



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

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### “Reno Reflections”

A message from  
Steve Smith, NRST Team Leader



Having recently concluded our 8<sup>th</sup> biennial Creeks and Communities Network meeting, I want to express my appreciation for all of the presenters who helped us deliver a diverse and interesting session. I also want to thank those who attended for taking the time to come together, actively participate, and discuss how we can collectively advance the Creeks and Communities Strategy. I certainly enjoyed seeing long-time friends and meeting new ones and I know the team feels the same way. I truly hope we were able to stimulate some thought about how we can stay relevant to agencies and communities. For those who were unable to attend this year, it is not too early to pencil in March 2012 for our

next meeting. You should be aware that Kelli Stone from the Colorado Team is working on a meeting evaluation and report, and in this issue, she provides an overview of the meeting.

As I mentioned in a recent email, we must always be conscious of the need to continually strengthen our support base in order to ensure the future viability of our network. Given that need, please take the time to share your Creeks and Communities experiences with your supervisors and colleagues so we can stay on the collective radar screen of leadership.

Having attended every network meeting since this work began; there is no question in my mind that as a group, we have come a long way. Among many other things, I was very proud of how the state team leaders represented their states and was impressed with the innovative ideas you are all coming up with to advance Creeks and Communities. I thought all of the presenters and panels were well prepared and succinct. It is indeed exciting to witness and be a part of the evolution of our work in cooperative riparian restoration.

I have been thinking quite a bit about the evolution of our network activities and while I think it is important for us to evolve, it is also important that we hold onto the things that made us successful. There is still great value in basic PFC training sessions for agency personnel and stakeholders as a foundation for creating a common vision of riparian resources. I am a proponent of change as long as it is *educated change* that is borne from a clear understanding of history. Change for the sake of change has proven to be very detrimental to organizations – not everything needs to change. As Winston Churchill said, “There is nothing wrong with change as long as it is in the right direction.” There is nothing wrong with continuing to do the

right thing as long as we are confident that *it truly is still* the right thing to do. We determine if it is “still the right thing to do” by continually re-evaluating our actions to ensure we are meeting current needs. It is my observation that as a network, particularly in the past few years, we are evolving and improving this work to stay relevant and have done a good job maintaining the things that have worked well for us – the discussions and activities in Reno were evidence of that. It is however, critical that we stay vigilant in our efforts to address current demand in order to avoid the mistaken notion that past success guarantees future success.

Thank you again for your commitment to Creeks and Communities and 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. If you ever need us to provide letters of support or telephone calls on your behalf for your work in Creeks and Communities, please let us know. I can be reached at 541-416-6703 or [steven\\_smith@blm.gov](mailto:steven_smith@blm.gov).

Thanks for reading and I hope to see you on the stream soon.

Sincerely,

*Steve*

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## ***2010 Creeks & Communities Network Meeting***

Approximately 92 people from 10 states, two Canadian provinces, and Washington D.C. attended the 2010 Creeks and Communities Biennial Network Meeting in Reno, Nevada on March 2-4, 2010. Attendees were primarily network members from federal agencies, non-profit organizations, Universities, ranches, consulting groups, and a public school, and ranged from agency retirees to new Network members, including the Environmental Protection Agency and individuals relatively new to their positions and agencies. This year’s meeting theme was “Staying Relevant to Agencies and Communities” and meeting objectives included:

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

The 2010 meeting agenda was, in part, developed from feedback received during telephone interviews conducted with network members in February 2009. State Team reports were alternated with guest speakers and topical sessions. One session was focused on monitoring with a purpose; linking inventory, assessments, management and monitoring and included an overview of the Multiple Indicator Monitoring (MIM) protocol, an overview of Region 5 Forest Service meadow and greenline protocols and culminated with a facilitated panel discussion and questions/answers with the group. Another segment of time was spent discussing streambank alteration as a short term indicator followed by discussion. The group also provided feedback relative to a possible revision of the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) Assessment User Guides (Technical References 1737-15 and 16).

People “in the trenches” presented how they have effectively used the Creeks and Communities Strategy in their landscapes including ranchers and federal agency personnel in the Springerville area of Arizona, and the Nueces River Authority in Texas, which also provided a fresh perspective on river stewardship. The “Cows and Fish” program in Alberta, Canada is a non-profit program working with landowners

*“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”*

## ***2010 Creeks & Communities Network Meeting continued***

which offers insight into riparian management in the Provinces bordering Network states. An enthusiastic teacher from central Oregon rallied the audience with real-life tales of using “Holding on to the Green Zone: A Youth Program for the Study and Stewardship of Community Riparian Areas”. A Nevada State Team member presented their experience with what is meant by the “social dimensions” of the C&C strategy; how they incorporate techniques and the subsequent impact. The British Columbia team once again illustrated how to take Creeks and Communities to another level in featuring their efforts at addressing both water and energy production through the development of closed systems in buildings and neighborhoods. Some additional highlights from the 2010 meeting include:

- This meeting was the first Network meeting conducted under the new leadership of Steve Smith, NRST Leader. Network members met and welcomed the newest member to the NRST: Mark Gonzalez, a Riparian Ecologist/Soils Scientist. Rob Roudabush, WO BLM, announced that the NRST will be receiving the 2010 DOI Partners in Conservation award.
- Leaders from three federal agencies participated in a panel discussion and participated throughout the meeting; Rob Roudabush, Division Chief of Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Ralph Giffen, Assistant Director, U.S. Forest Service, and Gene Fults, National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Rangeland Management Specialist, from the Western National Technical Support Center.
- State and Provincial Team members present were from Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Wyoming, and British Columbia, Canada.
- BLM Deputy Director Ed Roberson and Forest Service Deputy Chief Joel Holtrop took time away from other meetings in Reno to address the Network and offer their support for the work being done in riparian systems by members and communities.

Preliminary feedback from attendees about what they liked best about the meeting include: (1) hearing from the private sector about the positive impacts the Creeks and Communities strategy is having in their communities, (2) the diversity of topics addressed, (3) the quality of presentations and presenters, (4) opportunities to connect and visit with network members, and (5) good facilitation, including adhering to the agenda!

### **Network Meeting – More to Come**

To extend the good work accomplished at the meeting, a document highlighting each presentation and session, and the input gathered from network members, is being developed by Colorado Team Member, Kelli Stone (Two Birds One Stone, LLC). The Meeting Summary will act as a repository of the information presented but also showcase work being done by Network Members and the importance of Network meetings. The document, as well as links to PowerPoint presentations, will be on the NRST website by mid-April. An article fully describing the meeting will be in the April issue of Full Stream Ahead. To continue crafting relevant and effective Network Meetings, Kelli will also be conducting approximately 20 telephone interviews, this fall, with 2010 meeting attendees. The purpose is to hear and document what they found effective with this last meeting and what they want to see in 2012.

## ***Wyoming Grazing Workshop - "Rolling Down the River of Beef"***

On February 3, Eric Peterson, University of Wyoming Extension and Education Specialist and Sandy Wyman, NRST Rangeland Management Specialist, presented at a workshop held in Marbleton, Wyoming. More than 30 people attended what was the second in a grazing workshop series titled "Tune up Your Engines for a Sustainable Grazing Operation" sponsored by the Sublette County Soil & Water Conservation District, Bureau of Land Management, University of Wyoming Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Wyoming Department of Agriculture. This particular workshop called Rolling Down the River of Beef, focused on riparian and watershed function, stream improvements through managed grazing, and grazing systems, stocking rates, and economics. There are many resource issues in Sublette County involving extensive oil and gas development, livestock grazing, mule deer winter range and migration, and recreation activities. Workshops and organizational partnerships such as these can create the opportunities where people with diverse backgrounds and interests can come together in a learning environment.

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## ***Society for Range Management High School Youth Forum Workshop***

The Creeks and Communities Network stepped up to the plate once again at the Society for Range Management Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, conducting a three hour workshop for 27 High School Youth Forum Delegates. Jimmy Eisner, Fisheries Biologist and Oregon Team Leader and Sherm Swanson, UNR Range Extension Specialist and Nevada Team Leader provided several presentations on riparian-wetland function and grazing management. This is also a joint activity with the SRM Watershed/Riparian Committee of which Jimmy and Sherm are members. This is a popular workshop for the students as indicated by the repeat requests from Barron Rector, High School Youth Forum Chair over the past 5 years. Prizes are awarded to all the delegates as incentive to participate and learn and post-workshop evaluations are indicating that learning is occurring.

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## ***Ranching Heritage Alliance Award Winner***

Wink Crigler, X Diamond Ranch, Greer, Arizona, was recognized at the Society for Range Management US Forest Service Family Meeting in Denver, Colorado, with the Outstanding Stewardship Award having been nominated by the Springerville Ranger District, Apache-Sitgreaves Forest. Wink, with the help of fellow rancher Doyel Shamley, has been instrumental in the formation of the Ranching Heritage Alliance (RHA), a group focused on solving resource issues on federal land allotments in a positive, collaborative manner. Wink developed a video about the RHA and the history of the X Diamond Ranch. She presented the video at the National Conservation of Grazing Lands Conference in Reno, Nevada, in December and again at the SRM Forest Service Family Meeting. This is a great example of ranchers telling their story of creating a sound resource plan in a cooperative manner. Wink has also been inducted into the Arizona Farming and Ranching Hall of Fame. She is very humble and feels that she is accepting these awards on behalf of the RHA. The RHA partnership has continued to expand from the University of Arizona, US Forest Service Region 3, Arizona Stockgrower's, and the Springerville Ranger District, to include Arizona Game & Fish, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and others. The NRST and Dave Smith of the AZ State Team have had the pleasure of working with this group from the beginning and plan to continue providing assistance when needed.

## ***Evaluating the Creeks and Communities Strategy***

Between 1999 and 2003, the first formal evaluation of the interagency initiative for 'Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration and Management' was conducted as part of a Doctoral Dissertation. In an effort to address evaluation findings, the original strategy was revised in 2002 and the initiative renamed 'Creeks and Communities'. The strategy revisions addressed the need to incorporate more of the principles and practices for dealing with the human and social dimensions of riparian management, and to improve the blend and balance of technology transfer and problem solving within activities. Recently, the National Riparian Service Team (NRST) has partnered with Oregon State University (OSU) to conduct a second OMB approved evaluation, covering the period from 2003 to 2010.

The purpose of the current evaluation is to assess the satisfaction of past participants in activities associated with the Creeks and Communities strategy. Specifically, respondents will be asked to reflect on their experience with different activities in relation to the delivery, quality, value and usefulness of the products, information, and services provided by the NRST and State Riparian Teams. The information collected will help the NRST and State Riparian Teams improve the trainings and assistance as well as understand how the Creeks and Communities strategy has influenced participants, organizations, groups, communities, and riparian resources throughout the western United States since 2003.

The first part, of a two-part study, will focus on large-scale, quantitative mail-back surveys of Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) Riparian Assessment Training, Grazing Management for Riparian Areas Training and Site-Specific Riparian Assistance (a.k.a. Service Trip) past participants. The second part will focus on in-depth, qualitative, field-based case studies of eight NRST Service Trip locations. Survey results will be generalizable to the larger population of participants, while interview results will provide a fuller understanding of Service Trip implementation and allow for the capture of unanticipated themes or ideas that may emerge during the research process. The final evaluation report is scheduled for completion in March, 2011. For questions, or comments about this effort, please contact Laura Van Riper, NRST Social Scientist at 541-416-6702 or by email at [laura\\_van\\_riper@blm.gov](mailto:laura_van_riper@blm.gov).

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## ***Collaboration Learning Lab History***

In 2005, Interagency Cooperative Conservation Teams (ICCT) were created by the Department of Interior and charged with implementing recommendations resulting from the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation (WHCCC). Laura Van Riper served on the Measuring and Monitoring Team and occasionally worked with the Training and Development Team on behalf of the National Riparian Service Team (NRST). In an effort to build collaborative capacity within agency employees and their partners, the Training and Development Team identified units or work groups within the various Federal agencies that represented good models of collaboration that could be used as locations to train and mentor others. Specifically, the intent was to contribute to the following training recommendations developed as part of the WHCCC:

- **Designing and Managing Meaningful Participation:** Federal agencies should provide comprehensive and systematic training in how to lead collaboratively and work productively with communities, landowners, businesses, other levels of government, and NGOs. Participants explained that while some federal agency staff can do this, too often many do not have the skills to lead or participate in ongoing cooperative conservation projects.
- **Change Organizational Culture:** Have programs include peer collaborative leadership coaching and mentoring for project staff working on all conservation projects. They could also develop peer support networks that would help federal agency staff integrate new behaviors into their way of working.

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- **Managing Effective Communication:** Several groups also noted that while citizen knowledge of science was incomplete, colleges, universities and scientific societies should teach scientists how to communicate and problem solve. Conference participants also encouraged federal and state agencies to train agency scientists on how to communicate scientific and technical information in a manner that is accessible, understandable, and yet comprehensive.
- **Building Trusting Relationships:** Federal agency staff need to learn that consistency, transparency, regular communication and shared decision-making all contribute to trusting relationships.
- **Increasing Collaborative Leadership Capacity:** Participants suggested that agency staff should be trained in collaboration and the skills associated with establishing and maintaining partnerships. The concept of an employee exchange program may be an effective way to encourage cross-agency learning and integration of skills.
- **Bringing Science and Information to Problem Solving:** Participants stressed the need for resources to collect baseline data, conduct monitoring, and evaluate projects. Participants also noted the importance of recognizing the critical role of community-based and traditional knowledge in decision making, as well as the need for innovative methods of bringing scientific and technical expertise into a cooperative conservation process in a way that improves trust in the reliability of the information. Participants asked federal and state agencies to improve their capacity to use joint fact finding approaches that involved stakeholders in the development of questions and assumptions needing scientific input, as well as in synthesizing and understanding data.

In 2006, the Forest Service National Partnership Office carried the responsibility of piloting this effort on behalf of the ICCT, and selected the NRST as the first 'Collaboration Learning Lab.' The intent was to build the capacity of both agency employees and their stakeholders by engaging them in the best practices of working in a 'partnership culture', i.e., learning by doing. The Lab would also provide an opportunity to de-mystify the collaborative process by providing participants on-the-ground experience with the Creeks and Communities process of applying collaborative problem solving to natural resource issues. A notice of this opportunity, along with an application form, was distributed via the Creeks and Communities network mailing list, and from the respondents, nine individuals were able to travel with the NRST during the 2006 field season. They represented the Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Bureau of Land Management, California Fish and Game Department, Southern Oregon University, the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A formal pre and post evaluation process was employed from which three main points surfaced. First, many people noted the importance of experiential learning in changing beliefs about the importance of collaboration (i.e., "I realize now how important it is to listen to stakeholders and incorporate local knowledge"), as well as changing behaviors and imparting new skills. Second, participants expressed interest in seeing multiple phases of service trips and how one phase helps inform the development of another phase. They also expressed interest in a more structured training after the trip, so they could better understand the range of facilitation techniques and the rationale for using one tool versus another in specific situations. Third, participants felt it was important to seek out and build the skills of local cooperative conservation champions, regardless of what organization they work for. In order to meet the participants' request for a more structured training, the first NRST sponsored Consensus Institute was held in Prineville, Oregon.

In 2007, following the success of the 2006 pilot, the BLM Riparian Program provided additional funding to continue the Collaboration Learning Lab approach. This money was used to support five Creeks and Communities network members' participation on different service trips, to sponsor a second installment of the Consensus Institute, and offer travel scholarships to attend this session.

In 2008, the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) and Community Partnership Office initiated a partnership with the NRST to continue the Collaboration Learning Lab effort within NLCS units. To qualify, a NLCS unit must: (1) identify a riparian issue that could foster a collaborative approach to management; and (2) secure commitment from the unit leadership to support the collaborative process during and after the pilot. The NRST is currently working on three NLCS units as part of this effort; the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (Montana), the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area (Nevada), and the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (Colorado). Two additional installments of the Consensus Institute were also held in Prineville and Phoenix in 2008 and 2010. For additional information, contact Laura Van Riper at [laura\\_van\\_riper@blm.gov](mailto:laura_van_riper@blm.gov) or 541-416-6702.

## ***FY2010 State Team Training Schedule***

### **California**

PFC - Bishop June 22-24 Contact: Dave Weixelman (530) 478-6843  
[dweixelman@fs.fed.us](mailto:dweixelman@fs.fed.us)

### **New Mexico**

PFC - Silver City May 17-19 Contact: John Sherman (505) 438-7683  
PFC - Taos August 23-25 [John\\_S\\_Sherman@blm.gov](mailto:John_S_Sherman@blm.gov)

### **Oregon**

PFC - Prineville (wait list only) May 25-26 Contact: Jimmy Eisner (541) 416-6753  
[Jimmy\\_Eisner@blm.gov](mailto:Jimmy_Eisner@blm.gov)

PFC - Baker City August 30-31 Corey Parsons (541) 523-6418  
[Corey.Parsons@oregonstate.edu](mailto:Corey.Parsons@oregonstate.edu)

### **Texas**

Nueces River Authority Workshops May 2-8 Contact: Russell Castro (254) 742-9982  
PFC - Lubbock Sept 21-23 [Russell.Castro@tx.usda.gov](mailto:Russell.Castro@tx.usda.gov)

### **Utah**

MIM August 2-6 (tentative) Contact: Justin Jimenez (801) 539-4073  
[Justin\\_Jimenez@blm.gov](mailto:Justin_Jimenez@blm.gov)

### **Wyoming**

MIM - Rock Springs September 14-16 Contact: Dennis Doncaster (307) 352-0207  
[Dennis\\_Doncaster@blm.gov](mailto:Dennis_Doncaster@blm.gov)

PFC = Proper Functioning Condition  
MIM = Multiple Indicator Monitoring

## ***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](mailto: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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