



## Creeks and Communities Biennial Network Meeting March 2-4, 2010 – Reno, Nevada

### Meeting Report Executive Summary

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The 2010 Creeks and Communities (C&C) Biennial Network Meeting Report serves as a repository of the information presented at the meeting and provides a reference for people seeking additional details in their area of interest. The report consists of a synopsis of each of the PowerPoint presentations, case studies, panels and general discussions, and showcases the cooperative work being done by Network members and their partners in riparian restoration and management in the Western United States and Canadian provinces. The C&C Network includes individuals from federal, state and local agencies, academia, industry and conservation interests, and others. Approximately 90 people from 12 states, two Canadian provinces and the District of Columbia attended the meeting.

The 2010 meeting theme was “*Creeks and Communities: Staying Relevant to Agencies & Communities.*” Meeting objectives included: (1) enhance accountability and agency support, (2) diversify and enhance the Network skill base, and (3) enable coordination between Network members. Network meetings are an integral part of implementing the C&C strategy. They are both developmental and working meetings, designed to increase and enhance the ability of the Network to be effective in management and implementation of the initiative while meeting participating agencies goals. As in previous years, the 2010 agenda included presentations coupling theory and principle with on-the-ground practices and examples. Interviews with Network members conducted months in advance helped shape the meeting content. In keeping with the C&C approach, this input led to an agenda that was a blend of both the social and technical dimensions of the strategy. The meeting was structured to provide a diversity of topics throughout each day, and like all Network meetings, it was designed to be very interactive, with adequate break time for networking.

Steve Smith, Team Leader for the National Riparian Service Team, set the tone for the meeting with his optimistic view of the future for the C&C strategy and went on to point out the relevance of the C&C approach for addressing key issues such as water and climate change. He encouraged the group to be creative in advancing the strategy and to take this opportunity to get to know one another. Steve’s welcome was followed by the ‘grounding’ where each participant introduced themselves and their relationship to C&C, and expressed their expectations for the meeting. This process was important for establishing a sense of the group, fostering participant interaction, and setting the stage for careful listening during the remainder of the meeting.

The NRST provided a report of their work covering processes, services, lessons learned, mentoring, the ongoing OMB evaluation and the C&C contract. State and Provincial team reports occurred throughout the 3-day agenda. These reports have always played a major role in Network meetings by providing tested insight into what worked well, and not so well, and as a source of inspiration. Agency program representatives from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency, shared some national level issues and perspectives, as well as information on some important programs and initiatives for the Network to be aware of.

Several blocks of time were devoted to priority issues identified by the Network. Presentations were followed by facilitated group discussions addressing such topics as revising the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) Assessment User Guides (Technical References 1737-15 and 16), streambank alteration as an annual indicator, and several aspects of monitoring. An overview of the Multiple Indicator Monitoring (MIM) protocol was followed by presentations giving perspective to monitoring efforts from the field by people representing three different federal agencies. Participants were asked to put written responses on index cards to some specific questions about revision of the technical references and monitoring. These responses were compiled by emphasis or theme into collective statements that will be used when revisiting these issues in the future.

Additional presentations featured unique and related efforts. Norine Ambrose, Program Manager, shared her work with a non-profit organization operating in Alberta, Canada, and a program called “The Cows and Fish Process: Working with Producers and Communities on Riparian Awareness” and described the following program elements: (1) awareness, (2) team and community building, (3) tool building, (4) community-based action, and (5) monitoring. Betsy Wooster, BLM Environmental Education Specialist, introduced a recently published youth riparian curriculum titled “Holding on to the Green Zone.” She brought copies of the Student and Leader Guides and asked the Network to assist in the use of these new products within their communities. Brian Wachs, high school science teacher from Crook County, Oregon, was inspirational as he described his experiences using the curriculum with his students. Brian advised the group not to underestimate the marketing power that students using the Green Zone curriculum in place-based education can have on their parents and others in fostering land stewardship.

Case studies demonstrating ongoing application and results of the C&C approach provided another opportunity to hear from people outside of government. The Network appreciates hearing these perspectives and learning from them. The Ranching Heritage Alliance, formed by ranchers in the Springerville, Arizona region, participated in a panel discussion sharing their experiences of proactive learning and collaborative problem solving. The panel included Wink Crigler and Cary Dobson, ranchers, Jeff Rivera, District Ranger on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Dave Smith, USFWS, and Judith Dyess, Forest Service Region 3, however, George Ruyle, University of Arizona who could not attend, is also a primary partner. Each panel member gave an account of the many efforts to improve their understanding and communication, and build the trust that now supports meaningful, on-the-ground problem solving. Sky Lewey, from the Nueces River Authority, Uvalde, Texas, told how she has been successful in establishing a Riparian Network in the Nueces River Basin, comprised primarily of riparian landowners. With assistance from C&C Network members, she has been able to host a number of workshops and one-on-one landowner site visits emphasizing riparian function and the link between function and values; to date, over 400 people representing about 10% of the basin, have participated. In addition, Sky continues to distribute newly developed riparian information products and has initiated a formal program evaluation. Sky commented that because water is such an important commodity in Texas, landowners are beginning to manage land for water production, not just for traditional production of cattle (etc.) and as a result, they are seeing the role of the land differently.

Patrick Lucey and Cori Barraclough, Aqua-Tex Scientific Consulting in British Columbia, Canada, once again provided a very interesting evening program. The focus was on the water/energy nexus featuring some of the innovative projects they are involved with, both domestic and international. Cutting edge ideas were introduced with examples of how water (both for consumption and other uses) can be incorporated into green development and building to generate energy and maximize efficiency

and costs. They always challenge and stretch the group's thinking and awareness. Their evening programs have become one of the highlights of the Network meetings.

Ed Roberson, Assistant Director of Renewable Resources and Planning for the BLM, and Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief, National Forest Systems, spent time with the group between attending other meetings in Reno that same week. Both Ed and Joel voiced their support for collaborative approaches to problem solving and recognize that the Network is helping to build capacity within and outside the agencies towards that end. Ed acknowledged the Network's role in helping people create a common vision and satisfy the human need to come together to address complex challenges. He also asked that people become familiar with the Interagency Landscape Project including the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and the Climate Science Centers. Joel emphasized that the C&C strategy is a great example of achieving the Secretary of Agriculture's emphasis of an 'all lands' approach. The cross-jurisdictional cooperation realized is helping address water quality and quantity issues throughout the west and promote strategies that lead to increased resilience; both congruent with the agency's water and climate change strategies. Both agency leaders endorsed the youth education and mentoring done by the Network and encouraged the group to keep moving forward with this initiative.

In closing, Steve Smith reflected on the number of years the Network has been implementing the C&C strategy and how meaningful and rewarding it has been, and continues to be. He encouraged people to be innovative and creative in providing service and to assist one another in furthering this effort. Several audience members were asked to talk about their experiences at the meeting and how Network members can stay relevant. Participants were then asked to write their responses on index cards to the following two questions: (1) What aspects of this meeting went well, and (2) What would you suggest we do differently in 2012 in terms of both process and focus? The overriding response was that the meeting was a success and will assist network members in their ability to assess and monitor riparian systems and work effectively with communities. Comments revealed that people really liked hearing from the private sector about the positive impacts the C&C strategy is having in their communities. They enjoyed the diversity of topics addressed, the quality of presentations and presenters, and opportunities to connect and visit with Network members. In addition, participants felt the State Team reports were valuable and provided good ideas for future work. This feedback, along with additional interviews conducted later this year, will help inform development of the 2012 Network Meeting agenda.

**The full meeting report, PowerPoint presentations and handouts  
can be found at <http://www.blm.gov/or/programs/nrst>.**