

IUFRO Abstract #3002

The first four years of a collaborative forest landscape restoration project on Colorado's Front Range: successes and lessons learned

Theme: Forests and People

Session: 239 – Establishing social institutions for co-management of public forest lands

Presenter Surname	Presenter Country	Abstract Title	Abstract ID	Session No.	Session Title (with original session #)	Date and Time	Presentation type	Order in Session	
Dickinson	United States	The first four years of a collaborative forest landscape restoration project on Colorado's Front Range: successes and lessons learned	3002	A-10	239 Establishing social institutions for co-management of public forest lands	October 11, 08:00-10:30	Oral Presentation	6	Forests for People

Submitted abstract:

The lower montane forests of Colorado Front Range have changed significantly over the last 150 years. In the absence of the historic mixed-severity fire regime, the density of small and medium-sized trees has increased greatly. This increased tree density has been associated with increased occurrence of large uncharacteristically severe fires, insect outbreaks, and the degradation of open-woodland habitat. Furthermore, the wildland urban interface (WUI) is continuing to expand as more people build their homes in these fire-adapted forests. As such there is an increasing pressure to restore the structure and function of these forests, and reduce the likelihood of uncharacteristic wildfire.

In 2010, the Front Range Roundtable (a community group comprising non-government organizations, researchers, private stakeholders, and federal, state and local agencies) and two national forests (Arapaho and Pike National Forests) embarked on the Front Range Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project (CFLRP). Over the past four years this collaborative project has endeavored set restoration goals, carry out restoration treatments, monitor the success of the treatments and use adaptive management principles. We will present the successes of this collaborative project, and describe the lessons learned about working collaboratively to restore these forested landscapes.

Proposed outline:

(Need to have lots of photo's e.g. field trips and collaborative meetings, treatments underway, pre- & post-treatment forests etc. May split some slides over multiple slides where there is too much content)

Slide 1: Title

Slide 2: Map(s) showing location and extent of Front Range (including forest extent, urban areas, CFLRP boundary)

Slide 3: Explain what the pre-settlement forest/landscape structure and fire regime was; and the changes over last century (historical logging and grazing, fire suppression, climate change, WUI expansion) have lead to changes in structure (dense, homogeneous landscapes) and fire regime (undesirable fire)

Slide 5: Explain background of the Front Range CFLRP

- Collaboration of Front Range Roundtable (need to explain who the roundtable is) and Pike/Arapahoe-Roosevelt NF's
- Started in 2010, federal funding, project lasts 10 years (with monitoring beyond that)
- Outline goals/purpose of Front Range CFLRP:
- 1.5mill acre landscape, which includes a variety of land ownerships. 32,000 acres identified within this area of forest needing restoration in the wildland urban interface (WUI).
- Segue to next slide: purpose of this talk to share some of our successes, challenges and lessons we have learned; with the hope that what we have learned can inform other collaborative restoration projects.

Slide 6 Successes: Restoration treatments

- \$X funding from CFLR, with \$X matching funds
- X direct full and part time jobs created
- >8358 acres treated between 2010 and end of year 2012
- (Include photos and maps of actual treatments on slide)

Commented [YD1]: Include socioeconomic and ecological monitoring data here.

Slide 6 Successes: Restoration processes

- Adaptive management in action
- Information challenges have led us to do more local research to resolve unknowns – our understanding of the ecology is getting better
- Starting to understand the true effects of treatments on the ground (previously focused on implementation monitoring, rather than effectiveness)

Slide 7 Successes: Social capital and learning

- Improved relationships among collaborators (nobody excluded from participation, increase in trust recognized by members, “good faith collaboration”). Debates and discussions have been positive, constructive and respectful.
- Collaborators learning about perspectives and challenges of other in restoration process, including implementation challenges.
- Improving processes/structure (improving over time)
- Strong communication
- Collaborative implementation (improving over time)

Slide 7 Successes: “Spin-offs”. A number of other projects have been catalyzed by FR-CFLRP including:

- Scientific collaborations among researchers, and between researchers and managers e.g. Writing a USFS white paper to guide forest restoration activities in the region, The Front Range Forest Reconstruction Network, graduate student theses investigating effectiveness of restoration activities etc
- Meetings have become a forum to discuss future challenges and be proactive (rather than reactive) in our management.
- Other forest management collaborations (e.g. UMC project, plains to peaks collaborative)
- Outreach to other groups through publications and presentations (like this presentation!)

Slide 8 Challenges and lessons learned:

- While no one is excluded, there are some interests missing. The collaborative tends to be dominated by those with technical backgrounds. Involvement of collaborators from across institutional partners' hierarchy is important to get buy-in (e.g. regional, forest and district USFS employees).
- Collaboratively defining roles and processes important (we are still working on this); and a good facilitator is key.
- In addition to a facilitator, a single person to act as a coordinator of activities (particularly monitoring programs and data) is important, at times it has been difficult to access/share data and coordinate monitoring activities efficiently.
- Setting desired conditions (objectives) first is important to set project direction and establish monitoring plan, but very challenging with diverse collaborators. Even seemingly simple questions such as "What is restoration" have spurred much (healthy) debate and research to resolve.
- Although, members agree we are moving in a new direction and therefore need to design monitoring methods that measure new metrics... e.g. "groupy-clumpy"
- The turn around of monitoring data from time of treatment through to being able to share the data can take up to a year, which makes it difficult to adapt and change quickly using adaptive management.
- While the collaborative is evolving and adapting to internal/external partners, the institutional partners involved find it difficult to change as quickly (e.g. the NEPA process takes time for new projects, monitoring data needs for USFS reporting aren't necessarily relevant to the objectives of this particular project).
- Questions have arisen about what happens after the federal funding runs out in 2020... this may be some time away but members acknowledge that the work won't be finished.
- While this project manages USFS land, it aims to influence other landowners in this landscape. Gaining traction with this is challenging and slow.

Slide 9: Summary/Conclusions

- The Front Range CFLRP project has been a positive move forward for forest management in the region... while there is still much work to be done, the team is up for the challenge.

Slide 10: Questions? (and references/acknowledgements)

Cheng, A.S. and Gerlak, A.K. (In Preparation) Examining the adaptability of collaborative governance in public ecosystem and resource management over time: insights from the Front Range Roundtable, Colorado, USA

Mattor, K. 2013. A Case Study of Collaboration: The Front Range Roundtable and The Colorado Front Range Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project. http://coloradoforestrestoration.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2013_FR-CFLR_CollaborationCaseStudy.pdf

Monitoring and annual reports