



News and Highlights of Creeks and Communities: A Continuing Strategy for Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration

“Hold On:” It’s all about the Passion

A message from
Steve Smith, NRST Team Leader

Dear colleagues and friends,



Having served as team leader of the National Riparian Service Team for a year and with a very busy 2009 field season winding down, I want to get back to addressing some of the ideas I brought with me when I started. One of those thoughts is my desire to communicate more frequently with you – the Creeks and Communities Network. As a result, I intend to use the Full Stream Ahead newsletter for that purpose, and each time we publish this newsletter I’ll take the opportunity to briefly update you on recent key NRST and Network happenings, make preface comments for articles in the newsletter, share what I believe to be relevant thoughts, or other things that I think you will find timely, informative, and useful. At the same time, I encourage anyone in the Network to submit articles and information to share.

For those of you who are classic rock music aficionados like me, you may remember a song by the rock group *Kansas* titled “Hold On.” I really like the melody but more than that, the title has a message that I believe is important to all of us. That is, hold on to and never abandon your passions – the passions that led you to your present position in life. There is a strong possibility that if you are reading this message, you are a member of the Creeks and Communities Network; if you are a member of the Network, there is even a stronger possibility that you have a *passion* for working with riparian systems and the people who manage them. One of the unique things about the Creeks and Communities Network is that outside of the National Riparian Service Team, the collective work we do is largely on a part-time basis and yet we get some very important things accomplished. The greatest share of these accomplishments did not occur as the result of more money, more regulation, or more process; rather, they occurred because of the passion and commitment you – the members of the Network have for riparian restoration and management.

I mention the importance of holding onto this passion because far too often these days I see people who are worn down with the difficulties of trying to make progress when doing so sometimes requires almost superhuman persistence. Those of us who toil in government entities are well aware of the bureaucracy and process that we must

2010 Creeks & Communities Network Conference

The 2010 biennial Creeks and Communities Network Meeting will be held **March 2-4, 2009** at the Silver Legacy Hotel in Reno, Nevada. This will be a working meeting designed to increase and enhance the ability of the Creeks and Communities Network to effectively implement the Creeks and Communities strategy. A portion of the meeting will be set aside for finalizing State Riparian Team FY2010-2011 work plans. Room reservations can be made by calling the group reservation department at 1-800-687-8733; request **group code NRST310** for a special \$59 per night rate. For more information, contact Carol Connolly at carol_connolly@or.blm.gov or (541) 416-6892. Draft Agenda on page 8.

deal with on a daily basis; it's just the nature of the beast and although we can work to minimize it, every organization whether government or private must deal with a certain amount of it. In my opinion, the difference between the people who become ground-down and negative and those who persist and remain positive is quite simply passion, or more specifically, what I call "occupational passion." It is my observation that those who are happy and productive despite these difficulties have "held on" to and never abandoned the occupational passions that ignited them at the very beginning of their careers. They find a way to keep themselves engaged in their passions in some way; speaking at the Kiwanis Club luncheon, working with livestock and/or livestock operators, identifying plants, doing stream studies and monitoring, serving on committees in their professional societies, working on their State Riparian Teams, teaching, problem solving, etc. . I will admit that sometimes I can get as frustrated and negative as anybody, but the key factor here is that, at the end of the day, we need to enter more positives on the balance sheet than negatives. Like many of you, what keeps me going is my undeniable passion for riparian areas and the people who manage them – it's something I really like and will not abandon. I think perhaps Albert Schweitzer said it best: "Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."

So, in the spirit of "occupational passion," (having now established that you do have it for this work) I would like to invite you to the upcoming biennial Creeks and Communities Network Meeting to be held March 2-4, 2010 in Reno, Nevada. Having been a part of the Network since its inception, I've found that these meetings always energize and provide me with a wealth of new ideas. Based on my discussions with many of you over the years, I am convinced that a number of you feel the same way. I am very excited about this meeting and we are busily working to finalize what is shaping up to be a very informative and interactive agenda. You will be encouraged to know that we did a comprehensive evaluation of the 2008 Network Meeting and asked a number of you for suggestions of topics and emphasis areas you would like to see addressed during the upcoming meeting and as a result, the meeting is being crafted almost entirely from your input. You will find additional details in this issue of Full Stream Ahead and I strongly encourage you to plan to attend what promises to be a great meeting that will hopefully help to "kindle the fire of your passion" or re-ignite it if necessary.

Remember to "hold on" to your occupational passion about riparian work and, among other things, you will sleep better, age slower, and require less antacid. As always, if there is anything the team or I can do to help, feel free anytime to pick up the phone, send an email, or drop by. I can be reached at 541-416-6703 or steven_smith@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

Steve

New NRST Member!

We are pleased to announce the addition of a new member of the National Riparian Service Team. Mark Gonzalez was recently selected to fill the NRST Riparian Ecologist (Soils) position. Mark comes to us from the Forest Service where he is the Soils and Watershed Program Manager for the Dakota Prairie Grasslands in Bismarck, North Dakota and also a member of the Montana Riparian Team. Mark will report to Prineville after the first of the year. Stay tuned for a more detailed article about Mark in the next issue of Full Stream Ahead. Welcome aboard Mark!

Ranching Heritage Alliance

The Ranching Heritage Alliance (RHA) is a loosely formed group of ranchers who are undertaking a proactive approach to solving resource and livestock management issues on public land allotments. As part of this effort, the RHA, along with the University of Arizona, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Arizona Cattlemen's Association, the Quivira Coalition, and the National Riparian Service Team, sponsored three workshops this year in Springerville, Arizona. These workshops were a continuation from last year when the group held a grazing management course conducted by the NRST Riparian-Wetland Grazing Team. In these sessions, livestock permittees, interested public from the community, and people from local, state, and federal agencies are learning about riparian-wetland area function, management, and monitoring, using a collaborative approach.

The group began in February with a workshop about turning conflict into collaboration for improved stewardship of riparian areas on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. People interested in the Forest Plan revision came together to learn various ways to work together more effectively in order to better resolve riparian management issues. Their intent is to ensure healthy riparian areas and watersheds, diverse plant and wildlife communities, viable rural economies, and sustainable ranching operations. In June, a one-day Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment workshop was completed followed by three one-day field sessions on the Springerville, Alpine, and Clifton Ranger Districts. The primary focus was on the PFC method and how the assessments are to be conducted, as well as guidance on incorporating the information from the checklists into a management plan. A riparian monitoring workshop was held in August which covered riparian plant identification, short, mid and long-term monitoring, the Grazing Response Index (GRI), Multiple Indicator Monitoring (MIM) method, and Gigipan photography, in both the classroom and field settings. Participants were provided the opportunity to collect MIM data and learn how that data can be used to help make adaptive management decisions.

Fifteen to 30 livestock permittees have been attending these workshops to improve their understanding of riparian-wetland function and how they can better manage their livestock to ensure continued grazing on federal land allotments. The turnout of 60-70 people at each of these workshops is testament to the desire of the community to become more knowledgeable and improve and maintain relationships and communication among all stakeholders of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. In addition, the RHA will be presenting a case study of their collaborative work at the 4th National Conference on Grazing Lands in Reno, NV on December 15, 2009. This is one of three examples of the Creeks and Communities strategy at work at a forum designed for ranchers to share their experiences with other ranchers. Go to www.glci.org for more information on this event. Currently, Jennifer Arnold, University of Arizona, is conducting her graduate research on the RHA and their collaborative efforts and results; there will be more to report when she completes her study.



Floyd Reed explaining the Grazing Response Index



Forrest Berg explaining riparian function to one of the training teams.

“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”

Middle and Lower Sevier River Assessments (Utah) – Natural Resources Conservation Service Stream Visual Assessment Protocol Version 2 and Proper Functioning Condition Assessment Using Videography and Aerial Photography

By Kathryn Boyer, NRCS West National Technology Support Center Fisheries Biologist; Karen L. Fullen, UT NRCS State Wildlife Biologist; and Janice Staats, NRST Hydrologist

July 7-9, 2009, an interdisciplinary team conducted assessments of stream and riparian condition in the middle and lower Sevier River watershed applying both Stream Visual Assessment Protocol Version 2 (SVAP2) and Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment with the use of low-level video and high resolution aerial photography acquired by the Sevier Conservation District and the Utah NRCS for this purpose. The team was comprised of a fish biologist, wildlife biologist, range management specialist, hydrologist, water resources specialist, and watershed coordinator from several agencies and the private sector. This project facilitated tying together a major river system in Utah with an interagency, interdisciplinary assessment, assisting with overall coordination efforts and the ability of managers to efficiently identify and prioritize restoration projects. In addition, this project provided a unique opportunity to apply visual assessment techniques in an accelerated fashion through the use of video and photographic images. Within 3 days, approximately 1/3 of the total miles of the river were evaluated, an estimated 30 miles/day. Typically, in Utah, it takes approximately one day to complete an SVAP assessment on 2.5 miles of stream.

Another aspect of this project was the opportunity to examine the degree of correlation between SVAP and PFC. SVAP was issued by the NRCS in December 1998 and was developed to be an easy-to-use assessment to be conducted with landowners, and not require expertise in aquatic biology. (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ECS/aquatic/svapfni.pdf>). PFC was issued by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 1993 and was revised and reissued in 1998. PFC also relies on visual indicators and has been used with aerial photography in some areas of the west as described in Technical Reference 1737-12 Using Aerial Photographs to Assess Riparian-wetland Areas, 1996 (<http://www.blm.gov/nstc/library/techref.htm>).

The assessment team found Google Earth, the video, and associated aerial photography to be very useful in delineating reaches to be assessed. Ground-truthing at selected sites was necessary to ensure accuracy of scoring individual SVAP2 metrics, especially in regards to riparian area quality which utilizes riparian plant species as indicators of quality. Comparing scores assigned through the use of videos and photographs with scores assigned on site indicated reasonable compatibility with the SVAP2 metrics when using this approach for a broad scale rapid watershed assessment. When there was a lack of correlation between SVAP2 and PFC ratings, it was mostly related to differences in native vs. non-native dominated riparian vegetation. PFC does not distinguish between native vs. non-native plant species. If the non-native plant has root masses capable of withstanding high-streamflow events, reaches with these species present can be rated PFC even when dominated by non-natives. However, a riparian-wetland area has to have a diverse composition of vegetation if it is going to maintain itself or recover, so the presence of only one species makes a site very vulnerable to disease or extreme changes in climate which could kill all the vegetation. There are reaches of the Sevier River that are dominated by saltcedar (Tamarix). Sandy Wyman, NRST Rangeland Management Specialist, developed an informational paper on saltcedar (Tamarix) for the Creeks and Communities 2005 Network Meeting, and subsequently updated it in December 2007. It was helpful to review the briefing paper in regard to saltcedar's effect on physical functionality. See the excerpt below:

How does saltcedar affect the physical functionality of a riparian-wetland area?

Usually, one of the primary reasons for tamarisk invasion (other than being planted for erosion control) is a lack of the hydrologic or erosion/deposition attributes and processes needed for a particular system. The Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment is one qualitative method for assessing the condition of riparian areas while taking into account the system's potential and capability. The term PFC is used to identify the assessment process and is also a defined, on-the-ground condition of a riparian wetland area (Prichard et al 1998). PFC is a consistent approach for considering hydrology, vegetation, and erosion/deposition (soils) attributes and processes to assess the condition of riparian areas. A checklist is used for the PFC assessment which synthesizes information that is foundational in determining the overall physical functionality of a riparian area.

Continued on next page

Middle and Lower Sevier River Assessments (Utah) continued

When assessing riparian-wetland areas using the PFC checklist, the vegetation items may be evaluated as a “yes” response with the presence of saltcedar depending upon the diversity of plant species, amount, and vigor, but checklist items for floodplain access and floodplain characteristics may be a “no” response, which increases the opportunity for the site potential characteristics needed for saltcedar invasion. A “no” response would be appropriate for the vegetation checklist items (diverse composition, possibly amount) with a monoculture of tamarisk and would probably rate out at something less than PFC. It may not be the presence of a stand of saltcedar that keeps a stream reach from PFC, but other attributes and processes that aren’t functioning properly due to regulated flow regimes, incised channels, etc. that are creating the environment that is conducive to saltcedar germination. After all, saltcedar was brought in for erosion control, indicating that there may have been some kind of *vegetation, hydrologic, or erosion/deposition problem*. *It should also be noted that saltcedar has been known to invade pristine sites (Shafroth et al. 2005). Also, saltcedar has a longer seed dispersal period compared to cottonwood, so it has the ability to spread under conditions that are not suitable to cottonwood and willow germination and seedling development (Lesica and Miles 2005).*

Overall, using a combination of low-altitude video footage, aerial photographs, Google Earth, selective ground-truthing, and an interdisciplinary team for assigning metric scores, the 2 methods used show promise for expediting completion of stream and riparian condition assessments at a watershed/catchment scale, including for rapid watershed assessments. Conservation planning at the farm or ranch scale, however, should include completion of an SVAP2 assessment on the ground and in the stream to provide the accuracy and repeatability desired for sound decisions regarding stream corridor conservation and management. The NRCS will soon be releasing a revised and updated SVAP2. It is not yet available on a website. If you would like to learn more about SVAP2 before the final document is out, you can order a hard copy of the final draft from Kathryn Boyer, NRCS West National Technology Support Center Fisheries Biologist at Kathryn.Boyer@por.usda.gov.

BLM’s National Landscape Conservation System and NRST Partnership

The National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) is committed to engaging in collaborative, community-based stewardship both within and outside government. To accomplish this goal, the NLCS has partnered with the interagency National Riparian Service Team (NRST) to provide services aimed at improving the ability of land managers and stakeholders to collaboratively address riparian-wetland resource issues within NLCS. The NRST and their Creeks and Communities Strategy have been selected as the servicing venue because of their expertise in applying this approach across the western United States over the past decade. The objective is to facilitate focused, place-based problem solving around riparian-wetland issues while, at the same time, offering an opportunity for training and mentoring in the general principles and practices of collaborative problem solving as well as riparian assessment, management and monitoring. An outreach notice is being sent to all NLCS units in order to identify those that would be interested in NRST assistance.

The approach used by the NRST is specifically designed to address the technical dimensions of riparian issues while as the same time recognizing and addressing the social context within which these issues exist. Concepts and methods for integrating science into collaborative decision-making are utilized throughout. Activities result in equalizing stakeholder knowledge and increasing overall understanding and acceptance of the relevance of science and its application to community problem solving. Participants will be able to experience on-the-ground, community-based problem solving through:

- Working side-by-side with an experienced, *interdisciplinary* team of practitioners.
- Learning to put collaborative problem solving principles into practice by applying social science to natural resource issues.
- Advancing technical knowledge and skills for assessment, management and monitoring of riparian resources.
- Building individual skills and core competencies for engaging in collaborative, community-based stewardship both within and outside government.
- Discovering techniques (i.e. joint fact finding and facilitated dialogue) for leveling the playing field, developing a common understanding of current riparian conditions, shaping a shared future vision and outlining practical solutions for achieving that vision.
- Understanding the importance of building a common vocabulary recognizing that functioning ecological systems are what provide a range of values over time.

“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”

2010 Consensus Institute – Conflict Module

The National Riparian Service Team, in partnership with the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System and Community Partnership Office, is sponsoring the 2010 Consensus Institute scheduled for February 17-19 at the BLM National Training Center in Phoenix, Arizona. This is a concentrated 2 ½ day workshop where people will learn basic process tools for developing consensus in a highly experiential training approach. Participants will learn by doing and, at the conclusion of the session, will be capable of working within their own groups and communities to apply the lessons learned and build consensus. Following the session, the instructors will be available to assist participants as they design and conduct workshops or meetings in their own communities.

The Conflict Module is the first in a series of four (conflict, power, scarcity and diversity). During this session, participants will learn about managing conflicts caused by our rapidly changing natural, political and social environments, using their own situations and experiences as learning pathways. Participants will be exposed to the basic consensus building process, as well as some of the basic tenets underlying that process. This includes an Introduction to the following: a circular meeting format, a process for life-long learning, the power of worst and best outcomes, the pathway from beliefs and behaviors to strategies and actions, the role of the facilitator and recorder in consensus building and empowering others, and the importance of fostering the type of listening with respect that is critical to resolving issues. Participants will also become acquainted with conducting situation assessments as a means for convening groups of people around addressing difficult and complex issues.

Grazing Management Processes and Strategies for Riparian-Wetland Areas Training - Sturgis, South Dakota



The South Dakota Grasslands Coalition, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service sponsored the NRST Riparian-Wetland Grazing Team in providing a grazing management course primarily for private land managers as well as local, state, and federal lands agencies, and Interested groups. The workshop was held June 9-11 at the Sturgis Vo-Ag School. Sandy Wyman (NRST), Floyd Reed (Retired FS), Janice Staats (NRST), Erv Cowley (Retired BLM), and Cory Parsons (OSU Extension) gave instruction to over 30 people whose primary interest was in the management of prairie riparian systems. The livestock managers seemed to especially enjoy the session and the opportunity to work in an interdisciplinary, collaborative manner. As it turned out, workshop attendees had about one hour to discuss riparian function in the field before the torrential downpour drove everyone inside.

Gigapan Photography

During the Ranching Heritage Alliance workshop, Mary Nichols with the Agriculture Research Service in Tucson, presented information on research she is conducting in the use of high resolution photography as a potential range and riparian monitoring tool. The equipment and process Mary is using produces a grid of photos from a digital camera mounted on a robotic arm that can span/rotate up to 360 degrees. The software "stitches" the series of photos together to provide a panoramic view of a site. A person can zoom in on any part of the stitched photo to see something as small as a fly on a deer's ear. The software comes with the purchase of the Gigapan; a tripod, 6 AAA rechargeable batteries and a charger, a case, and a digital camera are also required. A variety of cameras will work; it can be as simple as a Canon Elph, or a digital SLR. The Gigapan website has a list of compatible cameras. One type of robotic mount (Gigapan Epic) can be purchased through: <http://www.gigapansystems.com/> (*this is not an endorsement of a product or company*). Images of Mary's project site are posted on the Gigapan.org website; however, Mary is hoping to create a stand-alone riparian or rangeland issues high resolution website. If interested, contact Mary H. Nichols, Ph.D., USDA-ARS-SWRC at 520-670-6381 x161 or mary.nichols@ars.usda.gov. For an example of Gigapan photography of the Blue River in Arizona: <http://www.gigapan.org/viewGigapan.php?id=27018>.

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Society for Range Management High School Youth Forum Presentation

For the past several years, the High School Youth Forum (HSYF) coordinators have requested a riparian workshop for their delegates attending the annual meeting of the Society for Range Management (SRM). Once again they are asking for a 2-hour session at the upcoming meeting to be held in Denver, Feb. 8-11, 2010. The riparian workshop for the HSYF would be scheduled for Wednesday morning (February 10). There may also be an opportunity to include a discussion of riparian function and management during the HSYF ecological tour the previous Monday (February 8). The workshops have been well received in the past with positive feedback from the students thanks to instructors from the Creeks and Communities Network. Please let Sandy Wyman know if you are interested in participating/assisting with the HSYF workshop and tour in 2010. You can reach Sandy at (541)416-6886 or sandra_wyman@or.blm.gov for more information.

2010 Tamarisk Symposium

The 2010 Tamarisk Symposium will be held in Grand Junction, CO January 12-13. The symposium is hosted by the Tamarisk Coalition and Colorado State University Cooperative Extension. Major topics will include tamarisk biocontrol, revegetation, wildlife and tamarisk biocontrol, and current tamarisk control and riparian restoration projects. The Symposium will also feature presentations on evapotranspiration by tamarisk, erosional consequences of tamarisk control and interactions between tamarisk, fire and biocontrol. This is a worthwhile conference for those who deal with tamarisk or Russian olive management issues. For more information visit the **2010 Tamarisk Symposium website** <http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/TRA/2010Tamarisk.shtml>.

Full Stream Ahead

Is there something you would like to see in a future issue of *Full Stream Ahead*? If so, send an email to nrst@or.blm.gov. The NRST utilizes this newsletter to share highlights, news and hot topics that pertain to the Creeks and Communities Strategy. This newsletter is for the entire network and we encourage you to send in ideas, questions and articles for us to publicize.



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“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”

DRAFT Agenda

**Creeks and Communities Biennial Network Meeting
March 2-4, 2010 • Silver Legacy • Reno, NV**

Theme: Creeks and Communities - Serving the needs of agencies and communities

Objectives:

- Diversify the Creeks and Communities Network and enhance skills
- Foster accountability and support for Creeks and Communities
- Facilitate coordination and learning among Network members

Tuesday, March 2, 2009

7:30 a.m.	Registration Welcome and Introductions	Steve Smith, NRST Team Leader Laura Van Riper, NRST Social Scientist Mike Lunn, Facilitator
10:30- 11:00	BREAK NRST Report	
	NRST & National Landscape Conservation Service (NLCS) Partnership	Susan Holtzman, NRST Team Coordinator Laura Van Riper, NRST Social Scientist Laura Van Riper, NRST Social Scientist
11:45-1:00	Lunch State Riparian Team Reports – NV, AZ, & CA	State Riparian Team Leads
1:45-2:15 2:15 - 3:20	BREAK The Cows and Fish Process: Working with producers and communities on riparian awareness.	Sandy Wyman, NRST Rangeland Management Specialist Norine Ambrose, Program Manager, Cows and Fish, Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society Mike Lunn, Facilitator
3:30 – 4:30	Agency Leadership Panel Natural Resources Conservation Service U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Forest Service Bureau of Land Management	
6:30 PM	Canadian Team Presentation: TBD (optional)	Patrick Lucey and Cori Barraclough, Aqua-Tex

“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”

Wednesday, March 3, 2009

8:00	State Riparian Team Reports – WY, MT, & NM Integration of the Social Dimension	State Riparian Team Leads Laura Van Riper, NRST Social Scientist
10:00 – 10:30	BREAK	
	NRST Contract Administration Ranching Heritage Alliance Case Study	Carol Connolly Sandy Wyman, NRST Rangeland Management Specialist George Ruyle, University of Arizona (Invited) Wink Crigler, X Diamond Ranch, Arizona Carey Dobson, Timberline Ranch, Arizona (Invited) Judith Dyess, U.S. Forest Service, R3 Jeff Rivera, District Ranger, Springerville, AZ Dave Smith, Arizona State Team Lead, USFWS
	BLM Riparian Activities	Agency Representative
11:40 – 1:00	LUNCH	
	State Riparian Team Reports - Canada, UT, & OR	State Riparian Team Leads
1:45 - 2:15	BREAK	
	Updating Riparian Policy/1737-15 (PFC TR Update): A Facilitated Discussion	BLM Riparian Program BLM National Operations Center National Riparian Service Team
3:45 pm.	State Riparian Team Work Plans	State Riparian Team Leads

Thursday, March 4, 2009

8:00	State Riparian Team Reports – TX, ID, & CO U.S. Forest Service Riparian Activities Natural Resources Conservation Service Riparian Activities	State Riparian Team Leads Agency Representative Agency Representative
9:30 - 10:00	BREAK	
	Engaging Private Landowners: Nueces Case Study U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Riparian Activities Holding on to the Green Zone: A Youth Program for the Study and Stewardship of Community Riparian Areas	Janice Staats, NRST Hydrologist Sky Lewey, Nueces River Authority, Texas Agency Representative Janice Staats, NRST Hydrologist Betsy Wooster, BLM's Environmental Education and Volunteer Specialist Brian Wachs, Crook County High School Science Teacher, OR
11:50 - 1:00	LUNCH	
	Monitoring Riparian Systems	Steve Smith, NRST Team Leader Ervin Cowley, Riparian Management Services Tim Burton, Riparian Management Services Jo Christensen, Missoula Field Office, BLM
2:30 – 3:00	BREAK	
	Monitoring Riparian Systems (continued)	
4:30 - 5:00	Closeout	Mike Lunn, Facilitator Laura Van Riper, NRST Social Scientist Steve Smith, NRST Team Leader

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