

The image features a teal-colored text box on the left side, containing the RVCC logo and title. The background is a photograph of a forest with tall, thin trees and a ground covered in pine needles and fallen logs. Several people are standing in the forest, engaged in a group activity. The text is overlaid on the image, and there are decorative circular lines in yellow and blue that curve across the top and right sides of the page.

RVCC
Rural Voices for
Conservation
COALITION

FOSTERING YOUR FOREST WORKFORCE

A PEER LEARNING EXCHANGE FOR
NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

NOVEMBER 13-14, 2019

FOSTERING YOUR FOREST WORKFORCE

ABOUT THIS LEARNING EXCHANGE

Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC), Ecosystem Workforce Program (EWP), and Lomakatsi Restoration Project (LRP) co-hosted a peer learning exchange on the topic of forest workforces and community-based organizations. 21 participants from 11 organizations and five states took part in the event.

The objectives of this workshop were to: 1) Foster dialogue and peer learning about common opportunities, challenges, and needs among nonprofits with forest workforces; 2) identify actionable policy and practice improvements; and 3) build or enhance connections among entities with similar issues and interests.

The workshop format was designed to encourage informal sharing and dialogue about shared interests, challenges, and opportunities. It included a half day tour and discussion of restoration work implemented by Lomakatsi in the Ashland watershed, as part of the Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project.

AUTHORS

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Document layout and design by Jessica Sabine Brothers, RVCC. Cover photo by Karen Hardigg, RVCC. For more information, contact Karen at rvcc@wallowaresources.org

DISCUSSIONS LED

- Youth crews as nonprofit workforces—Matt Piccarello, Forest Stewards Guild
- Prescribed fire: working across boundaries—Amanda Rau, The Nature Conservancy
- The ecological restoration workforce: safety and equity—Carl Wilmsen, Gladis Garcia, and Martha Valle, Northwest Forest Workers Center
- Ecological restoration and workforce development in the Ashland watershed (field tour)—Marko Bey, Belinda Brown, Braulio Maya Cortes, John Cymore, and crew members, Lomakatsi Restoration Project; and Don Boucher, retired U.S. Forest Service
- Building and sustaining cross-trained workforces—Nick Goulette, Watershed Research and Training Center
- Policy and higher-scale barriers and enabling conditions—Tyson Bertone-Riggs, Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition

THEMES AND TOPICS COVERED

WORKFORCE EQUITY

- The cycle of exploitation in forest work: although some prefer chainsaw work, others can become trapped in low-paying, high risk situations. There has been increased emphasis on the need to accelerate the pace and scale of forest restoration, with less attention to the myriad safety and equity dimensions of forest work, often perpetuated by how federal land service contracts are packaged and offered, with awards going to the lowest bidder. Training, community health work, and advocacy are needed.
- The importance of providing appropriate compensation, professional development, and benefits for workers despite limited budgets.
- Levers to improve conditions for forest workforces at higher scales may be found in multiple places: grants and agreements, the structures and incentives of land management agencies, contracting and procurement regulations, labor laws, funding sources, and fire policy.

PARTNERING WITH AGENCIES

- Opportunities and challenges in working with land management agency partners who may have differing interpretations of authorities and possibilities across units.
- The importance of specific mechanisms such as cooperative agreements and stewardship agreements for performing this work on federal ground and with federal resources. These mechanisms need to be maintained and protected in order for this work to continue.



Left photo: Lomakatsi crew members and director discuss their work. *Photo credit: Karen Hardigg*

Right photo: Forest restoration work site in the Ashland watershed. *Photo credit: Emily Jane Davis*

ROLES FOR INTERMEDIARIES

- The roles and values of community-based organizations in providing local employment and knowledge. CBOs are uniquely positioned to demonstrate and advocate for equitable ecological restoration workforces, and can elevate better pay and benefits with leveraged co-investments.
- Creating a local cross-trained workforce that is able to perform a spectrum of types of work requires aligning work opportunities, seasonal restrictions, budgets, and diverging worker interests.
- How nonprofit organizations can develop and sustain youth crew programs, including skill building and professional development, partnerships with the U.S. Forest Service, certifications, and navigating agreements to perform the work.
- Conducting prescribed fire across boundaries with diverse partner workforces: necessary agreements, trust, welcoming pyro-culture, and role of intermediaries.

ACTION ITEMS FROM THE WORKSHOP

- Continue discussion of these topics with a dedicated session at the RVCC annual meeting in January 2020.
- Create a file sharing space for participating peers to exchange documents and templates.
- Consider articulating a short white paper that describes the importance of workforce equity in forest restoration, so that these issues can be more centrally elevated among our organizations and our work.



Peer learning participants gathered for a group shot while visiting the Ashland watershed.

Photo credit: Tom Greco, Lomakatsi

PARTNERS & COOPERATORS IN ATTENDANCE

In alphabetical order by organization

Ecosystem Workforce Program/Oregon State University

Emily Jane Davis, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist

Ecotrust

Miakah Nix, Keex' Kwaan Community Forest Partnership Coordinator

Forest Stewards Guild

Matt Piccarello, Southwest Assistant Director

Lomakatsi Restoration Project

Daniel Barney, Youth Intern Job Shadowing
Jill Beckman, Lead Ecological Forester
Marko Bey, Executive Director
Belinda Brown, Tribal Partnerships Manager
Braulio Maya Cortes, Lead Restoration Crew Manager
John Cymore, Restoration Operations Supervisor

Mt. Adams Resource Stewards

Jay McLaughlin, Executive Director
Casey Tane, Stewardship Crew Lead

Northwest Forest Worker Center

Gladis Garcia, Program Coordinator
Martha Valle, Promotora de Salud
Carl Wilmsen, Executive Director

Northwest Youth Corps

Josiah Gray, Programs Coordinator
Matt Springer, Programs Director

Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition

Tyson Bertone-Riggs, Policy Analyst
Karen Hardigg, Executive Director

Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative

Terry Fairbanks, Executive Director

The Nature Conservancy

Amanda Rau, Oregon/Washington Fire Manager,
Oregon Prescribed Fire Council Chair

Watershed Research and Training Center

Nick Goulette, Executive Director