



Creeks and Communities

Agency Coordinator Desk Guide

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Introduction and Purpose

The Creeks and Communities (C&C) strategy was initiated in 1996 by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service, in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The strategy was developed to help ensure the sustainability of riparian-wetland resources by providing community-based training and assistance. C&C strategy activities explain and demonstrate how the physical function of riparian areas support the production of many societal benefits. This knowledge helps individuals and communities develop appropriate riparian management objectives linked to corresponding stream functions. To successfully implement restoration and improved management on a large scale, the importance of incorporating both natural resource and social science is emphasized. This often involves the creation of forums where varying perspectives receive open and frank discussion, where differences are respected, and where conflicting views can be reconciled to produce workable solutions.

The C&C strategy is implemented primarily in the western United States by a diverse network (Network) composed of individuals from various agencies, organizations, disciplines and interests. The Network provides guidance, information, tools, training, coaching and problem solving assistance to landowners, managers, specialists, and stakeholders. The Network includes:

- **The National Riparian Service Team (NRST):** An interdisciplinary team of BLM and Forest Service employees attached to the national level offices of both agencies, charged with implementing C&C activities and providing leadership for the Network.
- **Agency Coordinators:** BLM, Forest Service, and NRCS riparian and other program leads at the national and regional/state levels who provide program and budget support to the C&C program, coordinate across programs within their agency, coordinate across

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agency boundaries, and bring Network resources to meet on-the-ground needs of field units.

- **State Riparian Teams:** Inter-organizational and interdisciplinary teams at the state-level that implement C&C activities (e.g., community-based training).
- **Topical Teams:** Network members who work cooperatively to share information, develop/sponsor workshops, and undertake coaching efforts around specific topics of interest (e.g., grazing management for riparian-wetland areas).
- **Partner Organizations:** Non-governmental and other organizations that partner with the NRST and associated agencies and State Riparian Teams to support C&C programs and activities.
- **General Membership:** Individuals who participate in the Network for learning, coordination and information sharing opportunities, but are not active participants in strategy implementation.

Agency Coordinators are primarily located in the State Offices of BLM and NRCS, the Regional Offices of the Forest Service, and the national offices of all three agencies. The Agency Coordinator role is not necessarily filled based on an individual's job title, rather program leaders self-identify because of their passion for both riparian health and collaboration. Riparian areas, by their nature involve highly interdisciplinary work and are addressed by a number of program areas; consequently individuals from different disciplines are interested in riparian management. The NRST encourages more than one program manager serve as a C&C Agency Coordinator for their National/Regional/State offices. The role of Agency Coordinator involves working closely with State Riparian Teams, other agencies, and stakeholders. The purpose of this Desk Guide is to help Agency Coordinators become effective members of the Network by understanding their roles and responsibilities, as well as the benefits of being a part of the Network.

Benefits to Agency Coordinators

The Network is a community of practice⁵ focusing on an integrated riparian management process. This process includes steps to use assessment and monitoring information to develop riparian management objectives and plans, monitor the effectiveness of planned actions, and use that information to implement adaptive actions (Dickard et al. in preparation). Involvement in the Network provides Agency Coordinators access to a wide range of skills and resources and opportunities for growth and development through:

- Coordinating across organizational levels and with other agencies.
- Developing effective professional relationships.
- Using interpersonal and team-level skills.
- Galvanizing expertise, and sharing knowledge to help field units solve riparian problems.
- Contributing to solutions for pressing, complex policy issues that cross traditional boundaries.

⁵Communities of practice share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger 2006).

- Staying current on riparian research and techniques.
- Promoting the wide-spread application of best practices.
- Improving service to citizens concerning riparian management.

Benefits to C&C Network

The Network benefits from Agency Coordinators actively participating in strategy implementation. Benefits include:

- Sustainable budget for strategy implementation and riparian management through the work of Agency Coordinators.
- Expanded learning and knowledge-sharing opportunities. Innovation, fresh ideas, and critical perspectives tend to flow in networks that connect individuals and agencies with different expertise, viewpoints, and experiences.
- Effective learning by agency interdisciplinary teams as well as stakeholders through the availability and interaction of experienced peers. National and Regional/State program managers often have the experience, skills, and responsibility to help solve riparian problems at field units.
- Stronger coordination and impact of C&C promotion efforts and services.

Agency Coordinator Roles/Responsibilities – Standard Operating Procedures

- 1. Gain supervisor support.** Discuss the commitment and responsibilities involved as well as the benefits listed above. Also speak with other program managers that may be interested. If needed, the NRST and State Riparian Team Leader can assist with this, and provide a letter requesting an individual's participation. Incorporate Agency Coordinator action items into annual work plans and performance elements to promote accountability and recognition for the coordination efforts. Contact the NRST and State Team Leader(s) and ask to be added to the Network mailing list and directory.
- 2. Establish and maintain effective communication channels.** Agency Coordinators are the principal contacts for the C&C strategy within their agency jurisdiction and serve as a communication link between the NRST and field units. This requires awareness and knowledge of individuals, organizations and programs regarding riparian resources. Understanding the various interests and initiatives is key to fostering relationships and opportunities for coordination and joint participation. Specific actions include:
 - a. Creating and maintaining contact lists for information sharing such as training announcements and newsletters.
 - b. Contributing articles about C&C activities to NRST's Full Stream Ahead newsletters.
 - c. Keeping agency leadership apprised of C&C activities and introduce new leaders to the strategy and the Network. The NRST can provide PowerPoint presentations and handouts that can be customized for specific communication objectives. Briefings conducted jointly by the Agency Coordinators and State Riparian Team Leader(s) will add credibility when advocating for program support.

- d. Conducting targeted outreach to field units or external organizations to explain the C&C strategy and help develop priority requests for services to the NRST or State Riparian Teams.
- e. Fostering the application of the integrated riparian management process.
 - i. Draw upon and utilize the Network to ensure field units have adequate training and coaching for consistent application of riparian assessment and monitoring protocols.
 - ii. Advocate for interdisciplinary interaction on riparian-wetland issues.

3. Provide budget support for State Riparian Team’s travel.

- a. Discuss annual funding needs with the State Riparian Team Leader, team members, and other Agency Coordinator counterparts. State Riparian Teams flourish when they receive funding for travel through their Agency Coordinators in State or Regional offices.
- b. Consider funding to support other needs such as training to improve State Team members’ core competencies in both riparian resources and collaboration.
- c. Provide guidance and budget expertise to State Riparian Teams in efforts to partner with individuals or organizations that have access to grants or other funding for C&C activities.

4. Participate in Network meetings (face-to-face and internet) and calls. Network meetings and calls are designed to meet both Network development and work planning objectives. During the meetings, the NRST, State Riparian Teams, and Agency Coordinators present and discuss issues that are relevant to strategy implementation and learn from each other’s experiences. Time is also devoted to the development of 2-year work plans for C&C activities. Agency Coordinator input ensures the plans are congruent with agency program goals and objectives.

5. Recruit Network members. Through formal and informal contacts and staying abreast of personnel changes, Agency Coordinators can help recruit new State Riparian Team Leaders and members from a range of interested organizations and individuals. Those who are familiar with and have participated in C&C activities are often good candidates. New people coming into the state with riparian or social science experience are also possible recruits. Below is some additional guidance:

- a. Coordinate with the State Riparian Team Leader prior to formally requesting the services of a prospective individual from that person’s supervisor. A request letter can be sent from the Agency Coordinator, the State Riparian Team Leader, or the NRST. The letter serves as official documentation to be used after the groundwork is laid with both the individual and their supervisor; the letter should not be sent without prior contact with the supervisor.
- b. Communicate in advance of an upcoming transfer or retirement of an Agency Coordinator. Consult with the NRST and seek supervisory commitment and assistance to find someone to assume the Agency Coordinator role to ensure the work continues.

- 6. Become a member of a State Riparian Team.** Attend a State Riparian Team workshop to meet team members and become familiar with workshop content. Depending on the level of interest and passion for working with people, Agency Coordinators can help implement strategy activities by becoming a member of their State Riparian Team.
- 7. Compile C&C accomplishments annually.** The NRST compiles annual accomplishment reports for the C&C Network. These reports are shared with national, regional, and state level agency staff and posted on the website. Coordinate with the State Riparian Team Leader(s) to provide input for Agency Coordinator accomplishments, or submit directly to the NRST.

Participation in the Network is aligned with many of the United States Department of the Interior and United States Department of Agriculture strategic goals and objectives including policies that promote watershed health and resiliency, management and restoration of riparian areas and streams, and collaboration. This Desk Guide is a companion to the C&C strategic plan (C&C Network 2014). For additional information see the following documents at: <http://www.blm.gov/or/programs/nrst/index.php>.

- C&C Strategic Plans (2002, 2014)
- C&C Strategy Progress Report (2009)
- C&C Accomplishment Reports (yearly 1999 to present)
- Full Stream Ahead newsletters
- Technical References in the interagency 1737 Riparian Area Management series
- Request form for services of NRST

References

Creeks and Communities Network. 2014. Creeks and Communities Network strategic plan 2014-2024.

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