Principals' Staff Committee (of the Chesapeake Bay Program)
SECAS - Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy
TMDL - Total Maximum Daily Load
USFS - U.S. Forest Service
USFWS - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WAFWA - Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Bureau of Land Management, the Udall Foundation's National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution conducted a review of successful models of landscape-level collaborative partnerships to identify lessons learned and best practices that could be applied to the development of a collaborative partnership in the sagebrush biome. We reviewed three key collaborative partnership models (the North American Wetlands Management Plan and associated Joint Ventures, the Northwest Boreal Partnership, and the Chesapeake Bay Program) and four secondary models (Blackfoot Challenge, Crown of the Continent, the National Invasive Species Council, and the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy).

We conducted a desk review of all the models as well as interviews with selected representatives of the key models. We then assessed these models against seven key factors drawn from the literature on collaborative governance. As a result, we have drawn some clear lessons for creating a collaborative partnership focused on the sagebrush biome. Those lessons include:

- **Setting up measurable goals for the partnership and methods to track**, report, and adjust as needed using an adaptive management approach. At the same time, recognizing that this can be a longer-term, iterative process and avoiding over-emphasis on numeric outcomes in complex ecological environments.
- **Thinking in a broad and inclusive way about who should participate** in the collaborative, bringing in potential partners at the outset to help shape the partnership, and devoting the necessary time and resources to engaging affected Indigenous and other historically marginalized communities. Having engaged this diverse group, drawing on the interests and perspectives of participants to conceptualize a partnership that can speak to this broad range of interests while orienting the participants toward a common goal.
- **Creating pathways to incorporate scientific and technical knowledge into decision making, while also integrating other types of knowledge**, such as Indigenous Knowledge/Traditional Ecological Knowledge and an understanding of the human relationship to the environment.
- **Identifying sufficient, sustainable, and diversified sources of funding**, ideally including a core base of Federal funds, and tapping into a diverse partnership to bring innovative funding sources to the table.
- **Engaging high-level leadership in the region** to establish the partnership and remain involved over the life of the partnership to set priorities and direction. Ideally, the leadership group's ongoing engagement would be supported by staff who are more regular participants in the partnership.
- **Securing sufficient, stable funding for independent staff positions** to coordinate operations. If possible, devoting some staff to communication and outreach functions.
- **Developing a well-articulated and consensus-based decision-making process** to provide clarity and direction to the group.
- **Cultivating relationships of trust among participants** by creating a non-regulatory partnership, shaping goals to align with participants' interests, and investing the time and resources in relationship-building efforts and orientation for new members.
- **Carefully considering the incentives, roles, and connections between participants at different scales** and incorporating that understanding into the partnership design.

These results are intended to inform the development of proposed partnership governance model(s) for the sagebrush biome by an advisory committee and stakeholders in the sagebrush ecosystem, which is expected to take place in the spring of 2021. We hope the results of this research will provide useful guidance and help to frame the conversation for those working to forge collaborative partnerships in sagebrush biome conservation.

INTRODUCTION

The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) is coordinating the development of a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy with the support and active participation of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and many other State, Federal, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners. The aim is to address the accomplishments and challenges related to conservation and restoration of the sagebrush ecosystem.[1] This effort grew out of WAFWA's Sagebrush Conservation Initiative, which is dedicated to supporting a "healthy, working sagebrush landscape for people and wildlife." The strategy will have two parts: Part A will consist of a contextual analysis of the human and wildlife needs from the sagebrush habitat, and a scientific review of threats and related conservation challenges; Part B will include sections on sagebrush community ecology, examples of successful collaborative conservation programs, and updated strategies developed through a series of facilitated, virtual workshops conducted in May 2020.[2]

In support of Part B, WAFWA and BLM have sought assistance from the Morris K. and Stewart L. Udall Foundation's National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (National Center) to identify potential collaborative governance models that would support partnership effort to conserve the sagebrush habitat that spans 13 western states and is one of the most threatened biomes in North America. The desired partnership governance model would ensure that all actors - including State wildlife agencies, State departments of agriculture, State oil and gas conservation commissions, State land boards, Tribes, Federal agencies, NGOs, industry, and landowners - are effectively using their authorities and resources to conserve the sagebrush biome and the ecosystem services derived from it.

The Morris K. and Stewart L. Udall Foundation (Udall Foundation) was established by the U.S. Congress as an independent executive branch agency to honor the Udalls' lasting impact on this nation's environment, public lands, and natural resources, and their support of the rights and self-governance of Native Americans and Alaska Natives.[3] The National Center, a key program of the Udall Foundation, provides impartial collaboration, consensus-building, and conflict resolution services for complex environmental challenges and conflicts that involve the U.S. Government.

A Core Team was established to assist the National Center in various aspects of this project as described below. Core Team members are Pat Deibert, USFWS; Ali Duvall, Intermountain West Joint Venture; Shawn Johnson, University of Montana; Ken Mayer, WAFWA; Karen Prentice, BLM; Tom Remington, WAFWA; and San Stiver, WAFWA.

[1] Chris Smith, "Developing a Comprehensive Sagebrush Conservation Strategy," *Outdoor News Bulletin* 74, issue 8 (August 2020), https://wildlifemanagement.institute/outdoor-news-bulletin/august-2020/developing-comprehensive-sagebrush-conservation-strategy.

[2] Smith, "Developing a Comprehensive Sagebrush Conservation Strategy."

[3] P.L. 102-259.

WHY PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE

In recent decades, there has been a growing recognition that stakeholders' ability to collaborate toward their mutual goals is a key factor in achieving desired conservation outcomes.[4] Due to the scale and complexities of current natural resource management, collaborative work has even become necessary.[5] Therefore "collaborative conservation" has become a primary focus in large-landscape conservation.[6]

The sagebrush biome is geographically vast (covering portions of 13 states) and is confronted by numerous threats - the solutions to which are complex, and which must be implemented across multiple scales and forms of land tenure. In fact, Bixler et al. (2019) documented 509 entities across the country that self-identified as being active in sagebrush conservation, with likely many more that do not necessarily identify themselves as such.[7] Across this complex landscape, an expanded governance model is needed to ensure that all actors are effectively and efficiently coordinating actions on a set of established, shared priorities.

APPROACH

In this research report, our goal is to inform the design of a potential partnership governance system for the sagebrush biome by drawing lessons from other successful partnerships in large landscape settings. At the same time, the National Center also is conducting an assessment of the stakeholders in the sagebrush system to better understand their priorities, concerns, and needs with regard to participating in a potential collaborative partnership for sagebrush conservation. This assessment will result in a separate report.

Together, the two reports will inform the work of an advisory committee, composed of representatives of State and Federal agencies, Tribes, and stakeholders in sagebrush conservation, which will design proposed governance model(s) for a collaborative partnership for sagebrush biome conservation. Throughout the model development process, the advisory committee will invite comments from the larger community that is involved in implementing the work of sagebrush conservation. The process of developing proposed partnership model(s) is expected to take place in spring 2021, with a final recommendation for proposed models anticipated in June 2021.

To conduct our research, National Center staff reviewed nine existing models of collaborative partnerships. With input from the Core Team, we searched for partnership models with the following characteristics:

[4] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *A Review of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2016), 19.

[5] Lynn Scarlett and Matthew McKinney, "Connecting people and places: the emerging role of network governance in large landscape conservation," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 14, no. 3 (2016): 116.

[6] Scarlett and McKinney, "Connecting people and places."

[7] Patrick Bixler et al., "Toward a Network Governance Strategy of the Sagebrush Landscape: an empirical assessment of stakeholders and networks to inform multi-scale governance and implementation of the Sagebrush Conservation Strategy," (2019), 23.

- Management-focused governance bodies that operate in a science-informed way, ideally using an adaptive management approach
- Success integrating Federal agencies and other partners in a coordination role
- Shared vision, goals, objectives, and/or priorities for natural resource management
- Roles in both strategic planning and project implementation
- Clear lessons learned and illustration of the role of several of the assessment factors (see below)
- Applicability and parallels to the sagebrush effort, including geographic similarities if possible
- Sufficiently long operational histories (at least three years) to show some results
- Some influence on how resources are distributed to achieve conservation, as well as ability to secure additional resources

It is important to note that we did not do a comprehensive review of all large landscape partnerships and evaluate their levels of success. Rather, we selected some examples with the above characteristics that we thought would be instructive for the sagebrush endeavor. We sought to learn from those models how they approached some key elements of a partnership governance system.

Our review of the literature on collaborative governance (see Appendix A) helped us to identify the following factors that we would use to assess and draw lessons from each of the focus models:

- Goals and measurable impact
- Balanced and inclusive representation
- Access to needed knowledge and scientific or technical information
- Sufficient and sustainable funding
- Approach to decision making and conflict resolution
- Leadership and staffing roles
- Relationships among participants

After considering 15 partnership models gleaned from our research and Core Team recommendations against the above criteria, we selected three models for more in-depth review, including interviews with selected representatives: the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), the Northwest Boreal Partnership (NWBP) as an example of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and the Chesapeake Bay Program. These would be the **key models** for our review. We also decided to conduct literature reviews of the associated Intermountain West Joint Venture and the Playa Lakes Joint Venture as part of the NAWMP system.

In addition, the following models illustrated at least some of the factors we were considering but were not as comprehensive as our key models listed above. We conducted a desk review focused on the illustrative factors in these models:

- Blackfoot Challenge
- Crown of the Continent
- National Invasive Species Council
- Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy

We have summarized the main points under the assessment factors for each model in the table below. For the full description of each model by assessment factor, see Appendix B. In the subsequent Findings section, we summarize the lessons learned and best practices gleaned from the models and the

collaborative governance literature we reviewed. Our analysis, combined with the results of the stakeholder assessment, aims to inform the advisory committee and sagebrush stakeholders in their development of partnership governance models for sagebrush conservation.

MODEL SUMMARY TABLE

	North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP)	NAWMP: Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV)	NAWMP: Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV)	Northwest Boreal Partnership (NWBP)	Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP)
Goals and Measurable Impact	NAWMP has three goals focused on waterfowl populations, wetlands, and people. Goals are clear with associated recommendations and action plans. The original NAWMP goal of restoring waterfowl populations to levels during the 1970s has been measured and achieved. NAWMP, as originally established, was successful and has now grown its goals to achieve more.	Conservation goals of NAWMP are delivered primarily through JVs Establishes priorities, activities, and budget in Implementation Plan & its annual operational plan; also lists achievements, including metrics Developed science-based planning framework for working wet meadows; used bioenergetic model to create habitat objective of 64,700 acres on private land	Conservation goals of NAWMP are delivered primarily through JVs Established goal of 32,611 healthy playas out of 71,850 Website tracker shows status: 150 playas restored in 2017, 328 others had reduced functionality Demonstrates need to do more to offset impacts	The strategic plan is in the process of being updated due to all the changes the NWBP has undergone recently. Due to this, it is difficult to measure impact specifically.	Methods for setting and tracking its goals have evolved over 35 years 2014 agreement: 5 thematic areas with 10 interrelated goals, and 31 measurable outcomes Goal Implementation Teams (GITs) developing strategies to reach each outcome by 2025 Uses Strategy Review System, a structured process to apply an adaptive management approach Bay pollution generally decreasing; progress in some key areas slow

Balanced and Inclusive Representation	The Plan Committee has equal representation numbers from Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. Ducks Unlimited and other NGOs are helpful partners. Sufficient representation on project implementation is best viewed at the Joint Venture level.	"Relentless" focus on building diverse relationships, an IWJV core value Emphasizes broadening the conservation frame to bring together diverse partners and funders in projects that benefit ecosystem & participants Intends to outreach to new audiences; may need to broaden its messaging (e.g., fire, invasives)	Emphasizes the importance of partnerships to its success Building its partnership with the wind industry, due to potential to significantly impact the playa landscape Helpful to have a non-regulatory approach	The Steering Committee includes those who use or manage natural or cultural resources; conduct related science; or possess traditional ecological knowledge. The Partnership reports building more trust by involving Indigenous partners from the outset.	Includes 19 Federal agencies, nearly 40 State agencies / programs, ~1,800 Local Governments, over 20 academic institutions, over 60 businesses, nonprofits, and advocacy groups Headwater states of the Chesapeake Bay signed on to 2014 agreement Goal to increase the diversity of participants by engaging underrepresented groups, including Tribes

Access to Needed Knowledge and Scientific or Technical Information	NAWMP Science Support Team facilitates scientific collaboration between the Plan Committee, Federal wildlife agencies, and Joint Ventures.	2013 technical documents identify avian conservation priorities based on scientific evaluation Based on that analysis, IWJV prioritized investments, conservation work, and partnerships on key wetlands and high value areas Developed scientific understanding of key role of irrigated wet meadows for bird habitat & conservation Developed Wetlands Dynamics Technical Report and Decision Support Tool to guide wet meadow conservation	Science Advisory Team lays the foundation for conservation goals and activities, develops research plans, monitoring and evaluation protocols, and reviews research project proposals Developed essential scientific understanding of playas' role in aquifer recharge and human relationship to playas, leading to innovative partnerships	The NWBP balances knowledge from Western science data and Indigenous or traditional ecological knowledge. Projects now focus more on Indigenous-led efforts, such as Indigenous led land-use planning.	Adaptive management approach using Strategy Review System & ChesapeakeDecisions tool Goals linked to outcomes & deadlines, reviewed on 2-year cycle Adaptive management challenge: helping decision makers understand when appropriate to make changes Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee provides independent scientific/technical input Science, Technical Analysis, and Reporting group meets scientific & technical needs of GITs Suite of scientific & technical programs (e.g., modeling, monitoring) Needs to find ways to incorporate IK/TEK

Sufficient and Sustainable Funding	Projects in support of the Plan are often funded through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and must be matched. These funds have been sustainable.	Receives an allocation of Federal funds through USFWS Partner contributions constituted 72% of income in FY2021 11% funding increase in 2020 attributed to work of Government Relations Committee, partners, and staff	USFWS joint venture funds make up about 50% of revenue Diversified funding - since 1990, PLJV has raised over $50 million Members of the board contribute $5,000 annually PLJV may contribute matching funds for wetlands projects that conserve bird habitat; also offers the PLJV ConocoPhillips Capacity Grant program for State grassland habitat programs	Funding and staff support for the NWB LCC originally came from USFWS. Now NGO partners manage grants, host staff positions, and assist with fundraising.	Many funding sources for ecosystem protection & restoration: Federal, State, and Local Governments; NGOs; and private sector Significant source is EPA appropriations; funds support the CBP Program Office, including staffing, scientific and technical expertise, and decision support tools Some nonprofits help diversify funding Budget and Finance Work Group is the focal point for coordination, funding innovation, and reporting Federal Office of Management & Budget reports on the CBP budget annually in the *Chesapeake Bay Spending Restoration Crosscut*

Leadership and Staffing Roles	The Plan Committee's role is to provide direction and facilitate large-scale or long-term waterfowl discussions without prescribing actions from the Joint Ventures. USFWS, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and Canadian Government provide support staff.	Governed by a 21-member Management Board, comprised of representatives from a variety of sectors, including State and Federal agencies, NGOs, the energy industry, and private landowners Funded for 13 staff positions	Governed by a 21-member Management Board with members representing wildlife conservation organizations, State and Federal wildlife agencies, State agriculture agencies, and industry 8 staff members	The leadership team includes a co-chair and vice-chair from each country and the Partnership Director. Staff includes a full-time Partnership Director and Communications and Outreach Coordinator.	Hierarchical structure headed by the Chesapeake Executive Council (governors of signatory states, mayor of DC, EPA administrator, and chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission) The Executive Council is supported by the Principals' Staff Committee, composed of high-level State and Federal leaders The Management Board does strategic planning, sets priorities, and offers operational guidance; members of represent their signatory or Federal agency GITs are responsible for coordinating implementation EPA maintains the Chesapeake Bay Program Office

Approach to Decision Making and Conflict Resolution	The Plan Committee largely operates by consensus.	Work is focused on common-ground solutions that work for the diverse interests represented by a public-private partnership Decision-making relies on the Management Board, working closely with committees, staff, work groups; requires significant capacity to facilitate effective meetings where people are incentivized to work together Conflict resolution has not been required	Meetings facilitated by staff or board officers; an independent facilitator has not been necessary No significant need for conflict resolution	The NWBP operates by consensus. The Leadership Team makes day-to-day work decisions or decisions that require a rapid response. High-level decisions are made by the entire Steering Committee.	Defined AM decision-making process: under the Strategy Review System, the GITs and the WGs report on their progress to the Management Board on 2-year cycles ChesapeakeDecisions tool guides the participants through the Strategy Review System and promotes transparency Adopted the University of Maryland Center for Leadership & Organizational Change's "consensus continuum" for decisions Has series of well-articulated steps in the decision-making process Staff coordinators and chairs facilitate meetings; generally third-party neutral facilitation has not been necessary

Relationships Among Participants	Relationships on the Plan Committee change with turnover. Between the Plan Committee, working groups, and the Joint Ventures, it is possible to feel disconnected from the whole.	Prides itself on forging diverse partnerships that are based on the needs and interests of those involved and are mutually beneficial The significant funding that the IWJV receives from its partners - as well as its longevity - seem to reflect the high value that participants place on the organization and its work	There is a great deal of trust among PLJV members, in part because the effort is not regulatory Members are generally committed to furthering the work of the JV because it aligns well with their own missions	The NWBP builds and maintains relationships by being patient with relationship-building, asking what matters to people, and prioritizing in-person field trips.	The bay-wide total maximum daily load has in part eroded trust because even if the states have committed to meeting their assigned load, they may not have the resources to carry it out The total maximum daily load has also complicated EPA's role within the CBP, adding another dimension to the agency's responsibilities

FINDINGS

Having reviewed both the key models and the relevant elements of some secondary models, we identified a number of lessons related to our assessment factors that can be instructive in developing a governance system for the sagebrush effort. In this section, we discuss those lessons and point to some best practices for each of the assessment factors.

GOALS AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

1. **A compelling vision and agreed-upon quantitative goals were essential components of successful governance models.**

As pointed out in the 2016 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS) report on the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), critical components for collaborative efforts include, among other things, "a unifying theme, adaptive management, strategic planning efforts, [and] metrics to aggregate project impacts . . . "[8] Two of the key models that we reviewed - NAWMP with its accompanying JVs and the Chesapeake Bay Program - made an effort to use strategic planning to set goals that are measurable, track progress against them, and make adjustments as needed using an adaptive management framework. The third key model, the Northwest Boreal Partnership, is in the process of developing such goals through its strategic plan revision. In another example, the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS) established a long-term goal of 10% improvement in Southeastern ecosystem function by 2060, along with interim goals, and tracks progress against it annually. This singular goal is credited with attracting new partners, funders, and collaboration opportunities to the effort.

Having agreed-upon, overarching goals to orient the partnerships and their activities appeared to be essential for giving the groups direction; quantifiable goals helped to determine the resources and effort needed to achieve the desired outcomes. Indeed, the NAS report on the LCCs concluded that a key reason for the system's failure to gain traction was the lack of a specific, compelling goal to motivate participants. A 2002 U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report came to a similar conclusion on the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) effort. At the same time, the models we looked at also recognized the importance of the ability to adjust goals based on evolving information and realities on the ground - and included mechanisms to do so.

2. **An effective system to track and report on progress, as well as adjust goals and management approaches over time, is important to sustaining a large collaborative effort.**

The models we evaluated highlighted both the importance and difficulty of developing an effective and transparent monitoring and adaptive management construct. For instance, over its 35-year history, the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) went through an iterative process of developing more refined goals and processes for tracking and reporting on progress, prompted in part by critical GAO reports pointing to the inefficacy of its system. The CBP now has quite a robust system for linking measurable goals to outcomes, adjusting goals as needed, and publicizing results that is worth looking at as a model for how to implement an adaptive management framework. The CBP experience also reveals that the purpose and function of adaptive management is not always well understood by all stakeholders. This indicates a

[8] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *A Review of the* Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, 71.

need to familiarize participants with the adaptive management process as well as to develop tools such as the Strategy Review System to help with its application.

3. Partnerships' quantitative goals need to be viewed within the larger system context to appropriately evaluate their success.

The models' effectiveness in achieving their desired outcomes, however, is a challenging question. There has been limited research to date into the effectiveness of collaborative groups in terms of environmental outcomes, due to the challenges of linking environmental data to the groups' activities.[9,10] In several of the cases we reviewed, it seems the collaborative groups are not making progress on some of their key indicators or only just keeping up with ongoing resource degradation - for example, the health of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem recently maintained its D+ grade, with improvements in some areas offset by declines in others.[11] The Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) also acknowledged the need to do more to offset declines, observing that while 150 playas were restored in 2017, 328 others lost functionality in that time.

While such a lack of progress could be interpreted as a shortcoming of collaborative efforts, we heard from several interviewees that they did not view it in that light, cautioning against an over-reliance on specific quantitative indicators (particularly habitat goals) because of the complexity of the systems. Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of offsetting declines - even if overall progress seems slow or insufficient. It is important to consider what the resource conditions would be in the absence of the partnership effort. According to one interviewee, "Habitat loss is occurring faster than protection . . . In the long term you're going to be overwhelmed, it can be depressing. We don't look at it that way - [we focus on] finding what we can do now to reduce the rate of decline. Who knows what will happen in the future?" As suggested in this quote, collaborative groups are only one actor within the overall system context, which is comprised of elements such as policy and legal frameworks and resource conditions that can also significantly influence outcomes.[12]

Another interviewee pointed to possible problems with accurately measuring and accounting for the impacts, further cautioning about relying too heavily on particular quantitative metrics. Therefore, although measurable goals play an important role in helping a collaborative to focus its efforts in the areas where it can have the most impact, avoiding an over-emphasis on those goals and taking a longer-term, more holistic view of the qualitative outcomes can be important for continuing to move forward.

[9] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," *Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management,* 143, no. 9 (2017): 2; Kootz et al., "Assessing Collaborative Conservation," *Society and Natural Resources,* 33, no. 4 (2020).

[10] While we looked at the collaborative governance literature, a reviewer noted that there is a significant amount of literature showing positive outcomes in the collective impact field (for example, see https://ssir.org/articles/entry/does_collective_impact_really_make_an_impact). We did not have the opportunity to review the collective impact literature for this study, but it may be worth looking at for examples of positive outcomes of collaborative groups.

[11] Rachel Felver, "Chesapeake Bay sees health score decline by one point, but retain D+ grade," January 6, 2021, https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/chesapeake_bay_sees_health_score_decline_by_one_point_but_retain_d_grade.

[12] Kirk Emerson and Tina Nabatchi, *Collaborative Governance Regimes*, 40.

BALANCED AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

4. Diverse, balanced, and inclusive partnerships were a strength of the collaborative models.

Balanced and inclusive representation is a hallmark of collaborative bodies and one of the tenets of principled engagement, which is a component of successful collaboration dynamics.[13] Indeed, diverse and inclusive partnerships were a highlighted feature of all the models we reviewed, and many models credited their broad and diverse memberships with bringing needed expertise, resources, innovation, and funding to the table. The Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) and the PLJV pointed to their effort to conceptualize their goals broadly as fundamental to bringing in a range of partners who would otherwise not necessarily engage in bird conservation. For example, the PLJV developed a scientific understanding of the role of playas - essential bird habitat - in the recharge of the Ogallala Aquifer. Communicating around the need to preserve this ecological function, the PLJV was able to build innovative partnerships with the agricultural community as well as municipalities relying on the aquifer for drinking water. The IWJV has had similar success in its messaging around water - "the natural resource issue that defines the West" - to preserve wetlands habitat not only for birds but also for a range of human uses involving a broad swath of partners.

In the context of the sagebrush biome, therefore, it is worth considering how to shape the overall vision for the collaborative effort in a way that it is broad and inclusive enough to bring in a range of partners - while keeping the effort focused on a common purpose. In order to create such a vision, one interviewee observed, it is important to bring in the range of potential partners into the effort early on, when plans are being developed.

5. It is important to focus on diversity and inclusivity from the outset of the partnership, as well as be prepared to support engagement capacity when needed.

Although the models have had a focus on diverse partnerships, they have not necessarily had success in involving Indigenous or other historically marginalized communities. Some noted the difficulty in reaching these communities or insufficient community capacity to engage in collaboration. Among the models we looked at, the CBP, the Northwest Boreal Partnership, and the Crown of the Continent have a focus on engagement of Indigenous and/or underserved communities. The CBP recently developed specific objectives in a goal area around such engagement and is still working on implementation. The Crown of the Continent has had an explicit focus on partnerships with Tribes and First Nations since its founding in 2007, while the Northwest Boreal Partnership has reoriented to focus on partnerships with Indigenous communities as an integral part of its work. This more inclusive partnership has called for a revisioning of the effort and how it functions, necessitating a revision of the strategic plan. When a diverse range of affected stakeholders are brought into the collaborative effort, it helps the group develop a more holistic view of both the issues and the potential solutions. Such a broadening of perspectives reinforces the importance of making a concerted effort to bring those stakeholders in at the outset - and allocating the necessary time and resources to do so, helping to support engagement capacity as needed. This could involve activities such as engaging in additional outreach, providing meeting summaries or other needed materials, offering capacity-building trainings, or providing travel and participation stipends.

[13] Emerson and Nabatchi, *Collaborative Governance Regimes*, 59-60.

These efforts at inclusivity in collaborative partnerships can also be viewed in the larger context of ushering in needed changes at many institutional levels. As an interviewee pointed out, "[the work in diversity and inclusion] is a larger piece of addressing the long history of inequities that continue to be ever-present in the social and institutional fabric of our country. Some groups . . . recognize that addressing these inequities directly in their work is critical not only to the successes in achieving their mission and goals, but it is critical to empower marginalized communities to advocate for their needs and to have a central role in leadership in environmental science and conservation efforts."

ACCESS TO NEEDED KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL INFORMATION

6. **In the models we considered, participants recognized the importance of science-based decision making.**

Among the models, there were a variety of approaches and tools for bringing scientific and technical information to bear. These included forming scientific advisory committees, having scientific and technical experts available for consultation, conducting studies to help determine the collaborative's priorities, and using an adaptive management framework to integrate new information into subsequent management decisions. Some groups had monitoring programs and used modeling to help determine the potential outcomes of management decisions on the resources. Both the NAWMP and the CBP went through several revisions and updates to their plans that incorporated new scientific information.

The process of developing the scientific and technical data or tools often takes place over a longer timeframe, requiring updates to priorities and plan revisions as new information comes to light. Once that information is developed, it is important to help stakeholders in decision-making bodies translate that information into management terms and understand how to make management decisions in the context of scientific uncertainty.[14] As noted above, it is a valuable staff or leadership function to help participants understand this iterative process and guide them through the steps. In the CBP's case, the partnership has developed the well-articulated process of the Strategy Review System.

7. **There is a movement toward integrating more cultural, social, and economic knowledge into decision making.**

A previous National Center BLM-sponsored report, which focused on identifying best practices and roles for government agencies to support landscape-scale conservation, identified incorporating different types of information and ways of knowing - including social, economic, and cultural - into landscape-scale decision making as a "central need."[15] A few of the models we reviewed are increasing their consideration of social science in management decisions. The NAWMP, for example, has a human-centered goal around better understanding what motivates the public to become involved in conservation. The PLJV's focus on understanding the human relationship to the playas helped it to build new and innovative partnerships.

Moreover, research on the effectiveness of watershed partnerships has shown that those that rely heavily on a "technical" knowledge of the environment can have a lower perceived sense of success among participants than those that integrate a more holistic or historical knowledge of the environment

[14] ECO Resource Group, "Advancing Multi-Scale Place-Based Conservation and Development: Part I Data Report Including Discussion of Potential Federal Roles" (unpublished report, October 2018), Microsoft Word file, 33.
[15] ECO Resource Group, "Advancing Multi-Scale Place-Based Conservation and Development," 32.

(e.g., local communities, particularly Indigenous).[16] The Crown of the Continent and Northwest Boreal Partnership are the only models we reviewed that have focused on integrating a different type of knowledge in the form of Indigenous or Traditional Ecological Knowledge (IK/TEK) into their programs. These partnerships highlighted the importance of bringing different types of knowledge to the table in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand, as well as of possible solutions. It is important to note that there may be data sovereignty and confidentiality concerns when working with IK/TEK, so it is essential to identify ways to address these potential concerns with Indigenous community partners.

SUFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

8. **Access to sufficient funding over time is an important factor in the success and sustainability of a collaborative body.**

The models we examined have succeeded in securing funds to maintain and grow their partnerships, often diversifying their funding sources over time. Two of the key models, NAWMP and the CBP, benefit from core funding from Federal agencies that directly support the partnership. The NAS report on the LCC system and the GAO report on the NISC both pointed to the lack of dedicated Federal funds as a key weakness in those collaborative efforts. Moreover, although partners can often bring their own resources to support conservation activities, interviewees observed that having access to additional funds through the partnership can be a significant incentive for participation.

While Federal funds can provide an important source of support, the uncertainties in Federal appropriations can also bring the risk of delays; recipients therefore often saw the value in seeking other sources of funds to both expand the base and establish stable resources that provide for staff salaries and other ongoing expenses. After the loss of Federal funding to the LCCs, for example, the Northwest Boreal Partnership also sought funding from other sources such as NGOs and private foundations, in addition to continuing to seek partial funding from government partners.

The models we reviewed often draw on their partnerships to bring a variety of funding sources to the effort. In the Chesapeake, for example, the partners use their own resources to carry out their common goals. The program also has a Budget and Finance Work Group devoted to coordinating funding-related activities throughout the partnership. In the case of the PLJV and the Blackfoot Challenge, board members contribute funds to the organization and participate in outreach to funders. In another approach, the Northwest Boreal Partnership is in the early stages of forming a Canada & Transboundary Funding Task Force to develop funding based on collaborative project opportunities, which will help balance the work and staffing across the two countries.

At the same time, government funds remain a significant support for these partnerships - exemplified by the IWJV's formation of a Government Relations Committee, which continues to cultivate relationships with congressional appropriators. The large landscape conservation assessment report identified many of the limitations of Federal funding, noting that Federal agency funds reside within annual budgets and appropriations cycles and are subdivided among bureaus with different priorities, hampering efforts to

[16] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 9.

plan and support the kinds of multi-year, cross-cutting projects needed on the landscape scale.[17] The report added that Federal agencies can play a valuable role in collaborative partnerships by seeking ways to work across silos to bring funds to the table, identify new and innovating sources of funds, pool resources, and provide matching funds to supplement other sources. Some examples of innovative funding opportunities cited in the large landscape assessment include the following (for the full list, see Appendix G)[18]:

> The Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program, authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, used partnerships to stretch and multiply conservation investments and reach conservation goals on regional or watershed scale with greater certainty of funding. Unlike past annual allocations, this program was designed to support the Sage Grouse Initiative for 4 years through the life of the 2014 farm bill (NRCS 2015).
>
> Members of the NE Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies came together to pool and leverage funds from each state for regional and landscape-scale conservation efforts through the Regional Conservation Needs program. Additionally, in 2015, a Blue Ribbon Panel convened by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recommended a new approach for funding fish and wildlife conservation efforts that could potentially direct up to $1.3 billion per year in existing oil and natural gas revenues to the conservation of Species of Greatest Conservation Need identified in State Wildlife Action Plans (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) 2017).

Collaborative partnerships can likewise benefit from thinking broadly and creatively about possible funding sources. During the development of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), for example, participants recognized that the interest accruing on funds from the Pittman-Robertson Act, an excise tax on ammunition and firearms, could be redirected to funding waterfowl conservation.

LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

9. **The engagement of high-level leadership at the outset and throughout the process can be an important driver for bringing partners together and sustaining their motivation.**

In *Collaborative Governance Regimes*, the authors list initiating leadership among the four drivers needed for a collaborative effort to emerge.[19] The AFWA President's Task Force on Shared Science and Landscape Conservation Priorities observed that successful partnerships require effective communications, strong leadership, and dedicated and fully supported coordination functions.[20]

Although in our review we could not find information on the founding leadership for all the models, there were certainly examples of strong leadership at the outset of collaborative efforts that served to bring the partners together. In particular, the signing of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement among the

[17] ECO Resource Group, "Advancing Multi-Scale Place-Based Conservation and Development," 25.
[18] ECO Resource Group, "Advancing Multi-Scale Place-Based Conservation and Development," 25-6.
[19] Emerson and Nabatchi, Collaborative Governance Regimes, 47.
[20] Jonathan Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force on Shared Science and Landscape Conservation Priorities: Final Report," (Washington, DC: Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 2020), 18.

State governors, the mayor of the District of Columbia, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator, and the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission lent the program credibility and legitimacy and set the stage for the involvement of the necessary staff in each of the jurisdictions and at EPA. These leaders remain involved, supported by appropriate staff, and their annual meetings bring attention and authority to the work of the CBP. In the case of the NAWMP, the Plan Committee has been credited for its vital role in establishing the partnership's mission and providing strong, visionary leadership. Although a variety of parties could play the role of initial convener for a collaborative, establishing leadership at a high level can bring resources, direction, and the engagement of relevant staff at the partner organizations.

10. Dedicated coordinators, ideally independent neutral parties, are essential to the long-term survival of the partnership.

The models we reviewed recognized the importance of having someone in the coordination role and all have dedicated staff to coordinate and run the partnership's operations. The large landscape assessment report pointed to the essential role of "backbone" organizations for collaborative partnerships. These organizations take on the management of the day-to-day activities and coordination of the partnership.[21] Some models have Federal staff in the coordination role, while others have their own staff. According to Biddle's research on water partnerships, the agency role is best limited to providing financial and technical resources to the collaborative rather than coordinating its day-to-day operations. The collaborative groups operated best when allowed to self-organize.[22] In the case of the CBP, where EPA is in the role of both coordinator and regulator, those dual roles can hamper the agency's ability to effectively work as coordinator - a dynamic which was exacerbated with the establishment of the bay-wide Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and EPA's added role in overseeing the jurisdictions' efforts to comply. The best approach, therefore, seems to be separating out the agency's roles as convener, funder, advisor, and expert from the staffing role, which can be better performed by an independent, neutral party. Indeed, some interviewees noted that having independent, neutral staff aided their fundraising efforts.

In the interest of preventing staff turnover, it is necessary to have sufficient and stable funding for staff positions. As mentioned above, the need to secure funding for staff was a key reason some of the partnerships sought to diversify their funding streams. Finally, several of the partnerships with fundraising success have dedicated one or more staff to communications and outreach. The IWJV, which has been successful in building innovative partnerships, also has a staff member focused on expanding partnerships.

APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

11. A structured approach to decision making and conflict resolution is valuable for complex partnerships to provide clarity, transparency, and promote progress toward goals.

As voluntary partnerships, the models tended to use consensus as their form of decision making. We could not find detailed information on this for all the models, however. The CBP has a well-articulated decision-making process that defines "consensus" and uses a consensus continuum model, useful for

[21] ECO Resource Group, "Advancing Multi-Scale Place-Based Conservation and Development," 21-22.
[22] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 10.

allowing for a range of opinions while allowing the group to move forward. If consensus cannot be reached at lower levels of decision making, the issue is elevated; at the higher levels of organization, the group can resort to a supermajority vote if consensus cannot be reached.

In our interviews, we heard that there was not a significant amount of conflict within the groups that would require third-party facilitation. Partnership staff or committee chairs often serve in the role of facilitator. In the case of the Chesapeake, the Program Office maintains a contract with a third-party facilitator for when the need arises; that contractor also conducts facilitation training for those in a leadership role.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

12. **Building trust through careful work to learn about participants' interests and set joint goals that align with shared interests is central to the collaborative enterprise.**

Building trust among a diversity of participants is the lifeblood of collaborative groups. As the AFWA Task Force observed, partnership success "depends on relationship building and operates from a foundation of trust among a broad diversity of partners."[23] Several of the interviewees mentioned that the non-regulatory nature of their groups helped to foster trust. One interviewee noted that having independent funding also helped with trust-building.

In *Collaborative Governance Regimes*, Emerson and Nabatchi describe the evolution of shared motivation, one of the three main components of collaboration dynamics, as follows:

> "At the outset, participants' primary, if not only, perspective and motivation stem from their own interests and those of their represented groups. If these interests are satisfied, then participants are more likely to continue working together. As the cycling of principled engagement continues, participants can also develop a shared motivation that fosters their emerging identification with, and ultimately reinforces their dedication to, the [collaborative group]."

Given that the models we were looking at were generally known as successful and had been established for some time, one might expect that the groups had firmly reached the ground of shared motivation in which they have a sense of commitment and dedication to the collaborative group. The interviewees told us a more nuanced story, however. They described the importance of ensuring that the collaborative's efforts were aligned with the interests of the partners. While there may be a sense of joint enterprise, when asked whether participants trust each other, interviewees responded that they trusted that participants would act in ways aligned with their own interests, emphasizing the importance of developing goals that can speak to a broad range of interests. These observations reinforce the importance of being attentive to potential partners' interests, particularly at the outset, and seeking to identify broadly shared goals that can speak to a range of relevant partners. The IWJV and the PLJV have done exactly this in conceptualizing their programs around water and the Ogallala Aquifer, respectively. One interviewee advised, "keeping people together with shared values and then scaling it down to a landscape that makes sense, so they can see the benefit to themselves."

[23] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 18.

Furthermore, it is important to think about participants' incentives for engagement within the system context, considering why relevant partners might wish to be involved and what they could gain from their involvement that they could not achieve without it. The ability to answer these questions, of course, depends on understanding the perspectives of those potential partners. The large landscape assessment report notes that "streamlined and balanced regulation can be a strong incentive for landowners to engage in landscape-scale conservation . . ."[24] The report also cites the incentives for landowners and other stakeholders in avoiding the costs associated with the protection of at-risk species, pointing to the Bi-State Sage Grouse effort in California and Nevada, in which Federal and State agencies worked together to clarify for partners what would be needed to avoid an Endangered Species Act listing, as well as to provide funding and technical support for the effort.

13. To build trust, partnerships must engage and invest in relationship-building.

As one interviewee pointed out, the players getting to know one another is not a negligible piece of the puzzle, but is essential to building the relationships and trust necessary to sustain the collaborative effort. The interviewee highlighted the value of regular, perhaps annual, retreat-type workshops held in locations that allow for field trips to view the resource or projects taking place as well as relationship-building among new and existing participants. These workshops should include time for the work of the collaborative to take place, orientation for new members, and interactive field activities to familiarize participants with the work on the ground and get to know each other. The Blackfoot Challenge's focus on building relationships has succeeded in creating a strong sense of loyalty and affinity with the organization among participants, with one interviewee in a previous study describing it as "a serious organization that never forgets to have fun." Similarly, one of the key lessons learned from the Crown of the Continent's assessment of its programs was "never underestimating the value of meeting face-to-face, welcoming partners, and establishing relationships." Collaborative groups, therefore, should allocate the necessary time and resources for the important work of relationship-building.

Finally, building trust can be difficult to do in an environment of high turnover, as is common at voluntary organizations. Research has shown turnover to be a major driver of declining effectiveness of collaborative groups.[25] To address this, the staff needs to be charged with, among other things, consistent outreach to and training for new participants and those who are turning over. Some of the tools that can be useful in this outreach include:

- A succinct and compelling summary of the partnership's history, goals, impact, and relevance.
- An orientation package that includes the background, operating procedures and protocols of the group, and updated information on the status of the work and any key questions confronting the group.
- A PowerPoint presentation or webinar to share key information on the group with new audiences.
- Regular workshops to get to know participants as described above.
- Travel funding for participants whose organizations do not have the resources to attend meetings. This funding should be built into the partnership's budget.

[24] ECO Resource Group, "Advancing Multi-Scale Place-Based Conservation and Development," 29.

[25] Nicola Ulibarri et al., "How does collaborative governance evolve? Insights from a medium n-case comparison," *Policy and Society* (2020): 16.

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

14. When designing a partnership governance structure, it is important to be attentive to the involvement of different types of stakeholders at different scales, the connections and communication among organizational levels, and the incentives for participation at the various scales.

Although not explicitly identified as an assessment factor at the outset, one aspect of the partnerships that emerged as significant is the structure of the partnerships - in particular, the way that central coordinating and leadership entities relate to implementation bodies within the partnership. As the AFWA Task Force observed, there is no single structural formula for partnerships to be successful.[26] Clement et al. point out, however, that when the activities of a network must be implemented across jurisdictions, more centralized coordination is needed - and at higher levels of governance.[27] Both the NAWMP/Joint Venture (JV) and the CBP models spanned large landscapes and covered multiple jurisdictions and scales, ranging from the grassroots implementation level to national or even international policy levels. They both developed complex, tiered structures to set high-level direction for the overall effort while implementation takes place on the regional or local level.

When designing any collaborative enterprise, it is important to keep in mind three types of stakeholders - a smaller core group of vested stakeholders, some of whom will be leaders and decision makers; a larger group of interested stakeholders who will be involved in implementation of activities and/or will be affected by the outcomes; and finally, the wider public that needs to be kept apprised of the organization's efforts (and perhaps participate in them). The CBP and NAWMP cases offer somewhat different approaches to incorporating each of these types of stakeholders into their collaborative efforts.

For the CBP, the structure is well-defined and hierarchical, with an established decision-making process developed over decades. The EC, at the highest level, serves to commit the jurisdictions to a common purpose and keep both staff focus and public attention on the initiative. The engagement of these high-level leaders is necessarily supported by staff on the Principals' Staff Committee who are more connected to the work of the partnership. The Management Board oversees the overall coordination and implementation of the partnership's goals, while the GITs are charged with coordinating implementation in specific goal areas. The many implementing partners, including Local Governments, universities, and NGOs, are connected to the organization through participation on the GITs and the work groups, or State and Local Government partners may be recipients of CBP implementation grants. Local Government, citizens', and scientific advisory groups provide input to the CBP as well as conduct outreach to the larger community of stakeholders. There is also a Communications Work Group to assist with outreach across programs and jurisdictions.

It is worth noting that when the Chesapeake Federal Leadership Committee was established by executive order in 2009, it created a parallel structure that led to some uncertainty about the locus of the program's leadership. Furthermore, the lines of the authority within the CBP do not necessarily align with the authority structures outside of it, with the result that participants may be less motivated to

[26] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 18.

[27] Sarah Clement et al., "Understanding Effectiveness in its Broader Context: Assessing Case Study Methodologies for Evaluating Collaborative Conservation Governance," *Society and Natural Resources,* 33, no. 4 (2019), 467.

fulfill their commitments within the program. When designing a governance structure, therefore, it is important to provide clarity of leadership for accountability purposes, as well as to be aware of the incentives and motivations for participants at each level of the organization.

In the case of the NAWMP system, the founding members intended from the outset to create a continental vision that would be implemented at the regional or local scale through the JVs. The Plan Committee, with high-level representatives from the participating countries, has been credited with providing a clear mission and vision as well as strong leadership. The JVs operate relatively independently with their own management boards and formally consult with the Plan Committees every 3-5 years, although the Plan Committee no longer approves the JVs' plans. The JVs themselves are connected to the implementing organizations on the grassroots level either through their management board membership, most of which have staff and/or programs working on the ground with other partners. On-the-ground organizations may also be recipients of grants from the JV or receive matching funds from the JV for NAWCA grants. These mechanisms allow the JV to stay connected with the activities, opportunities, and challenges within the region.[28] Finally, in terms of broader public outreach, the Plan Committee has a Leadership/Communications/Funding Work Group, and the individual JVs may have staff or programs dedicated to outreach and communications.

Leadership within the NAWMP system is complex, a consequence of the evolution of bird conservation efforts over decades. The North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Council) is responsible for reviewing proposals for habitat conservation projects seeking NAWCA funds. The Council's spending recommendations are approved annually by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. Members of the four migratory bird Flyway Councils participate on the Plan Committee and the Council. While there is some overlap in membership or connecting liaisons between the leadership entities, a common request of the NAWMP leadership is improved coordination and communication among the various entities, including the Plan Committee, JVs, working groups, Flyway Councils, partner agencies, NGOs, and the Council. At the same time, although the formal connections between the bodies may not be robust, there is a significant degree of informal connection, given that many of the same people are often wearing different hats in different venues within the waterfowl management community.

Looking at these two examples, it is clear that important elements for consideration in the design of a partnership structure include the membership and authority of the leadership body, as well as the strength of its connections and communication with implementation bodies at the regional and grassroots levels. The lines of authority within the partnership should be considered in light of external leadership structures, along with the incentives of participants at each level to engage and carry out their commitments.

QUESTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SAGEBRUSH PARTNERSHIP MODEL

These lessons raise a set of questions about how to apply them in the context of the sagebrush biome. The advisory committee may wish to consider the following questions in conjunction with the results of the sagebrush biome stakeholder assessment:

[28] Jeff van Steeg, personal communication on 2/3/21.

- Who needs to be involved early on to help shape the effort? What incentives do they have to be involved? How can key partners, such as Tribes, be engaged at the outset?
- What are possible sustainable sources of funding? What Federal and State funds can provide a regular funding source? What could partners bring to the table? Are there innovative sources of funds that can be brought to bear (e.g., Pittman-Robertson)?
- How could high-level leadership in the region be engaged to launch and give legitimacy to the sagebrush effort?
- In the design of a governance structure for the sagebrush biome:
    - How can the different types of stakeholders (core, interested, public) be involved?
    - How can leadership provide a clear vision, accountability, and sufficient communication with the implementing entities?
    - How can the organization be connected at the various scales?
    - What incentives do participants at each level have to be involved (e.g., mission alignment, potential funding, leadership commitment)?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE LITERATURE REVIEW

To develop an understanding of the essential elements of partnerships and their governance, we reviewed some of the relevant works in the field. While this is not a comprehensive review of the literature, it allowed us to identify some key elements for functional and successful collaborative bodies that we could then use to assess the models. Those elements are the following:

- Goals and measurable impact
- Balanced and inclusive representation
- Access to needed knowledge and technical/scientific information
- Sufficient and sustainable funding
- Approach to decision making and conflict resolution
- Leadership and staffing roles
- Relationships among participants

PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE DEFINED

Throughout the literature, there are sometimes overlapping definitions for terms such as "network," "partnership," and "collaborative." For the purposes of this report, we chose the term "partnership" to emphasize the focus on retaining existing authorities within individual member organizations, using the following definition: an informal or more formalized arrangement (e.g., based on an agreement or legislation) where two or more autonomous entities "come together to exchange ideas, build relationships, identify common interests, explore options on how to work together, share power [and/or resources], and solve problems of mutual interest."[29] For "governance," we use the definition put forward by Emerson and Nabatchi, "the processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private, and civic spheres to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished."[30]

GOALS AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

Goal-setting is certainly a foundational part of the life cycle of a partnership governance structure.[31] Emerson and Nabatchi identify "consequential incentives," defined as "internal issues, resource needs, interests or opportunities, or external situation institutional crises, threats, or opportunities that must be addressed," as one of the key drivers in bringing a collaborative group together.[32] From these consequential incentives, a nascent collaborative body needs to align its members by focusing on "tangible accomplishments, driven by shared priorities."[33]

Determining the success of a partnership effort can be a difficult endeavor. In the area of natural resource conservation in particular, measuring ecological outcomes can be more challenging than

[29] Scarlett and McKinney, "Connecting people and places," 116. Our definition is adapted from this network governance definition.
[30] Emerson and Nabatchi, Collaborative Governance Regimes, 18.
[31] Ulibarri et al., "How does collaborative governance evolve," 2.
[32] Emerson and Nabatchi, Collaborative Governance Regimes, 46.
[33] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 18.

measuring social, economic, and behavioral outcomes due to factors such as ecological variability, long time horizons, and difficulty in identifying causal chains.[34] According to Network Impact and the Center for Evaluation Innovation, an approach to considering the success of partnerships is to look at their results based on whether they are accomplishing what they set out to accomplish - or members' perception of such accomplishment.[35]

Given that a natural resource partnership's goals can play out over a long time frame, it can be most useful to look at progress on interim outcomes that signal progress on the way to longer-term goals and intended impacts.[36] Interim outcomes can be assessed through monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management.[37] A successful partnership needs the skills and tools to monitor and evaluate progress and assess what is and is not working.[38] Failure to meet the group's original goals could be due to shortcomings in the scientific and technical approach, but could also be attributed to the changing needs and priorities of the group.[39]

BALANCED AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

One characteristic of initiatives that have achieved some measure of conservation success is that the members represent a broad coalition rallying around a shared goal.[40] According to Emerson and Nabatchi, principled engagement, one of the key components of collaboration dynamics, involves balanced representation from all "relevant and significant different interests."[41] They note, "Balanced representation is an indicator of diversity - not only in terms of the participants at the table but also in terms of the ideas, beliefs, and perspectives relevant to the issue at hand."[42] Of course, this diversity of perspectives can lead to conflict, calling for conflict management expertise among those leading or managing the partnership effort.[43]

Several authors indicate that it is important to bring the participants together in the design and formation stage of a partnership to set goals, build norms, and establish relationships of trust.[44] Engaging a diversity of interests around a broader commitment contributes to the sustainability of the organization and its resilience to both internal and external changes.[45]

[34] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 2; Kootz et al., "Assessing Collaborative Conservation."
[35] Network Impact and Center for Evaluation Innovation, "Framing Paper: The State of Network Evaluation," (2014): 6.
[36] Network Impact, "Framing Paper," 6.
[37] Matthew McKinney et al., "Large Landscape Conservation: A Strategic Framework for Policy and Action," (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2010), 16.
[38] McKinney et al., "Large Landscape Conservation," 40.
[39] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 18.
[40] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 24.
[41] Emerson and Nabatchi, *Collaborative Governance Regimes,* 59, citing Innes and Booher (1999).
[42] Emerson and Nabatchi, Collaborative Governance Regimes, 59-60.
[43] Emerson and Nabatchi, Collaborative Governance Regimes, 60.
[44] Ulibarri et al., "How does collaborative governance evolve," 2 citing Mandell & Keast (2007); Emerson and Nabatchi, *Collaborative Governance Regimes,* 215.
[45] Ulibarri et al., "How does collaborative governance evolve," 2-3.

ACCESS TO NEEDED KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL INFORMATION

While the technical or scientific tools or databases called for will vary depending on the partnership, in general having adequate scientific and technical resources improves environmental performance.[46] An AFWA landscape conservation report highlights, for example, that "common lexicon, threat categories, shared databases and/or performance metrics…[are] characteristic of initiatives that have increased conservation success."[47]

McKinney et al. include gathering and sharing information as one of the steps in the development of a large landscape conservation strategic framework.[48] They state, "the first steps in developing a long-term strategic framework for large landscape conservation are to (1) create a common and coherent scientific database; and (2) prepare an annotated atlas to identify existing initiatives, priorities, and gaps."[49]

Biddle's study of watershed partnerships, however, cautions against the over-emphasis of technical expertise and solutions at the expense of greater contextual and holistic knowledge.[50] Where there was a greater emphasis on technical solutions, partners contributing greater contextual knowledge perceived that the partnership's efforts were not successful. She suggests that there may be different points throughout the life cycle of partnerships when each of these types of knowledge could be optimally brought to bear.[51] Greater use of comprehensive, contextual knowledge could foster both improved trust and environmental performance of the partnership.

While incorporating scientific and technical knowledge is important to the collaborative's success, Scarlett and McKinney caution that such information is not sufficient for solving large-scale environmental challenges and must be accompanied with an ability to navigate the often complex politics of the issue at hand:

> The search for effective solutions to today's natural resource problems is not simply a matter of building and sharing better data and knowledge. Policy making is both complex and wicked. Such efforts to collect more data, undertake more complex analysis, and add more computing power 'reflect a naïve hope that science can eliminate politics.'[52]

SUFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

As Biddle's research on watershed partnerships concludes, adequate and sustained funding will improve environmental performance.[53] Dedicated resources are also a sign of sustained enthusiasm and commitment, and ultimately of the health of the collaborative body.[54] Furthermore, Emerson and Gerlak list not only the presence of resources, but also the shared access to them and better leveraging of

[46] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 7.
[47] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 24-25.
[48] McKinney et al., "Large Landscape Conservation," 38.
[49] McKinney et al., "Large Landscape Conservation," 38.
[50] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 9.
[51] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 10.
[52] Scarlett and McKinney, "Connecting people and places," 119.
[53] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 10.
[54] Network Impact, "Framing Paper," 6.

available resources as one of four factors for a collaborative body's successful adaptation to internal and external change – and thus long-term survival.[55]

The sources and levels of funding will likely depend on the unique needs of the partnership organization. McKinney et al. suggest seeking multi-year, multi-agency funding commitments to ensure continuity of the long-term projects usually required in large landscape conservation efforts.[56] AFWA's landscape conservation report highlights that financial commitment from participants, in some cases, is a characteristic of initiatives with increased conservation success.[57]

LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

As might be expected, successful partnerships require - and benefit from - strong leadership.[58] According to Emerson and Nabatchi, initiating leadership provides the motivating force for participants in a collaborative to come together.[59] Who, then, should provide that leadership? Several authors observe that partnerships naturally evolve from being more informal and grass-roots to more formal and directed over time, so it may be that leadership roles look different through the lifetime of the organization.[60]

One of the key findings of Biddle's research on watershed partnerships is that it is not sufficient to have the right participants involved - they must also be assigned to the right roles, which maximizes the effective decision making and activities of the collaborative body.[61] Furthermore, she concludes that for the agency-based watershed partnerships in her study, the Federal Government's role within the collaborative is best limited to acquiring and providing financial and technical resources.[62] With the agencies stepping back from the leadership role, the participants have greater flexibility to experiment, self-organize, and potentially increase the achievement of their desired outcomes.[63]
In terms of leadership approaches, it is important for leaders to refrain from prescribing actions or solutions.[64] Such micro-management can reduce information sharing, trust, and participation.[65]

Regarding staffing, a report on best practices to support landscape-scale conservation pointed to the essential role of "backbone" organizations for collaborative partnerships.[66] These organizations take on the management of the day-to-day activities and coordination of the partnership. Several scholars

[55] Ulibarri et al., "How does collaborative governance evolve," 2-3 citing Emerson & Gerlak (2014).
[56] McKinney et al., "Large Landscape Conservation," 46.
[57] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 24.
[58] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 18.
[59] Emerson and Nabatchi, Collaborative Governance Regimes, 47.
[60] Ulibarri et al., "How does collaborative governance evolve," 2 citing Provan & Kenis (2008).
[61] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 3.
[62] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 10.
[63] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 10.
[64] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 18; Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 10.
[65] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 10.
[66] ECO Resource Group, "Advancing Multi-Scale Place-Based Conservation and Development."

advise designating a lead organization or dedicated staff to manage the partnership.[67] Having a "dedicated and fully supported coordination functions to advance the interest of the partnerships" is a characteristic of initiatives with increased conservation success.[68]

APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In *Collaborative Governance Regimes*, Emerson and Nabatchi describe the three components of collaboration dynamics, one of which is "principled engagement." Principled engagement itself encompasses the four elements of discovery, definition, deliberation, and determinations. As a collaborative group cycles through this iterative four-stage process of shared learning, participants must take part in open discussions, listen actively, consider others' contributions, reflect, and assess, and confront conflict. The quality of this process, therefore, depends in part on the creation of space for dialogue and the skillful use of conflict resolution strategies.[69]

A further element of Emerson and Nabatchi's collaboration dynamics is "capacity for joint action," which includes procedural and institutional arrangements.[70] The authors observe that the need for these protocols to manage repeated interactions among participants is widely recognized in the literature on collaborative governance. They also point out that the larger and more complex a collaborative body is, the greater its need for protocols and structures such as charters and bylaws.[71] In Dupraw's enumeration of the distinct qualities of landscape-scale collaborations, one of the five qualities is the need for self-governance mechanisms. She cites a partnership effort participant who observed, "We realize that if you do not make the rules, someone is going to make them for you. It is a lot easier to follow your own rules."[72] Finally, when evaluating a partnership, Network Impact and the Center for Evaluation Innovation state that looking at the organization's infrastructure, such as its internal decision-making mechanisms, can provide a good indication of its overall health.[73]

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

According to Emerson and Nabatchi, the third component of collaboration dynamics is "shared motivation," which is composed of commitment, trust, mutual understanding, and internal legitimacy.[74] These elements of a collaborative system are not static but continuously cycling as relationships and connections among the participants evolve. The process of developing trust and understanding among participants helps sustain participants' engagement in and commitment to the partnership.[75] Indeed, AFWA's report on conservation partnerships indicates that effective relationship building and trust

[67] Biddle, "Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Regimes," 10 citing Milward and Provan (2006); Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 18.
[68] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 18.
[69] Emerson and Nabatchi, *Collaborative Governance Regimes*, 59-61.
[70] Emerson and Nabatchi, *Collaborative Governance Regimes*, 68-69.
[71] Emerson and Nabatchi, *Collaborative Governance Regimes*, 69-70.
[72] Marcelle DuPraw, "Defining Landscape-Scale Collaboration as Used to Restore Forests and Reduce Catastrophic Wildfires," *The Qualitative Report* 23, no. 11 (2018): 2810, quoting Bill Potter, Blackfoot Challenge, as cited in Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000).
[73] Network Impact, "Framing Paper," 6.
[74] Emerson and Nabatchi, *Collaborative Governance Regimes*, 64-65.
[75] Emerson and Nabatchi, Collaborative Governance Regimes, 64.

among the partners is required for the success of the endeavor.[76] Scholars also point to building trust and relationships as a foundational element during the initial formative stage of a partnership.[77]

[76] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 18.

[77] Ulibarri et al., "How does collaborative governance evolve," 2 citing Mandell & Keast (2007).

APPENDIX B: OVERVIEW OF KEY MODELS

NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT PLAN AND THE JOINT VENTURES

The most comprehensive migratory bird management effort for the United States is the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), signed by the U.S. and Canada in 1986, with Mexico also joining the agreement later.[78] NAWMP was not a plan in the conventional sense, but rather a clear definition of the causes of waterfowl population declines, an agreed upon statement of conservation goals, and the establishment of public-private collaboratives, known as JVs, as a framework for achieving these goals.

JVs, each with their own governance structure and funding to conserve critical wetlands over large geographic regions in the manner they deemed most appropriate for their particular geography and situation, are a unique, key characteristic of NAWMP. The JVs bring together a variety of partners - including bird conservation organizations, Local Governments, Tribes, industry, and State agencies - to implement the priorities established under NAWMP at a regional level. Twenty-two habitat-based JVs cover landscapes throughout Canada, Mexico, and the United States.[79] Three species-focused JVs study specific waterfowl species to better the science needed to properly manage these critical species.[80] Some JVs are staffed and funded by USFWS while others are staffed and funded more independently.

The other key characteristics of NAWMP are NAWCA—which has provided consistent grant funding to the conservation network—rigorous evaluation and adaptive management, and strong scientific and technical support for decision making.

GOALS AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

The original 1986 plan has been updated several times to incorporate new science and inform its overarching goals. The original plan was tightly focused on duck populations. The most comprehensive NAWMP revision, in 2012, expanded the goals--adding goal 3--and seeks to "achieve interrelated goals for people, waterfowl populations, and wetland conservation."[81]

2012 NAWMP Goals:

- Abundant and resilient waterfowl populations to support hunting and other uses without imperiling habitat.
- Wetlands and related habitats sufficient to sustain waterfowl populations at desired levels, while providing places to recreate and ecological services that benefit society.

[78] "North American Waterfowl Management Plan," U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, last updated October 4, 2016, https://www.fws.gov/birds/management/bird-management-plans/north-american-waterfowl-management-plan.php. .
[79] "North American Waterfowl Management Plan," U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
[80] "North American Waterfowl Management Plan," U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
[81] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update" (2018), https://nawmp.org/document/2018-nawmp-update-english, III.

- Growing number of waterfowl hunters, other conservationists and citizens who enjoy and actively support waterfowl and wetlands conservation.[82]

From these high-level goals came an accompanying Action Plan with updated recommendations to achieve the Plan's three goals.[83]

The most recent 2018 NAWMP Update keeps the same goals from 2012 but emphasizes supporting strong connections between society and nature: "We need to understand how people view the societal benefits of waterfowl habitats and how we can use this knowledge to increase support for conservation."[84] It contains new recommendations, replacing the 2014 recommendations.

2018 Plan Update Recommendations:

- Focus conservation actions on waterfowl habitat and population management objectives and incorporate social science into planning and program delivery.
- Help people understand the opportunities for conservation and outdoor recreation resulting from NAWMP and how society benefits from waterfowl habitat.
- Compel people to take action to conserve waterfowl habitat.
- Identify key geographic areas where the best opportunities exist to meet the needs of waterfowl and people.
- Establish a process to review and update Plan objectives every 10 years and provide guidance on implementation.
- Share knowledge from all work to integrate and balance the needs of habitat, waterfowl, and people.
- Bolster training programs for future waterfowl management professionals.
- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the Plan Committee and how it strategically structures itself and its functions to facilitate integration among the various technical work groups.[85]

While these goals and recommendations come from the highest levels of NAWMP governance, they are thought of as innovative conservation approaches to help the waterfowl management community rather than a prescriptive path to follow. NAWMP has always used quantitative objectives on the regional and local level. This allows tailored monitoring to meet local needs.

As the 2018 Update notes, "No plan survives a generation unless it remains relevant to changing values, priorities, and economic and political pressures."[86] The Plan has been assessed and reshaped several times to reflect updated science, changing needs, and on the ground lessons learned.

[82] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update," VII.
[83] NAWMP Plan Committee, "Revised Objectives" (2014), https://nawmp.org/document/revised-objectives-waterfowl-conservation-planning-addendum.
[84] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update," 6.
[85] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update," 20-22.
[86] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update," X.

Given that the quantitative objectives are established on the JV/regional level, cumulative effects based on varied regional measures can often be difficult to discern. That said, the original NAWMP goal of restoring waterfowl populations to levels during the 1970s has been measured and achieved.[87] NAWMP, as originally established, was successful and has now grown its goals to achieve more.

BALANCED AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

NAWMP's design is based upon the premise that the accumulation of many local and regional conservation efforts can result in large landscape conservation impact.[88] As the 2018 Update notes, "Today, NAWMP is taking this approach and applying it to the social landscape as well. A second developing premise of NAWMP is that the cumulative effect of many local and regional public engagement actions will result in dynamic but sustainable social landscapes capable of attaining waterfowl conservation support."[89]

As has been mentioned, NAWMP's scope is international, but its implementation is regional and flexible. Each JV is structured differently and includes different partners. Due to the regional scale of JVs, it is easier to identify who needs to be at the table for productive collaborative work; this would be nearly impossible at the national or international scale. As a result of this, outreach to partners usually happens at the JV level where implementation takes place. This outreach has included Tribes on certain projects, but not in a holistic sense.

On a national level, Ducks Unlimited has been an important partner in Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. Within the first five years of the Plan's establishment, Ducks Unlimited doubled its fundraising to 60 million a year--much higher today--most of which was poured into on-the-groundwork toward Plan objectives. They, along with the NRA and other big influencers, have also lobbied for NAWMP needs on Capitol Hill.

The Plan Committee has 18 members, 6 from each country.[90] The U.S. has two USFWS representatives and one State representative from each of the migratory bird flyways--which are four basic bird migration routes in North America. Canada has Federal and Provincial Government and non-profit representatives. Mexico has Federal Government, university, business, and non-profit representatives. Each country's natural resource agency has a permanent seat on the Plan Committee while all other seats have a three-year rotation. There is a two-term limit for the three-year seats.

Mexico joined NAWMP several years after its creation once there was more of a fiscal incentive to do so. Mexico's objectives have always been different from the U.S. or Canada; while the U.S. and Canada focus heavily on public hunting programs, Mexico focuses more on biodiversity projects and projects that help local economies. These differing objectives and differing cultures in how government functions

[87] NAWMP Plan Committee, "Continental Progress Assessment Final Report," (2007), https://nawmp.org/document/continental-progress-assessment.
[88] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2004 Implementation Framework" (2004), https://nawmp.org/document/2004-implementation-framework, 44.
[89] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update," 17.
[90] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 Update Addendum: PC Roles and Responsibilities" (2018), https://nawmp.org/document/2018-update-addendum-pc-roles-and-responsibiliteis-english, 4.

have caused minor stress points. Mexico's history of participation has not been from a lack of inclusion but a matter of priority on their part.

ACCESS TO NEEDED KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The NAWMP Science Support Team (NSST) facilitates scientific collaboration and communication among the Plan Committee, Federal wildlife agencies, and JVs as well as "provides technical advice to the Plan Committee to help strengthen the biological foundations of the plan and facilitate continuous improvement of plan-related conservation programs."[91] This helps to set priorities and see where the biggest return on investment will come from.

Mirroring NAWMP's more recent emphasis on their third, people-centered goal--growing number of waterfowl hunters, other conservationists and citizens who enjoy and actively support waterfowl and wetlands conservation--NSST is also focusing on the social sciences. They are looking to understand public motivations, especially around conservation.

NSST is made up of a national representative from each partner country, a technical representative from each JV and flyway council, and representatives from NSST working groups. Working groups and JV scientists also provide technical guidance.

The role of JV scientists is, in part, to set regional habitat objectives, informed by international, NAWMP-level population objectives. A structural concern for NAWMP is that unreliable or inconsistent approaches to regional objectives will result in unreliable or inconsistent objectives across the whole. The most extensive assessment of NAWMP, done in 2007, identified concerns with certain JVs' population abundance objectives being tied strongly enough to continental population goals. From this concern grew an NSST Committee to review JV approaches and provide recommendations. They found in their workshops that even similarly situated JVs' population objectives varied and were often not linked to NAWMP goals. Through these workshops the NSST and JVs worked "toward a more uniform and integrated approach for establishing regional population abundance objectives and ultimately more effective waterfowl habitat conservation at the continental scale."[92]

SUFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Habitat projects in support of the Plan are often funded through NAWCA grant programs. The title is broader in scope, focusing on all wetlands and is available for projects outside the purview of NAWMP as well. NAWCA uses the interest earnings from Pittman-Robertson funds—an excise tax on firearms and ammunition, whose funds go to each state through the Department of the Interior—prior to their distribution to the states.[93] In addition to these funds, NAWCA also receives an annual appropriation,

[91] "North American Waterfowl Management Plan," U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
[92] Mark J. Petrie et al., "Guidelines for Establishing Joint Venture Waterfowl Population Abundance Objectives," N*orth American Waterfowl Management Plan Science Support Team Technical Report No. 2011-1*, (2011): 3.
[93] "North American Wetlands Conservation Act," *Digest of Federal Resource Laws of Interest to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, accessed December 21, 2020, https://www.fws.gov/laws/lawsdigest/NAWCACT.HTML.

currently around $30 million a year, as well as Federal duck stamps and fines and forfeitures collected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.[94]

The North American Wetland Conservation Council is directly responsible for allocating NAWCA money. Grant applications are competitive, and most are made by conservation organizations that may be members of JVs.

Federal grant dollars from NAWCA must be matched for NAWMP projects, often at a 2-3 match, sometimes larger. For NAWMP, much of the match money comes from partners at the JV level. This allows the money to go much further and ensures partners are more invested. Additionally, since NAWMP has consistently demonstrated its effectiveness, it has also received funding from State duck stamp programs. The NAWMP community also looks for funding opportunities through a variety of avenues and seeks to leverage other priorities to benefit waterfowl and wetland conservation.[95]

LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

The objectives for NAWMP leadership, set by creators and original Plan Committee members, was to provide leadership and funding at a continental scale and to allow the JVs and their boards freedom to operate at regional scales; the enterprise is viewed as a big partnership at all times. At the beginning that meant that leadership was focused on passing funding legislation and served as an outlet for other groups that were not bought in at the start. Ultimately, the Plan Committee's role is to provide plan leadership and plan management. The Committee oversees activities furthering the plan and facilitates major, large-scale, or long-term waterfowl discussions. They also update the plan as needed and provide leadership through goals and recommendations set out in the plan. The Plan Committee meets at least two times per year.[96]

Plan Committee turnover is every six years or less, with governmental leaders moving positions from time to time and most seats on the Plan Committee rotating every three years. USFWS, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and organizations in Canada support the Plan Committee with staffing. Additionally, the Plan Committee has worked closely with consultants in the past who also played an essential continuity and institutional memory role that helped mitigate the impacts of frequent turnover.

A review of the Plan Committee highlighted consensus that the Plan Committee plays a vital role in establishing the mission of NAWMP and providing strong, visionary leadership. There was a common request for more communication and collaboration between NAWMPs entities: The Plan Committee, JVs, working groups, Flyway Councils, partner agencies, NGOs, and the North American Wetlands Conservation Council.[97]

[94] "North American Wetlands Conservation Act," Digest of Federal Resource Laws of Interest to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
[95] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update," 18.
[96] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 Update Addendum," 4.
[97] NAWMP Plan Committee, "Report on Review of the Plan Committee" (2018), https://nawmp.org/nawmp-udpate/report-review-plan-committee.

That said, formally, every JV has an hours-long conversation on a rotating basis (3-5 years) with the Plan Committee regarding JV activities, changes to planning documents, etc. The Plan Committee even used to approve JV planning documents, but that kind of oversight has been dropped. Although there is limited formal connectivity, some JV board members are also members of a Flyway Council, and the Flyway Council has a seat on the Plan Committee. Additionally, some JVs participate in Flyway activities. Thus, there are informal communication routes as well. Some Plan Committee members also informally attend JV board meetings as a means of communication. Essentially, several the same people are wearing different hats in different venues within the waterfowl management enterprise.

In addition, communication and connectivity can come through NAWCA grant requirements. Through the legal requirements and process of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service distributing NAWCA grant funds, there are field trips to look at on-the-ground status, as well as reporting on progress.

Another leadership entity tied into NAWMP is the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Council), who solicits, reviews, and recommends funding proposals for habitat conservation. The Council was created through NAWCA. The Council includes the USFWS director, the secretary of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a State director representing each Flyway, and three NGO representatives involved in projects under the Plan or NWCA.

Similarly, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (Commission) is a connecting piece in the leadership structure. It is made up of Cabinet members and four members of Congress and has been in existence since before NAWCA. Among other things, the Commission considers establishing new waterfowl refuges.[98] The Commission meets roughly once a year to approve spending recommendations from the Council. The chair and another member of the Council sit in on Commission meetings.

NAWMP's working groups include the Leadership/Communications/Funding Work Group, the Science Work Group, the Policy Work Group, the NAWMP Awards Committee, and the Communications and Outreach Team. There are also subcommittees that are created and dissolved for specific projects.

Finally, the Plan Committee created an Interim Integration Committee (IIC) in 2012 to facilitate integrated management between the three goal areas of the Plan, waterfowl, habitat, and supporters. A recent review of the Plan Committee recommended replacing the IIC's function with more structured liaising between the Plan Committee and working groups. This recommendation was accepted, and they are transitioning to this structure.[99]

Recognizing that most implementation decisions happen regionally or locally, NAWMP focuses on the mindset, "think continentally, integrate locally."[100] Leadership at each JV is unique, but each JVs leadership is a critical component to NAWMP's overall success.

[98] "Migratory Bird Conservation Commission," *National Wildlife Refuge System,* U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, last updated October 29, 2019, https://www.fws.gov/refuges/realty/mbcc.html.
[99] NAWMP Plan Committee, "Report on Review of the Plan Committee."
[100] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update," XI.

APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The Plan Committee does not follow formal rules or voting structure, such as Robert's rules. They largely operate by consensus, tending to not move on if someone is unsettled on a topic, or they table the issue or send it to a sub-committee to resolve.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

Each JV likely has unique relationships among participants. Among the Plan Committee, the dynamic changes with turnover and, like most organizations, is subject to personalities involved. Among the Plan Committee, the working groups, and the JVs, it is possible for people to be engaged in one part of this big plan and not understand the big picture or their place in it, a natural challenge to such a large organization.

INTERMOUNTAIN WEST JOINT VENTURE

Ultimately, the conservation goals of NAWMP are delivered primarily through JVs. The IWJV boundaries overlap most of the sagebrush biome and they have adopted a strong sagebrush conservation focus, so an in-depth review of their governance system may be instructive. IWJV has been building diverse partnerships across eleven western states to advance conservation in priority bird habitats since 1994. The IWJV emphasizes non-regulatory, entrepreneurial, and innovative approach to working across boundaries and strengthening local communities.

In June of 2019, the IWJV created a Sagebrush Conservation Committee, whose stated purpose is "to provide a diverse, agile, and actionable team of Board Members and other decision-makers to guide the IWJV's sagebrush conservation efforts, address relevant threats and issues, and fill a (not otherwise occupied) niche that advances voluntary incentive-based conservation of the sagebrush ecosystem through collaboration." The committee's initial focus has been on coordinating and addressing catastrophic wildfire and invasives.

GOALS AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

The IWJV has established its priorities and activities in its 2013 Implementation Plan, which aims to align with NAWMP goals, and in its annual operational plans. The 2021 plan has five key areas of emphasis - catalyzing sagebrush conservation, expanding the Water 4 program, redesigning State conservation partnerships, building capacity of staff and partners, and operating and administering an effective joint venture - with 15 accompanying strategies to further the work in those areas.

Several of the IWJV's strategies involve investing in and developing scientific decision support tools and integrating those into conservation planning. For example, the IWJV's "Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands: 2019 Annual Report" summarizes work the IWJV performed under two agreements with BLM in 2018-2019 and describes the outcomes of several science projects intended to measure the outcomes of conservation actions on sage grouse and sagebrush habitats and help inform adaptive management actions. One project focused on tracking the removal of invasive conifers in sagebrush landscapes and found that removal efforts are just keeping up with anticipated conifer

expansion.[101] The IWJV is engaged in several research partnerships to collect landscape-level data and integrate into mapping platforms to depict current habitat status, trends, and the impacts of conservation actions, with the goal of helping inform land use and management decisions.

For its flagship Southern Oregon-Northeastern California Working Wet Meadows Initiative, the IWJV and its partners developed a science-based planning framework to guide conservation efforts. Using a bioenergetic model, the partners established an objective of 64,700 acres on private lands in the region in order to meet the needs of migrating waterfowl. They used this objective to focus and track their programmatic activities, and in 2018 reported enhancements to 17,707 acres of waterfowl habitat in the region over a 5-year period.[102]

The 2019 annual report also lists the IWJV's achievements under the agreements, including metrics such as number of field projects implemented, acres impacted, and number of partners engaged.

BALANCED AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

The IWJV has a "relentless" focus on building diverse relationships, which is one of the core values guiding all its efforts.[103] Part of its mission is to "strive to find common ground among diverse interests to make a difference for wildlife, habitat, and people." Over its 25 years, the IWJV has been creating public-private partnerships involving participants from a variety of perspectives. The 21-member Management Board directing the work of the IWJV includes representatives of State and Federal agencies, bird and wildlife conservation organizations, ranchers, the energy industry, and private landowners.

Through its State conservation partnerships, IWJV brings public and private partners together in bird habitat conservation projects that not only benefit other wildlife, but also local communities and economic livelihoods. These projects are tailored to the needs of local communities and partners.

Rather than focusing on conservation of a single species or landscape, the IWJV emphasizes the importance of broadening the frame of conservation to bring together diverse partners and funders in projects that benefit both the ecosystem and the participants. For example, regarding its Water 4 project, the IWJV points out that "by focusing on water—the natural resource issue that defines the West—we are helping partners conserve wetland habitat in a way that is relevant for many reasons for birds, other wildlife, and landscape function was established to conserve wet meadows and water for agriculture, wildlife and fisheries habitat, groundwater recharge, and landscape resiliency in ways that matter to people."[104]

[101] Intermountain West Joint Venture, "2019 Annual Report," https://www.partnersinthesage.com/2019-annual-report, 19.
[102] Intermountain West Joint Venture and Natural Resources Conservation Service, "Southern Oregon-Northeastern California Working Wet Meadows Initiative: Accomplishment Report 2014-2018," 1-3.
[103] "Our Approach to Collaborative Conservation," Intermountain West Joint Venture, accessed December 16, 2020, https://iwjv.org/our-approach-to-collaborative-conservation/.
[104] IWJV, "2021 Annual Operational Plan," https://iwjv.org/annual-operational-plan/, 10.

In its 2019 annual report, the IWJV notes that primary partners to date have included BLM, other Federal agencies, State fish and wildlife agencies, private landowners, public land grazing organizations, conservation NGOs, and funders. Moving forward, the joint venture intends to outreach to new audiences, such as journalists and the outdoor recreation community. To do so, the IWJV may need to broaden its messaging to include topics such as fire and invasives.

In its 2021 Annual Operational Plan, the IWJV details its strategies for reaching out to additional audiences. In the context of its sagebrush conservation work, it plans to engage "exploration and production companies; Public Lands Council and cattlemen's associations; Tribal partners; the outdoor recreation industry (e.g., REI, Patagonia, First Lite); young people in agriculture, and additional under-represented communities and populations who are essential to the future of sagebrush habitat conservation."[105]

ACCESS TO NEEDED KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL INFORMATION

One of the main activities of the IWJV is working in partnership with universities, science agencies, and NGOs to develop science and collect data to fill gaps in the understanding of ecosystems and species and then to communicate that information in a usable form to those whose decisions and activities impact the landscape. For example, the partners have developed a scientific understanding of key role of irrigated wet meadows for bird habitat and conservation, which helps to guide and prioritize their activities. They plan to continue work in this vein; in the IWJV's 2021 plan, for example, Strategy 2c aims to, "expand wetlands dynamics science and facilitate technical transfer of decision-support systems."

In 2013, the IWJV released a series of three technical documents that identify its avian conservation priorities based on a scientific evaluation of costs, benefits, and likelihood of success.[106] Based on that analysis, it prioritized investments in wetlands landscapes with a specific focus on three strategic, high value areas. The organization uses these plans to focus its conservation work and partnerships on these key priority areas.

In 2013, the IWJV also identified modeling wetlands dynamics to determine how the landscapes are changing over time as its greatest science need. Work is ongoing to develop datasets for 11 western states that will ultimately be integrated into a web-based platform that will track wetland conditions across the region. Furthermore, the IWJV and its partners have developed a Wetland Dynamics Technical Report and Decision Support Tool to help guide conservation activities for working wet meadows.[107]

SUFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

As a joint venture, the IWJV receives an allocation of Federal funds through USFWS that is far outweighed by the contributions of its many partners, which constituted 72% of the IWJV's income in

[105] IWJV, 2021 Annual Operational Plan, 9.
[106] "IWJV Identifying Science Priorities: 2013 - 2018," Intermountain West Joint Venture, accessed December 18, 2020, https://iwjv.org/iwjv-identifying-science-priorities-2013-2018/.
[107] IWJV and NRCS, "Southern Oregon-Northeastern California Working Wet Meadows Initiative," 3.

FY2021.[108] The 2021 Annual Operational Plan lists the IWJV's core funders as USFWS, NRCS, ConocoPhillips, and Rocky Mountain Power/Pacific Power.[109] Additional partners include State fish and wildlife agencies, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), NGOs, and energy companies.

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the organization's budget increased 11% by $1.5 million.[110] The IWJV attributed this increase to the strong relationships built with Congress and agencies by its Government Relations Committee, its partners, and staff.[111]

LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

The IWJV has been in operation since 1994. It is governed by a 21-member Management Board, comprised of representatives from a variety of sectors, including State and Federal agencies, NGOs, the energy industry, and private landowners. As noted above, the board has a Government Relations Committee that has been successful in building good relationships with Federal agencies and members of Congress.

In FY2021, the IWJV was funded for 13 staff positions, all but one of which are filled. Of those positions, three are focused on communications and sharing the stories of conservation efforts and challenges with target audiences. The IWJV places a high priority on partnership-building, which is exemplified by the position of sagebrush collaborative conservation specialist, who is charged with expanding partnerships in the sagebrush conservation arena.

APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Decision-making at the IWJV relies on the Management Board working closely with committees, staff, and work groups. The aim is to focus on common-ground solutions that work for the diverse interests represented in the partnership. While this requires significant capacity to facilitate effective meetings where people are incentivized to work together, conflict resolution has not been required.[112]

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

According to the website, IWJV partners accomplish together what no single entity could do on its own. As noted above, the IWJV prides itself on forging diverse partnerships that are based on the needs and interests of those involved and are mutually beneficial. The significant funding that the IWJV receives from its partners - as well as its longevity - seem to reflect the high value that participants place on the organization and its work.

[108] IWJV, 2021 Annual Operational Plan, 19.
[109] IWJV, 2021 Annual Operational Plan, 20.
[110] IWJV, 2021 Annual Operational Plan, 20, 22.
[111] IWJV, 2021 Annual Operational Plan, 19.
[112] Alison Duvall, personal email communication on 3/8/21.

PLAYA LAKES JOINT VENTURE

One JV that has been recognized for its innovation and success in bringing together a diversity of partners and funding sources is the Playa Lakes Joint Venture.[113] Identified as a critical region for bird habitat conservation under the NAWMP, PLJV covers over 300,000 square miles and crosses six states - Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The PLJV was launched in 1989 as the 7th official joint venture under the NAWMP. While its original mission was waterfowl conservation, it has now expanded to the conservation of all birds. In this region, the playas - or seasonal ponds - provide habitat for at least 20 waterfowl species during migratory and winter seasons.[114] The playas also help to recharge the Ogallala Aquifer, which is an essential source of groundwater in the region.

GOALS AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

The PLJV's mission is to "conserve the playas, prairies, and landscapes of the western Great Plains . . . through partnerships for the benefit of birds, other wildlife, and people."[115] To carry out that mission, the organization works to:

- Restore the playas to help maintain the function of the Ogallala Aquifer for the benefit of the communities and wildlife who depend on it;
- Restore wetland and grassland habitat to increase bird populations for the benefit recreational communities who engage in hunting, birdwatching, and other activities; and
- Harmonize its restoration goals with local communities' water quality and quantity needs and goals.

The PLJV has established that there are 71,850 probable playas in the region and that 32,611 of them need to be healthy to provide the required habitat for migratory birds. To measure the partnership's progress toward its goals, the organization has a tracker on its website (https://pljv.org/playa-conservation/tracking-our-progress/) that indicates how many playas are healthy, how many need to be restored, and the percentage of playas with improved or reduced function over time. These clear indications of progress - or setbacks - toward goals help the partnership to focus its efforts. For example, the PLJV acknowledges that although 150 playas were restored in 2017, 328 others suffered reduced functionality due to energy development, sediment accumulation, or hydrologic modifications - demonstrating that the partnership needs to do even more to offset those impacts.[116] As a result, the PLJV is engaging with new partners, including municipalities and the wind energy industry.

BALANCED AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

The PLJV emphasizes the importance of partnerships to its success. It brings together representatives of State and Federal wildlife agencies, conservation organizations, and private industry. The joint venture offers the opportunity for the partners to engage in shared regional planning and conservation activities,

[113] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update," 7.
[114] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update," 7.
[115] "A Shared Future for Wildlife and People," Playa Lakes Joint Venture, accessed December 20, 2020, https://pljv.org/.
[116] "Tracking Our Progress on Playa Conservation," Playa Lakes Joint Venture, accessed December 20, 2020, https://pljv.org/playa-conservation/tracking-our-progress/.

while the individual participants bring financial resources, technical expertise, and local perspectives to the table.

The PLJV is working on building and strengthening its partnership with the wind industry, as the growing industry has the potential to significantly impact the playa landscape. The PLJV's approach to working with the industry is to build awareness of the value and functionality of the playas and their importance to both communities and wildlife. In order to bring the industry to the table, it has been helpful to have a non-regulatory approach. Working collaboratively with wind energy representatives, the PLJV has developed siting and mitigation recommendations and guidance for wind energy development.

ACCESS TO NEEDED KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The PLJV has a robust mechanism for integrating scientific information into its work. Its Science Advisory Team, comprised of scientific and technical professionals, is coordinated by a science conservation director on the PLJV staff. The team's work lays the foundation for the PLJV's conservation goals and activities. It also develops research plans, monitoring and evaluation protocols, and reviews research project proposals submitted to the joint venture.

The Scientific Advisory Team has played a key role in the development of the organization's approach to its conservation work. Developing a scientific understanding of the functioning of the playas and their essential role in aquifer recharge, as well as undertaking social science research to explore the human relationship to the playas, has served as the foundation for the PLJV's innovative partnerships that aim to restore playas through the conservation of both wildlife habitat and water resources for local communities. Drawing on this understanding, the PLJV has partnered with the city of Clovis, New Mexico to implement a shared plan to preserve the town's more than 300 playas.[117]

SUFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

The PLJV is a nonprofit organization. While most of its early funding came from USFWS joint venture funds, that funding now makes up about half of the organization's revenue. The partnership recognized that to avoid over-reliance on Federal appropriations with their uncertain timing, the joint venture would need to diversify its revenue and develop a more consistent funding stream. Since 1990, the PLJV has raised over $50 million for its conservation work.[118] Members of the board contribute $5,000 annually, both to demonstrate their investment in the joint venture and to add to a pool of matching funds for Federal grants.

The PLJV connects regional habitat and wildlife conservation projects with funding. The joint venture provides information to landowners and local organizations about grant opportunities for conservation work, such as farm bill programs. It also offers the PLJV ConocoPhillips Capacity Grant program, which provides funding to states for grassland habitat conservation programs. For NAWCA grants, the PLJV may contribute required matching funds for wetlands conservation projects that aim to provide bird

[117] NAWMP Plan Committee, "2018 NAWMP Update," 7.
[118] "Our Partners," Playa Lakes Joint Venture, accessed December 20, 2020, https://pljv.org/about-us/our-partners/.

habitat. Finally, the PLJV assists the NAWCA review committee in the evaluation of grant proposals that are submitted from the region.

LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

The organization has a Management Board with 21 members representing wildlife conservation organizations, State and Federal wildlife agencies, State agriculture agencies, and industry. The board helps set the direction of the joint venture and approves funding for projects. Members also do outreach to the public and decision makers. When there is an open board seat, the PLJV works with the partner organization to identify a representative who is a good fit for the position.

The PLJV has eight of its own staff; in addition to the conservation science director mentioned above, there are two staff positions devoted to communications and outreach.

APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Meetings of the PLJV are at times facilitated by joint venture staff and other times by officers of the board; an independent facilitator has not been necessary. A participant noted the meetings are productive and focused on the business of developing conservation projects and metrics or working with landowners. The group has been working together for a long time and so there is not a significant need for conflict resolution.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

In an interview, a participant noted that there is a great deal of trust among PLJV members, in part because the effort is not regulatory. Members are generally committed to furthering the work of the joint venture because it aligns well with their own missions. They are focused on carrying out their own projects while trying to avoid overlap and inefficiencies. As a result, there is little concern among members about the motives of other participants.

In the case of bringing in new members, such as in the current initiative to engage the wind industry, the PLJV finds that some companies are motivated to join due to their own missions, while in other cases it helps to have Federal agency partners engage with the company and facilitate their involvement. When new members join, they generally spend some time in the beginning to listen and learn how the group operates.

THE LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVES AND THE NORTHWEST BOREAL PARTNERSHIP

The LCCs were created in 2009 by the Department of Interior (DOI).[119] This network of 22 conservation partnerships spanned the United States, as well as parts of Canada and Mexico. The aim of the LCC Network program was to, "identify and prioritize conservation science needs broadly; fund and otherwise support research projects that address these needs; and ensure that the results and products

[119] Dorthy Merritts, "Preface," in *A Review of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives,* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2016), xi.

derived from these projects can apply to conservation efforts."[120] DOI helped provide the LCC Network's funding and overall vision and goals, while each LCC had its own governance model, leadership, and priorities.

Despite compelling arguments in support of a need for collaborative, landscape scale conservation planning and implementation, LCCs were not uniformly accepted across the country, and within 5 years (2014) Congress directed the USFWS to contract with NAS to evaluate: (1) the purpose, goals, and scientific merit of the program within the context of other similar programs; and (2) whether there have been measurable improvements in the health of fish, wildlife, and their habitats as a result of the program.[121] The ensuing NAS report was generally favorable, but by 2018 Federal support for LCCs essentially dried up, presumably because of opposition to LCCs by key partner organizations. The NAS Committee report, written while LCCs were still active, evaluated the LCC network against criteria that contribute to the success of large landscape conservation collaboratives. They concluded:

- The vision of LCCs (responding to climate change and other landscape-scale stressors) might have been too broad and not compelling enough to engage partners. They cited examples of other successful landscape collaboratives that had specific and quantifiable objectives that partners could rally around.
- Although built on a collaborative partnership platform, the depth of engagement by many partners was not strong, in part because LCCs had science money but no funding for on the ground implementation. Successful implementation required individual partners to engage in these activities outside the LCCs, which they could do anyway.
- LCCs were perceived by some as competing for funding with other USFWS programs that had broad support and constituents, and that LCCs were duplicative of other Federal programs such as the Joint Ventures.[122]

The LCC network concept came from DOI, without the active involvement or necessarily even buy-in from stakeholders who were ultimately invited to participate. Given that the LCC program had no congressional appropriation of its own, funding for staff and science support was reallocated from existing programs. As noted in the NAS report, implementation of conservation actions indicated by planning or science projects was solely dependent on partners using their own funding.[123]

NORTHWEST BOREAL PARTNERSHIP

The Northwest Boreal LCC worked with and received administrative and financial support from USFWS through 2017. In 2018, substantial reductions in U.S. Federal Government support of the LCC Network led to most LCCs dissolving or transforming into different partnerships. At that time, the Northwest

[120] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *A Review of the* Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, 59.
[121] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *A Review of the* Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.
[122] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *A Review of the* Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, 70.
[123] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *A Review of the* Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

Boreal LCC became the Northwest Boreal Partnership, financially supported by NGO partners. The NWBP is also part of the Northern Latitudes Partnerships, a cooperation among the three former LCCs in Alaska and northwest Canada for joint work and idea sharing.

GOALS AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

The NWBP operates under a 10-year strategic plan. The strategic plan is in the process of being updated due to all the changes the NWBP has undergone since the plan's creation in 2015. Although the strategic plan is being updated, much of the vision for working together remains the same. The NWBP values and prioritizes setting shared goals that work for all partners. To accomplish this, they involve their diverse partners from the outset and keep them engaged through the entire goal-setting process. Due to the organization's goals currently being formulated, it is difficult to measure impact specifically.

BALANCED AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

The NWBP includes voting and non-voting Steering Committee members. "Members include entities that steward, use, or manage natural or cultural resources; conduct related science; and possess or gather Indigenous or traditional ecological knowledge (IK/TEK)."[124] Members collaboratively determine organizational priorities and structure, join working groups and projects, and often provide in-kind support and funding.

Steering Committee partners include Indigenous organizations, universities and research institutions, NGOs; US and Canadian Federal Government agencies, State and Provincial Government agencies, and several members who do not represent organizations, including Tribal and First Nation citizens, students, and retired professionals.[125]

Moving forward, the NWBP is focusing on equity and inclusion, particularly regarding Indigenous peoples. Recently they formed an Indigenous leadership working group that is providing guidance during the NWBP's update of the charter and strategic plan, on-the-land Indigenous approaches training, leading racial equity dialogues within the Partnership and other relationship building opportunities. This emphasis evolved from an initial challenge during the early years of the partnership to meaningfully engage with local communities and to have representation of Indigenous organizations and persons within the NWBP Steering Committee and on projects. In recent years, calls from Arctic Indigenous groups for more equitable engagement from science researchers, conservation groups, and government entities has been steadily growing. The NWBP recognized that taking serious steps to address systemic inequities is critical to advance the mission and goals of the Partnership.

From this inclusive approach, the NWBP reports building more trust by involving Indigenous partners from the outset, before any meaningful decisions are made. The challenge they find is Indigenous people working in these areas are in high demand.

[124] Northwest Boreal Partnership, "Charter for the NWB LCC" (2018), https://northwestboreal.org/uploads/1/1/9/4/119407018/nwblcc_charter_-_approved_10-24-18.pdf, 2.
[125] "Partners," Northwest Boreal Partnership, accessed December 16, 2020, https://www.northwestboreal.org/partners.html.

ACCESS TO NEEDED KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The NWBP emphasizes balancing knowledge from Western science data and IK/TEK. While the organization was an LCC, it relied primarily on Western science data and approaches. Since 2018, projects now focus more on Indigenous-led efforts, such as Indigenous led land-use planning, that are based in Indigenous worldviews, approaches, and knowledge.

For example, the NWBP was planning to co-host a workshop gathering in partnership with a local First Nation in Canada, focused on Indigenous led land-use planning. The entire structure of the workshop was intended to blend Western and Indigenous norms for meetings. Story time, space and support for elders, and conversations out on the land were to be included. The workshop was ultimately postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the NWBP is working with an all-Indigenous Steering Committee to implement the workshop as a virtual series in spring 2021. This learning opportunity is tailored to a broad audience of academics, government officials, and others not as familiar with Indigenous worldviews and approaches to land stewardship.

Another example of balancing Western science data and IK/TEK is the "Northern Connections: Bridging Indigenous Knowledge & Observations" project, funded by the National Science Foundation's Navigating the New Arctic Program. The NWBP Partnership Director is the project leader, in collaboration with 17 additional partners based in Alaska and Canada. The project is intended to bring together Indigenous, community-based environmental monitoring efforts across Alaska and Canada, explore ways to connect efforts at the landscape-scale, and strengthen on-going monitoring programs. "With many on-going environmental monitoring efforts happening in silos, [the] goal is to find ways to reduce duplication of efforts, connect data collection across large geographies, and help connect a network of 50+ partners who are tracking environmental change in the North."[126] This project focuses, in part, on improving community-based monitoring and building a more robust monitoring network. As the project team has worked to bring in additional Indigenous leadership to the project, additional objectives include, working with funders to help them be more inclusive in what monitoring projects they fund, and how they can partner with Indigenous leaders to create more equity within their funding frameworks.

SUFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

As mentioned in the introduction, base funding and staff support for the NWB LCC originally came from USFWS. The lack of financial support from USFWS in 2018 motivated their transformation into the NWBP with NGO partners (Wildlife Management Institute and Alaska Conservation Foundation) to manage grants, host staff positions, and assist with fundraising. The NWBP is still establishing a long-term, sustainable funding model to support staff, operations, and project work. Their goal is to eventually have multiple full-time staff, and the ability to cover operating costs and partnership meetings, based on a public-private funding model. Member organizations either use their own resources to help realize partnership goals and visions or collaborate on funding proposals and projects that bring in resources for their organizations as well as the NWBP itself.

[126] "Northern Connections: Bridging Indigenous Knowledge & Observation Efforts," Northwest Boreal Partnership, accessed December 16, 2020, https://www.northwestboreal.org/northern-connections-bridging-Indigenous-knowledge--observation-efforts.html.

The NWBP's long-term funding goal is diversification between public and private sources for more stability and less vulnerability to politics. The NGO partners that initially supported the NWBP in 2018 helped the NWBP secure long-term private funding with other private partners. The USFWS has stepped back in as a public funder of the NWBP but simply as a partner, and at a much-reduced funding level than was the case under the national LCC Network program. Since 2018, the NWBP has secured several competitive grants for projects and continues to seek funding opportunities.

Being housed outside of government has enhanced the ability of the NWBP to build trust, as well as to help collaboratively secure funding that can be distributed among project partners, particularly Alaska Native Tribes and Canadian First Nations. When they were an LCC, people saw them as another arm of the Federal agency. Now they are better positioned to do collaborative work and build trust.

The NWBP shifts funds to meet current emphases and demands. For example, the NWBP was prioritizing funds to support Indigenous peoples' participation, mirroring their focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. With COVID-19 preventing travel, funds previously allocated to travel were not needed, those funds were therefore shifted to project work.

LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

The NWBP is run by a Steering Committee made up of voting and non-voting members. The Steering Committee makes the major decisions for the organization, "such as setting programmatic priorities, making organizational changes, where to allocate funding, and determining [the] strategic plan."[127] The leadership team within the Steering Committee includes a co-chair and vice-chair from each country and the Partnership Director, which meets on a bi-weekly basis. The Steering Committee members meet quarterly. Owing to the large geographic area the NWBP covers, the meetings rotate between virtual and in-person and between Canada and Alaska, resulting in a face-to-face meeting in Alaska and Canada at least once a year. In recent years, NWBP meetings have evolved to include a significant time focused on locally relevant topics that are open to participation by local leaders, decision-makers, and experts. These are paired with NWBP Business Meetings, in which the Steering Committee addresses organizational business and updates.

In terms of project development, the Steering Committee has a general role in setting priorities, but specific proposals and project development occurs organically, with input and leadership from a mix of Steering Committee organizations and outside collaborators who share a common interest and alignment around specific needs within a specific geography. Often, collaborative proposals are developed to bring in resources needed to implement a project, and partners are brought on board either as a result of pre-planning and scoping workshops, or through networking and relationships already established among NWBP partners and broader entities throughout the northwest boreal region.

One of the key components of the NWBP structure is ensuring there is full-time paid staff dedicated to this work. As was mentioned above, more than one staff is ideal but, in their view, at least one full-time

[127] "Our Partnership," Northwest Boreal Partnership, accessed December 16, 2020, https://www.northwestboreal.org/our-partnership.html.

staff dedicated to the success of the partnership is vital. The NWBP staff includes a full-time, dedicated Partnership Director and a Communications and Outreach Coordinator that works with all three of the former LCCs that constitute the Northern Latitudes Partnerships. Prior to 2018, the NWBP had three-full time positions as well as additional staff that shared duties among the LCCs in Alaska. This reduction in staffing has remained a challenge for the partnership.

One of the challenges of the reduction in staff capacity, along with the loss of sustained backbone funding, is that the allocation of time for the Partnership Director to put towards general coordination duties, relationship-building, has shifted significantly to include substantial time toward development. In addition, without a dedicated "Science Coordinator" (as part of the former LCC staffing structure), project coordination and management also falls largely to the Partnership Director.

APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The NWBP is a consensus-based decision-making body. The Leadership Team meets on a bi-weekly basis and is granted authority by the NWBP Steering Committee at large to make decisions on the day-to-day work of the NWBP, or to make decisions that require a rapid response. High-level decisions around general priority-setting, changes to the charter or strategic plan, or any other issues that would affect the nature of the partnership are in the authority of the entire Steering Committee.

Conflict has not yet been tested in the NWBP. There is a realization, however, that guidelines need to be in place before a conflict emerges. There is currently a mechanism to remove members from the partnership if they have not participated in two years. The NWBP aims to hold people accountable to voluntary guidelines; if issues arise where partners are acting outside of those guidelines, there will be a mechanism by which the NWBP can ask members to step down.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

Although the NWBP will soon revise its charter, the values embodied in the existing charter are still relevant and reflective of the current organization. The charter outlines principles each partner agrees to follow. The principles state:

- Working together strengthens planning, research, inventory and monitoring programs, communication, and adaptive management by leveraging the collective human and financial resources to provide quality science and IK/TEK to address shared information needs.
- Working together strengthens and enhances capabilities to plan, design, and deliver strategies in response to changes in climate, land use, ocean conditions and other environmental factors.
- Cooperation and consistency among partners improve communication and messaging, and is critical for the development of rigorous science, IK/TEK, and tools that support sound, outcome-based, stewardship of fish and wildlife, habitats, and critical cultural resources.
- Each partner is committed to understanding the opportunities and constraints of one another's independent authorities and regulatory responsibility, which will not be compromised through participation in the partnership described in this Charter.
- Each partner will consider and respect each participating organization's unique mandates and jurisdictions.[128]

[128] Northwest Boreal Partnership, "Charter for the NWB LCC," 3.

The current leadership also notes their emphasis on bringing people together before having goals and plans crafted. That intentional, inclusive "pre-planning" time built into timelines and budgets is a high priority to avoid hard feelings from those who would otherwise be invited in later, as an afterthought. The NWBP also takes great pride in knowing how to build and maintain relationships, by being patient with the time that relationship-building takes and asking what matters to people. To build strong relationships and inclusivity, they also prioritize bringing people together in-person without outside distractions and outside of a traditional boardroom setting. They plan to facilitate field trips for the Steering Committee, particularly those led by local Indigenous community members when possible.

CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED AGREEMENT AND THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM

In 1983, the governors of three states - Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia - the mayor of the District of Columbia, the EPA administrator, and the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission signed the historic Chesapeake Bay Agreement to fight pollution in the watershed. The 64,000-square mile watershed became the first estuary in the United States to benefit from restoration and protection efforts by Congress. The agreement followed a comprehensive, congressionally funded study of the Chesapeake Bay in the 1970s that revealed the water quality problems in the bay, principally the flow of excess nutrients and toxic substances resulting in its state of degradation and the critical decline of submerged aquatic vegetation. As part of that agreement, the Chesapeake Bay Program Office was established under EPA to coordinate a regional partnership to guide restoration efforts. Since then, the CBP has become a national and international model for collaborative efforts on ecosystem restoration, serving as a template for the National Estuaries Program later established by the EPA.

GOALS AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

In its over 35 years of operation, the Chesapeake Bay partnership's methods for setting and tracking its goals have evolved considerably, with a series of agreements establishing new standards and processes. The 1983 document was a simple, one-page agreement to coordinate on addressing pollution in the bay. It was followed by the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement, among other goals and commitments, the first measurable goal of 40% nutrient reduction and a deadline for achieving it. In 2000, the partners signed the *Chesapeake 2000* agreement, which set a vision and strategy for the region, accompanied by 102 ecosystem restoration goals. While the partnership made progress in some of those goal areas, its results were mixed, with key resources such as oyster populations continuing to decrease and pollution due to nutrient runoff from agricultural and urban areas continuing to rise.[129]

Given the continuing interest of Congress - perhaps owing in part to the bay's location in proximity to Washington, DC - the CBP was the subject of a series of GAO investigations and reports beginning in 2006. In its 2006 report, the GAO observed that despite having over 100 goals, the partnership lacked an approach for assessing its progress in a measurable way.[130] It also noted that the CBP's progress

[129] "Bay Program History," Chesapeake Bay Program, accessed December 22, 2020, https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/bay_program_history.

[130] U.S. Government Accountability Office, Chesapeake Bay Program: Improved Strategies Needed to Better Guide Restoration Efforts, Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies,

reporting was not sufficiently transparent, accessible, or independent. In response, the partnership worked to develop a more integrated approach to goal setting and tracking, created a new reporting format, and planned to have its work independently assessed.

In 2010, the EPA established a TMDL for the Chesapeake Bay that established limits on the amount of nutrients and sediment entering the bay, which the CBP refers to as the watershed's "pollution diet." In response to these regulatory limits, Federal, State, and Local Governments then collaborated to create State-based Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) throughout the seven jurisdictions in the watershed that set out plans for how the bay could achieve the TMDL levels by 2025.

A 2011 GAO report found, however, that not all the stakeholders were working collaboratively towards the same goals, with Federal stakeholders following a strategy responding to a 2009 Executive Order to increase Federal leadership and engagement in bay restoration, and some State participants viewing it as a uniquely Federal effort. The report pointed to several potential obstacles to achieving the Chesapeake's protection and restoration goals - a lack of collaboration among stakeholders, insufficient funding, and external factors such as the increasing impacts of climate change.[131] The CBP responded that it was working to develop an integrated set of goals to align stakeholder efforts.

In 2014, the partnership expanded to include the headwater states of Delaware, New York, and West Virginia, and together they signed a new Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, which achieved the desired goal alignment and included a commitment to achieve the WIPs. That agreement was later amended in 2020. The partnership's vision for the watershed is "an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed with clean water, abundant life, conserved lands and access to the water, a vibrant cultural heritage, and a diversity of engaged citizens and stakeholders."[132] The 2014 agreement established the following 5 thematic areas with 10 interrelated goals, including the TMDL, and 31 measurable outcomes:

- Abundant life
- Clean water
- Climate change
- Conserved lands
- Engaged communities

For each of the goal areas, a Goal Implementation Team (GIT) is charged with developing strategies to reach the associated outcomes by 2025. In 2017, the CBP launched its Strategy Review System, a structured process to apply an adaptive management approach to its program implementation. Progress toward each of the goals is reviewed on two-year cycles by the CBP's Management Board and adjustments are made as needed. This review process is supported and documented by the decision

Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, statement of Anu K. Mittal, GAO-06-614T (Washington, DC: July 13, 2006): 1.

[131] U.S. Government Accountability Office, Chesapeake Bay Restoration Effort Needs Common Federal and State Goals and Assessment Approach, Report to Congressional Committees, GAO-11-802 (Washington, DC: September 2011: 1.

[132] "What Guides Us," Chesapeake Bay Program, accessed December 22, 2020, https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what_guides_us/watershed_agreement.

support tool ChesapeakeDecisions (www.chesapeakebay.net/decisions). Progress against the outcomes is also tracked on the publicly available ChesapeakeProgress website (www.chesapeakeprogress.com).

In terms of the partnership's environmental impacts to date, despite centuries of development and polluting activities in the watershed, the last 35 years of restoration efforts have yielded some results and pollution in the bay generally is decreasing. Progress in other key areas is still slow, however, and the partnership recognizes the need for continued work to achieve a healthy and functioning watershed.

While the development of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL has been a step forward as it provides a regulatory incentive, it can also have the effect of drawing energy and attention away from other restoration goals. The two-year Strategy Review System cycle, however, helps to focus attention on each of the outcomes periodically. Another effective aspect of the system has been developing a relationship between outcomes and quantified indicators that are measured to show the progress of the partnership's efforts. Finally, the fact that the CBP program agreements are signed by representatives at the highest levels of government has been helpful over the years to focus attention and resources on the program's priorities.

BALANCED AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

The CBP states that partnerships have been fundamental to its program, bringing together the expertise, authority and resources needed to carry out its activities. They also allow the participants to gain a better, fuller understanding of the issues, as well as to coordinate efforts and avoid overlap. The Chesapeake's sprawling collaborative effort includes:

- 19 Federal agencies
- Nearly 40 State agencies and programs
- Approximately 1,800 Local Governments
- Over 20 academic institutions
- Over 60 businesses, nonprofits, and advocacy groups

While the headwater states of the Chesapeake Bay were not part of the original agreement, they did sign on to the 2014 Chesapeake Watershed agreement, signaling the importance of engaging all the jurisdictions in the watershed to improve bay health. Recognizing it as an area for improvement, one of the partnership's goals under the 2014 agreement is to increase the diversity of participants in the program's activities by reaching out and engaging groups that are not currently represented in the partnership's decision making.[133]

ACCESS TO NEEDED KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL INFORMATION

As mentioned above, the CBP is taking an adaptive management approach to carrying out its ecosystem goals, using the structured process of the Strategy Review System and the ChesapeakeDecisions tool. Its programmatic goals are linked to quantified outcomes and deadlines that are reviewed on a two-year cycle and revised as needed in response to updated information or changes on the ground. One challenge of adopting an adaptive management approach, however, is helping participants and decision

[133] "Stewardship," Chesapeake Bay Program, accessed February 12, 2021, https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/goals/stewardship.

makers understand what it means to adaptively manage and when it is appropriate to make changes to goals and outcomes. Different stakeholders can have different perspectives on the meaning and execution of adaptive management, so taking this approach can require a learning process for participants to reach a common understanding.

The CBP has multiple avenues for integrating scientific and technical information into its work. Since the earliest days of the program in 1984, the CBP has benefitted from the advice of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), whose membership is composed of appointees from the signatory states, the District of Columbia, Federal agencies, and at-large appointees, mostly from academia. The STAC provides independent scientific and technical input through reports and reviews, as well as science-based communications and outreach throughout the region. There is also the Science, Technical Analysis, and Reporting (STAR) group that works directly with the GITs and Work Groups to provide for their scientific and technical needs, such as modeling, analysis, and explanations of changing conditions that will help support their decision making. Its membership includes CBP staff and representatives of Federal and State agencies, NGOs, universities, and the GITs. Furthermore, the CBP has a suite of scientific and technical programs that support its work, including comprehensive modeling of the Chesapeake ecosystem, a monitoring program, and a Resource Lands assessment using GIS models.

Although the partnership has numerous ways to access scientific and technical information, it has yet to find ways to incorporate IK/TEK into its work. There is a need to bring more Tribal representatives to the table to develop a more holistic view of the Chesapeake Bay and its issues. The region includes both State-recognized Tribes and several Federally recognized Tribes that received that designation in 2018. The CBP is currently planning to reach out to diverse stakeholders who have not been participating to date, as well as to bring more social science approaches to bear in its activities.

SUFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

There are many sources of funding for the Chesapeake Bay partnership's ecosystem protection and restoration work, coming from a range of contributors, including Federal agencies, State budgets, Local Governments, NGOs, and private sector organizations. There are some robust nonprofit organizations, such as the Choose Clean Water Coalition and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, which are helping to further diversify the funders contributing to Chesapeake Bay restoration. The CBP has a Budget and Finance Work Group that is the focal point for coordination, funding innovation, and reporting within the partnership.

With many partners providing funds to the restoration effort, the funding of CBP programs can be quite complex. The Federal Office of Management and Budget is required to report annually to Congress on State and Federal funding for the CBP, which it does in the *Chesapeake Bay Spending Restoration Crosscut* report. In fiscal year 2020, State and Federal agencies combined spent almost $1.6 billion on Chesapeake Bay restoration.[134] A summary of the *Crosscut* report and breakdown of the spending by

[134] "Funding," Chesapeake Bay Program, accessed February 12, 2021, https://www.chesapeakeprogress.com/funding.

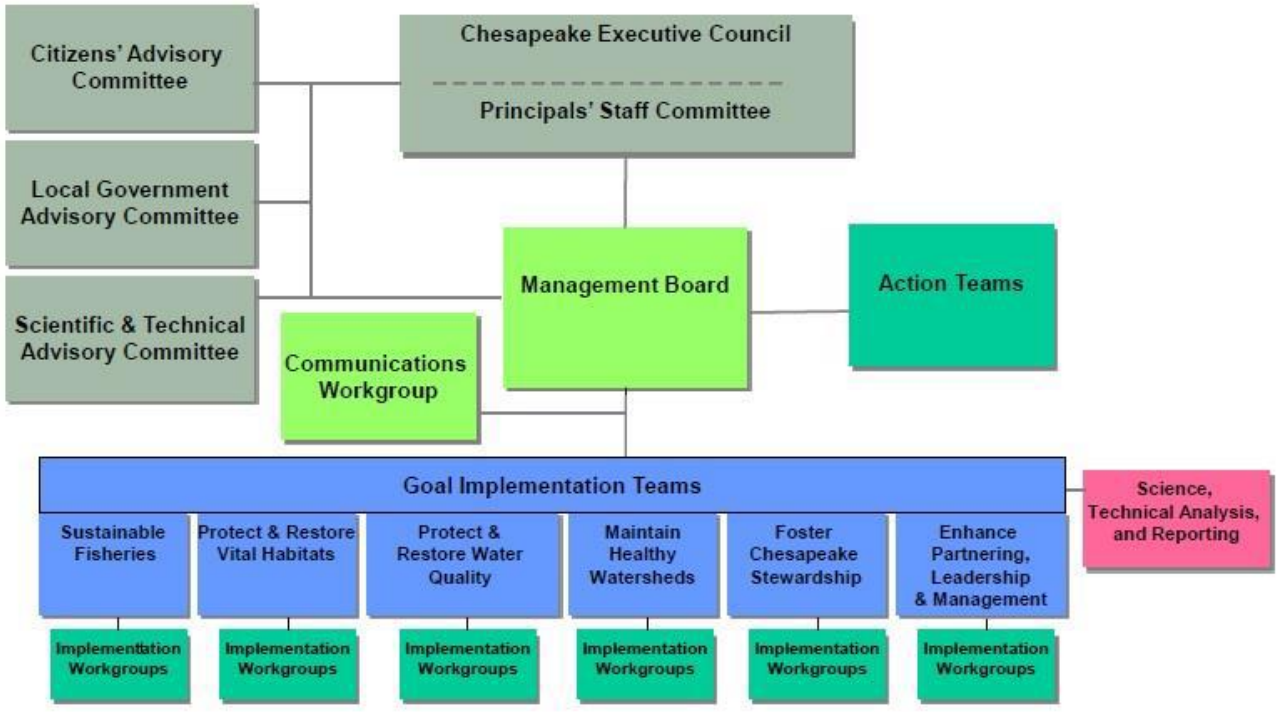
Federal agency and by state is available on the ChesapeakeProgress website (www.chesapeakeprogress.com/funding).

A significant source of program funding comes from congressional appropriations to EPA. While the CBP continues to enjoy strong support in Congress, there can be the risk of delays or funding reductions with the uncertainties of the appropriations process. The EPA funds support the operations and coordination of the Chesapeake Bay Program Office, including providing staffing, scientific and technical expertise, and decision support tools. While the Chesapeake Bay Program Office provides funding for meeting space and remote access to meetings, it does not typically fund participant travel to meetings and partners are expected to fund their own travel. Approximately two-thirds of EPA's funding is passed on through grant programs to State and Local partners to do restoration, protection, and monitoring work.

LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

It can be challenging to manage a collaborative effort as extensive as the Chesapeake Bay's. The partnership has organized itself into a hierarchical decision-making structure headed by the Chesapeake Executive Council (EC) [see Figure 1]. The EC is composed of the governors of the watershed signatory states, the mayor of DC, the EPA administrator, and the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission. The EC meets annually to set policies for the restoration and protection of the bay. The annual meetings serve to focus public attention on the issues and the high-level leadership confers credibility and authority on the program. Leadership of the EC rotates among the members.

Figure 1. Organizational Structure of the Chesapeake Bay Program[135]



[135] Chesapeake Bay Program, "Governance and Management Framework for the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership," March 31, 2020, 5.

The EC is supported by the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC), which is composed of high-level State and Federal leaders. Each state can bring a delegation of members from relevant State agencies, such as agriculture, environmental, and natural resource agencies. When voting, each delegation submits a single vote. The PSC supports the EC by translating its policy direction into implementation. The PSC identifies topics for consideration by the EC and sets their agendas. It also provides policy and program direction to the CBP Management Board and tracks the direction of CBP policies and projects on behalf of the EC. The PSC holds meetings at least three times per year and more often as needed. The chair of the PSC is a representative of the signatory who is currently chairing the EC; the PSC chair coordinates the meetings with the assistance of CBP staff.

The Management Board does strategic planning for the CBP, sets priorities, and offers operational guidance. They also oversee the GITs that are carrying out the implementation of the partnership's programs. Members of the Management Board are representatives of their signatory or Federal agency - generally ranking a step below those on the PSC - and coordinate their entity's activities regarding the partnership. The CBP director chairs the Management Board and works with a staff coordinator to facilitate monthly meetings on the group's priorities.

Since the early days of the CBP's operations, three standing advisory committees have offered input on the program's work. In addition to the STAC discussed above, the Citizens' Advisory Committee and the Local Government Advisory Group were established in 1984 and 1987, respectively. The Citizens' Advisory Committee is comprised of representatives of stakeholder groups throughout the watershed, including the agricultural and homebuilding sectors, businesses, environmental and conservation groups, and civic organizations. The Citizens' Advisory Committee not only provides stakeholder perspectives on the program's restoration activities, but also engages in educational outreach to constituent groups and the public. It further undertakes an independent evaluation of the CBP's work. The role of the Local Government Advisory Group is to share the perspective of Local officials on program implementation and engage Local Governments, facilitating the flow of information among governments in the watershed.

Goal Implementation Teams, or GITs, as mentioned above, are responsible for coordinating implementation to achieve results for each of the 10 goals and 31 outcomes outlined in the 2014 agreement, along with a sixth goal area to support the Management Board with governance, coordination, and management of the overall program. The GITs develop management strategies and two-year Logic & Action plans for each of the 31 outcomes in their goal areas. They also commission work groups to undertake specific tasks as the need arises. The leadership of the GITs is established following either a chair/vice chair or co-chair model. Any member can serve in a chair role, provided at least one of the leadership seats is filled by either a Federal or State representative. The GITs aim to have representation from both signatories and non-signatories among their membership, with slots for at-large members, as well as advisors from the advisory committees and relevant work groups. Meetings are held as needed to accomplish the group's tasks.

In addition to the STAR group described above, which offers scientific and technical support to the GITs, another cross-programmatic work group is the Communications Work Group. The work group assists with communications efforts across the jurisdictions in the watershed.

Section 117 of the Clean Water Act provides the authority for EPA to establish and maintain the Chesapeake Bay Program Office. The office is staffed with EPA and other Federal staff, along with State, academic, and NGO partners. Program staff are assigned to coordinate each of the GITs and the EC and PSC are supported by high-level program staff.

In 2009, executive order 13508 Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration was issued, directing Federal agencies to increase their engagement in and support to the CBP. A Federal Leadership Committee (Committee) was established with the EPA administrator as the chair. Committee membership includes senior representatives of the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security, Interior, and Transportation. The order directed the agencies to take a leadership role, while acknowledging that success depends on the collaborative partnerships in the region. Agencies should use their resources, authorities, and expertise efficiently to support the CBP efforts. The Committee was also required to develop a strategy for coordination of existing efforts; it issued its *Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed* in 2010.[136] Although the Committee has been helpful for bringing more Federal agencies into an active role in the Chesapeake Bay, the involvement of more agencies can also give a sense of diffused leadership and lack of clarity about who is in the lead role. It is important to be careful about the number of participants in a leadership role in order to preserve a sense of accountability on the part of those who need to take action.

Over the decades of the CBP's operation, it has remained stable, without significant impacts from political and administrative changes on the Federal and State levels. Different administrations with differing perspectives have respected the Chesapeake agreements. The political and economic importance of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, with Washington, DC located in the region, may have contributed to sustained congressional interest and to the stability of the partners' commitment. Agreements signed at the highest levels of government create an investment on the part of the partners that makes it difficult to later step back from the agreed-upon goals. Furthermore, the CBP is staffed at the high levels with career Federal employees who are not political appointees; therefore, staffing is not subject to turnover with changes in Federal administrations. In terms of responding to participant turnover, the CBP office provides orientation for the incoming EC or PSC chairs, although not for other committees or teams due to the extensive resources required to keep up with turnover in such a large operation.

APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

As discussed above, the CBP has developed a defined decision-making process within an adaptive management framework. Under its Strategy Review System, the GITs and the WGs report on their progress to the Management Board on two-year cycles, beginning with a review meeting and followed

[136] U.S. Government Accountability Office, Chesapeake Bay Restoration Effort Needs Common Federal and State Goals and Assessment Approach, 3.

by seven quarterly progress meetings. The groups use the review opportunities to explain any challenges they are encountering and request any needed actions from the Management Board. This process allows for the organization to make changes to the goals, outcomes, and management strategies in its plans. The ChesapeakeDecisions tool guides the participants through the Strategy Review System and promotes transparency. There are three standard documents the groups submit through ChesapeakeDecisions during the review cycle - a Logic & Action Plan, a narrative analysis, and a presentation.

One of the CBP's core principles is consensus in decision making, meaning that all participants can "live with" the outcome, and it is the default method for reaching decisions. If consensus cannot be reached on the GIT or WG level, then the decision is elevated to the next level of the organization with a description of the positions of those for and against the proposal. If consensus cannot be reached on the EC, PSC, or Management Board levels, then decisions can be made by supermajority vote. When dissenting from a proposal, participants are asked to propose an alternative or a method for reaching one. The CBP also has adopted the University of Maryland Center for Leadership & Organizational Change's "consensus continuum," which allows participants to signal their level of support for a proposal - or allow a proposal they do not fully support to go forward without blocking it (i.e., "I trust the group and will not block this decision but need to register my disagreement").[137] Furthermore, there is a series of well-articulated steps in the decision-making process that allows for participants to discuss, raise concerns, address those concerns, and modify the proposal before returning to a consensus decision.

Transparency is a key element of the CBP's operations, which helps to build trust and accountability between agencies and stakeholders and for EC members to show responsiveness to their citizens. The CBP meetings are open to the public and meeting summaries are posted on the website. The organization's progress against its goals is also published on the ChesapeakeProgress website.

With the sprawling, cross-jurisdictional nature of the Chesapeake Bay effort, holding in-person meetings has been important for building relationships and trust between participants. Staff coordinators and chairs are responsible for setting agendas and running meetings, and generally third-party neutral facilitation has not been necessary. The CBP does have a facilitator on contract to step in when the need arises; the contractor also provides facilitation training for those who need it.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

Over the years, the level of trust between CBP participants has had ebbs and flows. The CBP staff takes opportunities to support trust-building among participants. Since the development of the bay wide TMDL, EPA has been responsible for providing oversight of the jurisdictions' efforts to meet pollution load reduction targets established by the partnership for meeting the TMDL. This dynamic of the targets can complicate the relationship between the states, given that they rely upon each other to meet their assigned load. Even if the states have committed to meeting their assigned load, they may not have the resources to carry it out - eroding trust with other jurisdictions.

[137] Chesapeake Bay Program, "Governance and Management Framework for the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership," 19.

The advent of the TMDL has also complicated EPA's role within the CBP, adding another dimension to the agency's responsibilities. Prior to the TMDL, agency staff were effectively fulfilling their role of coordinating and facilitating the partnership. As a Federal agency, EPA has the advantage of being able to bring resources, focus, and attention to the CBP. The addition of the regulatory responsibilities related to the establishment of the bay wide TMDL, however, has placed stress on the EPA's role as coordinator, transforming its relationship of an equal partnership to one of oversight. It can be challenging to navigate this dual relationship for the agency and the jurisdictions alike.

APPENDIX C: OVERVIEW OF ADDITIONAL MODELS

The following models illustrated at least some of the factors we were considering but were not as comprehensive as our key models listed above. We conducted a literature review focused on those illustrative factors.

BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE

The Blackfoot Challenge is a public-private, collaborative watershed management organization in Northwest Montana and a bit of Canada that was established in 1993.[138] It aims "to coordinate efforts to conserve and enhance natural resources and the rural way of life in the Blackfoot watershed for present and future generations."[139] The organization was developed as a remedy to poor mining, logging, and livestock grazing practices; invasive weeds; recreational over-use; and large real estate development in the area.

GOALS AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

The organization coordinates responses to community needs. While there are project specific goals and objectives, there are no stated measurable, organizational-level goals on its website.[140] We would need to conduct interviews for information on organizational-level goals, goal-setting procedures, as well as measurement, evaluation, and adaptation practices. Since the Blackfoot Challenge started in 1993, it has established and managed over 100 programs and projects. Some example programs and outcomes include:

- "Comprehensive Conservation Easements. Starting in 1995, the Blackfoot Challenge and one of its primary partners, the USFWS, has secured conservation easement coverage on 90,000 acres involving 65 private landowners and 75 easements. This is 30% of all private property in the watershed."[141]
- "The Blackfoot Community Forest Project. This is a comprehensive and pioneering effort to restore the ecological and biological integrity of 88,000 acres of Blackfoot land by purchasing private land from Plum Creek Timber and other private landowners, deeding it over to the US Forest Service (Lolo National Forest) in perpetuity, and creating a large common public, or community, area that is jointly owned and managed by community stakeholders."[142]
- "Endangered Species (other than fish) and Wildlife Conservation...Human-grizzly bear conflicts have been reduced by 67% since 2001 despite significant increases in bear sightings and anecdotal evidence over the last 10 years that grizzlies, listed as threatened under the ESA, are re-colonizing many parts of the Blackfoot area. Programs contributing to these results - more bears, yet fewer conflicts - include abatement measures such as the building of 14,000 linear feet of electrified predator-friendly fencing (60% of rancher's calving yards are now fenced), the

[138] "History," Blackfoot Challenge, accessed December 28, 2020, https://blackfootchallenge.org/history/.
[139] "History," Blackfoot Challenge.
[140] "What We Do," Blackfoot Challenge, accessed December 28, 2020, https://blackfootchallenge.org/what-we-do/.
[141] Edward P. Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements: Getting to Robust Durability in the Blackfoot Valley," *Journal of Sustainable Development* 5, No. 7 (2012): 38.
[142] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 40.

installation of 80 bear-resistant dumpsters, and a carcass pickup program that removes dead animals (wild game, livestock, road kill) from private property and roads."[143]

BALANCED AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

Members include private landowners, industry users (e.g. a timber company), State and Federal land managers, Local Government officials, local business owners, conservation NGOs, and other watershed residents.

Blackfoot Challenge is purposefully designed as non-partisan, avoiding "pro-green" or "pro-development" labels. It maintains a reputation of being a forum for resolving disputes and solving problems.[144]

The inclusive representation on the leadership team is discussed in the leadership section.

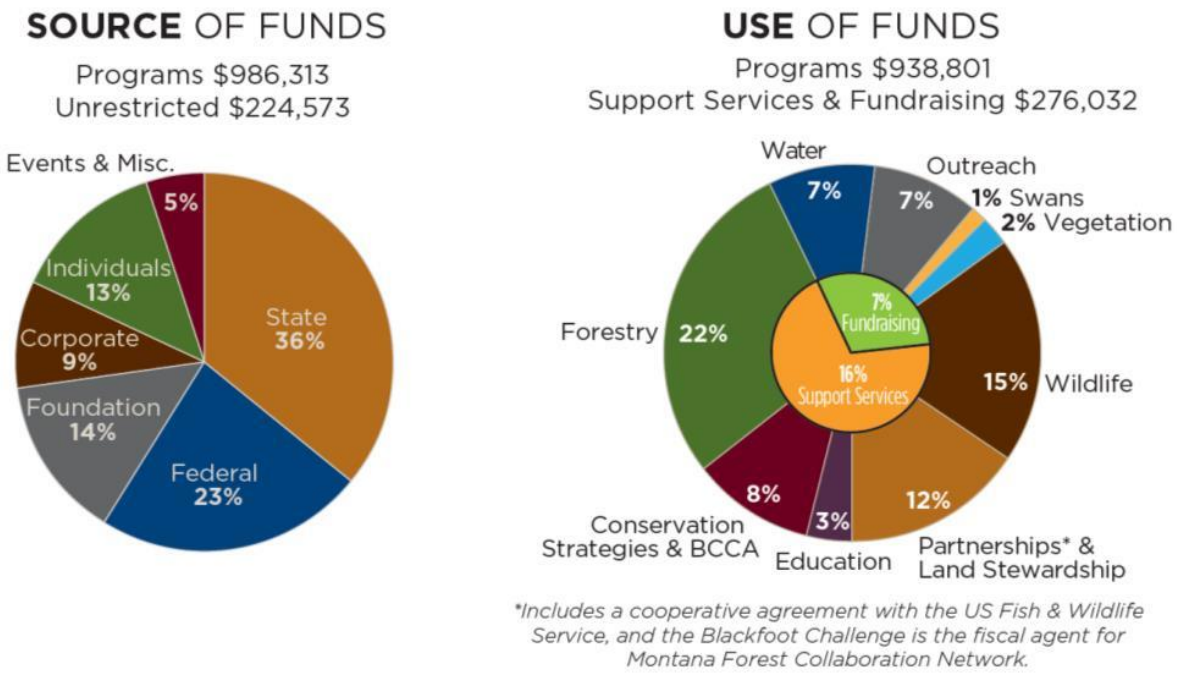
SUFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

The Blackfoot Challenge focuses on diverse, resilient funding from individual contributions, government, and private foundation money. This approach helps protect against the rise and fall of governments' interest in certain approaches and programs. For example, in 2001 the Blackfoot Challenge nearly doubled its annual budgets to $100,000.[145] Only two years later, it dramatically increased to $600,000, and exploded in 2005 and 2006, to over $2,000,000.[146] Most of that dramatic change came from government grants. All throughout, the Blackfoot Challenge continued to focus on a diversified approach. This helped when those larger numbers later began to fall somewhat.

One private funding strategy they use is requiring an annual minimum of $5,000 "give or get" money for all partners, not just Executive Board members, as is quite common for non-profit organizations.[147] Starting in 2006, the Board set a goal of setting aside a $3M endowment that, "allows the [Blackfoot Challenge] to jump on good ideas as they arise, rather than worrying about raising new funds."[148] As of the recent update available on the website (2010), they were over two-thirds of the way toward meeting their goal.

[143] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 40.
[144] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 41.
[145] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 38.
[146] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 38.
[147] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 44-45.
[148] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 45.

Figure 2. 2019 Source and Use of Funds[149]



LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

The Blackfoot Challenge has 23 board members (every public agency that manages land in the watershed has a seat on the board), 11 staff, 8 committees, and 7 work groups.[150] All meet monthly to share, listen, and prioritize work. Each work group is chaired by a board member.
The Blackfoot Challenge's founders, and other Board members are described as "fully rooted. They live on the land, rely on the land, manage the land whether because they own it or, as government employees, they have a responsibility for it. They do not see their place as an intellectual position; instead they live and breathe the land. They love the place."[151]

The Blackfoot Challenge's leadership vision is to direct and ensure their relevant work is completed in accordance with their collaborative conservation mission. To do this, they aim for:

- "The presence of the [Blackfoot Challenge's] hands-on board of directors
- The recruitment of 'focal' people
- The long-term perspective provided by the mission in combination with a selective partnering approach
- The embrace of staffing changes to fit the different stages of [Blackfoot Challenge] growth
- A core catalyst model of minimalist bureaucracy

[149] "Financials," Blackfoot Challenge, accessed December 28, 2020, https://blackfootchallenge.org/financials/.
[150] "Our Team," Blackfoot Challenge, accessed December 28, 2020, https://blackfootchallenge.org/who-we-are/our-team/.
[151] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 42.

- And a commitment to transparency and accountability to others."[152]

The Blackfoot Challenge often delegates tasks and projects to on-the-ground problem solving initiatives and partners. "We want to keep the central staff small. That's why we work hard to catalyze partners so they can work through program details and implement the programs. After all, they're the ones with the expertise, they're the ones with the experience getting things done."[153] This delegation and small-staff focus is reflected in the Blackfoot Challenge's expenditure patterns, with an average of over 89% of budget dollars going to programs.[154]

The commitment to the core catalyst minimalist model of administration shows up in the [Blackfoot Challenge's] expenditure patterns, which expends an average of over 89% of total budget dollars on programs in the years 2007 through 2009 (the practice of reporting program versus administrative expenditures started in 2007)."

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

Edward Weber (2012) conducted 32 interviews of Blackfoot Challenge key stakeholders, including on the topic of the character of the organization and its people.[155] The following are excerpts from those interviews:

- The Blackfoot Challenge is "loaded with good people and community leaders who act as a magnet for others. They are highly intelligent, passionate, it's their home, their life and they enjoy the [Blackfoot Challenge] work."[156]
- The Blackfoot Challenge is seen as "a secure organization where participants have a high sense of self-worth in their own lives and what they are doing for the watershed."[157]
- The "[Blackfoot Challenge] is a serious organization that never forgets to have fun. That's why we meet at Trixie's a local pub to unwind and why we have community barbecues. I think it's the most sexy, desirable, fun organization I've ever been affiliated with."[158]
- "The belief that 'people make conservation happen' emphasizes the individual responsibility that attaches to citizens of the Blackfoot, as opposed to relying solely on government agencies or others to achieve their mission."[159]

[152] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 42.
[153] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 43.
[154] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 43.
[155] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 43.
[156] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 41.
[157] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 41.
[158] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 42.
[159] Weber, "Unleashing the Potential of Collaborative Governance Arrangements," 44.

ROUNDTABLE ON THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT

The Crown of the Continent area is approximately 18 million acres in Montana, British Columbia, and Alberta, where 83% of the land is publicly owned.[160] The land faces many typical threats including residential development, invasive species, climate change, wildfires, etc.[161]

The Crown of the Continent Roundtable (Roundtable) started in 2007 with an aim to connect the over 100 government agencies, Tribes and First Nations, NGOs, and community level partnerships addressing changing land use and climate.[162] Across this landscape and within these 100+ organizations are at least 14 jurisdictions, a central challenge to their work.[163]

"The Roundtable should be viewed as a large-scale neighborhood association that promotes conservation and coordinated land stewardship."[164] The Crown of the Continent Roundtable carries out its aim primarily through workshops and conferences, adaptive management projects, and policy dialogues. It's leadership team both facilitates and is this "network of networks'' with representatives from the local, subregional, and regional networks involved. Representatives' own networks offer the Roundtable ideas and examples on both substance and process.

BALANCED AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

The Roundtable is focused on including all perspectives and communities within the landscape - Tribes and First Nations, businesses, colleges and universities, young people, conservationists, local officials, landowners, etc.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are considered foundational cornerstones for the work the Roundtable seeks to accomplish. The Roundtable sees this focus as the reason it can successfully have open discussions about complex management issues and why the Roundtable has become a leader in collaborative large landscape conservation efforts.[165]

Tribal and First Nations involvement has increased substantially for the Roundtable, in large part because of the Adaptive Management Initiative (discussed more below) which has targeted funding to projects using traditional knowledge, assisted Tribal management, and fostered connections with Tribes

[160] Patrick Bixler et al., "Networks and landscapes: a framework for setting goals and evaluating performance at the large landscape scale," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 14, no. 3 (2016): 146.
[161] Bixler et al., "Networks and landscapes," 146.
[162] Bixler et al., "Networks and landscapes," 147; "About," Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent, accessed December 28, 2020, http://www.crownroundtable.net/about.html.
[163] "Many Jurisdictions, One Landscape," Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent, accessed December 28, 2020, http://www.crownroundtable.net/many-jurisdictions-one-landscape.html.
[164] "Many Jurisdictions, One Landscape," Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent.
[165] "Home," Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent, accessed December 28, 2020, http://www.crownroundtable.net/.

and First Nations.[166] The Roundtable Leadership Team includes representation from Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy.[167]

ACCESS TO NEEDED KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The Roundtable's key program is the Adaptive Management Initiative (AMI), a large-scale climate-adaptation program. AMI is a collection of local-scale projects selected by the Roundtable's Leadership Team, with the goal of sharing lessons learned and hopes of moving projects to a broader scale.[168] AMI supports projects that build resilience into the Crown's natural and human communities. Through grant funds from the Kresge Foundation, the AMI has allocated $800,000 across 45 projects through the region.[169] The projects have leveraged up to five times that amount by interesting new donors and, at times, combining efforts.

The Roundtable also assesses the AMI program by monitoring the strength of relationships and network structure between organizations through progress reports. The Roundtable also monitors AMI participants actions and outcomes. This enables the Roundtable Leadership Team to set measurable goals for this program. As a result, the number of relationships between organizations has increased from 19, before the AMI started, to 169, just two years after AMI started.[170]

Lessons learned from the AMI include:

- "Identifying and supporting leadership at all scales
- Building trust and identifying common goals
- Supporting existing work rather than replacing current initiatives
- Meeting people "where they are" and encouraging them to work together toward common goals
- Creating a strong backbone organization that can keep communication open and friendly, and promote the sharing of ideas that include new players
- Never underestimating the value of meeting face-to-face, welcoming partners, and establishing relationships."[171]

NATIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

Although NISC does not meet our model selection criteria, there are lessons learned on unclear goals and insufficient funding we thought important to include.

[166] "Collaboration with Tribes and First Nations," Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent, accessed December 28, 2020, http://www.crownroundtable.net/collaborations-with-tribes--first-nations.html.
[167] "Collaboration with Tribes and First Nations," Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent.
[168] Bixler et al., "Networks and landscapes," 147.
[169] "Adaptive Management Initiative," Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent, accessed December 28, 2020, http://www.crownroundtable.net/adaptive-management-initiative-ami.html.
[170] Bixler et al., "Networks and landscapes," 151.
[171] "Adaptive Management Initiative," Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent.

NISC was established under Presidential Orders 13112 and 13751.[172] NISC's purpose is to provide vision and leadership for addressing invasive species and impacted ecosystems across the US. A primary duty includes publishing a National Invasive Species Management Plan. NISC is co-chaired by the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce, and its membership includes Secretaries and Administrators of many Federal Government departments and agencies.[173] NISC works with Federal groups and non-Federal stakeholders in support of their duties. There is a Federal Advisory Committee Act-established Invasive Species Advisory Committee serving as advisors to NISC.

Despite these nationally established bodies, NISC and the Invasive Species Advisory Committee, and the three management plans that have been produced, Federal-level invasive species research and management is still a significant conservation issue that has little coordination and has seen little progress.[174] While there are many contributing factors, two factors focused on in this report that likely contribute to the low levels of progress are insufficient overall goals and no additional funding to incentivize coordination.

GOALS AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

NISC and the Invasive Species Advisory Committee produced three management plans. A 2002 GAO report points out that the 2001 plan called for actions that would have contributed to invasive species prevention and control, but that there were no specific long-term goals for governments to strive for.[175] "For example, it is not clear how implementing the actions in the plan will move national efforts toward outcomes such as reducing new invasive species by a specific number or reducing spread of established species by a specific amount."[176]

SUFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

The 2002 GAO report lists lack of funding and staff resources as a reason for the Federal Government's slow progress on actions in the management plans.[177] Invasive plant management work on Federal lands are often coordinated with State and Local Governments and contracted out. Federal funding for these activities is lacking in the West, receiving less attention and funding than wildfires though the spread and impact of invasive species is greater.[178] Federal funds are usually between two and three billion dollars annually, pieced together from a large array of programs.

[172] "NISC Intro," Department of Interior, accessed February 1, 2021, https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/nisc-intro-2020.pdf.
[173] "About the Council," Department of Interior, accessed February 1, 2021, https://www.doi.gov/invasivespecies/about-nisc.
[174] M.R. Ielmini et al., Invasive Plant Management and Greater Sage-grouse Conservation: A Review and Status Report with Strategic Recommendations for Improvement. Cheyenne, Wyoming, 2015: Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 3.
[175] U.S. Government Accountability Office, Invasive Species: Federal Efforts and State Perspectives on Challenges and National Leadership, Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Water, Committee on Environment and Public Works, United States Senate, Testimony of Barry T. Hill, GAO-03-916T (Washington, DC: June 17, 2003).
[176] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Invasive Species*.
[177] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Invasive Species*, 2.
[178] Ielmini et al., Invasive Plant Management and Greater Sage-grouse Conservation, 3.

Along with coordinated work with the states, there is also a growing trend to shift the burden of invasive species control to states. State officials cite a lack of Federal funding for State invasive species work as a main barrier to invasive species prevention and reduction.[179] "In particular, states were concerned about not having sufficient funds to create management plans for addressing invasive species, and to conduct monitoring and detection, inspection and enforcement, and research activities."[180]

SOUTHEAST CONSERVATION ADAPTATION STRATEGY

SECAS is a regional partnership in the Southeastern U.S. and Caribbean that started in 2011 to protect land and at-risk species from climate change and over-development.[181] "The purpose for creating SECAS was to strengthen collaboration among agencies and organizations responsible for the nation's natural and cultural resources while honoring differing agency responsibilities and authorities...SECAS was also established to ensure that individual sub-regional conservation planning efforts, initially developed through the LCCs, contributed to a coordinated regional strategy.'"[182]

SECAS was started by the states involved in the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Federal agencies' part of the Southeast Natural Resource Leaders Group with support from Southeast and Caribbean LCCs, the Climate Science Centers, and the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership.[183] Today, membership includes 16 states and territories, 13 Federal partners, and several other nonprofit partners.[184]

GOALS AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

The vision of SECAS is "a connected network of lands and waters that supports thriving fish and wildlife populations and improved quality of life for people."[185]

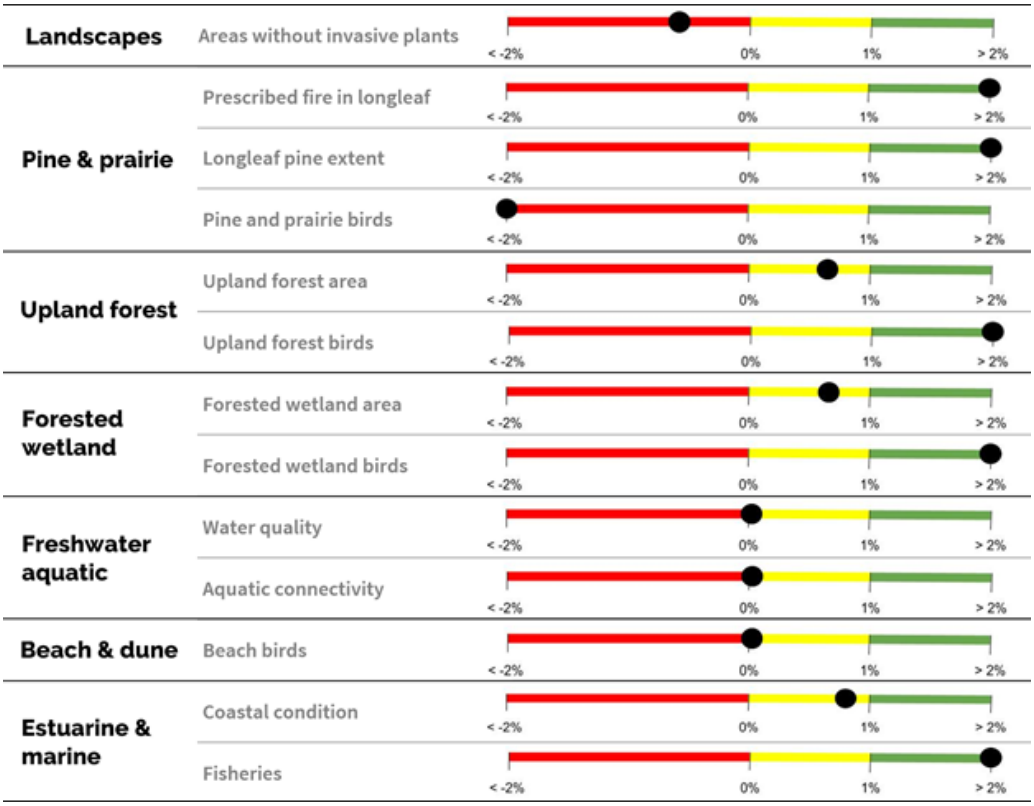
The overarching goal of SECAS is "a 10% or greater improvement in the health, function, and connectivity of Southeastern ecosystems by 2060.[186] This long-term goal is a combination of 12 regional ecosystem assessments covering the Southeast.[187] A singular goal like this helps simply describe SECAS' work, attracts additional funding, identifies new collaboration opportunities, and brings in a diversity of partners.[188]

[179] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Invasive Species*, 3.
[180] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Invasive Species*, 4.
[181] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 19.
[182] Mawdsley et al., "AFWA President's Task Force," 27.
[183] "Partners," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy, accessed February 1, 2021 http://secassoutheast.org/partners.
[184] "Partners," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy.
[185] "Our Goal," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy, accessed February 1, 2021 http://secassoutheast.org/our-goal.
[186] "Our Goal," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy.
[187] "Our Goal," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy.
[188] "Our Goal," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy.

Near-term goals contributing toward the overarching goal include "1% improvement in the health, function, and connectivity of Southeastern ecosystems every 4 years"[189] and "1% increase in conservation actions within the Southeast Conservation Blueprint (Blueprint) every 4 years."[190] These near-term goals plot minimum progress necessary to be on track to meet the long-term goal. The chart below tracks the first near-term goal.

SECAS tracks the most recent 3-6 years of data from existing Southeast monitoring programs and reports annually on progress towards this 10% goal.[191]

Figure 3. Estimated percent change in indicator over 4 years based on most recently available data[192]



ACCESS TO NEEDED KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL INFORMATION

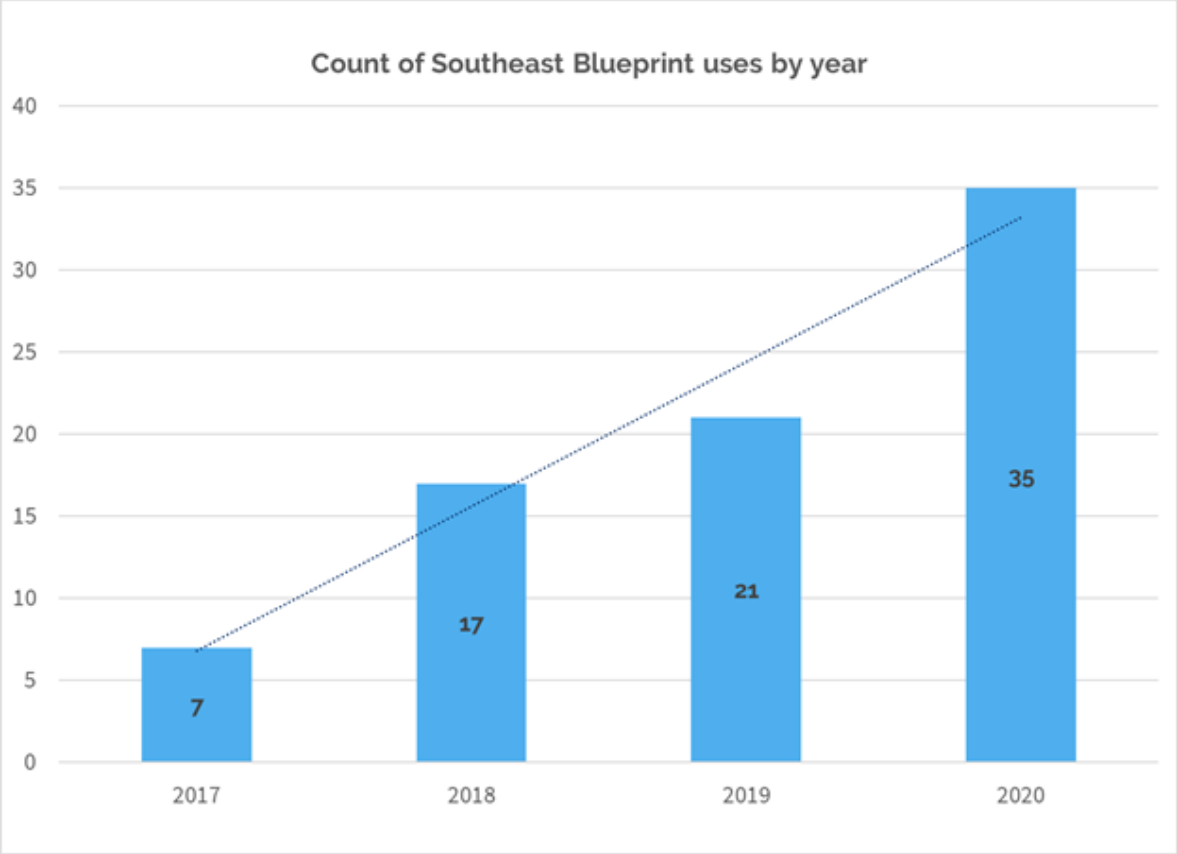
The Southeast Conservation Blueprint is a dynamic spatial plan made up of smaller sub-regional plans that identifies the most important conservation and restoration areas in the region. It is updated annually based on sub-regional inputs. More than 225 people from 100+ organizations have used the

[189] "Our Goal," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy.
[190] "Our Goal," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy.
[191] "About SECAS," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy, accessed February 1, 2021 http://secassoutheast.org/about.
[192] "About SECAS," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy.

Blueprint to inform their conservation decisions.[193] The Blueprint has also helped bring in over $31 million in conservation funding.[194]

The Blueprint is one map with the best available information on key species and habitats, and future threats. Naturally, the Blueprint evolves based on science, on-the ground conditions, and input. It is currently on its fourth edition. Thus far, more than 1,700 people representing 500 organizations have contributed to the Blueprint.[195]

Figure 4. Count of Southeast Blueprint uses by year.[196]



As a complement to the Southeast Conservation Blueprint, a "Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need'' list was recently created from fifteen State Wildlife Action Plans. This will help prioritize conservation projects among partner states.[197]

[193] "About SECAS," Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy.
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APPENDIX E: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND AFFILIATIONS

Carin Bisland, Chesapeake Bay Program
Leanna Heffner, Northwest Boreal Partnership
Ken Mayer, Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
Tom Remington, Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
Rollie Sparrow, North American Waterfowl Management Plan
San Stiver, Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
Jeff Ver Steeg, North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the Playa Lakes Joint Venture
Dan Yparraguire, North American Waterfowl Management Plan

APPENDIX F: RESEARCH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

List of Questions (different sub-questions selected for emphasis depending upon the model)

1. Please tell us about your measurable goals, how they direct your work, and how they change over time.

   a. What are the articulated goals of your collaborative?
   b. Is monitoring and adaptive management built into your collaborative's structure?
   c. Are there clear signals of progress/interim outcomes for your collaborative and are they understood and measured by members?
   d. Is your collaborative making progress on interim outcomes that signal progress on the way to longer-term goals or intended impacts?
   e. Is there measurable on-the-ground impact? Or how do participants perceive the impact?
      i. At which level are impacts expected – on individual members, on members' local environments, and/or on members' combined impact on their broader environment?
      ii. If the goal is achieved or ultimate impacts observed, can a plausible or defensible case be made that your collaborative contributed to them?

2. Please tell us about who's involved in your collaborative body, their roles, and background.

   a. Who is included in your collaborative body? Were any key groups excluded?
   b. What are the roles of the participants in your collaborative body? What roles do they have, if any, in implementation of decisions?
   c. Do participants have a clear sense of roles and how their role fits into overall collaborative goals?
   d. Do the assembled members have the capacities (i.e. experience, skills, connections) to meet collaborative goals?
   e. Are there mechanisms to support participation/access when needed (i.e., travel funding, options for remote participation)?
   f. Are there mechanisms to account for participant turnover over the long term (e.g., orientation, designated handoff approach, documentation of decisions and institutional knowledge)?

3. What knowledge and scientific information is considered and how do you integrate it into your collaborative?

   a. Does your collaborative have a well-defined mechanism to access needed knowledge and scientific information and integrate it into decision making? If so, how?
   b. What types of knowledge and information are considered (i.e., is traditional ecological knowledge incorporated into the decision-making process)?

4. Please tell us about your funding sources and if they change over time.

   a. Is funding new or existing?
   b. What is the source(s) of the funding?
   c. Are funding sources maintained over time or do they expire?
   d. Does the collaborative adapt its resource plan over time?

5. Please tell us about the leadership, coordination, and staffing roles of your collaborative.

   a. Who takes on the leadership role (may be organizations rather than individuals)?
   b. Who does the day-to-day coordination and staffing?
   c. To what extent are the leaders involved in the direction of your collaborative?
   d. How dependent is your collaborative on a small number of individuals? Is there a mechanism to transition the leadership role? Has it been tested and how has it worked?
   e. Are there mechanisms to account for staff turnover over the long term (e.g., orientation, designated handoff approach, documentation of decisions and institutional knowledge)?
   f. Does the system survive turnovers in administration and leadership?

6. What is your collaborative's approach to decision making and conflict resolution?

   a. What kind(s) of procedural and institutional arrangements does your group have (e.g., ground rules, operating protocols, charters)? How are they followed?
   b. Is there a mechanism to adapt the procedural and institutional arrangements over time?
   c. Are decisions based on consensus or majority rule? If consensus, how is it defined?
   d. Is there a mechanism for dealing with conflicts? If so, how is it structured?
   e. Is the collaborative body facilitated? If so, is there a third-party neutral facilitator or affiliated facilitator?

7. Please tell us about relationships among participants.

   a. Do participants generally trust one another? Has that changed over time? If so, what has contributed to the change?
   b. Do participants generally seem to understand and respect each other's positions and interests, whether or not they agree with them? If so, what contributed to creating that dynamic?
   c. Is the collaborative generally perceived as legitimate by participants? What challenges might there be to the collaborative being perceived as legitimate?
   d. Do participants generally have a sense of commitment to the collaborative effort? What tells you they are committed (or not)? Has it changed over time and if so, how?
   e. Are all members contributing to your collaborative? Or – are there certain members who are not contributing? If so, why would you say that is occurring?
   f. Are members achieving more through the collaborative than they could individually?

8. What are the most important lessons learned from your collaborative that should be applied to sagebrush habitat conservation efforts across landscapes?

9. Is there anything else that you'd like to add that wasn't covered here?

APPENDIX G: EXCERPT FROM "ADVANCING MULTI-SCALE PLACE-BASED CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT"

Examples of Funding Opportunities for Multi-Scale Place-based Conservation and Development

Federal and state agencies have resources, knowledge, and the capacity to help coordinate large landscape efforts, and they are already responsible for lands and water bodies that often become the focus of large landscape conservation. Linking homegrown efforts to broader state and federal capacities will likely generate the most effective action on the ground (Mckinney, Scarlett and Kemmis, 2010).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program, authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, used partnerships to stretch and multiply conservation investments and reach conservation goals on regional or watershed scale with greater certainty of funding. Unlike past annual allocations, this program was designed to support the Sage Grouse Initiative for 4 years through the life of the 2014 farm bill (NRCS 2015).

Members of the **NE Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies** came together to pool and leverage funds from each state for regional and landscape-scale conservation efforts through the Regional Conservation Needs program. Additionally, in 2015, a Blue Ribbon Panel convened by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recommended a new approach for funding fish and wildlife conservation efforts that could potentially direct up to $1.3 billion per year in existing oil and natural gas revenues to the conservation of Species of Greatest Conservation Need identified in State Wildlife Action Plans (AFWA 2017).

In Maine, the **Downeast Lakes Land Trust (DLLT)** has recognized the climate value of landscape conservation and has innovated around utilizing forest management projects as a means of generating approximately $6 million in revenue through carbon offset markets (Network for Landscape Conservation, 2018b).

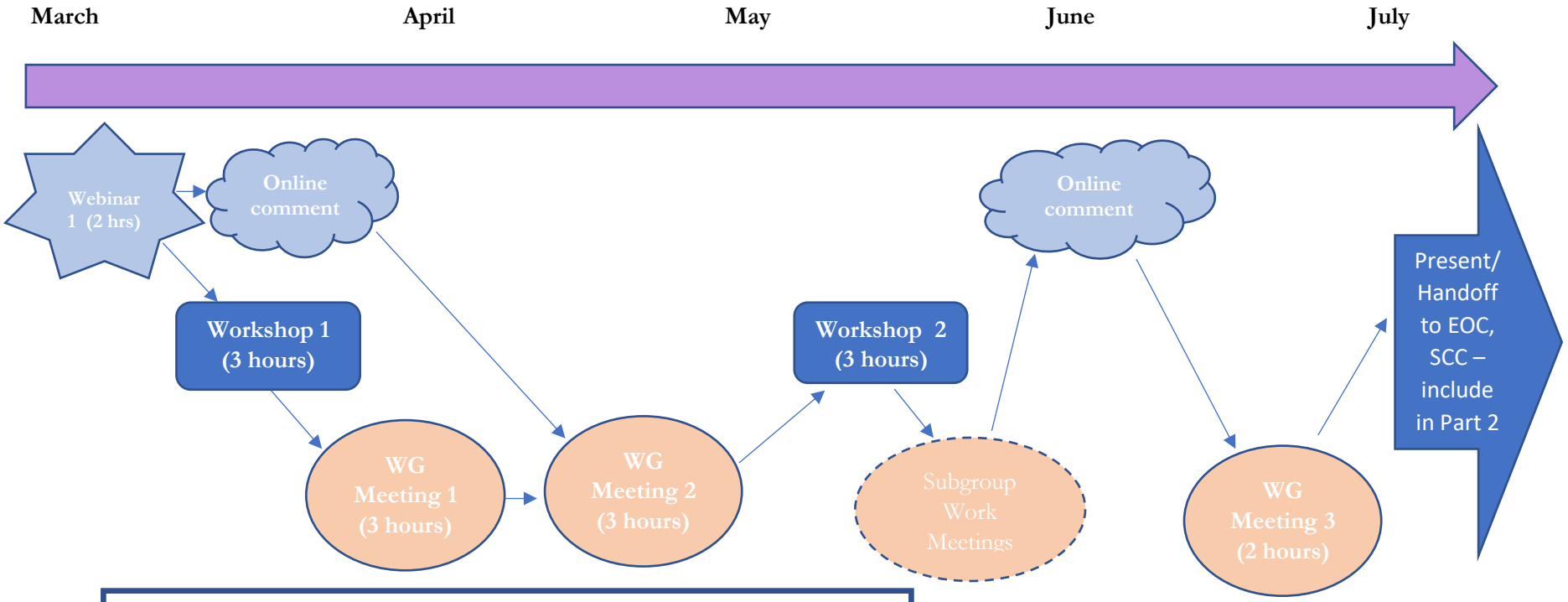
Forest resilience bonds in the western United States represent a public-private partnership where investors pay for high-priority forest restoration and then get paid back by the beneficiaries: primarily the water utility (for clean and abundant water supply), the USFS (for decreased fire risk), and in some cases state and local governments (for avoided fire suppression costs, avoided carbon emissions, protected communities, and job creation) (Network for Landscape Conservation, 2018b).

Strategies that quantify ecosystem services rely on market-based mechanisms to achieve positive conservation outcomes as well as financial returns, complement traditional funding mechanisms and have potential to help close funding gaps, and private and public conservation investment in those values has emerged as a significant and rapidly growing source of conservation financing (Network for Landscape Conservation, 2018b).

The value of domestic forests could be increased by a **policy recognizing the carbon sequestration benefits of their sustainable management and of long-lived forest products**. The value proposition of working forestlands will be enhanced through monetization of ecosystem services. Carbon markets, payment for ecological services, and upstream watershed protection could be built into landscape-scale conservation approaches to engage large landowners. (Smith et al., 2016).

Representatives of organizations experienced in conservation transactions have noted the potential for high impact on conservation if **fee or easement acquisition structures could be adjusted**. If land managers can successfully communicate conservation impact and value to investors, timberland investment vehicles could be restructured as revolving funds or perpetual investment models that encourage investors to think long term (Smith et al., 2016).

There is a need to **develop new funding mechanisms** such as tax credits like the new market tax credits. Existing federal programs could be updated to create flexible funding and high-conservation-impact programs. For example, the Farm Bill could represent an opportunity to update and increase flexibility in the USFS's Forest Legacy program, allowing funding to be used for multiple conservation incentives or purchases beyond conservation easements or fee to purchase (e.g., carbon) (Smith et al., 2016).



Key

= Webinar for all interested sagebrush stakeholders

= Online comment opportunity for all stakeholders

= Sagebrush Partnership Advisory Committee

= Partnership Model Drafting Work Group


John S. McCain III
National Center for
Environmental Conflict Resolution
Udall Foundation
UDALL
FOUNDATION
NATIONAL CENTER FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION
Sagebrush Executive Oversight Committee Presentation
Wednesday March 10, 2021

Introduction to the Udall Foundation

- An independent executive branch federal agency
- Established by Congress to honor Morris K. Udall
- Mission to strengthen Federal Agencies and Native Nations
- Programs
  - Education
    - Scholarship
    - Native American Congressional Internship
    - Parks in Focus
    - Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy & Native Nations Institute
  - National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution

NATIONAL CENTER

Mission

Help federal agencies and other affected stakeholders **address environmental disputes**, conflicts, and challenges, including helping agencies **build internal capacity to address those challenges**

National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution
Udall Foundation

NATIONAL CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Overview

Enhance collaboration and resolve conflicts involving environmental, public lands, and natural resources issues involving a federal interest

Case Services

- Consultations
- Assessments
- Process Design
- Convening
- Mediations / Facilitations

Training and Program Support

- ECCR Training
  - Open/Public Sessions
  - Group Sessions
- ECCR Program Support
- Tribal Consultation Training

ECCR Leadership

- Assist w/implementation of NEPA Section 101
- Facilitate Federal ECCR Forum
- Support Native American and Alaska Native engagement activities

NATIONAL CENTER'S ROLE

The National Center is assisting in identifying potential models for a partnership governance strategy.

- *Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance Assessment Report*
- *Review of Models for Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance*

These reports aim to lay a foundation for Advisory Committee, Work Group members, and other interested parties to contribute to the development of potential sagebrush partnership model(s).

SAGEBRUSH STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT REPORT

ASSESSMENT APPROACH

Purposes of an assessment:

- Understand range perspectives on the issue and share them back for collective understanding
- Recommend next steps
- Starting point for collaborative work
  - Not an evaluation or analysis of solutions

Specific goals of the sagebrush assessment:

- identify what is working well within sagebrush network governance
- identify barriers that exist
- identify recommendations for additional governance strategies
- assess support for anticipated partnership model proposal development group member composition and identify any gaps

ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The National Center worked with the Core Team (representatives from WAFWA, IWJW, University of Montana, USFWS, and BLM) to:

- define the approach and scope of the assessment
- identify interviewees and interview questions
- determine an approach for reporting the results.

26 representatives from 20 organizations contacted.

One-hour phone interviews were conducted with 19 individuals representing 15 organizations between December 2020-January 2021.

FINDINGS

Sagebrush Executive Oversight Committee

- Most stated the there are limitations to how much the EOC can accomplish with its current structure.
  - A broader membership would be required for efforts that go beyond information sharing

- There is disagreement as to whether the current composition of the EOC needs to change
  - Several stated that it ultimately depends on the EOC's purpose.

- Major challenges of the EOC are consistent prioritization from its members, continuity of efforts, and connection to work on the ground.

FINDINGS

Support for a Sagebrush Partnership Governance Entity

Would their organization's sagebrush conservation effectiveness be enhanced if there were a leadership/coordination body that:

- developed common objectives,
- common prioritization scheme,
- monitoring and adaptive management system,
- facilitated access to the latest science?

Most common response was yes with a caveat.

There were a range of views from supportive, supportive with caveats, feeling the status quo was sufficient, and unsupportive.

FINDINGS

Barriers to Effective Sagebrush Biome Conservation

- Insufficient funding and staffing
- Communication silos and jurisdictional boundaries
- Data and monitoring limitations
- Wasteland perception
- Funding structures
- Inconsistent and insufficient priority
- Threats to the biome (invasive plants and fires, etc.)

FINDINGS

Learning From Other Collaborative Efforts

- Broad partnerships
- Ecosystem focus
- Storytelling
- Dedicated staffing
- Core area planning
- Bottom-up efforts
- Inclusion of local people
- Attention to incentives to participate
- Sufficient time and resources
- Collaborative efforts lead to better outcomes

FINDINGS

Critical Actions for Successful Coordination of Sagebrush Conservation Efforts at the Landscape-Level

- Federal agencies – leadership and priority setting
- Tribal agencies – Tribes need to be included and are likely interested to participate
- States and state agencies – increase and facilitate coordination across partner organizations
- Private sector and landowners – willingness to represent issues in a common venue

FINDINGS

Interviewee Recommendations for Sagebrush Conservation Governance

- Landscape prioritization
- Inclusive representation
- Dedicated staffing
- Recognize and highlight successes
- Connecting landscape-level coordination to local work on the ground
- Data and monitoring
- On the ground empowerment and incentives
- Sagebrush conservation leadership – who should lead this effort
- Sagebrush partnership model proposal development group members

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on themes heard from interviewees, key areas of focus as a partnership governance model for sagebrush is being developed and refine include:

- Building on Successes and Leaving Room for Innovation
- Continuity, Dedicated Resources, and Staffing
- Broad Participation at All Levels, and Coordination Across Scales
- Data, Monitoring, and Landscape Prioritization Considerations

BUILDING ON SUCCESSES AND LEAVING ROOM FOR INNOVATION

- Build on and learning from what's already going well
  - Highlighting successful efforts builds **momentum and rapport, garners additional support, gains media attention, celebrates milestones** along a larger process, and **develops bi-partisan support**

- Efforts to date have not been sufficient, and **unprecedented and creative efforts will be required**

CONTINUITY, DEDICATED RESOURCES, & STAFFING

- **Dedicated funding, staffing, patience, and sufficient time** are key

- Need to include mechanisms to ensure **long-term priority and continuity across individual staffing and administration changes, as well as dedicated and sufficient funding and staffing**.

DATA , MONITORING, AND LANDSCAPE PRIORITIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

- **Need for prioritization of landscapes** in order to use available resources in the most effective way possible.
- **Numerous challenges exist around data and monitoring systems**, including keeping track of all data, the use of different matrices, data collection methods, reporting, and monitoring by different organizations.
- Some interviewees noted that **monitoring could be overly burdensome,** indicated the challenge of **collecting data around disturbances**, and noted a need for data to **reflect what's on the ground rather** than data that was collected in the permitting process.

BROAD PARTICIPATION AT ALL LEVELS, AND COORDINATION ACROSS SCALES

- **Diverse, inclusive, and broad partnerships** are needed
  - Need to **balance large-scale planning with regional and local-level autonomy and implementation**.
- **Grassroots scale –** incentivized if **aligns with their missions and brings more resources**
  - **Connecting** sagebrush conservation work to **people's connection to the land and why they care is critical**.
- **Agency level –** incentivized if given **direction and priority by their leadership**.
- Different organizations have **different strengths** to bring to the table

PARTNERSHIP MODELS RESEARCH REPORT

RESEARCH APPROACH

The purpose:

Inform the design of a potential partnership governance system for the sagebrush biome by drawing lessons from other **successful partnerships** in large landscape settings

RESEARCH APPROACH

Characteristics of Models

- Management-focused governance bodies that operate in a science-informed way, ideally using an adaptive management approach
- Success integrating Federal agencies and stakeholders in a coordination role
- Shared vision, goals, objectives, and/or priorities for natural resource management
- Roles in both strategic planning and project implementation

- Clear lessons learned and illustration of the role of several of our assessment factors (explained shortly)
- Applicability and parallels to the sagebrush effort, including geographic similarities if possible
- Sufficiently long operational histories (at least 3 years) to show some results
- Some influence on how resources are distributed to achieve conservation, as well as ability to secure additional resources

RESEARCH APPROACH

ASSESSMENT FACTORS

- Goals and measurable impact
- Balanced and inclusive representation
- Access to needed knowledge and scientific or technical information
- Sufficient and sustainable funding
- Approach to decision making and conflict resolution
- Leadership and staffing roles
- Relationships among participants

RESEARCH APPROACH

SELECTED KEY MODELS

- North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) & the Joint Ventures
  - Intermountain West Joint Venture
  - Playa Lakes Joint Venture
- Northwest Boreal Partnership
  - Example of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives
- Chesapeake Bay Partnership

RESEARCH APPROACH

ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATVE MODELS

- Blackfoot Challenge
- Crown of the Continent
- National Invasive Species Council
- Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy

FINDINGS

Goals and measurable impact

- A **compelling vision** and **agreed-upon quantitative goals** were essential components of successful governance models.
- An **effective system to track and report on progress**, as well as adjust goals and management approaches over time, is important to sustaining a large collaborative effort.
- Partnerships' quantitative goals need to be **viewed within the larger system context** to appropriately evaluate their success.

FINDINGS

Balanced and Inclusive Representation

- **Diverse, balanced, and inclusive partnerships** were a strength of the collaborative models.
- It is important to focus on diversity and inclusivity **from the outset** of the partnership, as well as be prepared to **support engagement capacity** when needed.

FINDINGS

Access to Needed Knowledge and Scientific or Technical Information

- In the models we considered, participants recognized the importance of **science-based decision making**.
- There is a movement toward integrating **more cultural, social, and economic knowledge** into decision making.

FINDINGS

Sufficient and Sustainable Funding

Access to **sufficient funding over time** is an important factor in the success and sustainability of a collaborative body.

FINDINGS

Leadership and Staffing

- The engagement of **high-level leadership** at the outset and throughout the process can be an important driver for bringing partners together and sustaining their motivation.
- **Dedicated coordinators, ideally independent neutral parties**, are essential to the long-term survival of the partnership.

FINDINGS

Approach to Decision Making and Conflict Resolution

A **structured approach to decision making and conflict resolution** is valuable for complex partnerships to provide clarity, transparency, and promote progress toward goals.

FINDINGS

Relationships Among Participants

- Building trust through careful work to learn about participants' interests and **set joint goals aligned with shared interests** is central to the collaborative enterprise.
- To build trust, partnerships must **engage and invest in relationship-building**.

FINDINGS

Partnership Structure

When designing a partnership governance structure, it is important to be attentive to the involvement of **different types of stakeholders at different scales**, **the connections and communication** among organizational levels, **and the incentives for participation** at the various scales.

QUESTIONS?

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Sagebrush Partnership Model Development Process
Webinar #1
Wednesday, March 10, 2021, 2:30 - 4:30 pm Mountain

Webinar Agenda

Webinar Objectives:

- Share information on the goals and identified needs for a collaborative partnership across jurisdictions and scales for the sagebrush biome; the state of current sagebrush coordination and management activities; and the work that has been done to date to assess stakeholder perspectives and learn about other partnership governance models
- Prepare Advisory Committee members, Work Group members, and other interested parties to contribute to the development of potential sagebrush partnership model(s) and to understand 1) the process for development of a proposal for partnership model(s) and 2) opportunities for providing input

Time	Lead	Topic
2:30	Tom R. and Dana G.	**Welcome, Introductions, and Overview** • Welcome – *Dr. Tom Remington, Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA)* • Introduction to team and agenda review – *Dana Goodson, Udall Foundation* • Overview of current sagebrush conservation efforts – *Dr. Tom Remington and Ken Mayer, WAFWA* • Q&A
3:00	Melanie K.	**Overview of Sagebrush Assessment & Partnership Models Research** • Presentation of assessment report – *Melanie Knapp, Udall Foundation* • Presentation of models research report – *Dana Goodson and Monique Mullenaux, Udall Foundation* • Q&A *Materials: Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance Assessment Report; Review of Models for Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance*
4:00	Dana G. and Susan H.	**Next Steps in Proposed Partnership Model(s) Development** • Overview of partnership model(s) development process – *Dana Goodson, Udall Foundation* • Overview of opportunities for online comment – *Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic* • Q&A and discussion *Materials: Proposed Sagebrush Process Map*
4:25	Melanie K.	**Next Steps and Wrap up**
4:30		**Adjourn**

Sagebrush Governance Partnership Model(s) Development Process Advisory Committee Workshop #1

Thursday, March 18, 2021

12:30-3:30 pm MT

Proposed Workshop Agenda

Workshop Objectives:

- Reach shared understanding of the plan for potential sagebrush partnership governance model(s) proposal and the Advisory Committee's role
- Identify needed elements for a vision statement for potential sagebrush partnership governance model(s)
- Identify valuable functions of potential sagebrush partnership governance model(s) across scales

Time	Lead	Topic
12:30	Ali D., Melanie K., Tom R.	**Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review** • Zoom Connection Instructions, Process Map and Agenda Review • Welcome and Overview of process goals & Advisory Committee • Breakout Room Introductions *Materials: Process map*
12:55	Dana G. and Susan H.	**Discussion: Exploring a Vision for Potential Partnership Governance Model(s)** • Demonstration of MURAL tools • Overview of straw draft of problem statement and vision language • Questions for discussion: o *Does the problem statement summarize the issue(s) you are trying to solve related to sagebrush conservation partnership governance? If not, what's missing?* o *Do you see yourself in this vision statement? If not, can you share why?* *Materials: Straw draft of problem statement and vision language*
1:30		**Break**
1:40	Dana G.	**Breakouts: Discuss Key Functions for Sagebrush Partnership Governance Model(s)** • Overview of breakout groups • Question for discussion: o *What types of partnership governance model FUNCTIONS are most needed to support sagebrush conservation at each scale?* o *What functions are missing?*

		<u>Materials:</u> Desired Functions for Partnership Governance Document
2:45		**Break**
3:00	Facilitation Team	**Debrief Breakout Groups and Discussion** • Review functions sorted by breakout groups and highlight themes, areas of challenge • Questions and Discussion
3:20	Tom R., Melanie K.	**Next Steps and Wrap up** • Plans for Work Group meetings and next Advisory Committee workshop
3:30		**Adjourn**

Sagebrush Partnership Model Advisory Committee Workshop #1

Thursday March 18, 2021 | 12:30-3:30 MST

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review

The facilitation team welcomed participants and reviewed the agenda. Tom Remington, WAFWA, and Ali Duvall, IWJV, provided opening comments. The group was then split into breakout groups for small group introductions.

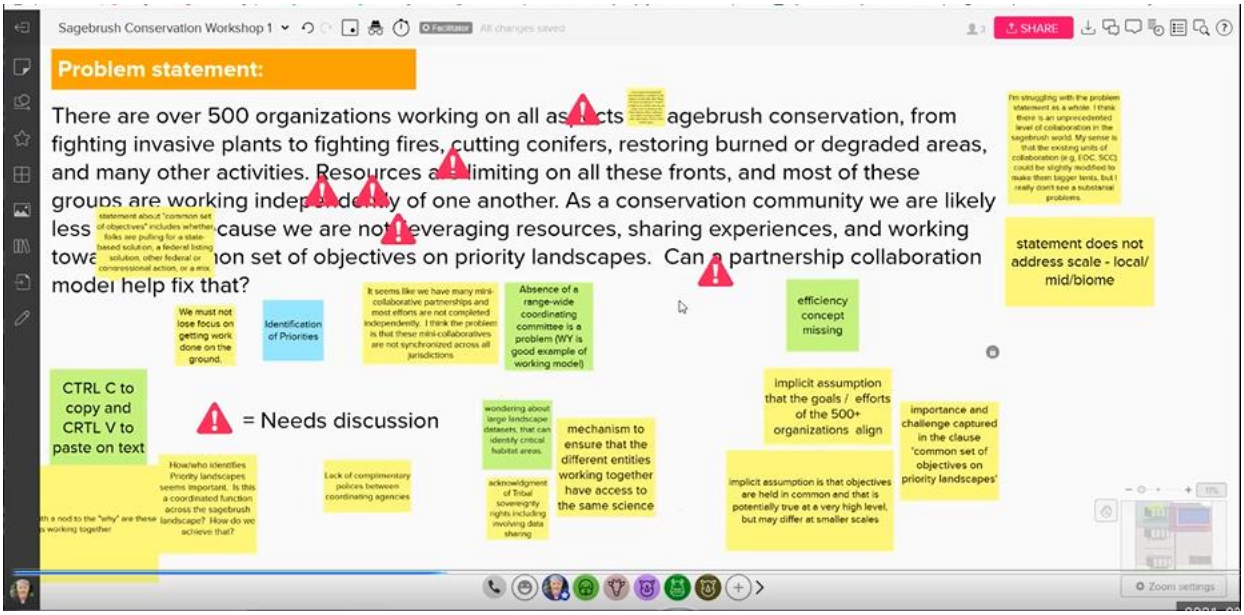
Discussion

Exploring a Vision for Potential Partnership Governance Model(s)

The group discussed the straw drafts of the problem and vision statements related to sagebrush conservation partnership and coordination efforts. Utilizing the MURAL tool to provide feedback, participants both flagged areas of concern and added ideas for inclusion in the straw draft. Facilitators sought clarity on flagged concerns and captured ideas to ensure the suggestions will be integrated into the statements after the meeting.

Regarding the vision statement, participants were polled: "For the vision statement to be inspirational and compelling for you, do you need to see more detail or is the current statement sufficient?" 21 participants voted that a broader statement (current statement) is sufficient. 6 participants voted that more detail was needed.

These statements will continue to be refined by the DWG and in the next Advisory Committee Workshop.



Discussion of Key Functions for Sagebrush Partnership Governance Model(s)

In breakout groups, participants were asked to use the MURAL tool to review a straw list of functions that the partnership could fulfill, and to sort those functions by the scale (biome, mid, and local) in which they should occur in the partnership. They were also asked to note additional needed functions that were not included on the straw list, and to flag any places where others had listed a function but they believed that a listed function should *not* be fulfilled at the listed scale. The below table is a summation across all breakout group discussions.

FUNCTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL TO FULFILL?	BIOME SCALE	MID-SCALE	LOCAL SCALE	CONCERNS/CAVEATS/SUMMARY
Develop conservation objectives -define success	**13 yes, 1 no**	5 yes	6 yes	One views this as mid-scale but role of state not partnership
• Provide vision, leadership motivation across scales	10 yes	7 yes	6 yes	Could be led at biome-scale, with all levels involved; some doubts about biome leadership
Prioritize landscapes based on conservation objectives	**10 yes, 7 no**	7 yes	0	Could be led at mid-scale – significant concerns at biome-scale
• Prioritize sites for action	0	**4 yes, 1 no**	4 yes	
Develop adaptive mgt / monitoring construct	6 yes	7 yes	2 yes	Broad support for function; need to work through concerns at mid-scale. One idea that this could be led at mid-scale, with all levels involved. Another, could be led at biome-scale with all levels involved. Multi-function tool for communication, tracking/storing monitoring data. Take monitoring guidance/ideas from national level and adapt to local levels using local priorities and mgt Qs (AIM, sage-grouse lek info, etc.) Use/incorporate existing data
• Coordinate data collection	4 yes	4 yes	3 yes	
• Provide data repository	12 yes	**1 yes, 2 no**	0	
• Host dialogue on data mgt	**4 yes, 1 no**	**5 yes, 1 no**	2 yes	
• Track accomplishments	9 yes	11 yes	6 yes	
• Facilitate fed and state policy and data-gathering approaches	6 yes	1 yes	1 yes	
Increase capacity for local conservation efforts	**3 yes, 4 no**	3 yes	9 yes	Strong support at the local scale, concern with biome leadership
• Identify capacity-building needs	**5 yes, 2 no**	7 yes	9 yes	
• Identify training needs	0	0	**4 yes, 1 no**	Prioritize funding across landscapes – we could defer to funding across states to allocate to priority areas
• Facilitate training of conservation implementers	**2 yes, 1 no**	4 yes	7 yes	
• Distribute funding for voluntary, collaborative conservation	0	4 yes	7 yes	
Conduct or facilitate scientific research	5 yes	**13 yes, 1 no**	7 yes	Could be led at biome and/or mid-scale, with all levels involved
• Compile and distribute the latest scientific information	7 yes	6 yes	4 yes	
• Periodically identify knowledge gaps	6 yes	3 yes	3 yes	

• Produce decision support tools • Host dialogue on integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science	**5 yes, 2 no** 4 yes	**4 yes, 1 no** 1 yes	4 yes 0	
Communicate success stories, impacts, and needs • Facilitate stakeholder / partner outreach • Share funding opportunities for collaborative conservation objectives • Communicate to public about sagebrush needs, benefits, threat abatement	11 yes 3 yes **4 yes, 1 maybe** **11 yes, 1 no**	7 yes 3 yes 6 yes 9 yes	**9 yes, 1 no** 6 yes 5 yes 8 yes	Strong support generally, with biome-scale leadership
Conservation Planning & Implementation • Facilitate sagebrush planning efforts • Develop conservation project proposals • Evaluate and rank conservation action proposals • Engage communities to participate in restoration • Identify community needs and desires	(new) 0 0 0 0 1 yes	 **3 yes, 2 no** 5 yes 7 yes 0 3 yes	 3 yes 9 yes 3 yes 2 yes 8 yes	 "community needs" is vague
Facilitate partner relationship development • Connect sagebrush conservation partners	1 yes **6 yes, 1 no**	3 yes	5 yes	

*one yes vote is assumed by someone placing the post-it into the category.

General thoughts/comments not otherwise captured above:

- There is no mention in this collaborative vision of the tribes as sovereign entities and the fact that natural resources policies on tribal lands are another designation that works alongside and is based on federal and state regulations, but that may differ.
- Big ideas scaled down to local application.
- Seems the challenge in this exercise might be in "how" the P-ship exercises and fulfills the functions - and many functions apply to all scales, but the mechanism, tools may vary while still staying true to principle that "all conservation is local.
- Same scalable concepts for implementation -- actual treatment on actual land locally driven, but outcomes can be pushed up to higher scales.
- Stakeholder groups / membership varies by scale and thus the P-ship functions should account for that; seems like there is an iterative facet to the 30 example functions; the function may be implemented uniquely or look differently at each scale and yet still have the look and smell of the same activity or function; functions exercised by the P-ship ideally are exercised iteratively -- go to the local then mid then biome then back to local; contemplate the human dimensions and social science facets.
- Add as function: how to deal with populations that cross state lines – species do not recognize jurisdiction.
- Question of generalizability of science – there might be some things, but most of it is not.

- Definition of regional scale – sagebrush range/WAFWA zones – based on habitat types? ID reasonable set of scales.

Next Steps and Wrap Up

- The Mural whiteboard will stay open until March 24th to allow for further comment.
- Two Drafting Work Group meetings will occur before the 2nd Advisory Committee workshop. The first DWG meeting is on March 29th.
- The Drafting Work Group will work to translate the function preferences expressed in this meeting into a tentative structure(s) and then present that work to the Advisory Committee for review.
- The online commenting process will remain open through 3/24. Please share broadly with your contacts in the sagebrush conservation community and encourage them to provide input.
- In the meantime, do not hesitate to reach out to the facilitation team with any feedback or questions!

Workshop Participants

- Ali Duvall, IWJV
- Bob Budd, WY Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust
- Brett Brownscombe, Oregon SageCon Partnership
- Brian Nesvik, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
- Brian Rutledge, Audubon Society
- Carolyn Sime, Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program
- Chris Jasmine, Nevada Gold Mines and Ranches
- Cristina Eisenberg, Oregon State University
- Dana Goodson, NCECR
- Danny Summers, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
- Dave Pellatz, Thunder Basin Associations
- Ellen Sanders-Raigosa, Intertribal Agriculture Council
- James Rogers, Winecup Gamble Ranch
- Jay Tanner, Rancher
- Jim Durglo, Intertribal Timber Council
- Jim Lyons, University of Montana
- John O'Keeffe, Rancher/Warner Valley Rangeland Fire Protection Association
- Karen Prentice, BLM
- Ken Mayer, WAFWA
- Marvin Vetter, Oregon Dept. of Forestry/Rangeland Fire Protection Coordinator
- Matt Preston, BLM
- Melanie Knapp, NCECR
- Monique Mullenaux, NCECR
- Pat Deibert, USFWS
- Paul Meiman, UNR Extension
- Paul Ulrich, Jonah Energy
- Rod Litzel, Johnson County Weed and Pest (WY)
- San Stiver, WAFWA

- Sean Finn, USFWS
- ShaTeal Pearman, Intertribal Agriculture Council
- Slade Franklin, Wyoming Department of Agriculture
- Steve Abele, USFWS
- Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic
- Tom Remington, WAFWA
- Tomer Hasson, TNC
- Zack Bowen, USGS

Sagebrush Conservation Strategy

Online Comment Synthesis

March 25, 2021

Introduction

The sagebrush biome faces serious threats from invasive annual grasses, fire, conifer expansion, free-roaming equids, livestock, human development, and climate change. The Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), in partnership with Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV), and other conservation partners, is developing a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy (Conservation Strategy) to guide collective efforts to conserve the sagebrush biome. The unprecedented nature of the threats and the expansive extent of the sagebrush biome requires an equally unprecedented degree of public/private cooperation and coordination.

As part of the Conservation Strategy, WAFWA is seeking to develop a **partnership model** to ensure stakeholders across all scales are effectively working together to address these threats. The partnership model(s) will be included in Part II of the Sagebrush Conservation on collaborative conservation governance in the sagebrush biome. Part II of the Strategy will be published by USGS later this year and provided to State and Federal Agency leadership on the Sagebrush Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) for consideration and potential implementation.

The development of the partnership model(s) will take place between March and June 2021. The following reports reflect information collected and synthesized as part of this effort to date:

- Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance Assessment Report (PDF, 655 KB)
- Review of Models for Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance (PDF, 1MB)
- Sagebrush Conservation Strategy, Part 1, Challenges to Sagebrush Conservation (background)
- March 10, 2021 Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance Webinar

The following text summarizes comment received to the seven open-ended questions. The narrative responses are followed by metrics and demographic information. This synthesis will inform the Drafting Work Group's first meeting.

Part A: Narrative Responses

1. Is the stated purpose and need for creating a sagebrush conservation partnership model clear and compelling? Any suggestions for making it clearer? More compelling? (4 responses)

    - While one respondent felt the purpose and need was clear, another felt it is unclear, due to the already unprecedented level of collaboration regarding sagebrush conservation across the private and public sectors.
    - Another expressed appreciation for the WAFWA/Udall effort, but felt the specifics described in the reports were inconsistent with this individual's many years of experience working within the sagebrush community.
    - One respondent suggested developing an effective **wiring diagram** to clearly define the existing players and connections. This could serve as the basis for a gap analysis to identify existing areas needing strengthening and those needing new structures/connections.

2. What are your observations of the findings contained in the Final Assessment Report and presented by the Udall Foundation? Are the findings clear? Were you surprised? Did we miss anything?

    - *Barriers to Effective Sagebrush Biome Conservation (6 responses)*
        - Some expressed that "nearly intractable" ecological threats are the real barrier (fire, invasive grasses, etc.), as opposed to funding or staffing. Another respondent added that the invasive species problem is much deeper than just annual grasses, and efforts to manage for these species may have the unintended consequence of impacting other species. One noted that problems are likely specific to states and should not be assumed to be in common.
        - One respondent noted that discussion of fire suppression, post-fire rehabilitation, grazing, development, and wildlife programs seemed to be missing in the report; this person felt It would be useful to determine whether these management issues are being effectively integrated.
        - Regarding the report itself, it was generally noted as comprehensive, though some felt it would benefit from greater simplification for more effective consumption.

    - *Learning from Other Collaborative Efforts (4 responses)*
        - Respondents were generally satisfied with this section—that it was a clear analysis of shortfalls and needs.
        - One respondent, however, expressed disappointment that the analysis omitted lessons learned from the Great Basin Research and Management Partnership, Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and other collaborative groups in this region.

- *Critical Actions for Successful Coordination of Sagebrush Conservation Efforts at the Landscape-Level (5 responses)*
    - One respondent noted concurrence with the identified gap in tribal government engagement. Another noted that getting landowners educated and involved was a critical component of potential success that was overlooked.
    - Also suggested as a critical action was a step-by-step diagnostic of available assets and necessary additions.
    - One respondent also felt that the specifics offered in the report "had some issues," though did not offer any examples.

3. What are your observations of the Review of Models for Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance ("Findings," beginning on page 17)? Are the findings clear? Were you surprised? Did we miss anything? (3 responses)

- One respondent observed that the scale of the sagebrush area makes this partnership effort distinct and unique from the models reviewed and, as a result, makes comparisons difficult.
- Another suggested the importance of minimizing or eliminating the word "governance" due to potential issues with cross-jurisdictional negotiations.
- A third respondent was critical of the section "Panel to Refine Governance Model" (p.24), expressing an inability to relate to the input, and stating that a more concise description is needed of leadership with potential for having the most positive impact.

4. Do you have suggestions for how a partnership model could improve conservation linkages between biome-wide, mid-level, and local scales? (4 responses)

- One respondent expressed concern about the creation of additional sagebrush-focused partnerships, which could "complicate an already complicated need to be talking to the right people."
- Another commented that perhaps the most important issue in Oregon is how to restore the forb/grass/insect understory in areas that have adequate sagebrush cover and are not invaded by juniper, invasive grasses , or fire. Juniper is being reduced in a fashion and in inappropriate areas to create good Greater Sage-grouse(GSG) habitat, yet GSG numbers keep dropping around those cuttings. Current evidence suggests it is likely that many juniper reduction projects are creating ecological traps for GSG. Help is needed to figure out this problem.
- A respondent suggested establishing common language and common evaluation and reporting mechanisms to improve linkages.
- Another said a partnership that can bring different groups together. They observed that bottom-up efforts will help groups buy in, but prioritization from top down is also important.

5. What is the greatest incentive to your support for a sagebrush conservation partnership model? What would this require? (4 responses)

- One respondent said having the right folks with the right seats at the right table, without making it cumbersome or further creating inefficiencies.

- One commented on the need for more sage-grouse, which current projects are not "delivering." There is a need to focus on the right projects.
- One said their greatest incentive is the development of common goals and their measurement across the ecosystem.
- Another observed that partnership and collaboration achieve greater conservation than going it alone.

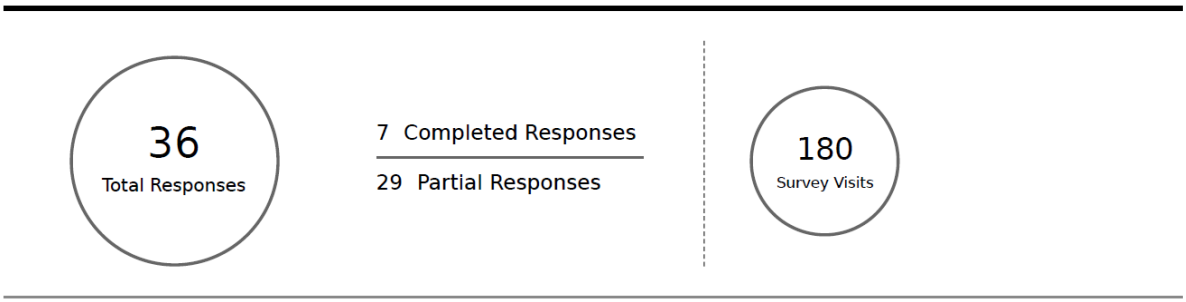
6. What is the greatest barrier to your support for a sagebrush conservation partnership model? How might we reduce or eliminate this barrier? (3 responses)

- One respondent observed that there are "already so many existing partnerships."
- Another felt it is the inability to do projects based on the biology of the Greater Sage-grouse and the ecology of the sage-steppe rather than politically popular approaches.
- Finally, one noted that the greatest barrier is competing interests and not finding common goals.

7. Concluding thoughts about the sagebrush partnership model? (6 responses)

- One respondent questioned again whether there is a need for this initiative.
- Another suggested a balance is needed between sagebrush conservation and landowner removal of sagebrush. Their active engagement in this process is critical to landscape scale conservation efforts; and the lack of it could contribute to the potential failure of this partnership.
- Some observed that a model is much needed, but in a manner that could be adapted to a broad spectrum of ecosystems.
- One respondent acknowledged the effort to develop a partnership model and its potential to be more effective than species by species management. While another also acknowledged the effort, they added that the "document needs to go back to the drawing board," and there were too many comments to address online.

Part B: Metrics/Demographics



Respondents based in:

Salt Lake City, UT

Buffalo/Johnson, WY

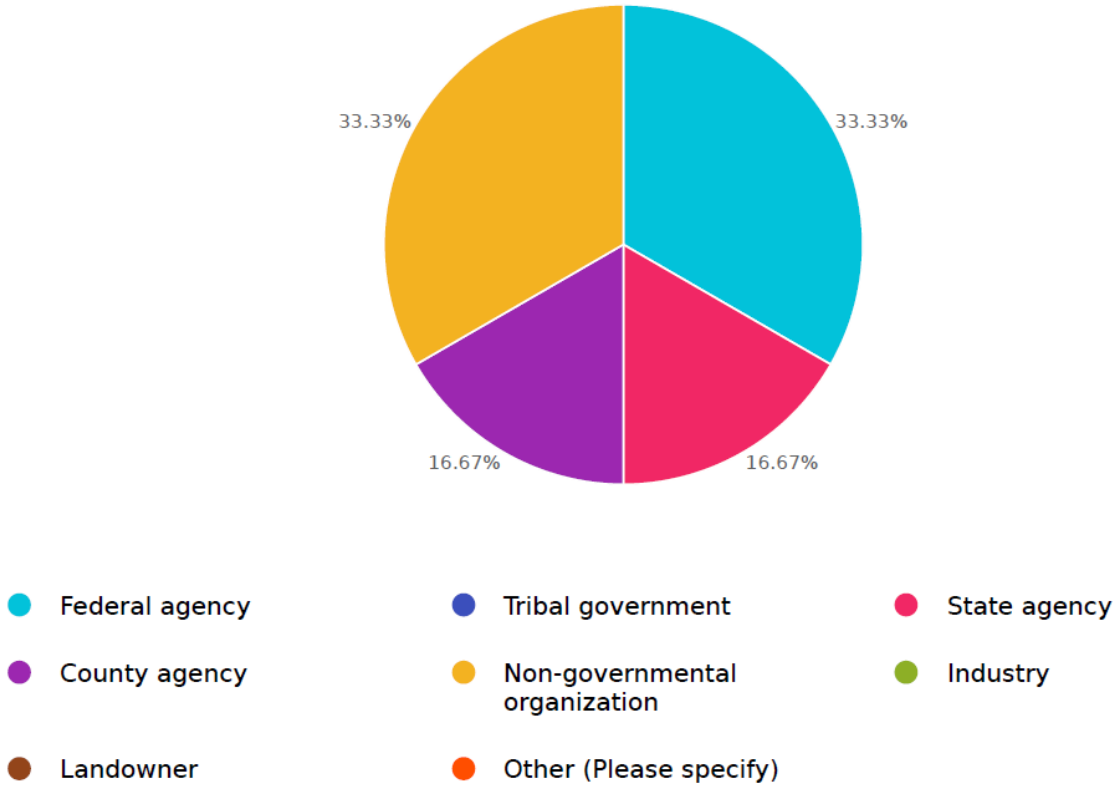
Bend, Deschutes County, OR

Livermore, CO

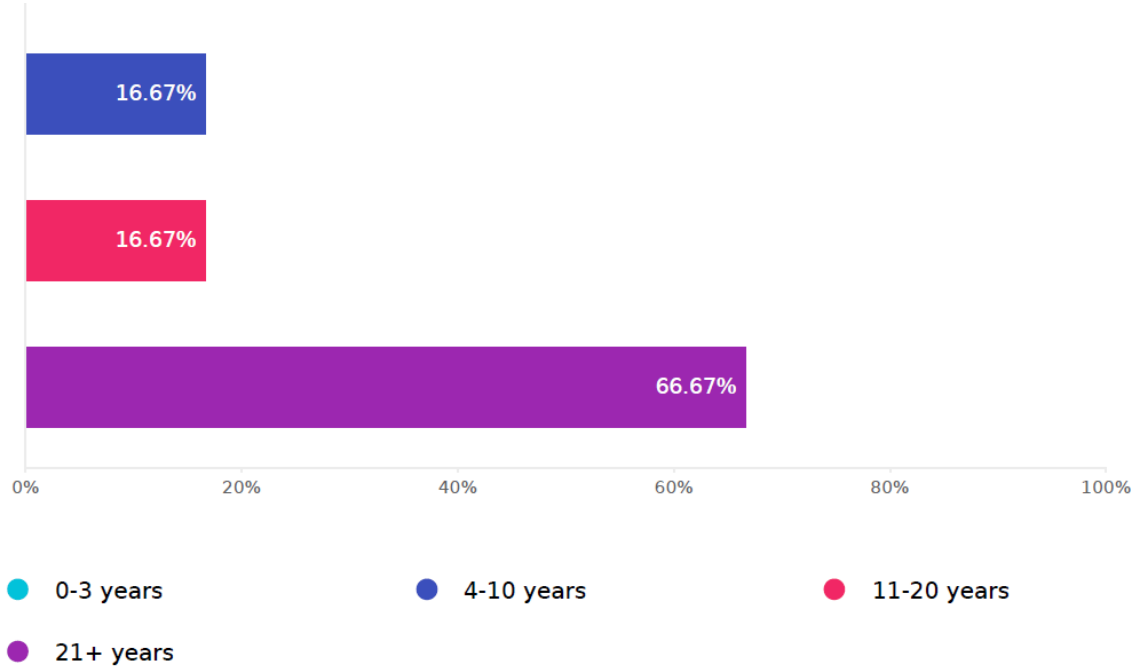
Boise, ID

Ephraim, UT

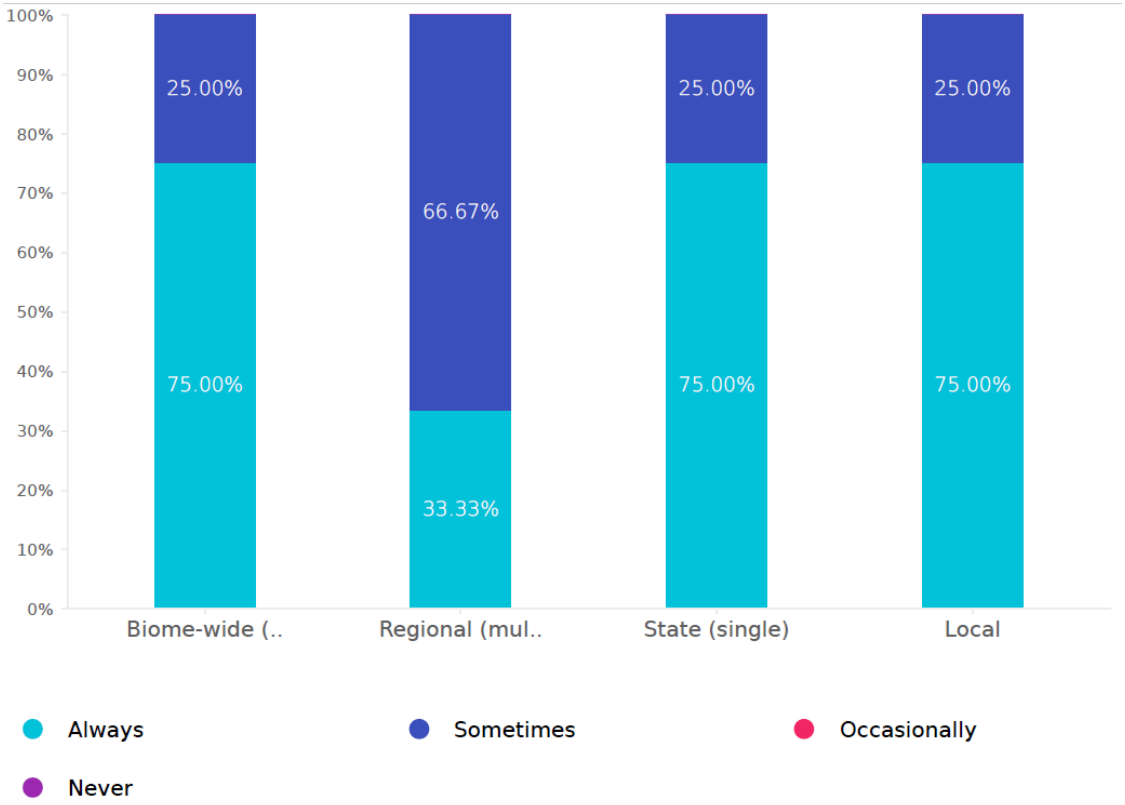
Organizational Affiliation (6 responses)



How long have you worked with sagebrush conservation activities/issues? (6 responses)



Scales worked/Frequency (6 responses)



Sagebrush Partnership Model(s) Development Process
Drafting Work Group Meeting #1

Monday, March 29, 2021
12:00-3:00 pm MT

Proposed Meeting Agenda

Objectives:

- Review and refine revised problem statement and vision statements based on feedback received via the workshop
- Review compiled input from Advisory Committee workshop regarding functions of potential sagebrush partnership model(s) across scales
- Review additional feedback received via online comments process
- Discuss desired functions for partnership model(s) and linkages across scales

Time	Lead	Topic
12:00	Dana G.	**Welcome, Agenda Review and Introductions** • Welcome • Process Map and Agenda Review • Introductions • Overview of role of the Drafting Work Group ○ Debrief of discussion with Tribal representatives *Materials: Process map, Agenda*
D	Dana G.	**Review and Refine Revised Problem Statement and Vision Language** • Overview of revised draft of problem statement and vision language based on feedback *Materials: Revised draft of problem statement and vision language*

12:45	Dana G., Susan H.	**Discuss Functions for Sagebrush Partnership Model**
		• Overview of additional input received via the online commenting process – Susan H.
		• Overview of input received from Advisory Committee members on valuable functions – National Center
		• Questions and Discussion:
		  ○ *Given the input received in the workshop, what do we want to see for each function across each scale?*
		  ○ *How are these functions linked across scales?*
		
		Materials: Functions Synthesis from Advisory Committee Workshop; Review of Models for Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance

1:40		**Break**
1:55	Melanie K.	**Discuss Functions for Sagebrush Partnership Model (continued)**

		• Questions and Discussion:
		  ○ *Given the input received in the workshop, what do we want to see for each function across each scale?*
		  ○ *How are these functions linked across scales?*
		
		<u>Materials:</u> Research Report; Input Received in Workshop and Online Commenting Process

2:45	Melanie K.	**Next Steps and Wrap up** • Plans for additional Work Group meetings and next Advisory Committee workshop
3:00		**Adjourn**

Sagebrush Partnership Model Drafting Work Group Meeting #1

Monday March 29, 2021 | 12:00-3:00 MST

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review

The facilitation team welcomed participants and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. Group members introduced themselves and reviewed the "We Are Here" process map diagram to situate the work of the Drafting Work Group within the larger Advisory Committee and online commenting process. The facilitation team provided an overview of the role of the Drafting Work Group, which is to provide another level of input and review into the development of partnership model(s) and to grapple with input received from the sagebrush conservation community in the Advisory Committee workshop and in the online commenting process, and ultimately make a recommendation to the EOC and SCC. The facilitation team also provided a debrief of discussion with Tribal representatives, noting that the assessment reflected and we also heard in our discussions that Tribes have not been significantly involved in sagebrush conservation efforts and that recognizing Native Nations' sovereignty, rights to lands and resources through sovereignty and treaty rights, and role as co-managers is critical to sagebrush partnership efforts moving forward.

Discussion

Revised Problem Statement and Vision Language

The facilitation team gave an overview of the problem statement and vision language revised draft, based on feedback from the Advisory Committee workshop. Participants wanted to include more acknowledgement of efforts working and connecting across scales, e.g., highlighting SageWest as an existing, valuable effort. One participant suggested creating a wiring diagram that maps out what efforts already exist and how they interrelate. Participants also wanted mention that the sum of individual contributions would sum up to a meaningful whole.

Regarding the vision language, one participant emphasized the need to identify how a structure will create accountability. Others agreed there is a need for accountability but a concern with it looking or feeling regulatory. Participants shared ideas of accountability measures outside of a vision statement, e.g., through adopting principles as a partnership, or interagency MOUs.

Functions for Sagebrush Partnership Model

The facilitation team gave an overview of input received via the online commenting process and the Advisory Committee workshop.

Input from the Online Commenting Process
Key Takeaways:

- Purpose and need unclear-- ecological threats are the real issue.
- Need the right folks/right seats/right table, without inefficiencies.
- Disappointment that Great Basin partnerships not reviewed.

- Greatest incentives for support = development of common goals and measurements across the ecosystem.
- Greatest barrier to support = already so many existing partnerships; competing interests.

Partnership Design Suggestions:

- Increased engagement with tribal governments and local landowners.
- Additional "gap analysis" and a wiring diagram showing relationships.
- Remove the term "governance."
- Establish common language, with common evaluation and reporting mechanisms to improve linkages.
- Allow for bottom-up efforts paired with top-down prioritization.

Given the input received in the Advisory Committee Workshop (votes indicated as "yes"s and "no"s in the table below), the group discussed what they wanted to see for each function, across scales. Red text summarizes the thoughts and options discussed.

FUNCTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL TO FULFILL?	BIOME SCALE	MID-SCALE	LOCAL SCALE	CONCERNS/CAVEATS/SUMMARY	WHAT DO WE WANT TO SEE FOR THIS FUNCTION, ACROSS SCALES?
Develop conservation objectives -define success • Provide vision, leadership motivation across scales	**13 yes, 1 no** 10 yes	5 yes 7 yes	6 yes 6 yes	One views this as mid-scale but role of state not partnership. Could be led at biome-scale, with all levels involved; some doubts about biome leadership	• One option biome level – goals; mid and local set objectives – step down; local would be objectives. • Collaborative, not required – some might go further. • Another option – could set biome-wide quantitative goals. • Translate biome-wide objective for functional acres to local scale – • Build on WGA's Enlibra process? • NAWMP – specific population goals – created biome and mid-scale partnerships – created funding opportunities that brought people together. • You facilitate at the local scale, but the partnership is focused on mid and biome scale.
Prioritize large areas for investment based on conservation objectives. • Prioritize sites for action (not at biome scale; but should create priority areas for national funding	**10 yes, 7 no** 0	7 yes **4 yes, 1 no**	0 4 yes	Could be led at mid-scale – significant concerns at biome-scale	• Prioritize at biome and perhaps mid, local can make own determination. • Focus on some threats but not all? • NAWMP – biome wide prioritization, autonomy at

– biome scale not determining local projects) • Mid and local scale deal with places that are ready, feed up to funders. • Priorities objectives thru engagement process. Mid-scale objectives will be more expansive, support the biome.					mid-scale - established own plans in support. Locals support projects that support own objectives – bounce off mid-scale, funded by national. • Identify priorities at biome, careful with science at biome scale because you are talking about system. • Portfolios determined at mid, in support of local. • Biome – science-driven, aspirational, not specific; mid-more specific based on local; then more specific at local. Potential to consult mid and local levels. • Est aspirational goals and modify over time. • Conservation maps can tell us priority areas (need to reconcile science and political priorities)
Develop adaptive mgt / monitoring construct. • Coordinate data collection • Provide data repository. • Host dialogue on data mgt • Track accomplishments • Facilitate fed and state policy and data-gathering approaches. • Establish common language (sets for fed agency decisions, regional, local – at some level, it all counts, but not the burden for every partner) • AM decision-making – only around voluntary,	6 yes 4 yes 12 yes **4 yes,** **1 no** 9 yes 6 yes	7 yes 4 yes **1 yes,** **2 no** **5 yes,** **1 no** 11 yes 1 yes	2 yes 3 yes 0 2 yes 6 yes 1 yes	Broad support for function; need to work through concerns at mid-scale. One idea that this could be led at mid-scale, with all levels involved. Another could be led at biome-scale with all levels involved. Multi-function tool for communication, tracking/storing monitoring data. Take monitoring guidance/ideas from national level and adapt to local levels using local priorities	• What is adaptive management? Evaluate progress toward objectives, retool as needed. • Part 1 of strategy has AM; not doing for biome but should aim high. • Need metrics for each objective; what does it look like for each player (fed agency and rancher) • Need to give definitions for each player. • Collect at local scales – rolls up to support mid-scale, rolls up to support national. • Make sure that the data is meaningful at biome-wide scale – partnership role. • Data collection – fed, Tribal, state agencies? • Need common understanding of data we

collaborative decision; funding the partnership controls. • If money for capacity, make sure the monitoring syncs up				and mgt Qs (AIM, sage-grouse lek info, etc.) Use/incorporate existing data	use to make decisions, how to interpret. Feds are going to meet standards for metrics – need some indicators across all scales. Conversation – what kind of info for informing decisions, making sure. • Issue of state & fed holding data - FOIA
Increase capacity for local conservation efforts. • Identify capacity-building needs. • Identify training needs. • Facilitate training of conservation implementers. • Distribute (provide?) funding for voluntary, collaborative conservation	**3 yes, 4 no** **5 yes, 2 no** 0 **2 yes, 1 no** 0	3 yes 7 yes 0 4 yes 4 yes	9 yes 9 yes **4 yes, 1 no** 7 yes 7 yes	Strong support at the local scale, concern with biome leadership Prioritize funding across landscapes – we could defer to funding across states to allocate to priority areas	• Do not distract from doing the work. • Maybe identify and make available as needed? • Can address by getting capacity where needed – conversation happening at **mid-scale**. Id local needs to get in pipeline for biome model. New funding source. • Expertise likely at mid-scale. • Awareness of locally based conservation model • Biome-scale not prescriptive • Examples of mid and biome relationships that met capacity needs – JVs, partners biologist. Role to find creative ways to get resources for local capacity needs. Putting together relationships. • Ex: Rangeland fire protection districts in OR. Took off when got support from state. Provided training, equipment. Need to coordinate with feds. • Mid role in working with fed agencies. Partnership role – take lessons learned, apply elsewhere at broader scale.

Next Steps and Wrap Up

The Drafting Work Group will meet again to finish discussing the functions list. The group discussed the upcoming schedule and any conflicts with proposed days for the next meeting.

WAFWA will host a draft Sagebrush Partnership Model Outline document for collaborative editing through their MS Teams channel. The facilitation team will consolidate the problem statement, vision language, and explanation of proposed functions, and post the document shortly by Friday, April 2nd. Participants are invited to comment and edit the draft document on that platform before the next Drafting Work Group meeting (by COB Wednesday, 4/14). The 2nd Drafting Work Group meeting is scheduled on Friday, April 16th from 1:00-4:00 MST.

Meeting Participants

- Brett Brownscombe, Oregon SageCon Partnership
- Brian Rutledge, Audubon Society
- Corey Lucero, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society
- Dana Goodson, NCECR
- Ellen Sanders-Raigosa, Intertribal Agriculture Council
- Karen Prentice, BLM
- Ken Mayer, WAFWA
- Melanie Knapp, NCECR
- Monique Mullenaux, NCECR
- San Stiver, WAFWA
- Sean Cross, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society
- Steve Jester, PartnerScapes
- Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic
- Tom Remington, WAFWA
- Tomer Hasson, The Nature Conservancy

Sagebrush Partnership Model(s) Development Process
Drafting Work Group Meeting #2

Friday, April 16, 2021
1:00-4:00 pm MT

Proposed Meeting Agenda

Objectives:

- Review remaining compiled input from Advisory Committee workshop regarding functions of potential sagebrush partnership model(s) across scales
- Discuss options for coordinating body, funding, and leadership for the partnership model(s)

Time	Lead	Topic
1:00	Melanie K.	**Welcome and Agenda Review** • Welcome • Agenda Review and Process Map *Materials: Process Map, Agenda*

1:10	Melanie K.	**Discuss Functions for Sagebrush Partnership Model**
		• *Final Draft Review of Following Functions:*
		  ○ Establish conservation goals and objectives
		  ○ Prioritize areas based on conservation objectives
		  ○ Develop adaptive mgt / monitoring construct
		  ○ Increase capacity for local conservation efforts)
		• *Draft* - Review and refine remaining compiled input from Advisory Committee workshop regarding functions of potential sagebrush partnership model(s) across scales:
		  ○ Conduct or facilitate scientific research
		  ○ Communicate success stories, impacts, and needs
		  ○ Conservation planning and implementation
		  ○ Facilitate partner relationship development
		• Questions and Discussion:
		  ○ *Given the input received in the workshop, what do we want to see for each function across each scale?*
		  ○ *How are these functions linked across scales?*
		  ○ *Are there key examples that should be duplicated in other locations? (example: RFPAs being duplicated in each state, etc.)*
		
		Materials: Sagebrush Partnership Model Outline_Draft 4.14.21

1:55 A break will occur	National Center	**Discuss Options for Partnership Coordinating Body, Funding, and Leadership** • Review information on coordination body, funding, and leadership for existing collaborative models – *National Center*

in this session		• Questions and Discussion:
		  ○ *What are the different options for what a coordinating body, funding, and leadership could look like for sagebrush conservation?*
		  ○ *Where does the high-level leadership come from? How is it supported? How does leadership stay involved over time?*
		  ○ *Is there a founding agreement or legislation?*
		  ○ *What are the main sources of funding, and what are additional, diversified sources of funding?*
		  ○ *How do the funds flow through the partnership (e.g., proposals reviewed and approved, incentives provided)?*
		
		<u>Materials:</u> Review of Partnership Models_Final 3.11.21

3:45	Dana G.	**Next Steps and Wrap up** • Reminder of timing for DWG #3 • Proposed DWG #4 • Plans for online commenting process and next Advisory Committee workshop
4:00		**Adjourn**

Sagebrush Partnership Model Drafting Work Group Meeting #2

Friday April 16, 2021 | 1:00-4:00 MST

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review

The facilitation team welcomed participants and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. Group members introduced themselves and reviewed the "We Are Here" process map diagram to situate the work of the Drafting Work Group (DWG) within the larger Advisory Committee and online commenting process.

Discussion

Functions for Sagebrush Partnership Model

The facilitation team asked participants to continue giving feedback on the problem statement, vision language, and Enlibra principles in the Sagebrush Partnership Model Outline document that was posted for DWG member comment. Participants voiced difficulties accessing MS Teams to edit the Sagebrush Partnership Model Outline document. Ross Strategic will explore alternative options for DWG members to access the document for future rounds of editing. The facilitation team invited participants to also email feedback directly if that is easier for them.

Participants finalized the first four functions discussed in the Drafting Work Group #1 Meeting and then discussed the final four functions in the list. The table below summarizes all discussion on this functions list.

FUNCTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL(S) TO FULFILL?	BIOME SCALE *(e.g. all tribes in the sagebrush biome; 13 Western states; 175 million acres of public and private lands)*	MID-SCALE *(e.g. ecoregional; state; all the tribes within a particular state that reside within the sagebrush biome (example: the Plains Tribes in Montana)*	LOCAL SCALE *(e.g., a specific tribe; county-level, city, etc.)*

Establish conservation goals and objectives	• Provide vision, leadership motivation across scales • Set science-driven, aspirational biome-wide goals in consultation with mid-and local scale partners • Provide funding opportunities to facilitate work at local and mid scales to meet conservation objectives • Iteratively and periodically update goals as appropriate and in consultation with mid-and local scale partners.	• Identify mid-scale objectives to contribute towards achievement of biome-wide goals • Develop additional objectives to meet specific mid-scale needs • Develop mid-scale conservation plans	• Local goals and objectives determined by local groups and communities, not a function of the partnership.
Prioritize areas based on conservation objectives and funding for opportunities for collaborative conservation objectives • Develop conservation project proposals • Evaluate and rank conservation action proposals	• In coordination with national level, create priority areas for national funding, reflecting sound scientific principles and merit but leaving as much flexibility as possibility to proposals at the local level (biome level not determining local projects) • Share funding opportunities for implementation of collaborative conservation objectives at the mid and local scales	• Develop landscape portfolios at mid-scale in support of local work • Share funding opportunities for collaborative conservation objectives and connect proposed projects with national funding • Identify project-ready work and prioritize projects for partnership funding • Evaluate and rank conservation action proposals	• Share funding opportunities for collaborative conservation objectives • Local communities identify project-ready work and autonomously design projects that meet local objectives • Coordination at local scale to determine which conservation action proposals they would like to advance for evaluation and ranking • Project proposals are submitted to the mid-scale for consideration for funding *Note: Local level organizations and communities will continue to*

			autonomously complete other work of interest to the communities, seek additional funding sources, etc.
Develop adaptive mgt / monitoring construct *Note: As part of the development of the Conservation Strategy, a separate AM/monitoring work group will be convened to discuss specific considerations for sagebrush conservation.*	• Define adaptive management (update DOI/Ag definition?), AM objectives and metrics, and linkages across scales. • Host dialogues with mid- and local scales to establish common language related to adaptive management and monitoring • Host dialogues that lead to agreed upon system for management of confidential data (e.g. acknowledges tribal ownership of data, includes private landownership data, etc.) and share learnings and best practices • Work with federal and state agencies to understand and seek to reconcile data-gathering approaches, where possible (utilizing and building on agreed upon national/regional data sets where possible) • Informed by data collected at the mid and local scales, review available data sets and make recommendations on biome wide needs and actions • Identify gaps in data sets from a biome wide perspective	• Building on and in addition to work done at the biome scale, define adaptive management objectives and metrics at mid-scale • Identify gaps in data sets from a mid-scale perspective • Collect data for adaptive management and monitoring efforts • Work with local scale to develop appropriate methods of handling confidential data • Engage in ongoing discussions to increase understanding of the system, models, data standards, etc.	• Partnership contributes to and facilitates data collection efforts by partners at local scales. • Partnership ensures data needed for adaptive management and monitoring is aggregated and sent to mid-scale in a manner consistent with agreed upon confidentiality provisions. • Identify gaps in data sets from a local perspective • Partners collect data to evaluate success of individual projects as they deem appropriate. • Local levels flag needs for AM and monitoring and funding needs to mid scale (avoid unfunded mandates) • Engage in ongoing discussions to increase understanding of the system, models, data standards, etc.

	• Provide funding for adaptive management and monitoring efforts to mid and local scales • Acknowledge and incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge on Tribal lands in a manner that respects data sovereignty, and/or use broader sets of publicly available data that don't conflict with issues of sensitive tribal data • Engage in ongoing discussions to increase understanding of the system, models, data standards, etc. *Note: The partnership may or may not be an appropriate host for a data repository but can coordinate with others to determine an appropriate repository.*		
Increase capacity for local conservation efforts • *Note: Concerted effort to support and sustain people and groups occurs across all scales (assistance, keeping sight of vision, etc.)*	• Identify gaps in capacity at the mid-scale and prioritize based on biome scale conservation objectives and priority areas. • Determine creative ways to get funding to local and mid scales to facilitate capacity-building efforts • Work in partnership with mid-scale to develop and apply lessons learned and best practices	• Identify gaps in capacity at the local scale and prioritize based on mid-scale conservation objectives and priority areas. • Provide expertise, equipment, training at a mid-scale to support local efforts • Work in partnership with biome scale to develop and apply lessons learned and best practices	• Filling local gaps left to local groups and communities, facilitated by the partnership • Share case studies and best practices for learning throughout the partnership

		• Help communicate case studies and best practices throughout the partnership (i.e. SageWest)	
Conduct or facilitate scientific research • Compile and distribute the latest scientific information • Periodically identify knowledge gaps • Produce decision support tools • Host dialogue on integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science	• In coordination with mid-scale, host cross-cultural biome-wide dialogue on braiding together Indigenous Knowledge, Western Science, and local knowledge • Periodically identify knowledge gaps at the biome scale • Compile and distribute the latest scientific information in coordination with mid scale partners • Connect and relate existing research, coordinating with and supporting those who conduct scientific research at mid and local scales • In coordination with mid and local partners, build on existing decision support tools and create any needed additional tools	• Serve as the primary scale for conducting and facilitating scientific research in coordination with biome and local scale partners • Periodically identify knowledge gaps at the mid scale • Compile and distribute the latest scientific information in coordination with biome scale partners • In coordination with biome and local partners, build on existing decision support tools and create any needed additional tools	• Periodically identify knowledge gaps at the local scale • Contribute data and local scale information to scientific research efforts at mid scale • Conduct local scale scientific research in coordination with mid scale • In coordination with biome and mid and partners, build on existing decision support tools and create any needed additional tools
Communicate success stories, impacts, and needs • Communicate to public about sagebrush needs, benefits, threat abatement	• Communicate success stories related to how well meeting priorities and funding targets, impacts, mistakes, and needs at the biome scale • Build brand by showing efficacy based on successes on the ground level to ensure consistent funding base	• Success stories, impacts, mistakes, and needs at the local scale feed upwards to the mid and biome scales • Communicate to public about mid-scale sagebrush threats, benefits, and abatement, making connections to work at biome and local levels	• Communicate basic success stories, impacts, mistakes, and needs at the local scale (example: Tribe, village, county successes), acknowledging Tribal sovereignty rights and processes to approve photos • Communicate to public about biome-wide sagebrush threats, benefits, and abatement, making

	• Communicate to public about biome-wide sagebrush threats, benefits, and abatement		connections to work at biome and mid scales
Conservation Planning & Design • Facilitate sagebrush planning efforts • Engage communities to participate in restoration • Identify community needs and desires	• Develop conservation plans at biome scale	• Facilitate sagebrush planning efforts and develop conservations plans at the mid scale • In coordination with local scale, identify community needs and desires (example: NAWCA-like peer review function)	• Facilitate sagebrush planning efforts at the local scale • Engage communities to participate in restoration • Identify community needs and desires
Connect sagebrush conservation partners and facilitate partner/stakeholder relationship development	• Connect sagebrush conservation partners • Assist with partnership development and relationship building to connect individuals across mid scales and local scales	• Facilitate partner / stakeholder relationship development at the mid scale	• Facilitate partner / stakeholder relationship development at the local scale

Options for Partnership Coordinating Body, Funding, and Leadership

The facilitation team reviewed information on coordinating bodies/staff, funding, and leadership for existing collaborative models researched previously, including examples from the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and Joint Ventures, the Northwest Boreal Partnership, and the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Participants discussed different options for what a coordinating body, funding, and leadership could look like for sagebrush conservation. Different options were created of how these elements could interconnect within the sagebrush community and are reflected in the table below.

	Examples:	**OPTION 1 – Governor/ State Driven/Other Leadership)**	**OPTION 2 – Legislation Driven**	**OPTION 3 – Federal/State Hybrid**	**OPTION 4 - Interim step (Broad Partnership that**

					Represents Biome to Local Scales)
Convener / Leadership	Multiple Governors, USDA, DOI, BLM, FWS, NRCS	Governors/state/other leadership, plus tribal leadership body, convene Biome-level		Federal agencies convene Biome-level Governors/state leadership plus some form of tribal leadership body convene Mid-Level	
Coordinating Body					
Funding	Federal funding + access to additional/external funds, legislation;	Funding at federal level		Funding controlled at federal level	Seek external funding; does not start with own money
Mechanisms to ensure continuity	Initial agreement (pillars, guides), shared objectives and values (values that transcend boundaries), understanding of the challenges/opportunity of economic impacts, everyone needs skin in the game, consistent dedicated funding	Common objective that ties all together. "Watershed agreement" that makes it difficult to back out later.	Funding provided on an annual or earmark basis		
Notes		• Govs are best conveners we can have – they can ask folks who need to be there		Need Tribes/Tribal organizations involved – consultation required at fed level	Start with structure and access external funding

		• Use existing structures and forums to have meetings • Need Tribes/Tribal organizations involved – consultation required at fed level; often disrespected at state level. Need policy for tribal engagement at state level. Need to try out tribal sovereignty models --this partnership can be a place that tests this		but at state level not respected; policy for tribal engagement at state level; need to work out tribal sovereignty models, this partnership can be a place that trials this	
Pros		• Govs are best conveners we can have – they can ask folks who need to be there		Federal leadership at the funding level may prevent triggering FACA	Partnership can start work without its own internal funding
Cons		• Could have Governors who do not support (*need to be clear about the costs of not participating) • FACA complications if fed agencies are distributing funding			
Other Groups to Reference (may be promising!)	Western Regional Partnership (WRP), SECAS				

Other broad observations:

- **Tribal Engagement:** Still trying to determine how to best integrate Tribal engagement and representation of sovereign entities throughout the various partnership models in a way that gives Tribal groups a seat at the table that enables Tribes to be equal participants in the conversation. A partnership like this is a superb place to test tribal partnership models.
- **Need "skin in the game" and stable funding to successfully convene and maintain a partnership.**
  1) If you don't have Governors and/or state-level organizations such as WAFWA, WASDA, etc., the partnership won't be able to keep people together.
  2) Dedicated funding needs to be established (example: in legislation and dependably provided on an annual basis).

Next Steps and Wrap Up

The Drafting Work Group will meet again after the second Advisory Committee Workshop.

Ross Strategic will host the Sagebrush Partnership Model Outline document for collaborative editing for easier access. The facilitation team will consolidate comments from the meeting and integrate them into the document shortly. Participants are invited to comment and edit the draft document on that platform before the next Advisory Committee Workshop and will receive an email requesting their review of the documents.

Meeting Participants

- Ali Duvall, IWJV
- Brett Brownscombe, Oregon SageCon Partnership
- Brian Rutledge, Audubon Society
- Cody Desautel, Intertribal Timber Council
- Cristina Eisenberg, Oregon State University
- Dana Goodson, NCECR
- Elveda Martinez, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society
- Karen Prentice, BLM
- Ken Mayer, WAFWA
- Melanie Knapp, NCECR
- Monique Mullenaux, NCECR
- San Stiver, WAFWA
- Sean Cross, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society

- Steve Jester, PartnerScapes
- Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic
- Tom Remington, WAFWA

Summary Table: Overview of Partnership by Function

4/27/2021

The Sagebrush Partnership Advisory Committee reviewed a straw list of functions that could be fulfilled by potential voluntary, collaborative partnership structure(s). Working in breakout groups, they sorted the functions to scales where they would desire those functions be fulfilled. The Sagebrush Partnership Drafting Work Group discussed and refined the feedback further, summarized in the table below:

FUNCTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL(S) TO FULFILL?	BIOME SCALE *(e.g., all tribes in the sagebrush biome; 13 Western states; 175 million acres of public and private lands)*	MID-SCALE *(e.g., ecoregional; state; all the tribes within a particular state that reside within the sagebrush biome (example: the Plains Tribes in Montana)*	LOCAL SCALE *(e.g., a specific tribe; county-level, city, etc.)*
Establish conservation goals and objectives	• Provide vision, leadership motivation across scales • Set science-driven, aspirational biome-wide goals in consultation with mid-and local scale partners • Provide funding opportunities to facilitate work at local and mid scales to meet conservation objectives • Iteratively and periodically update goals as appropriate and in consultation with mid-and local scale partners.	• Identify mid-scale objectives to contribute towards achievement of biome-wide goals • Develop additional objectives to meet specific mid-scale needs • Develop mid-scale conservation plans	• Local goals and objectives determined by local groups and communities, not a function of the partnership.
Prioritize areas based on conservation objectives and funding for opportunities for collaborative conservation objectives	• In coordination with national level, create priority areas for national funding, reflecting sound scientific principles and merit but leaving as much flexibility as possibility to proposals at the	• Develop landscape portfolios at mid-scale in support of local work • Share funding opportunities for collaborative conservation objectives and connect proposed projects with national funding	• Share funding opportunities for collaborative conservation objectives • Local communities identify project-ready work and autonomously

FUNCTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL(S) TO FULFILL?	BIOME SCALE *(e.g., all tribes in the sagebrush biome; 13 Western states; 175 million acres of public and private lands)*	MID-SCALE *(e.g., ecoregional; state; all the tribes within a particular state that reside within the sagebrush biome (example: the Plains Tribes in Montana)*	LOCAL SCALE *(e.g., a specific tribe; county-level, city, etc.)*
• Develop conservation project proposals • Evaluate and rank conservation action proposals	local level (biome level not determining local projects) • Share funding opportunities for implementation of collaborative conservation objectives at the mid and local scales	• Identify project-ready work and prioritize projects for partnership funding • Evaluate and rank conservation action proposals	design projects that meet local objectives • Coordination at local scale to determine which conservation action proposals they would like to advance for evaluation and ranking • Project proposals are submitted to the mid-scale for consideration for funding *Note: Local level organizations and communities will continue to autonomously complete other work of interest to the communities, seek additional funding sources, etc.*
Develop adaptive mgt / monitoring construct *Note: As part of the development of the Conservation Strategy, a separate AM/monitoring work group will be convened to discuss specific considerations for sagebrush conservation.*	• Define adaptive management (update DOI/Ag definition?), AM objectives and metrics, and linkages across scales. • Host dialogues with mid- and local scales to establish common language related to adaptive management and monitoring • Host dialogues that lead to agreed upon system for management of confidential data (e.g. acknowledges tribal	• Building on and in addition to work done at the biome scale, define adaptive management objectives and metrics at mid-scale • Identify gaps in data sets from a mid-scale perspective • Collect data for adaptive management and monitoring efforts • Work with local scale to develop appropriate methods of handling confidential data	• Partnership contributes to and facilitates data collection efforts by partners at local scales. • Partnership ensures data needed for adaptive management and monitoring is aggregated and sent to mid-scale in a manner consistent with agreed upon confidentiality provisions. • Identify gaps in data sets from a local perspective

FUNCTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL(S) TO FULFILL?	BIOME SCALE *(e.g., all tribes in the sagebrush biome; 13 Western states; 175 million acres of public and private lands)*	MID-SCALE *(e.g., ecoregional; state; all the tribes within a particular state that reside within the sagebrush biome (example: the Plains Tribes in Montana)*	LOCAL SCALE *(e.g., a specific tribe; county-level, city, etc.)*
	ownership of data, includes private landownership data, etc.) and share learnings and best practices • Work with federal and state agencies to understand and seek to reconcile data-gathering approaches, where possible (utilizing and building on agreed upon national/regional data sets where possible) • Informed by data collected at the mid and local scales, review available data sets and make recommendations on biome wide needs and actions • Identify gaps in data sets from a biome wide perspective • Provide funding for adaptive management and monitoring efforts to mid and local scales • Acknowledge and incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge on Tribal lands in a manner that respects data sovereignty, and/or use broader sets of publicly available data that don't conflict with issues of sensitive tribal data	• Engage in ongoing discussions to increase understanding of the system, models, data standards, etc.	• Partners collect data to evaluate success of individual projects as they deem appropriate. • Local levels flag needs for AM and monitoring and funding needs to mid-scale (avoid unfunded mandates) • Engage in ongoing discussions to increase understanding of the system, models, data standards, etc.

FUNCTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL(S) TO FULFILL?	BIOME SCALE *(e.g., all tribes in the sagebrush biome; 13 Western states; 175 million acres of public and private lands)*	MID-SCALE *(e.g., ecoregional; state; all the tribes within a particular state that reside within the sagebrush biome (example: the Plains Tribes in Montana)*	LOCAL SCALE *(e.g., a specific tribe; county-level, city, etc.)*
	• Engage in ongoing discussions to increase understanding of the system, models, data standards, etc. *Note: The partnership may or may not be an appropriate host for a data repository but can coordinate with others to determine an appropriate repository.*		
Increase capacity for local conservation efforts • *Note: Concerted effort to support and sustain people and groups occurs across all scales (assistance, keeping sight of vision, etc.)*	• Identify gaps in capacity at the mid-scale and prioritize based on biome scale conservation objectives and priority areas. • Determine creative ways to get funding to local and mid scales to facilitate capacity-building efforts • Work in partnership with mid-scale to develop and apply lessons learned and best practices	• Identify gaps in capacity at the local scale and prioritize based on mid-scale conservation objectives and priority areas. • Provide expertise, equipment, training at a mid-scale to support local efforts • Work in partnership with biome scale to develop and apply lessons learned and best practices • Help communicate case studies and best practices throughout the partnership (i.e. SageWest)	• Filling local gaps left to local groups and communities, facilitated by the partnership • Share case studies and best practices for learning throughout the partnership
Conduct or facilitate scientific research	• In coordination with mid-scale, host cross-cultural biome-wide dialogue on braiding together	• Serve as the primary scale for conducting and facilitating scientific research in coordination	• Periodically identify knowledge gaps at the local scale

FUNCTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL(S) TO FULFILL?	BIOME SCALE *(e.g., all tribes in the sagebrush biome; 13 Western states; 175 million acres of public and private lands)*	MID-SCALE *(e.g., ecoregional; state; all the tribes within a particular state that reside within the sagebrush biome (example: the Plains Tribes in Montana)*	LOCAL SCALE *(e.g., a specific tribe; county-level, city, etc.)*
• Compile and distribute the latest scientific information • Periodically identify knowledge gaps • Produce decision support tools • Host dialogue on integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science	Indigenous Knowledge, Western Science, and local knowledge • Periodically identify knowledge gaps at the biome scale • Compile and distribute the latest scientific information in coordination with mid-scale partners • Connect and relate existing research, coordinating with and supporting those who conduct scientific research at mid and local scales • In coordination with mid and local partners, build on existing decision support tools and create any needed additional tools	with biome and local scale partners • Periodically identify knowledge gaps at the mid-scale • Compile and distribute the latest scientific information in coordination with biome scale partners • In coordination with biome and local partners, build on existing decision support tools and create any needed additional tools	• Contribute data and local scale information to scientific research efforts at mid-scale • Conduct local scale scientific research in coordination with mid-scale • In coordination with biome and mid and partners, build on existing decision support tools and create any needed additional tools
Communicate success stories, impacts, and needs • Communicate to public about sagebrush needs, benefits, threat abatement	• Communicate success stories related to how well meeting priorities and funding targets, impacts, mistakes, and needs at the biome scale • Build brand by showing efficacy based on successes on the ground level to ensure consistent funding base • Communicate to public about biome-wide sagebrush threats, benefits, and abatement	• Success stories, impacts, mistakes, and needs at the local scale feed upwards to the mid and biome scales • Communicate to public about mid-scale sagebrush threats, benefits, and abatement, making connections to work at biome and local levels	• Communicate basic success stories, impacts, mistakes, and needs at the local scale (example: Tribe, village, county successes), acknowledging Tribal sovereignty rights and processes to approve photos • Communicate to public about biome-wide sagebrush threats, benefits, and abatement, making connections to work at biome and mid scales

FUNCTIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL(S) TO FULFILL?	BIOME SCALE *(e.g., all tribes in the sagebrush biome; 13 Western states; 175 million acres of public and private lands)*	MID-SCALE *(e.g., ecoregional; state; all the tribes within a particular state that reside within the sagebrush biome (example: the Plains Tribes in Montana)*	LOCAL SCALE *(e.g., a specific tribe; county-level, city, etc.)*
Conservation Planning & Design • Facilitate sagebrush planning efforts • Engage communities to participate in restoration • Identify community needs and desires	• Develop conservation plans at biome scale	• Facilitate sagebrush planning efforts and develop conservations plans at the mid-scale • In coordination with local scale, identify community needs and desires (example: NAWCA-like peer review function)	• Facilitate sagebrush planning efforts at the local scale • Engage communities to participate in restoration • Identify community needs and desires
Connect sagebrush conservation partners and facilitate partner/stakeholder relationship development	• Connect sagebrush conservation partners • Assist with partnership development and relationship building to connect individuals across mid scales and local scales	• Facilitate partner / stakeholder relationship development at the mid-scale	• Facilitate partner / stakeholder relationship development at the local scale

Narrative Overview of Partnership Functions

Biome-level

Based on the desired functions that have been identified at each scale, a collaborative partnership could be created that provides leadership, a vision for biome-wide conservation, and an administrative structure that could distribute funding to support local conservation activities. The purpose would be to support and provide shared direction for work being done at regional and local scales. Partners representing all scales involved would come together to establish science-driven, biome-wide goals for sagebrush conservation as well as a monitoring and adaptive management construct to evaluate progress against those goals. Priority areas for conservation emphasis would be established at a biome scale to guide distribution of national level funding through the partnership. The partnership would not interfere with existing authorities, nor determine local projects.

To facilitate the effort of evaluating progress towards goals and adjusting them as needed (adaptive management), the biome-level entity would host a dialogue on defining appropriate metrics for objectives at each scale. including data proprietary to Tribes, and boundaries

To support conservation capacity at mid- and local scales, the biome level could seek and distribute funding for identified capacity-building needs. Along with the mid-scale, the biome level could work to develop lessons learned and best practices, drawing on the experiences from different regions, and communicate those learnings to all partners (perhaps through an annual forum?). It could also serve to connect partners for the purposes of sharing information and expertise.

Mid-scale

Existing mid-scale organizations would translate biome-level goals to mid-scale objectives that are suitable for regional landscapes, as well as develop additional objectives and conservation plans to meet mid-scale goals. Serving as the bridge between the biome level and local efforts, mid-scale organizations would develop a portfolio of projects that support local work and identify relevant local projects, helping connect them with opportunities for national funding.

To assist with tracking progress against objectives, mid-level organizations would use the guidance issuing from adaptive management discussions at the biome level to inform the development of metrics for monitoring and data collection at the mid-scale. They could share the guidance with those implementing projects and collecting data on the ground. Along with local organizations, they could identify data gaps and share that information with the biome level. Mid-scale organizations could work with members and local organizations to develop appropriate methods for handling confidential data.

In terms of capacity-building for conservation, the mid-scale could communicate funding needs to the biome level. They could help collect lessons learned and best practices and share the information with their members, perhaps by hosting conversations around implementing those lessons regionally and locally. Mid-scale organizations would also be best situated to connect local partners to needed expertise and guidance.

Local scale

There did not seem to be much support from the Advisory Committee voting or the discussions by the Work Group for any partnership functions relative to objective/goal setting or conservation planning at local scales. There was substantial support for the partnership at biome and mid-scales to support and facilitate local efforts, but there seemed to be a strong sentiment for autonomy for local scale conservation efforts. Local-scale organizations will continue to work with local communities to develop objectives that meet local needs, translating biome-wide goals and mid-scale objectives to projects that are relevant for the local landscape. They will have the opportunity to propose projects that can be considered and prioritized at the mid-scale level for national-level funding.

Local organizations could work with mid-scale organizations to develop appropriate monitoring and data collection metrics to evaluate success at project scales, which could be collected and shared across scales (as appropriate) to help determine progress towards shared goals. They could identify any data gaps and needs that the larger-scale entities could help to fill, as well as identify needs for the handling of confidential data.

Local organizations could share case studies and best practices they have developed with the partnership members. They could also identify capacity-building needs that could be funded at the mid- or biome level or they could work with the mid-level to determine how the necessary expertise could be brought to bear.

Additional pieces to add, as determined by the Drafting Work Group: Tribal engagement plan, wiring diagram, leadership, options for funding, etc.

Translating Desired Functions by Scale into Potential Administrative Structures

Understanding which potential functions we want the partnership to fulfill at various scales can inform potential administrative structures that can enable completion of those functions, particularly if we look back on the Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance Assessment Report and the Review of Models for Sagebrush Partnership Governance (Sagebrush Conservation Strategy – WAFWA) for guidance on how they structurally approached similar functional needs.

For conservation objectives and any prioritization scheme that is derived from those goals to be effective they must have scientific legitimacy and they must be accepted and endorsed by land management and wildlife agencies (including tribal) who have the responsibility, authority and expertise over sagebrush, sagebrush dependent wildlife, and threats to the biome. This suggests a national level collaborative "Council" who can act upon and endorse objectives and areas for conservation emphasis (prioritization). If federal funding is to be distributed, and this has been identified as a significant need and an expectation for participation of stakeholders in the assessment, then a national level body to approve funding distribution plans will be necessary. If there is an expectation that NGOs and potentially industry and other affected groups will accept and incorporate these goals, objectives, and priority areas into their conservation activities then these groups should be represented on this body. There was a similar expectation for setting objectives, identifying priority areas for conservation, and distributing funding to local scale projects at a mid-scale, potentially ecoregional or state. This creates a similar need for some form of administrative structure to accomplish these functions at a mid-scale. Conversely, the majority of support reserved setting local objectives and local

priorities to local communities and groups, independent of any partnership model. While conservation actions at local scales would be facilitated and supported by the partnership, there is not necessarily a need for any administrative partnership structure beyond what presently exists to accomplish this.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) Committee established and periodically updates Plan goals. The North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA), the federal funding mechanism that initially implemented the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, established the North American Wetland Conservation Council who oversees federal funding by soliciting, reviewing, and recommending funding proposals for habitat conservation. The Council includes the USFWS Director (funds are congressionally appropriated to USFWS), the Secretary of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a State Wildlife Agency Director representing each Flyway, and NGO representatives involved in projects under the Plan or NAWCA. Although separate, national-level guidance groups were established under NAWMP and NAWCA to deal with planning and funding distribution, respectively, this would not likely be necessary for sagebrush conservation. The NAWMP Committee includes representatives from Canada and Mexico because many North American waterfowl breed in Canada (and the U.S.) and winter in Mexico (and the U.S.). The NAWCA Council was separate from the NAWMP Plan Committee presumably because, while funds can be and are distributed to entities in Canada and Mexico, decision making authority on funding distribution was left to the U.S. Although sagebrush extends peripherally into Canada, it does not extend into Mexico and our Conservation Strategy efforts to this point only include the U.S., so presumably one national-level entity could oversee planning and funding distribution for sagebrush conservation.

Wetlands and grassland conservation needed to meet NAWMP goals is delivered through a NAWCA grant program and through conservation programs supported and facilitated by the public-private partnership efforts of 22 Joint Ventures (JVs) across the U.S. (18) and Canada (4), with a few extending into Mexico. NAWCA grant proposals are evaluated and approved by the North American Wetland Conservation Council, but their decisions are strongly influenced by rankings established by Joint Ventures. These JVs are the mid-scale in the NAWMP partnership model, and each has its own collaborative governance structure to guide its' activities. JV Management Boards – typically comprised of federal agencies, state agencies, NGOs, and, in some cases, industry representatives and private landowners – set direction, establish goals, and approve operational plans for these self-directed public-private partnerships. JVs are staffed through a variety of funding sources including appropriated federal JV funds and partner contributions from other federal agencies, state agencies, NGOs, corporations, or foundations. JV staff positions are hosted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or partner organizations (e.g., American Bird Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, WAFWA, Pheasants Forever, Wildlife Management Institute). There is no administrative structure at local scales in the NAWMP partnership model; rather, projects are generated by local representatives of partner agencies or NGOs.

The Northwest Boreal Partnership develops and implements strategic plans and makes funding decisions through a Steering Committee which includes voting and non-voting members. "Members include entities that steward, use, or manage natural or cultural resources; conduct related science; and possess or gather indigenous or traditional ecological knowledge." These include Federal, State and Provincial Government agencies, and representatives from NGOs, Indigenous organizations, and Universities. There is no partnership structure at mid- or local scales, proposed projects are brought up to the Steering Committee for resolution.

The Chesapeake Bay Partnership (CBP) and Program governance structure has evolved since the initial agreement was signed in 1983 and is now a fairly complex hierarchical structure (see Fig. 1 in Research report). The highest level is the Chesapeake Executive Council, composed of the Governors of the watershed states, the mayor of D.C., the EPA administrator, and the Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission. The Executive Council is supported by the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC), which is composed of high-level State and Federal leaders. The Principles' Staff Committee provides policy and program direction to the CBP Management Board, representatives of signatory agencies generally ranking a step below those on the PSC, which oversees implementation actions including an adaptive management and monitoring component (Strategy Review System). Three Advisory Committees (Citizens, Local Government, and Scientific and Technical) provide input to the Executive Council and the Management Board, while a Communications Workgroup also advises and works with the Management Board. Goal Implementation Teams are tasked with developing strategies to reach objectives in each of 5 thematic areas (Abundant life, Clean Water, Climate Change, Conserved Lands, and Engaged Communities). The equivalent of a mid-scale in this partnership would be the State-based Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) developed by Federal, State, and local governments. There is no equivalent to a local partnership structure, local monitoring and pollution reduction activities occur through a myriad of ~ 1800 local governments, 20 academic institutions, over 60 businesses, nonprofits, and advocacy groups, and employees of 19 Federal and 40 state agencies and programs.

There are examples of very successful collaborative conservation programs that achieve conservation functions at national, mid-, and local scales entirely within a government administrative structure. Programs such as USDA Farm bill conservation title programs, and the USFWS Partners Program. Most state wildlife agencies have similar habitat programs that deliver conservation to the local level. All of these differ in some respects because their objectives are programmatic in nature; they achieve as much as they can with the program dollars appropriated, rather than setting specific quantifiable goals they wish to achieve for a landscape or population. An example for illustrative purposes would be the NRCS Sage-grouse Initiative (SGI), one of nine initiatives within the Working Lands for Wildlife Program. Policies and allowable conservation practices are established nationally, then prioritized and modified by NRCS State Conservationists, who consults with a State Conservation Committee, composed of representatives from Federal and State natural resource agencies, American Indian Tribes, agricultural and environmental organizations, and agricultural producers. Conservation practices are then delivered at the local scale by individual producers with the support of NRCS offices and staff in local communities.

Sagebrush Partnership Models Development Process
Advisory Committee Workshop 2

Wednesday, May 12th – 1pm to 4pm Mountain

(Zoom link provided via email)

Workshop Objectives:

- Receive an update of the partnership model evolution to date.
- Review and improve conceptual **partnership structures** ("conceptual wireframes") based on proposed partnership functions developed by the drafting work group following input from the Advisory Committee.
- Understand the next steps for the process, including additional opportunities for engagement by this group and the broader sagebrush conservation community.

Workshop Packet: Agenda; products to date (problem statement, vision, guiding principles, functions table, structures table)

Agenda:

Time	Topic	Lead
1:00pm	**Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review** • Welcome & Introductions • Agenda review • Process to date *Materials: Agenda, process map*	• Tom Remington, Core Team • Susan Hayman, Facilitator
1:20 pm	**Conceptual Partnership Wireframes** • Purpose for the discussion • Connection to the partnership structures table • Wireframe-refinement and building *Materials: Functions and structure table for individual reference*	• Tom Remington • Brett Brownscombe, Drafting Work Group • Facilitation team • All
2:00 pm	**Conceptual Partnership Wireframes – Breakout Group Discussion** • *How do we want these functional relationships to be structured?* • *Are the critical functions identified in the Functions Table for the biome, mid-scale, and local levels supported through this structure?* • *What's missing? What would you add or change? Why?* • *Fatal flaws—how can we alleviate them?* *Materials: Onscreen Mural Board (no link required); Functions and structure table for individual reference*	Facilitated discussion
2:45 pm	**Break**	

3:00 pm	**Conceptual Partnership Wireframes – Advisory Committee Perspectives** • Review conceptual wireframes • Compare and note areas of convergence/divergence for DWG refinement *Materials:* Onscreen Mural Board (no link required); Functions and structure table for individual reference	Facilitated discussion
3:50 pm	**Next Steps and Wrap up** • Online comment opportunities • Process conclusion steps *Materials: Process map*	Susan Hayman Dana Goodson Tom Remington
4:00 pm	**Adjourn**	

Sagebrush Partnership Model Advisory Committee Workshop #2

Wednesday May 12th, 2021 | 1pm – 4pm MST

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review

The facilitation team welcomed participants and reviewed the agenda. Tom Remington, WAFWA, and Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic, provided opening comments. Problem/vision statements/guiding principles and functions have been refined by the Drafting Work Group from input provided by the Advisory Committee at Workshop #1. They will be important references for today's workshop.

Objectives:

- Receive an update of the partnership model evolution to date
- Review and improve conceptual **partnership structures**
- Understand the next steps for the process including additional opportunities for engagement

Process to Date

Tom provided an overview of where this process began and progress to date. The purpose of this effort is to build partnerships that link ongoing sagebrush conservation efforts together, facilitating and supporting conservation actions. He acknowledged the substantial efforts underway, and the need to build a network structure to support ongoing projects. Tom said it is unknown whether the sum of the actions currently underway will be enough to conserve sagebrush and keep sage-grouse and other critical species from being federally listed. Part of the partnership structure is to create a system to define success, goals, and keep a check on whether the sum of individual actions are adequate with needs.

Tom referenced the findings from the Udall Foundation's Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance Assessment Report (2021), and its Review of Models for Sagebrush Biome Partnership Governance (2021). He then briefly identified the outcomes thus far from the Advisory Committee Workshop #1 (March 18, 2021), and the two Drafting Work Group meetings that followed:

- Problem statement (refined draft)
- Vision (refined draft)
- Guiding principles (refined draft)
- Partnership Functions Table (refined draft, organized by scale)
- Partnership function narrative (refined draft)
- Partnership Structures Table (first draft)

Conceptual Partnership Wireframes

In his introduction to this agenda item, Tom noted that the wireframes were intended to be frameworks that stimulate key questions and allow for refinement, not provide the "final answer." It is currently envisioned that the "partnership functions" are primarily supported at the biome and mid-scale levels with high degree of autonomy given to local scale groups.

Brett Brownscombe presented the Drafting Work Group's Partnership Structure Table, saying that it is not presented as a final product; these concepts would benefit from additional discussion and refinement. The Udall Foundation's research on partnership models, Advisory Committee discussions from Workshop #1, and efforts by the Drafting Workgroup to translate general thoughts/comments contributed to development of the Partnership Structures Table and associated Conceptual Partnership Wireframes that will be discussed today.

Brett then provided an overview to the Structures Table. Components along the left of the first column include those the Drafting Work Group thought would provide structure to the model options. The table also describes the three options developed to varying degrees of detail by the Drafting Work Group:

1. Governor and Federal led
2. NGO led
3. Federal led

Brett provided the following additional points about the Structures Table:

- There are other mid-scale concepts to consider – authority structure, state boundaries; tribal boundaries funding distribution, and how joint ventures can help address the needs at this scale
- Tribal engagement is a priority for all these structures; tribal representatives need to lead the way on what this engagement should look like
- The models do not restrict funding to one source; there may be potential alternative sources of funding that allow for a 'mix and match' approach for different scales and under different authorities
- Each option is not a standalone approach—an interim/transitional approach, perhaps with an NGO-led transitional model, could also be considered
- The Table is intended to define lanes, what the Drafting Team hoped to do was to define these lanes and avoid overlap and "mission creep" in the functions
- There is a need to define accountability mechanisms that ensure partners are contributing to shared goals
- There needs to be a management system that will support the goals and objectives defined at each scale

Additional points from Advisory Committee members during this discussion include:

- Science and research should be identified at all scales, not just at the mid-scale
- A metrics/measure of success and accountability is needed to ensure everyone is on the same page. It was noted that a Conservation by Design and Prioritization Workgroup is charged to set the metrics for biome-wide conservation goals and objectives. This group is currently thinking that ecological integrity can be used as a proxy for ecosystem services in combination with wildlife layers. Next steps for the group include establishing a monitoring and adaptive management construct.

Conceptual Partnership Wireframes – Breakout Group Discussion

The Facilitation Team developed conceptual wireframes to reflect the overall framing for each of the three structural options described in the Partnership Structures Table. Participants were asked to self-

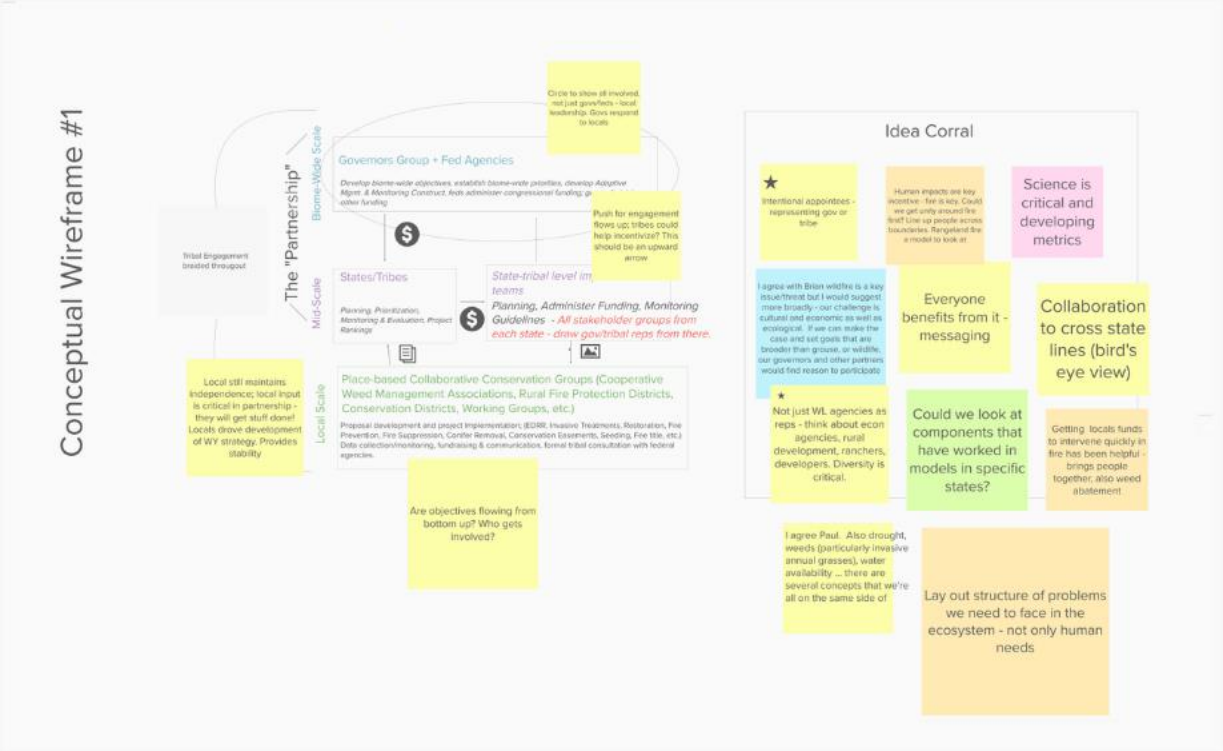
select one of the wireframes to be placed into separate breakout rooms to discuss and improve on the specifics of each wireframe.

The following questions were used to guide a discussion, using Mural Boards to visually depict potential structural features. Facilitators encouraged discussion by the group relevant to the following framing questions:

- How do we want these functional relationships to be structured?
- Are the critical functions identified in the Functions Table for the biome, mid-scale, and local levels supported through this structure?
- What's missing? What would you add or change? Why? Fatal flaws—how can we alleviate this?

Report Out by Breakout Group

Wireframe 1: Governor and Federal Led *(see Attachment 1 for full size version)*



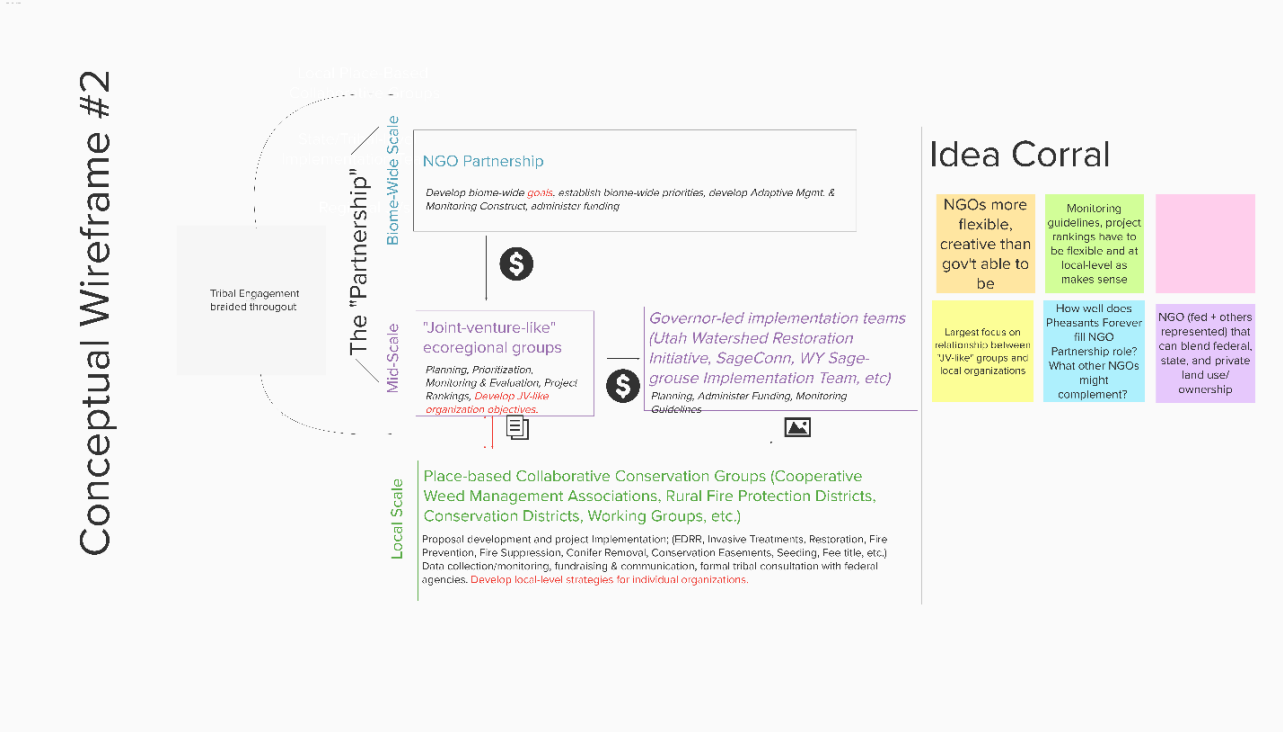
Key points during the report-out:

- Structure: A lot of the energy and initiative flows from the local level. The local level will be critical to the partnership, providing stability and accomplishing tasks, and should be depicted as such. The locus should be the mid-scale, composed of stakeholders and representatives from Tribes with incentives and engagement coming from the bottom up/local level rather than top down. There also needs to be local representation at the biome level. It is important to be intentional about the selection of appointees at the biome level. Representatives of the governors, Tribes, and other groups at the biome level should be drawn from those participating at the mid-scale.

- When it was noted that governors appear at both the biome and mid-level, the group responded that a Governor's office would establish an implementation group at a state-level (may already exist) and appoint multi-disciplinary representatives at the biome-wide scale

- Leadership: This wireframe looks at governors as the conveners; however, there is the limitation of changing administrations and shifts in priorities. Similar issue exists with quasi-government bodies such as WAFWA, with a lack of consistency with leadership over the years. A sense of permanence in leadership is important to ensure long-term implementation of the model.
- Framing: In the messaging around this effort, it will be critical to frame it in a big-picture, cross-border way that demonstrates the benefits to everyone. A human impact framing could help incentivize both wildlife and non-wildlife agencies. Fire is a good example of how to have a human-centric concept be central to the design of priorities and a good motivator for a range of potential partners and leaders, including economic and rural development agencies, ranchers, and developers. Diversity of representation is key. Other unifying issues include drought, weeds (particularly invasive annual grasses), and water availability. At the same time, however, the ecosystem needs to be the ultimate leading driver for the partnership – it is not only human needs that are essential here.

Wireframe 2: NGO Led *(see Attachment 1 for full size version)*

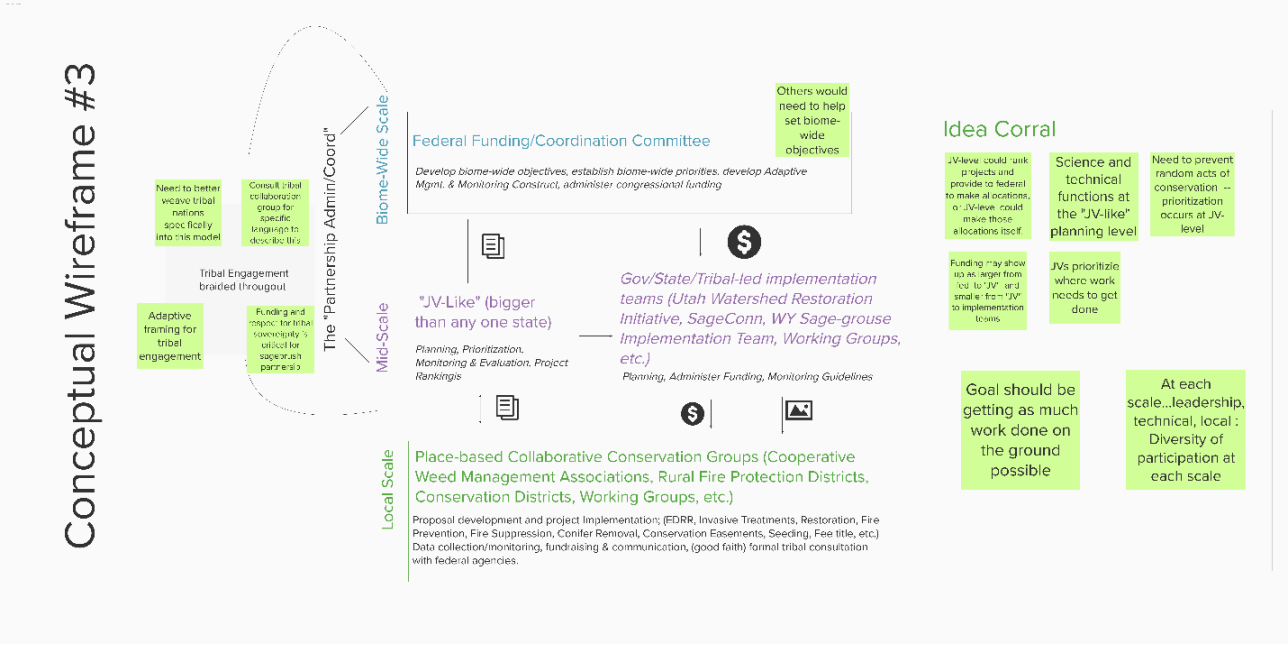


Key points during the report-out:

- An NGO led Partnership Structure allows for more flexibility, creativity, nimbleness, and less bureaucracy

- An NGO led model can develop a stronger, independent private/public/federal land partnership and be a more attractive model for private landowners
  - This model could be a standalone partnership or a starting point for a transitional type of approach that eventually leads to a governing body led model
  - Current NGO partnerships are currently focused on private land; this model needs to consider how to address public land in addition to private land and landowners
  - Current NGOs that cover the entire biome, e.g., Pheasants Forever—and their Sage Grouse Initiative—and Mule Deer Foundation, tend to be species or other function specific. Could multiple NGOs, pieced together, fit the needs of this Partnership?
- Recommend addressing cohesion across scales by developing interrelated mid-scale objectives and biome-scale goals, and encouraging local scale strategies that support those objectives and goals
- More emphasis needs to be on the bottom-up structural aspect
  - Monitoring guidelines need to be flexible to ensure voluntary compliance at the local level
  - Project ranking and monitoring evaluation should happen at the local level
- Consider "boots on the ground" projects that could be patched into this framework
  - Consider the gaps in what currently exists at the local level that a biome level model can help fill

Option 3: Federal Led *(see Attachment 1 for full size version)*



Key points during the report-out:

- While this option envisions a "federal funding committee," the group thought of this as including others besides federal agencies to help set biome-wide objectives
- The main science and technical functions occur at the "JV-like" planning level
  - Prioritize where "work gets done" to help prevent "random actions of conservation" at the local level

    - JV-like level could rank project and provide this ranking to federal agencies to make funding allocations (group initially considered JV-like entity handling the funding, but then felt this would make more sense to go directly from the biome-level to mid-scale implementation teams to distribute funding)
- Science, technical, local, and leadership interests are represented at each scale
- Tribal coordination group NEEDS to be considered, seems a bit disconnected
    - Respect for tribal connection is essential for this to be successful
    - Adaptive framing for tribal engagement is needed
    - Funding and respect for tribal sovereignty is critical for the sagebrush partnership
- There are many other functions that need to be identified in this model:
    - Ex. How to incorporate science (need scientific advisory group)
    - Need to consider what representation occurs at these scales
- Important to note that all scales are part of the partnership (not just the biome and mid-levels). Need to emphasize that it is the "boots on the ground" doing the actual restoration work. The goal should be getting as much work done on ground as possible
- Local groups should be represented/feedback group at the biome and mid-scales

Additional Advisory Committee Perspectives

- **Some critical functions were not captured in today's discussion, due to lack of time.** Questions remain around accountability structure and authority, as well as where to incorporate science and what kind of representation will occur at which level
- An NGO led model might not have the gravitas to keep partners incentivized to maintain connection with a partnership; however, it would be independent from the dynamics of any particular federal or state political administration/government
- If an existing NGO were to be at the center of the NGO led model, there is a possibility that that authority and ability to drive accountability might prove to be an issue. However, if an NGO was formed specifically for the purpose of driving this partnership, that accountability and structure would be central to establishment of that authority
- Creation of a new NGO to lead this partnership would require investment energy/resources to get that off the ground. There may be an opportunity to use an existing organization/system that already has authority among stakeholder groups/states/agencies to move that forward (examples – Great Yellowstone Coordinating Committee, an inter-state steering committee, or an existing joint venture)
- Other considerations with an NGO led model is the ability to have variety of investment opportunities based around other guiding principles such as climate mitigation, use of carbon credits, and investment through landscape level management goals and objectives that goes beyond state boundaries (fires, invasive species, etc.).
- With regards to funding, the streams should go towards multiple objectives which include ecosystem functions and also support local socio-economic elements
- **The Advisory Committee agreed that all three approaches could be viable**. It was noted that all three could function at different scales. Priority should be given to identify the best way to work across state lines and explore different ways each approach addresses the following aspects:
    - Authority
    - Funding

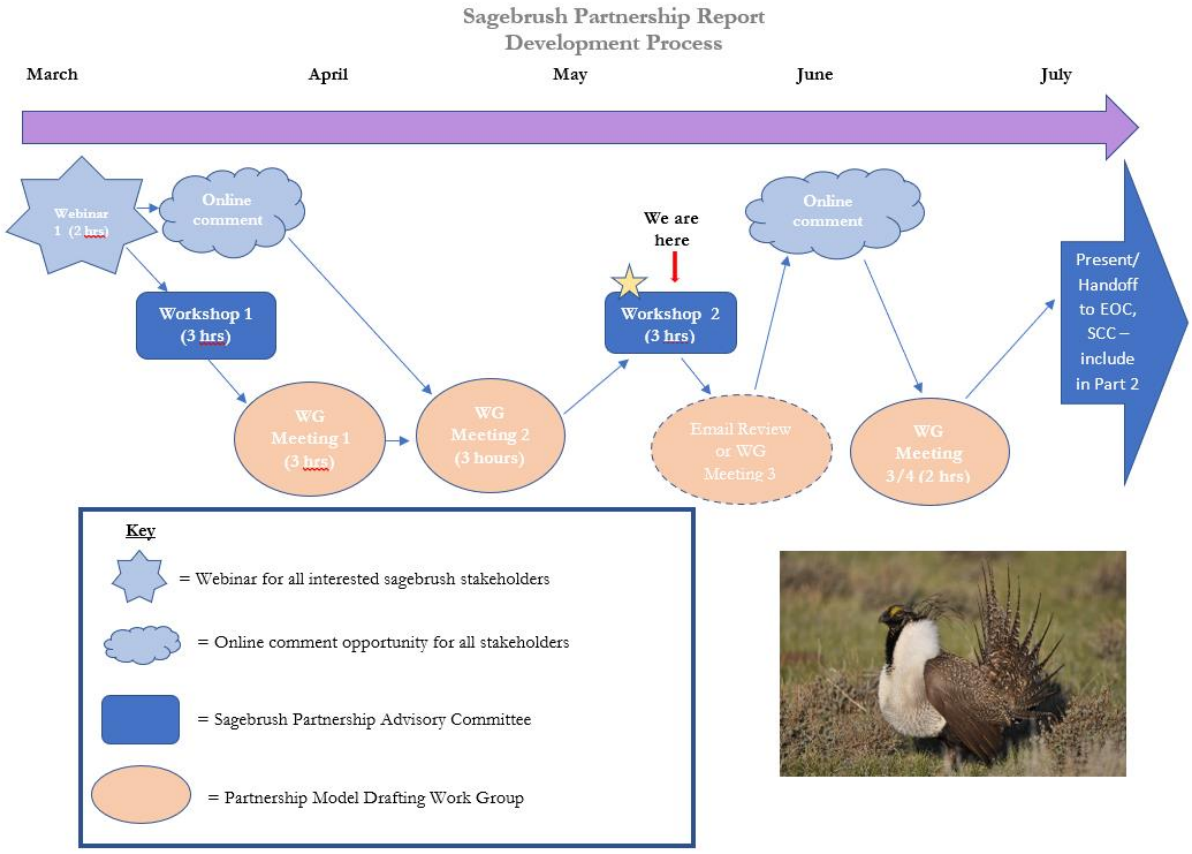
    - Management
- There was discussion of the ‘Farm Bill’ model, which has a "partnership structure" at national, mid-scale (State Conservationist and Committee) and local (Conservation District) levels. However, there was a strong consensus to avoid imposing a structure at a local level. That approach works well for prescribing a set of conservation practices; it is less flexible, however, when it comes to responding to proposals and local needs.
- Recommendation to have the Drafting Group explore a ‘mix and match’ approach to the structure and the function weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each Wireframe. Note that some functions are best delivered locally/through an NGO while others would require Governor level authority.

Next Steps

Tom and Dana walked through the project’s Next Steps

- Drafting Team will continue to flesh out other topics brought up on this call
    - Partnership model structures
    - Communication
    - Representation
- Online Engagement Tool in June will offer the opportunity to review the draft proposed models
- Drafting Workgroup Meeting 3 and 4 (June/July)
    - Possibly Meeting 3 will be email review rather than a meeting
- Partnership model options package/final report (presented in July to the Executive Oversight Committee)

Process Map:



Susan, Tom, and Dana thanked the participants for their contributions, and adjourned the meeting.

Advisory Committee Workshop #2 Participants

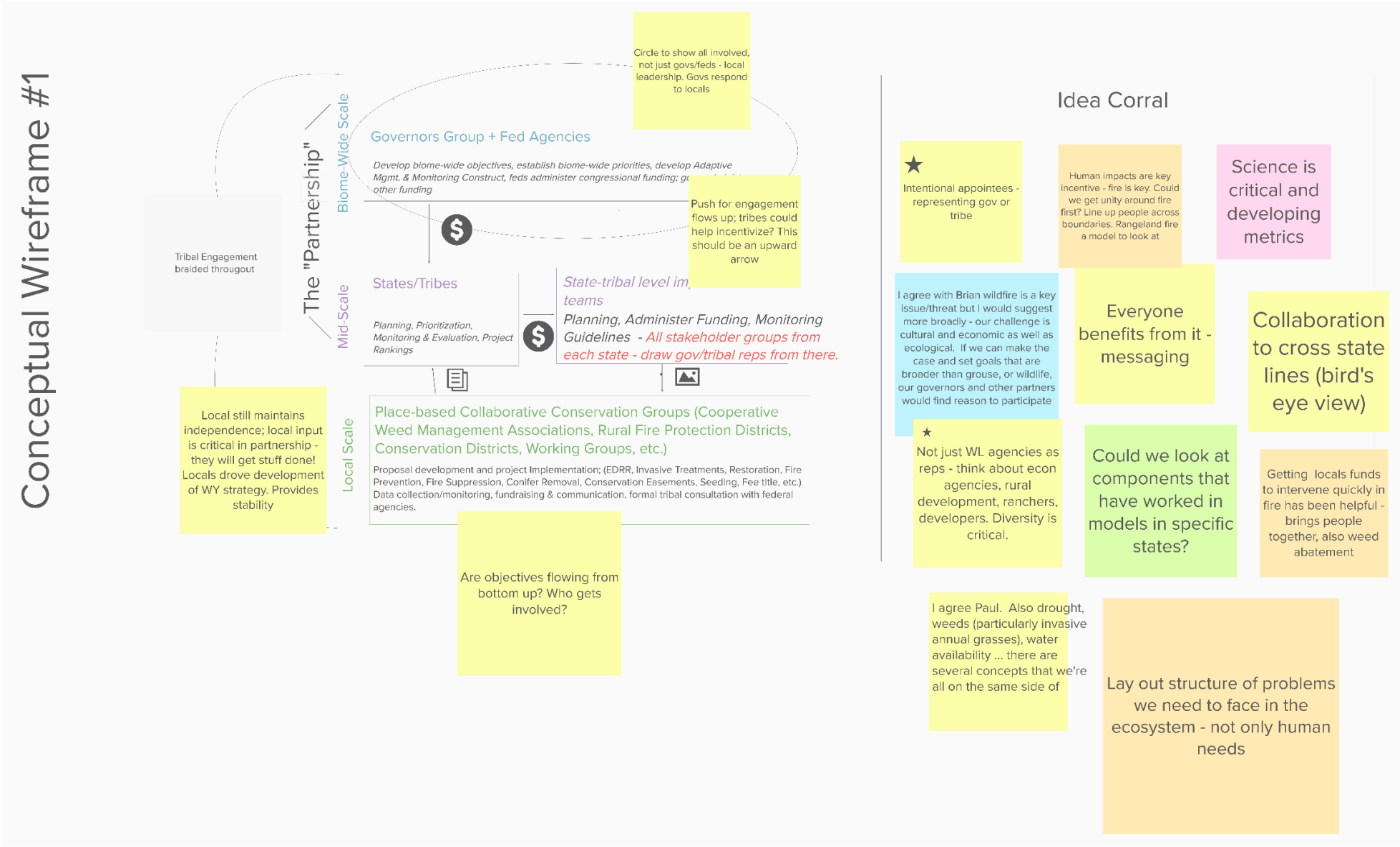
- Aaron Foster, Fremont County Weed & Pest -
- Bob Budd, WY Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust
- Brett Brownscombe, Oregon SageCon Partnership
- Brian Rutledge, Audubon Society
- Carolyn Sime, Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program
- Chris Jasmine, Nevada Gold Mines and Ranches
- Corey Lucero, Native American Fish & Wildlife Society
- Cristina Eisenberg, Oregon State University
- Danny Summers, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
- Dave Pellatz, Thunder Basin National Grasslands
- James Rogers, Winecup Gamble Ranch
- Jim Lyons, University of Montana
- Julie Kraft, Sublette County Weed and Pest
- Karen Prentice, BLM
- Matt Preston, BLM
- Pat Deibert, USFWS
- Paul Henson, USFWS

- Paul Meiman, UNR Extension
- Rebecca Riley, Big Sandy Rancheria
- Rod Litzel, Johnson County Weed and Pest (WY)
- San Stiver, WAFWA
- Sean Finn, USFWS
- Slade Franklin, Wyoming Department of Agriculture
- Steve Abele, USFWS
- Steve Jester, Partnerscapes
- Tom Remington, WAFWA
- Tomer Hasson, The Nature Conservancy

Facilitation Team

- Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic
- Mario Colón, Ross Strategic
- Dana Goodson, National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution, Udall Foundation
- Melanie Knapp, National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution, Udall Foundation
- Monique Mullenaux, National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution, Udall Foundation

Attachment 1: Conceptual Wireframes Mural Boards from Breakout Group Discussion



Attachment 1: Conceptual Wireframes Mural Boards from Breakout Group Discussion

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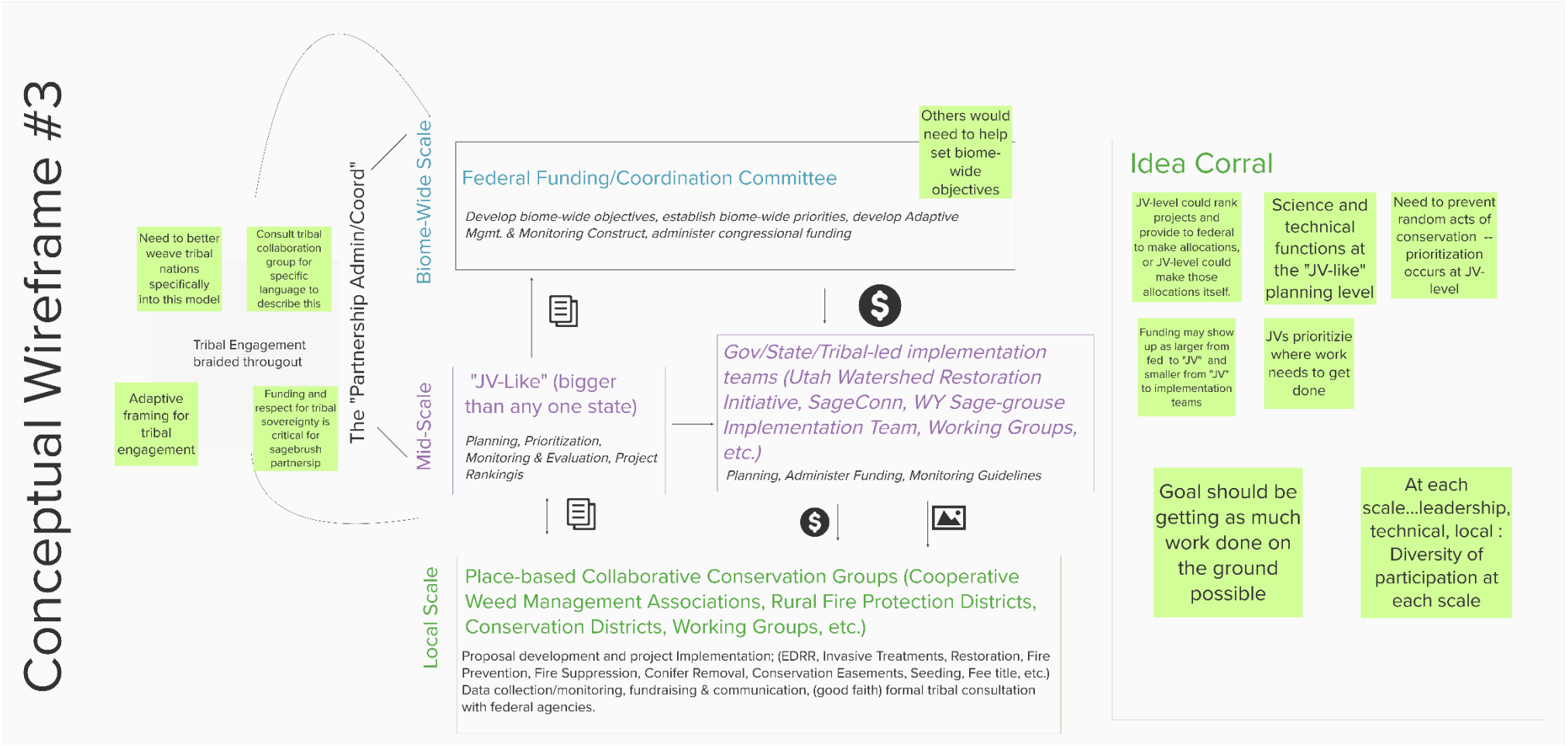


Which of these Models do you think would work best? Why?

1. Option 1 (Governor Led) Preferred (17)

1.1 Proven model-- Much of the infrastructure for a governor-convened approach is already in place (i.e., WGA).
1.2 Strikes a balance between including and incorporating local knowledge and concerns
1.3 Has the gravitas to exert meaningful influence at the federal level.
1.4 Brings a variety of state level resources to the table while bringing in federal partners that have funds and federal mission areas important to the conservation.
1.5 Greatest likelihood to get moving more quickly and carry momentum.
1.6 Puts tribal leaders at the table from the onset.
1.7 Producers/Landowners are most comfortable if this strongly regional effort is tied to strong elected regional leadership.
1.8 Efficient and effective implementation directed towards resources
1.9 Places entities with primary management authority for sagebrush-dependent wildlife species in charge of governance.
1.10 This is the only model description that calls out industry representation.
1.11 Best suited to building cooperation and trust across a broad spectrum of agencies, interests, and stakeholders for the purpose of facilitating local bottom-up community-based conservation.
1.12 A governor led effort, might provide an element of consistency during administration changes.
1.13 Requires bi-partisan governors and Department Secretaries. Would need serious engagement and commitment of executive time.
1.14 Ideally this would be a state-led effort but question the ability of states to get leadership and/or staff within each state to participate across such a large geographic scale.
1.15 Get buy-in from each state's governor, which lends support to this partnership.
1.16 Raises the profile of issues that state wildlife agencies work on with Governor's Offices; attracts partners that might not otherwise engage in a partnership; ensures states take a leading role and buying into management outcomes/recommendations that might impact their individual states.
1.17 Will produce the best long term cooperative conservation results.

Option 1 –NOT Preferred

1.18 Governor-led did not work first time around and is less likely to now.
1.19 State-level efforts have largely been fraught with unique challenges including political isolation/lack of stakeholder representation in addition to being more unilaterally controlled by whomever is governor at the time.
1.20 This option lacks a key aspect of continuity. As state administrations changes so will priorities. WAFWA works for the directors, the directors work for their governors
1.21 This option has been the model to date. Although worthy, the outcomes of this effort have not met the conservation needs necessary to maintain quality sagebrush habitats long-term.
1.22 Executive-heavy – may be hard to sufficient time commitment from people at this level.

1.23 State buy-in has long been a challenge. More likely to be successful if we can surmount state's wariness of fed overreach. But if the motivation comes from the executive branch, expect inconsistency as new governors may reverse gains.

1.24 State-led: Could work best if majority of the state's impetus comes from legislatures, not governor. If this were to work - and long-term commitments were attained from most states, model would still be dependent on federal funding influx.

1.25 The danger with a governor-led model is that there may not be much support for sage-grouse protections.

1.26 Not sure there is strong enough gubernatorial leadership.

2. Option 2 (NGO Led) Preferred (5)

2.1 IWJV model has proven successful

2.2 Greater ability to move quickly and, if properly chartered/established, could minimize inherent inefficiencies in agency structure and function.

2.3 Would create the most long-term stability.

2.4 Sets goals, objectives, and strategies at the correct scales. Additionally, the NGO partnership can and will have a much more diverse group supporting it than would the Federal Option. More federal management is not what is needed.

Option 2 NOT Preferred Because

2.5 WAFWA's LPC efforts a good example of how this model can go awry.

2.6 Authority for management decisions and direction for on-the-ground work is less clear.

2.7 May work in a coalition frame, but it's not realistic to assume that this will be accepted by all stakeholders - particularly those in industry, elected government, or other NGOs not at the table or with inequitable constituency representation.

2.8 The Feds and States could easily do their own thing.

2.9 Creates another layer or hierarchy which will be subject to the whims of the sponsors.

2.10 Producers will not feel represented at the Biome level with Option 2.

2.11 Don't have the funding, oversight, and coordination capabilities as would exist with state and federal agencies.

2.12 Lacks the political investment of Options 1 and 3 and could raise questions about authority and legitimacy.

2.13 Forming a new NGO could be challenging because a new organization would need to build new structures (board, bylaws, etc.) and identify sustainable sources of funding to maintain the organization and its new infrastructure before it took up any substantive issues.

2.14 "Neutral third party" serving as mediator among state, fed & resource use groups could be critical for durability. It would be very challenging to create an NGO model that is trusted by all stakeholders.

2.15 There are without doubt many environmental NGOs that focus on implementing conservation efforts. Unfortunately, there are also many that are specifically engaged in advocating against something, rather than working in collaborative partnerships in support of something. This view of NGOs could cast a shadow on the effectiveness of one attempting to take on this role.

The focus of many NGOs is often driven by its funders and their interests which often takes the opportunity of partnerships with broad stakeholder interests off the table. Who would be "holding the purse strings" of a new NGO or coalition of NGOs for the purpose of leading this type of effort? In some cases, even the existing conservation-based NGOs do not have the trust and respect of certain stakeholder groups. Even a new NGO would have a lot of work ahead of it to overcome lack of trust and to facilitate a collaborative process - just by virtue of being labeled an NGO.

2.16 While NGOs, and states, need to be part of the solution, NGOs lack the resources and the capacity to carry the burden on their own. Competition between NGOs for funding can further impact capacity for collaboration and leadership.

2.17 NGO Partnership will gather people, but likely quickly fade and not garner buy in and the desired long-term results.

3. Option 3 Preferred (Federal Coord Led) (9)

3.1 Proven model (i.e., the 2015 sagebrush/grouse conservation plans).

3.2 Places entities with significant habitat management authorities (on public lands) and significant scientific capacity in charge of governance.

3.3 Direct allocation from the federal government to state and local levels keeps more money in the system and less for overhead of an NGO.

3.4 Less political sway between administrations

3.5 Feds experienced in cross-jurisdictional inclusivity and consistency across planning areas

3.6 Best assurance of continuity and a source of funding to leverage

3.7 Federally led, with assistance from WAFA most effective and could use existing infrastructure.

3.8 Ensures coordination across state lines and minimizes the influence of state politics in making key land management decisions affecting the sagebrush ecosystem.

3.9 Most likely to have the staffing support and consistency, but really will need some elements of Option 1 (Secretarial Orders, state Exec Orders), so a hybrid of 1 and 3.

3.10 Federal agencies bring funding and decision-making that can match states in implementing conservation.

3.11 Federal gov't already has the scaled infrastructure in place (e.g., BLM National Office>>State Office>>District>>Field Office).

Option 3 NOT Preferred

3.12 Producers will not feel represented at the Biome level with Option 3.

3.13 Efforts following this model tend to get bogged down, and stakeholder buy in at local levels is especially difficult in certain situations.

3.14 This option would be viewed as the states being directed by the Feds.

3.15 Could be improved if funding were not annual or term-based but rather a long-term commitment (e.g., decades).

3.16 May be viewed as more regulatory than voluntary.

3.17 Federally led coalition would likely be too "clunky" to be able to move something like this forward. Further, the local ground-level focus for many federal agency personnel is based on

career growth through mobility. Because of this, agency personnel are rarely able to become members of local communities in a real sense which can lead to lack of trust and the ability to maintain top-down public/private partnerships. Local/state interests and stakeholders must be directly involved as part of the partnership governance model.

3.18 Longstanding distrust among feds and states suggest a fed-led model will result in inconsistent commitments.

3.19 Points to the necessity of involving federal agencies but a government-led effort might not be able to gain the same level of trust and would be subject to political whims when it comes to funding, etc.

3.20 Federally led Coordination Committee would produce mixed results and will not have the state level buy in.

4. Other Comments Regarding Options

4.1 In Utah, wildlife conservation success is measured by how well competing land uses get their wishes.

4.2 State and Federal commitment is fundamental to success

4.3 Option 2: If NGOs could be given authority over authorized land use on federal lands, this may show promise. If they are purely advisory, this will fail.

4.4 Perhaps a hybrid combination of Options 2 and 3 would be most effective.

4.5 Option 1 works best in portions of the range where there are not expansive federal lands, and private landowner buy-in is key.

4.6 I believe the model needs to have a body leading the effort that has some level of influence over the effort. However, there needs to be a VERY strong level of partnership baked into the process

4.7 Must engage state and stakeholders, regardless of the model.

4.8 A successful model must focus on how to best facilitate trust and partnerships to facilitate community-based conservation initiatives and steer clear of a top-down approach as much as possible.

4.9 The change really needs to be a mandate for the Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture. Land Use Plan Amendments have failed miserably, or at least the implementation of those plan amendments have failed to effectively conserve and maintain the quality of sagebrush habitats.

5. What would you change or add to the models? Why?

5.1 **Specific to Option 1 (Governor led):**

- Change Option 1 at the **mid-scale level to not have State admin boundary focus**. I think a State-by-State approach will warrant an even spread of attention, rather than focusing on the true highest needs. I think the JV-like from Option 2, applied to Option 3, but where the staffing is a FACA-group with State, NGO, tribal members, could be the most functional and feasible.
- Option 1 is like what has worked with regards to a WGA task force led by Governors. State buy-in is important. However, it is equally important that federal agencies are involved since they often have authority for implementation (needs to be: **bi-partisan governors in**

partnership w/ DOI, USDA, plus BIA / DOI). It is also important that Tribes as well as NGOs and other stakeholders have a seat at the table.

- Some level of local (state) leadership will ensure more success but this cannot be politically motivated, or it will fail. Option 1 must be a **mixture of career staff and committed capacity**. It's also important to link to local communities (counties?) to ensure local buy-in.
- **Add current state-level efforts**(SageCon) to the Governor-led option.
- Add a piece about **NGO engagement** in the Governor-led model
- Any Governor-led effort would need to be **balanced with science-based technical advice** that is not politicized if the goal is to establish range-wide priorities.

5.2 Specific to Option 2 (NGO led):

- **Super NGO with the endorsement/support of Governors/Tribes**; sort of a hybrid version of the options presented.
- A 'Super NGO' with **state-level endorsement and federal support, with a very difficult "back out"" provision** seems best for the long-haul nature of the effort. The ability to move quickly and with limited inefficiencies is desirable. The delivery success shown over time of Conservation Districts and Extension Service models might be considered in building a hybrid model. Stability and sustainability - certainly including multi-decade funding commitments - are crucial for the success of any model. It seems a hybrid has the potential to achieve that.
- I like option 2 but if it could **come from an invitation or request from governing bodies like option 1 - or federal agencies like option 3** - that might create more legitimacy.

5.3 Specific to Option 3 (Fed coordination led):

- Ensure **States** can **help set priorities**.
- Ensure there are **not biome- wide standards**, since ecology is different through-out the biome, e.g., don't enforce Oregon- level sagebrush cover standards on drier systems in Utah or Arizona.
- Develop **regional or local joint ventures that have access to funding and the power to administer the funding**. The biome-wide steering committee can set still set policy, but determining who and what gets funded should have more local input. The scale of the JV becomes important - the JV should be based on ecological regions, but to assert they need to be larger than one state might overlook the fact that there might be areas within a state that may warrant their own JV.

5.4 **Independent objective science is needed and not identified in any of the models**. The conservation program will only work where those advocating for wildlife have authority to review and approve relevant agency monitoring and management programs.

5.5 A stronger focus and structure for **integrating data and adaptive management** into each of these models is required.

5.6 Development of a **4th option that is led by a more neutral party**. Perhaps an academic institution like University of Wyoming's Ruckelshaus Institute or a western policy think tanks with academic ties like the Andrus Center for Public Policy in Idaho or the Salazar Center for North American Conservation in Colorado. This would be attractive to all stakeholders, create a

single point of logistical organization, focus on collaboration, and eliminate politics from the equation as much as possible in addition to elevating science in the processes.

5.7 **Funding mechanism includes extractive industry** (oil & gas, renewables, beef and wool, hard rock, recreational services). Profit-making industry should be invited to contribute on sustainable practices and mitigation to retain ecological functions and services

5.8 **Formalize State WL agencies as part of core coordination team**. Need to incorporate species expertise at top level. Include stakeholders/ NGOs/ private landowners as part of stakeholder advisory group.

5.9 One aspect that seemed underrepresented in all the models was the **monitoring component**. Robust and well thought out monitoring is needed to assess the impacts of the conservation actions. Key biological targets need to be identified and monitored.

5.10 Add clear focus on representation by **industry, commercial business and private landowners and managers**.

5.11 Regardless of the model, there needs to be an **integration of policy-level decision makers** at the highest level with the entities that can actually implement actions.

5.12 Keeping collaborative voluntary efforts in mind, most of the people slated to be at the table will be told to be there and/or will be getting paid to be there. See **value in people being at the table who won't be paid to be there**. Propose some sort of **input or representation from people outside of our current structures**.

5.13 The **National Invasive Species Council and the associated Invasive Species Advisory Committee approach was a good model**, though under underfunded, without the delegated authority needed to get the job done, and ultimately undermined by politics.

5.14 The Sage-grouse Initiative model works well - especially in the partnership space and delivering science to land managers. **Parts of SGI should be incorporated into the final model**.

5.15 WAFWA has done a grand job of trying to get things in order and moving to get conservation on the ground in an expeditious manner --a **revision of the entity might be the super NGO needed**.

5.16 **Federal agencies with state and NGO collaboration need to lead the effort**. A joint leadership team composed of lead fed, state, local (where leadership demonstrates a seat at the table), and NGOs with expertise to lead a landscape effort would provide the best leadership.

5.17 **A team of scientists and biome experts needs to be established** to provide the scientific and technical advice to guide landscape management decisions, to monitor progress in achieving management objectives, and to "raise the alarm" when population trends or habitat conditions are trending in the wrong direction and a new course of action is warranted.

5.18 **Hybridize 1 and 3 as much as possible**. The option 3 needs to include new capacity, not just repurposing existing staff at state and federal agencies.

5.19 Explore a hybrid model, not unlike that first proposed in the earlier draft NASECA legislation, in which **US DOI and USDA are charged with establishing a governance body consisting of representatives from all core constituencies; and, that body is codified (and legitimized) via an Act of Congress (and, potentially, analogous acts in affected state legislatures**).

5.20 Potentially allow each **State to carry out the tasks**.

6. How should conservation units be crafted at the mid-scale?

6.1 Jurisdictional at some level, with coordination across **jurisdictional boundaries** required (and a system set up through the models) where ecological conditions/managed populations dictate.

6.2 Both ecological and political boundaries/realities. To achieve management, you need to recognize the ecology (i.e., Great Basin ecology) but work within the existing federal, local and state-level political and management frameworks.

6.3 NRCS Major Land Resource Areas do a good job at delineating the areas with similar SG threats. If you were to overlay the MLRA's you would quickly see that most areas with major P/J impacts fall into a few MLRA's. Areas with Cheatgrass /fire fall into some specific MLRA's, etc.

6.4 **State boundaries**

- State boundaries would keep the organizational aspect simple yet related to meso-scale ecoregional issues (weeds, fire, ranching, etc.)
- There will be greater local and mid-level participation with state level units. Although ecological units cross state boundaries, the work on the ground is administered largely within state boundaries through existing partnerships, existing funding opportunities, and state-specific policies or other issues.
- Conservation units should be crafted by state and then broken into units as each state believes appropriate.
- Recognizes the variety of state level approaches towards sage conservation. Monitoring could occur at the ecoregion level to ensure outcomes are being obtained across state boundaries.
- Most federal (BLM, NRCS, FWS) funding comes to the state-level, as does, by definition, any state agency funding. Using an ecoregional approach would seem to complicate funding allocations to projects.
- States will have to work together. Perhaps there are lessons from the work on the bi-state population.

6.5 **Ecoregional:**

- The ecoregion approach successfully modeled by the joint ventures is an ideal way to address conservation units and prioritize consideration of intact habitat/habitat restoration regardless of jurisdictional boundaries, state/county lines or arbitrary demarcations.
- Ecoregions or sage-grouse climate clusters and neighborhood clusters.
- Management at 'natural' boundaries is more appropriate than at administrative or political boundaries. Natural boundaries are more difficult in the short term, but far more appropriate for the long-term aspects of land management.
- Some sort of watershed-focused approach would be best (and/or use the new local-climate sage grouse clusters coming out).
- Might force communication and cooperation across administrative boundaries to happen, but it does introduce additional complexity into the process.
- Convene a panel w/ state representation so states are bought in to the scaled approach. Use ecoregion designations that are then snapped to state wildlife agency regions resulting in mid-scale eco-management clusters.

6.6 **Ecologically based**

- US Forest Service ECOMAP layer, and based on the priorities for each ecoregion. Individual states can do their part to contribute where that ecoregion occurs in that respective state.
- Must be based on ecological concerns and reflect science-based guidance for managing the biome. Suggest guidance for management be established at the highest possible level as a basis for developing finer scale management guidelines at a "lower" level consistent with best available science for sustaining ecosystem health and not along political (e.g., state) or agency jurisdiction (e.g., BLM v Forest Service) boundaries.
- Collaboration between and among federal and state agencies, landowners, and tribal governments should be seamless, coordinated, and collaborative if the health of the biome and associated species is to be restored and/or preserved.
- At a minimum, have an Eastern and western range model, but probably aim for smaller ecoregional units as feasible. These should be determined through technical committee recommendations to the governing board.
- Biological focus should be regional considering the environmental variability that isn't delineated by state boundaries.
- To the maximum extent practicable, mid-scale conservation units should follow some ecological contour, be it eco-regional, watershed, BCR, etc.
- An alternative to ecoregions might be an approach that would largely mimic the cluster scale analysis conducted by USGS at one of the upper-level scales; however, I realize that approach is relegated to the range of Greater sage-grouse rather than the entire biome.
- Higher level lek clusters or sub-populations: the flaw with this is that the boundaries will move, but the benefit is that land managers and developers will have consistent regulations within a cluster, across state lines.

6.7 Crafted at the **scale they are achievable** . For example, within each state, there may be areas - working groups scale - that have the right stuff in terms of the unique ecology, and social and economic conditions that will allow them to succeed. Why limit innovation by imposing artificial boundaries that may impede free enterprise?

6.8 Crafted to be **authentically inclusive**. In Utah, these "conservation units" have been crafted to give agricultural interests dominate control. Not one active conservation organization is a member of Utah's advisory groups. And even with token membership, their input would be useless.

6.9 Consider creating **Conservation Enterprise Districts (CEDs)** – The CEDs may constitute a novel concept for creating a new funding base to fund and place voluntary conservation easements on high value private sagebrush lands that constitute sage-grouse and other candidate species habitats. Targeting easements to areas with a high threat of residential subdivision and dense sage-grouse populations may have a greater conservation benefit than random placement of easements based on traditional willing seller approaches (Copeland et al., 2013). A CED would function like a local bond issue for generating new revenue for a community public works project. The CED would engage a wider geographic fiscal base centered on state or regional species management zones to strategically fund and target easements in important habitat areas thus achieving conservation goals and negating threats hence the need for listing a

species. These CED districts would allow project proponents, partners, and investors to purchase and trade conservation credits in a free-market scenario to offset impacts and fund conservation easements (https://utahcbcp.org/ou-files/publications/PolicyBrief_SageGrouse.pdf)

6.10 **PACs or focal areas that may extend beyond State lines**. Priority to protection, maintenance, limited rehab. within intact ecosystems that also represent areas where significant connectivity can be achieved.

7. Other thoughts?

7.1 Began this process with a broad diverse and conflicting array of beliefs and science on the habitat and wildlife. **Need independent oversight and authority** in order that the best knowledge that can be independently verified forms the core for future action.

7.2 This partnership model will only be successful if **all scales focus on getting money on the ground for meaningful rehabilitation efforts**. Losing too much habitat to delay work on the ground through an overly complicated model.

7.3 In my experience, the **most important predictor of success would be relating the organizational scale to the type of oversight**. for example, regional oversight should be directed to alignment of funding, land planning, and landscape context (roll up to big picture); whereas local implementation should be enacted at the county to state (or region of state) level where action occurs.

7.4 **WAFWA continues to be a thoughtful leader in the wildlife and habitat management space**. The sagebrush conservation model development is critical to a variety of obligate species--commend digging into the difficult work of establishing a framework that will invite the best results and include the most important stakeholders.

7.5 Without funding or legally binding protections, the partnership becomes meaningless on the ground. **Hope for a partnership that seeks funding to encourage good behavior instead of heavy-handed regulation**.

7.6 **Analysis should occur at ecoregional or biological scale** (i.e., mid/population level in HAF)-implementation at state (conservation unit) scale. Marry the two pieces of info.

7.7 Honest read = **none of these options will get legs**.

7.8 The context documents offer some interesting insight into barriers and challenges with the current models. **Could be a useful exercise to look at how each proposal addresses the "need" or barriers identified**.

7.9 **Tribal engagement. This is critical**.

7.10 From the model language is "an **improved understanding of human and wildlife needs from the sagebrush system**". Regionally needs are highly variable but if we can have something that further sheds light and concentrated effort on that subject we will continue to move forward.

7.11 Consider developing **credit-trading system** to offset direct and indirect impacts of development (from oil and gas, renewable energy, housing, etc. in sage-grouse sagebrush habitat and **create a "cooperative" funded through payments by economic interests which impact sage-grouse habitats**). The funds could be banked to pay for future restoration or conservation easement projects to mitigate for indirect or cumulative impacts (Hauffler et al., 2011). This system would be based on a standard metric (credit) such as a desired improvement in the overall ecological site

conditions. These metrics (credits) could be used to offset impacts by the project proponents or marketed. For example, a private landowner who earns credits for developing, enhancing, and protecting candidate species habitat on private land could accrue credits and subsequently market these credits to project proponents to offset the impact of the proposed development project. The price of the credits would be decided in the marketplace. For this process to work, the FWS must recognize this process as a valid ESA mechanism.

7.12 **Need various industries to play a role in this effort**. Oftentimes, industry waters down true and meaningful conservation and tends to over-estimate benefits to a habitat or a species. They have expertise and resources that are useful.

7.13 Keep it as **simple and streamlined** as possible.

7.14 Any selected model should **provide for participation by individuals** as well.

7.15 Account for **all variables impacting ecosystem health and the health of associated and dependent species**. That means addressing threats to habitat from energy development and other forms of disturbance, rangeland fire, invasive species (e.g., cheatgrass), and a commitment to habitat restoration using native seed sources. Focus on habitat protection, restoration, and improvement regardless of what state, jurisdiction, or ownership it is on through collaboration and coordinated efforts and the biome will have some chance of surviving.

7.16 The NRCS has consistently delivered conservation funding to private landowners across the west with good result. This should **continue without change or additional bureaucracy**.

7.17 Need a biome-wide approach that brings in enough **top-level buy-in and support to make sagebrush restoration and conservation a permanent presence**. There are no quick fixes, and we need **commitments that will not fade away with the next round of elections** (at any level).

7.18 Focus of funding should be used to **analyze existing guidance (science) for prioritization and implementation** of on the ground conservation.

7.19 Whatever model is ultimately adopted, it **needs to be institutionalized through some "formal" mechanism(s)**, e.g., legislation, executive order, etc., to ensure durability and viability throughout changing political landscapes.

Sagebrush Partnership Model(s) Development Process
Drafting Work Group Meeting #3

Thursday, July 1, 2021
9:30-11:30 pm MT

Proposed Meeting Agenda

Objectives:

- Review work on sagebrush partnership structures table, narrative, and conceptual wireframes since last Advisory Committee meeting
- Review input collected from online commenting period and determine needed refinements to structures table and conceptual wireframes
- Understand the next steps in the process, including additional opportunities for engagement by the sagebrush conservation community

Time	Lead	Topic
9:30	National Center, Core Team	**Welcome and Agenda Review** • Welcome • Agenda Review • Review Process to Date and Overview of How DWG/AC Work Fits into Conservation Strategy Development *Materials: Process Map, Agenda*
9:45	Brett Brownscombe, Cristina Eisenberg, Tom Remington, Facilitation Team	**Review and Refine Sagebrush Partnership Structures (Structures Table and Narrative, Conceptual Wireframes)** • Review work completed on sagebrush partnership structures (structures table and narrative, conceptual wireframes) • Review relevant comments from online commenting process • Determine needed refinements *Materials: Sagebrush partnership conceptual wireframes, structures table and narrative, online comment summary*
11:15	Core Team Members, Facilitation Team	**Next Steps and Wrap up** • Discuss next steps and additional opportunities for engagement in EOC, SCC, Strategy Development process, etc.
11:30		**Adjourn**

Sagebrush Partnership Model(s) Development Process
Drafting Work Group Meeting #3

Thursday, July 1, 2021 | 9:30-11:30 pm MST

Welcome and Agenda Review

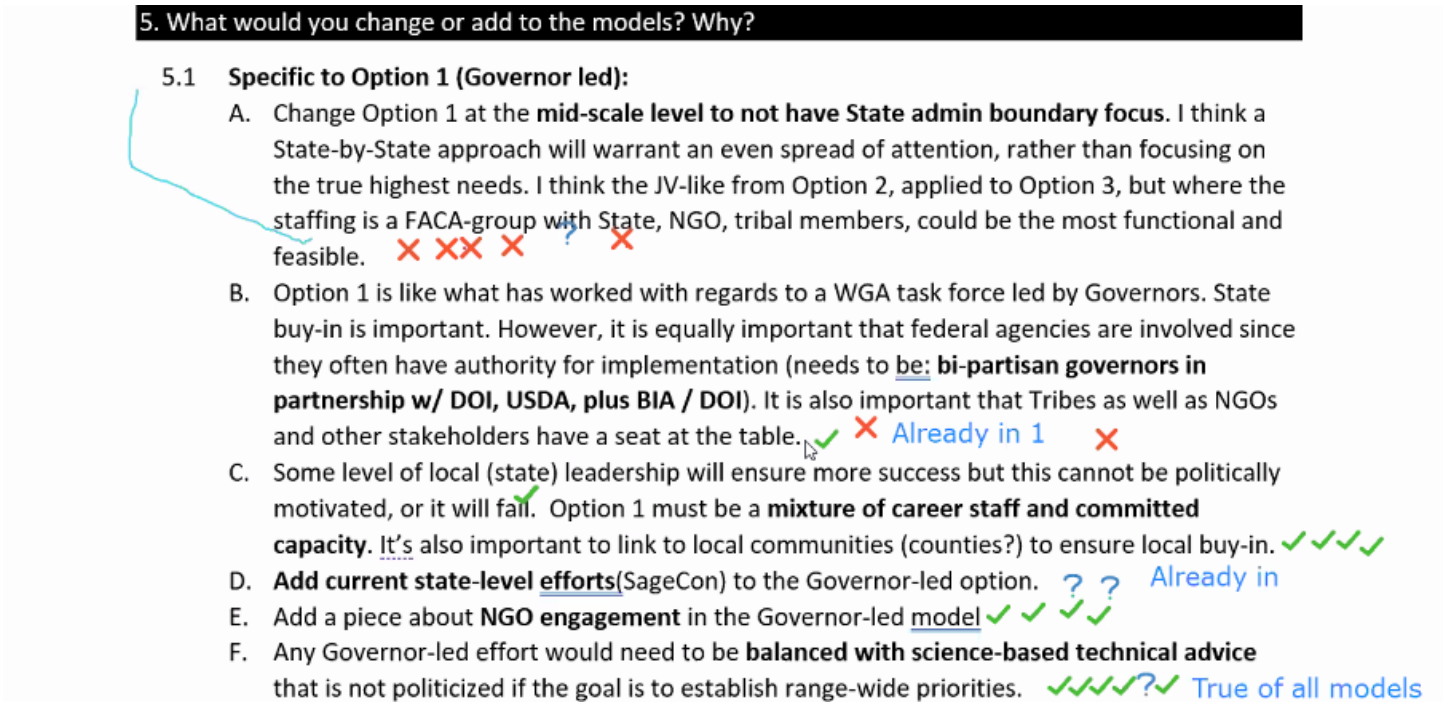
The facilitation team welcomed participants, reviewed the agenda for the meeting and the "We Are Here" process map diagram to situate the work of the Drafting Work Group (DWG) within the larger Advisory Committee and online commenting process. The group discussed next steps in the process including recommending to the Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) at their July 15th meeting that they push this forward. The group also discussed the opportunity for interested DWG members to meet after the July EOC meeting for further strategic thinking.

Review and Refine Sagebrush Partnership Structures (Structures Table and Narrative)

Brett Brownscombe and Cristina Eisenberg gave a brief overview of subgroup work that further refined the structures table and narrative since the DWG last met. The document the subgroup refined was the document that was posted online for public comment.

Susan Hayman summarized the demographics of respondents to online comments. 30% of respondents were associated with federal government, 30% were associated with state government, 20% were associated with NGOs, and 20% were associated with universities or other organizations. There was diverse representation from different states and organizations. Of those who commented, Option 1 (Governor-led model) was preferred by most – 17 online commenters. Option 3 (Federal Coordinated and Led model) was the next preferred option – by 9 commenters. Option 2 (NGO-led) was the least preferred option with only 6 respondents in favor.

The remainder of the meeting was spent approving integration of or discussing aggregated online comments. DWG members were asked to review the online comments received and indicated with a green check which comments they supported integrating into the document. A question was an indication that a comment needed discussion, and a red x was an indication that they thought the comment did not need to be integrated. The screenshots below summarize that discussion.



5.2 Specific to Option 2 (NGO led):

A. **Super NGO with the endorsement/support of Governors/Tribes**; sort of a hybrid version of the options presented.

B. A 'Super NGO' with **state-level endorsement and federal support, with a very difficult "back out"" provision** seems best for the long-haul nature of the effort. The ability to move quickly and with limited inefficiencies is desirable. The delivery success shown over time of Conservation Districts and Extension Service models might be considered in building a hybrid model. Stability and sustainability - certainly including multi-decade funding commitments - are crucial for the success of any model. It seems a hybrid has the potential to achieve that.

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Tomer Hasson

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5.18 **Hybridize 1 and 3 as much as possible**. The option 3 needs to include new capacity, not just repurposing existing staff at state and federal agencies.

5.19 Explore a hybrid model, not unlike that first proposed in the earlier draft NASECA legislation, in which **US DOI and USDA are charged with establishing a governance body consisting of representatives from all core constituencies; and, that body is codified (and legitimized) via an Act of Congress (and, potentially, analogous acts in affected state legislatures)**. Option 3

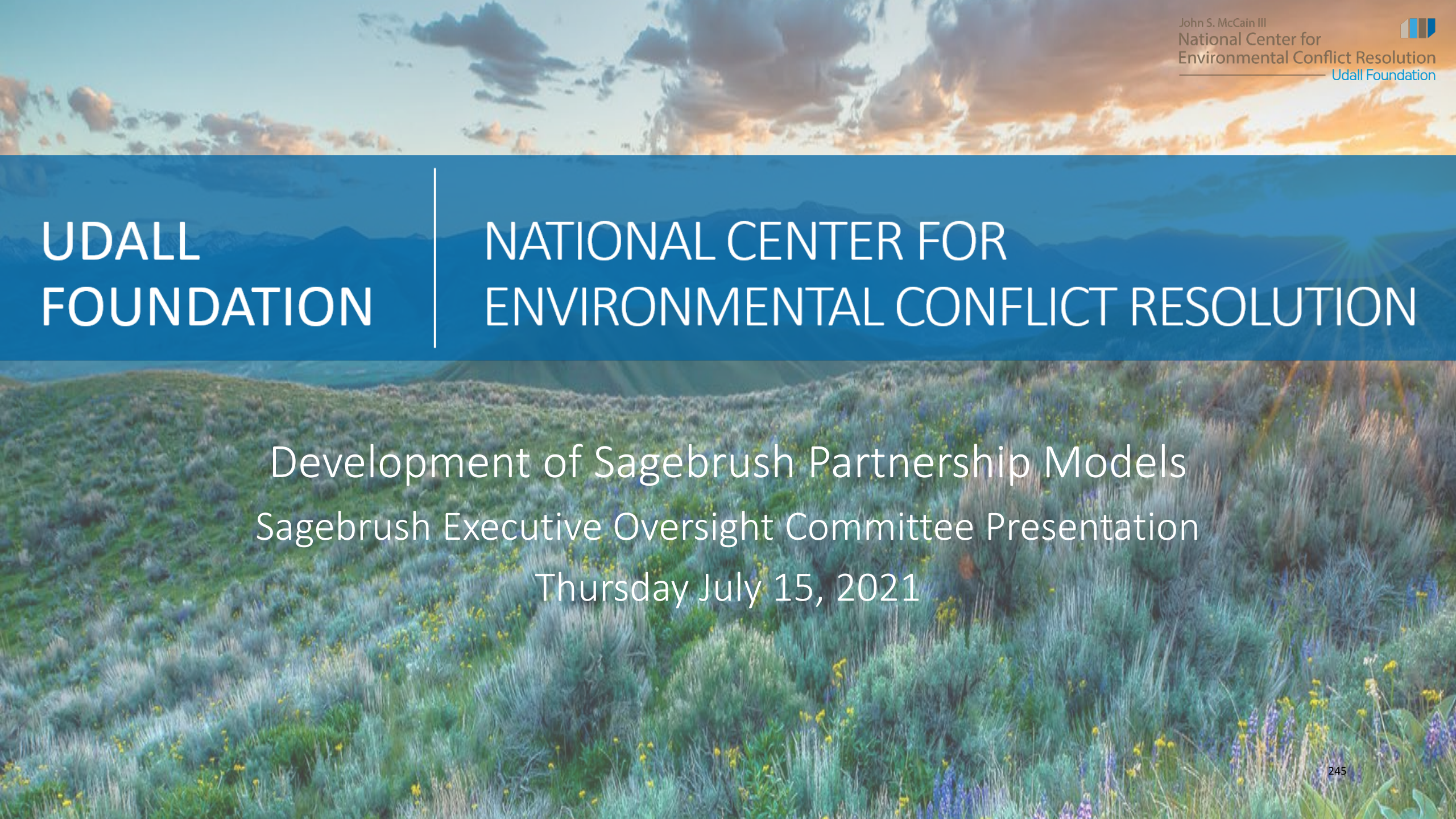
5.20 Potentially allow each **State to carry out the tasks**. Option 1&3

Next Steps and Wrap Up

Based on the DWG feedback received, the facilitation team will incorporate feedback from the screenshots above into the structures table and narrative and organize unresolved online comments. This package will be delivered to the EOC prior to their July 15th meeting. The National Center team will also present the project process and options at the July 15th EOC meeting. Others are invited to join this presentation.

Meeting Participants

- Brett Brownscombe, Oregon SageCon Partnership
- Cristina Eisenberg, Oregon State University
- Dana Goodson, NCECR
- Jim Durglo, Intertribal Timber Council
- Ken Mayer, WAFWA
- Melanie Knapp, NCECR
- Monique Mullenaux, NCECR
- Pat Deibert, USFWS
- San Stiver, WAFWA
- Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic
- Tom Remington, WAFWA
- Tomer Hasson, TNC


John S. McCain III
National Center for
Environmental Conflict Resolution
Udall Foundation
UDALL
FOUNDATION
NATIONAL CENTER FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION
Development of Sagebrush Partnership Models
Sagebrush Executive Oversight Committee Presentation
Thursday July 15, 2021

Introduction to the Udall Foundation

- An independent executive branch federal agency
- Established by Congress to honor Morris K. Udall
- Mission to strengthen Federal Agencies and Native Nations
- Programs
  - Education
    - Scholarship
    - Native American Congressional Internship
    - Parks in Focus
    - Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy & Native Nations Institute
  - National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution

NATIONAL CENTER

Mission

Help federal agencies and other affected stakeholders **address environmental disputes**, conflicts, and challenges, including helping agencies **build internal capacity to address those challenges**

National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution
Udall Foundation

NATIONAL CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Overview

Enhance collaboration and resolve conflicts involving environmental, public lands, and natural resources issues involving a federal interest

Case Services

- Consultations
- Assessments
- Process Design
- Convening
- Mediations / Facilitations

Training and Program Support

- ECCR Training
  - Open/Public Sessions
  - Group Sessions
- ECCR Program Support
- Tribal Consultation Training

ECCR Leadership

- Assist w/implementation of NEPA Section 101
- Facilitate Federal ECCR Forum
- Support Native American and Alaska Native engagement activities

NATIONAL CENTER'S ROLE

The National Center assisted in identifying potential models for a partnership strategy.

- *Sagebrush Biome Partnership Assessment Report*
- *Review of Models for Sagebrush Biome Partnership*

These reports lay a foundation for Advisory Committee, Work Group members, and other interested parties to contribute to the development of potential sagebrush partnership model(s).

SAGEBRUSH STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT REPORT

The purpose:

- identify what is working well within sagebrush networks
- identify barriers that exist
- identify recommendations for additional partnership strategies
- assess support for anticipated partnership model proposal development group member composition and identify any gaps

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on themes heard from interviewees, key areas of focus as a partnership governance model for sagebrush is being developed and refine include:

- Building on Successes and Leaving Room for Innovation
- Continuity, Dedicated Resources, and Staffing
- Broad Participation at All Levels, and Coordination Across Scales
- Data, Monitoring, and Landscape Prioritization Considerations

PARTNERSHIP MODELS RESEARCH REPORT

The purpose:

Inform the design of a potential partnership system for the sagebrush biome by drawing lessons from other **successful partnerships** in large landscape settings

FINDINGS

Goals and measurable impact

- Compelling vision and agreed-upon quantitative goals
- Effective system to track and report on progress
- Viewed within the larger system context

Diverse, balanced, and inclusive partnerships

- From the outset
- Support engagement capacity when needed

Access to needed knowledge and scientific or technical information

- Science-based decision making
- More cultural, social, and economic knowledge

Sufficient and sustainable funding over time

FINDINGS

Leadership and Staffing

- High-level leadership
- Dedicated coordinators, ideally independent neutral parties

Relationships Among Participants

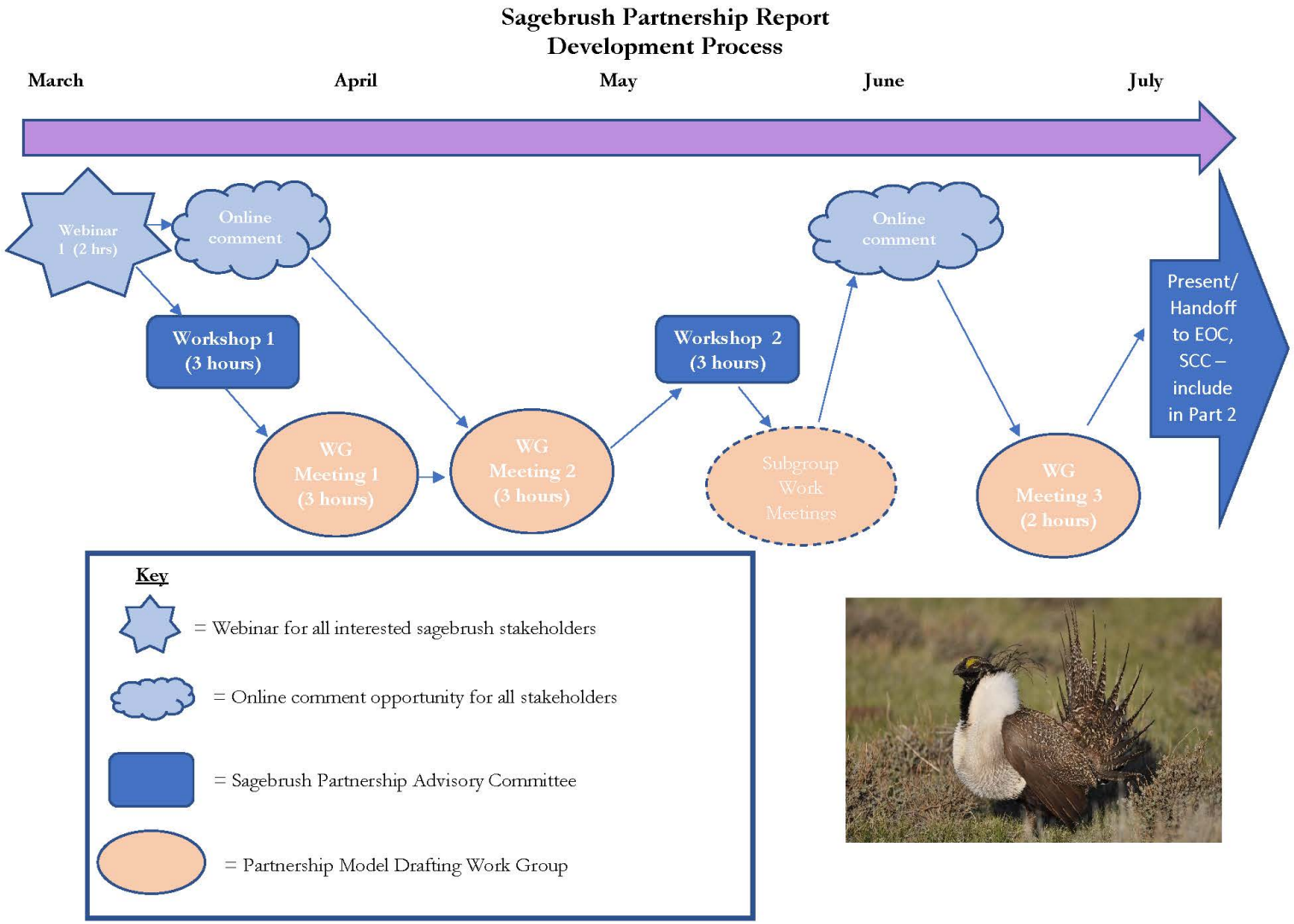
- Set joint goals aligned with shared interests
- Engage and invest in relationship-building

Partnership Structure

- Different types of stakeholders at different scales
- Connections and communication among organizational levels
- Incentives for participation

Structured Approach to Decision Making and Conflict Resolution

PROCESS MAP



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NEXT STEPS

Present/Handoff to EOC, SCC – include in Part 2

QUESTIONS?

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