RVCC
Rural Voices for Conservation COALITION

Ecosystem Workforce Program

Oregon State University

University of OREGON

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All-Lands Checklist

Principles and considerations for more meaningful and effective cross-boundary projects

OVERVIEW

Across the West, practitioners working on sustainable land management and restoration have increasingly focused on efforts that cross public, private, and tribal boundaries. Working across multiple land ownerships creates efficiencies, helps leverage resources, and better addresses the interconnected nature of today's ecological and economic challenges. While this type of "all-lands" work has gained broad support and interest, it is also complex, involving multiple partners, different land ownerships, diverse objectives and priorities, and many funding sources. Unsurprisingly, all-lands projects can be difficult to successfully implement to their full potential.

For 20 years, the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC) has advocated for policies and developed tools and resources that support partners working together across land ownerships. In line with this work, the following checklist presents considerations and best practices for carrying out all-lands projects that leverage partners' diverse skills and capacities to accomplish more than the sum of their parts. Developed from interviews with practitioners and reviews of case studies and academic literature, the checklist is intended as a set of possible ingredients rather than a defined recipe for this type of multi-partner work. Some items may come before others or be more applicable than others depending on the project. Our hope is that this list can help guide all-lands projects that are high quality, inclusive, and strategic.

THE MEANING OF "ALL-LANDS"

All-lands work, also described as cross-boundary or landscape-scale work, involves multiple landowners, land managers, and other entities within a targeted landscape coming together to plan and/or implement management activities with a common goal. All-lands projects encompass at least two land ownership types, such as federal, state, tribal, or private ownership. Multiple partners are involved, with partners describing those who own or manage lands within the project boundary, or otherwise contribute resources and support to project implementation. Ideally, all-lands projects happen by design, not by chance, and are deliberate efforts to plan across boundaries, pool resources, and work in targeted areas to optimize outcomes for all.

Acknowledgments

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Ashland Forest All Lands Restoration - Mustard Family Forest
NRCS photo by Tracy Robillard

Enabling conditions:

Elements that lay the foundation for successful all-lands projects.

Partner relationships

Trusting relationships and a history of collaborative work help set the stage for successful all-lands projects. If relationships don't already exist between partners, it could be helpful to carve out dedicated time for relationship building at the start of the cooperative effort. Gatherings like shared meals, field trips, visits to peoples' places of work or home communities, or meeting icebreakers and social time can help strengthen relationships. Attempting smaller-scale or pilot projects can also help partners to get a feel for one another and build rapport before scaling up to a larger effort. Different approaches may be required to build relationships with different types of partners. If large private landowners are key players in the project, spend time understanding their management objectives and financial considerations. If there are opportunities to work with tribal governments in ways that go beyond required consultation processes, start by asking how they would like to participate in the project and seek their guidance on how to foster cross-cultural understanding and uphold tribal treaties, laws, and protocols.

Leadership

All-lands projects need leaders who can promote the overall vision for the project, manage relationships, communicate effectively, and navigate challenges. Try to find people within each of the lead agencies and partner entities who embody these traits. Partners should also consider if people set to take on leadership roles have the knowledge and decision-making authority (or access to appropriate decision-makers) to effectively coordinate their organization's involvement in the project.

Agency capacity, stability, and engagement

Before starting an all-lands project, it helps to make sure there are state and federal agency personnel who have the time, resources, experience, institutional support, and desire to support the work and build relationships with the local community. Agency field offices may need to adjust long-term planning, funding allocations, and staff work plans and assignments to ensure the all-lands work is sufficiently prioritized. An all-lands project also can run into challenges without buy-in from all levels of an organization, from leadership to field staff. Agencies may therefore find value in enabling a range of staff to engage early in project development so they understand the overall vision and can contribute site- or department-specific knowledge.

Creativity and risk-taking

Making all-lands projects happen often requires thinking outside the box, being willing to try a new approach, or exploring new ways to operate within existing regulatory structures - all of which can require taking risks. Try to seek out individuals, landowners, and partners who will embrace and promote creativity during the project, are solutions-oriented, and are not overly risk averse. Make the most of risk-taking by setting up deliberate learning processes such as pilot projects and after-action reviews.

Pre-planning considerations:

Less tangible aspects of all-lands work that partners should be thinking about and discussing at early stages.

Shared Vision

Partners can set a solid foundation for an all-lands project by taking time early on to find consensus on core components including overall goals, general scope of the work, and desired outcomes. Zones of agreement already established by collaborative groups, state or federal management plans, or other prioritization efforts can provide a starting point for this work. It is important to consult diverse entities in creating this shared vision for the project. For example, private landowners could need language supporting their decision-making authority and management priorities to feel comfortable signing on. Tribal governments will want to protect their tribal sovereignty. Conversely, partners may need to make certain concessions or commitments that go beyond their individual management objectives in order to achieve the greater goals of the project. To help partners unite around shared management goals, consider the use of boundary objects like maps or prioritization matrices that are accessible to all partners. These resources can serve as useful tools for onboarding newcomers and be referenced throughout the project. The representatives of each partner entity can further support the project by making it clear how the all-lands project fits into their organizational priorities and communicating that to their staff.

Intentionality and alignment

Capturing the full potential of cross-boundary work means intentionally designing a project rather than simply taking advantage of activities occurring in the same area during the same time. This requires dedication from agencies and other partners to identify areas of shared priority and then align project planning, funding, and on-the ground activities in those areas. Shared tracking of outcomes and learning are other strategies for working more cohesively. While requiring upfront effort, improved coordination and alignment can pay off in increased efficiency and efficacy of activities such as resource surveys and project communications. As time passes, partners should recognize that maintaining the intentional nature of an all-lands project will require continued engagement from those with knowledge, authority, and necessary decision-making power to prioritize aligned work.

Prioritization

Individual partners typically have their own prioritization processes informed by factors like resource condition assessments, private lands management objectives, values-at-risk analyses, and public input. While all-lands projects often emerge in areas where these priorities overlap, partners likely need to make compromises to ensure the cross-boundary work gets sufficient attention and resources. This could mean shifting grant proposals or staff time to ensure the all-lands work is adequately supported. The all-lands project itself may be able to gain greater buy-in if focus areas, activities and timelines are based on a clear and transparent prioritization approach that considers widely accepted factors such as NEPA readiness, values at risk, and degree of social support. Collaborative mapping activities with local community members and partners can be a way to identify areas and activities of mutual priority within the project footprint.

Tribal Engagement

No matter where an all-lands project takes place, it is being implemented on lands that overlap with and include the treaty rights and traditional homelands of one or more Native American tribes. Additionally, many projects affect lands adjacent to tribal reservations.[1] Tribes have a vested interest in any all-lands project that occurs in their area of interest and federal agencies involved in the project are required to formally consult or otherwise engage with tribal governments in their planning processes, per their trust responsibilities. Working with tribal governments also produces stronger projects. Given their unique powers as sovereign nations, as well as their deep history and knowledge of land stewardship, tribes bring valuable perspectives and capabilities to cross-boundary and collaborative land management (e.g. the Anchor Forest concept). Before approaching tribal governments, non-tribal partners should spend time learning about relevant tribal and treaty rights, tribal culture, and tribal values. Another initial step could involve reaching out to one or a few individuals from the involved tribe or tribes who can help teach non-tribal partners on how to best work with the tribe. From there, partners should continue to develop relationships with leaders and experts within the tribe's government (following tribal direction on how to do so) and learn how to work through the tribe's preferred channels and protocols for communications and decision-making. During project planning, tribal members or representatives should be included in deliberate conversations about how the tribe's knowledge, values, and traditional uses of the land can be prioritized and integrated into the project. Also keep in mind that each tribal government has different staffing resources and will vary in their ability to respond to requests or join projects.

Kevin Goodell (left), a member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and tribal natural resources crew member, and Mike Kennedy, natural resources director for the Siletz Tribe. NRCS photo by Tracy Robillard

Equity

It is important to consider how the all-lands project can help reduce, rather than exacerbate, inequities across space, time, and resource concerns; and how outcomes from the work may be distributed. To incorporate equity considerations, partners could start by reaching out to a diverse range of potentially affected parties to understand how the project intersects with issues of concern for them. Then, evaluate how actions like shifting the distribution and prioritization of activities or incorporating more collaborative decision-making processes could, for example, better address the needs of historically underserved communities. Follow-through on planned activities is important as well: the balance of commercial and non-commercial restoration work accomplished ideally should match what was originally promised or be adapted appropriately in response to changing conditions.

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1. For example, there are nearly 3,000 miles of shared boundaries between Indian tribes and the U.S. Forest Service and 60 tribes have treaty rights to culturally important resources on national forest lands.

Source: Morishima, G.S., & Mason, L. (2017). Our Nation's Forests Need America's First Stewards. *Journal of Forestry*, Volume 115 (5), 354- 361. https://doi.org/10.5849/jof.16-073

"Nuts and bolts" considerations:

The more tangible, operational, and tactical parts of developing an all-lands project.

Governance structures

Avoid confusion, inefficiencies, and duplication of efforts by establishing some basic governance structures for the involved partners. This could include charters, memoranda of understanding, and dedicated working groups and steering committees. Partner roles and responsibilities are also important to hash out. Ask, for example, who should take the lead on a particular activity or funding source? Who should serve as liaison with other entities or the community? Governance structures can be simple while still making it clear who makes which decisions and how. Keep in mind that each of the partners also have their own decision-making processes that should be factored into how everyone works together. For example, if representatives of agencies, local governments, or tribal governments participate in regular all-lands project meetings, be sure to understand when decisions are theirs to make and when they may need to get direction or approval from higher-level leaders.

Partnership tools and authorities

In addition to governance structures, partners will likely need to develop agreements, contracts, or other formal arrangements in order to share or allocate resources and designate certain responsibilities and commitments. Because these documents and structures can be complicated to create, make sure to get the right experts at the table. For example, state and federal agencies must ensure the partnership activities align with their legal authorities while formal work with tribes usually requires approval from tribal leadership. While it may require more upfront effort, it can be useful to craft documents in ways that make space for innovation and evolutions in the project without requiring updates or modifications. If a project doesn't appear to fit perfectly into a specific agency agreement structure, don't be deterred. Seek out knowledgeable staff, including those in grants and agreements positions, who can think creatively about alternatives and areas where flexibility exists. Be patient but persistent during this process.

Funding

Diverse funding types are often needed to support different activities and landowner needs within an all-lands project footprint. For example, some landowners may not want to use funding that requires certain surveys, and some funding is better suited to small properties rather than larger land ownerships. If mixing and matching funding sources, partners may need to coordinate the timelines for applying for and spending each funding source and create a plan for covering upfront expenses if a funding source only reimburses for costs incurred. Partners also should pay close attention to match requirements for various funding sources and have a strategy for satisfying those through cash or other contributions. One best practice is to develop and consistently use systems that track valuable partner time and other in-kind match.

Timelines and sequencing

Understanding the timelines and sequencing of various activities within the project footprint can help identify when and where it may be important for implementation to happen in the same time frame. For example, engaging a contractor or logger to work on multiple small adjoining or nearby parcels during the same time period could reduce costs of equipment mobilization and staging. When thinking about timelines, be aware of other planning efforts such as travel or resource management plans that could cause project delays or put additional strain on agency staff time. Work plans

that operate on separate but parallel tracks may help avoid or minimize situations where initiation of work on one land ownership is dependent on the completion of work or environmental reviews on another.

Environmental plans and reviews

A key factor affecting project sequencing and timelines is the status of and need for environmental analyses, plans, and documentation on different land ownerships. Requirements will depend on proposed activity, funding type, and land ownership but could include National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, grazing plans, individual landowner plans, integrated resource management plans, or other permits and surveys. Even if a project or activity happens on non-federal lands, a NEPA analysis could be required if it uses federal funds, requires an easement across federal lands, or requires a federal authorization such as a lease or permit to proceed. Depending on the level of analysis required, completing NEPA on federal lands could take several months to several years, a reality that should be built into the project's timeline.

Shared data and commitment to monitoring

There may be advantages to partners collecting and using data that is available to everyone and covers the entire project area. This includes using the same baseline data on factors like wildfire risk, watershed condition, and landowner engagement to support funding requests and selection of priority areas. As the project progresses, joint or coordinated monitoring of ecological, social, and economic outcomes can help promote accountability and adaptive management. Make sure monitoring plans include scientifically sound protocols, outcome indicators, processes for sharing data, multi-party learning opportunities, and strategies for adaptation if needed.

Adaptability

A number of strategies can help a project be more adaptable to changes and challenges. Pursuing flexible funding and writing agreements broadly can allow resources and activities to shift in the face of obstacles or unexpected events. Deliberate check-ins and pre-established plans for adaptation can also help partners quickly respond to changes. Personnel transitions can be smoothed by building institutional memory through documentation of discussions, operating principles, agreements, and decisions. Individual organizations can also do their part by communicating upcoming departures to the group, creating a plan to bring new hires up to speed on the partnership, and engaging other staff so if a key person leaves, someone else is ready to fill in.

Economic viability

It is important for partners to be aware of market forces that may affect the viability and progress of an all-lands project, including timber values and the economics of forest byproducts removal and processing. Because contractor availability, log markets, chip prices, and other factors will change over time, the conditions for removing material may vary between project initiation and when harvesting begins. Incorporating partners involved with local restoration or forest products businesses can help make sure the project is economically viable and able to adapt when necessary.

Connection-building considerations:

The relationship-building and partner engagement work that is crucial for making an all-lands project an inclusive, multi-stakeholder effort.

Collaborative discussion

Collaborative dialogue among project stakeholders (which include formal partners as well as others who have an interest in and/or influence over aspects of the project) plays a key role in the planning and implementation of public lands components in an all-lands project, including monitoring and adaptive management. Distinct from operationally-focused communications among core partners, this type of dialogue involves deliberation, discussion of diverse perspectives, mutual learning, consensus-building, and collectively generating solutions. Going through such processes can help build trust, zones of agreement, and shared vision. Established collaborative groups are a natural, but not the only, venue for this sort of dialogue. Partners can help enable collaborative dialogue by providing dedicated space and time before and during a project, setting basic ground rules and expectations, and enlisting skilled facilitation.

Operational communication

Maintain frequent and sustained operational communication between partners by establishing communication channels and point people, as well as regular opportunities for partners to connect, such as weekly or monthly phone calls open to all. Designated point people and liaisons should ensure conversations are happening not only between partners but also between field-level staff and higher levels of the participating organizations and agencies. It is good practice to regularly share project updates with all partners and to maintain a well-organized, shared online space for meeting notes, key documents, and other important files.

Community outreach

Robust communications and opportunities for public engagement help build community support for a project. To avoid redundancy and conflicting messaging, partners should consider collaborating on a communications plan to articulate the value of the all-lands project and explain how they are working together. Holding regular open meetings, hosting field tours, and maintaining a website with public information about work activities, timelines, and key decision points, are other ways to increase engagement and build trust within the local community. In planning public outreach efforts, partners should consider how to reach different audiences including underserved or less-obvious groups. One approach is to connect with key members of those groups who recognize the value of the project and can help engage their neighbors, friends, and colleagues.

Landowner engagement and assistance

The most effective strategies for engaging and assisting private landowners are tailored to their individual concerns and goals, land use, property type and condition, engagement level, and communication preferences. Building these strategies often starts with gathering information about and building relationships with landowners and landowner groups in the project area. Local field staff from nonprofits and agencies may be able to aid in this endeavor if they have experience working with residents and have built trust with them. One common engagement strategy is to recruit more-involved landowners to reach out to their less-involved neighbors or to be the first to undertake treatments on their land to demonstrate the potential value. Other options include inviting landowners to field tours or

educational workshops about the all-lands project and involving them in collaborative project planning. These tactics can increase landowners' buy-in to the project's larger goals and, in turn, their willingness to pursue management activities that align with those goals. When landowners do signal their willingness to participate in the all-lands project, other partners can reduce barriers to entry by facilitating access to cost-share opportunities as well as technical assistance and/or resources such as inventory and mapping services. As the project progresses, maintaining landowners' privacy and using discretion in sharing information helps maintain trust.

Holding regular open meetings, hosting field tours, and maintaining a website with public information about work activities, timelines, and key decision points, are other ways to increase engagement and build trust within the local community.

Bald Hill Farm Field Tour, NRCS photo by Tracy Robillard

Gooseberry 3rd Grade Education Program, Fishlake National Forest. Photo by US Forest Service

Managing outreach and communications for an all-lands project includes organizing public engagement and adult education opportunities, creating unified storytelling and branding, and using social and traditional media to share messages.

Experience and skills considerations:

Seek out, designate and include partners with these key roles and abilities.

Diverse partners

All-lands projects need willing partners who are able to invest time and resources in the work. Ideally, multiple agency and non-agency partners can bring complementary expertise, capabilities, operational scales and resources to address the full scope of a project's needs. It helps to think broadly about the types of entities that could be involved in different ways. They can include public lands managers, private landowners, tribal governments, nonprofits, extension offices, industrial landowners, ranchers, forest products businesses, family forestland owners, and state and federal natural resources agencies.

Expertise in project funding and partnership structures

Agency grants and agreements specialists and administrative staff from non-governmental organizations are crucial for finding project funding and developing the financial arrangements, agreements, and contracts needed to support an all-lands project. These financial and administrative specialists can also be key in operationalizing innovative ideas if they are open to experimentation. Engaging their expertise early in a project can ensure there is a solid legal and financial framework for partnership work, which may help reduce the risk of delays due to administrative reasons later on.

Project coordinator

With so many moving parts, all-lands projects may benefit from one entity that can take the lead on administrative and management tasks such as facilitating meetings and coordinating various partners, activities and funding sources. If it is needed, try to find dedicated funding for a person or organization to carve out time for this coordination work, versus adding it on top of their regular responsibilities. This role can also be key for facilitating communication between different participants and stakeholders, avoiding duplication of efforts, tracking funding and activities across the landscape, and generally making sure nothing falls through the cracks.

Implementation capacity

Partners may find it valuable to do an assessment of local workforce capacity and infrastructure, including logging contractors, mills, and field crews, to better inform expectations and timelines for project implementation. Agency personnel who enable and oversee planned activities are crucial implementation capacity as well. They include people involved with contracting, project layout, property assessments, project administration, and the application of prescribed fire. Engaging these staff in project planning can help identify potential opportunities and challenges from an operational perspective.

Communications and outreach capacity

Managing outreach and communications for an all-lands project includes organizing public engagement and adult education opportunities, creating unified storytelling and branding, and using social and traditional media to share messages. Capacity for this type of work can often be found in nonprofits, local collaborative groups, university extension offices, and organizations such as fire safe councils. Of the people tasked with communications and outreach, make sure some have an understanding and ability to connect with diverse audiences.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

How Do We Accomplish All-Lands Management? Direct Insights from a Survey of Practitioners (RVCC)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/562e839ee4b0332955e8143d/t/59ede7cafe54ef255de3c9e0/1508763595768/RVCC+Land+Report+WEB.pdf

Appendix

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/562e839ee4b0332955e8143d/t/59ede7b4ace8645c75983955/1508763573011/RVC+Land+Report+Appendix+WEB.pdf

All-Lands Case Studies (RVCC)

https://www.ruralvoicescoalition.org/case-studies

Planning and Implementing Cross-boundary, Landscape-scale Restoration and Wildfire Risk Reduction Projects (Oregon State University Extension)

https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/pnw707

Partnership Learning Project (Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board)

Part 1 and Part 2

Forest Restoration at the Landscape Scale across Land Ownerships: How to get there from here? (USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station)(video)

https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/rtw/2017/Oct17/5/

Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities for Collaborative Accelerated Restoration in Oregon's Blue Mountains (EWP)

http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/WP_88.pdf

Strategies for Success Under Forest Service Restoration Initiatives (EWP)

http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/WP_81.pdf

Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition

RVCC envisions healthy landscapes and vibrant rural communities throughout the American West. We are committed to finding and promoting solutions through collaborative, place-based work that recognizes the inextricable link between the long-term health of the land and the well-being of rural communities.

Ecosystem Workforce Program

The Ecosystem Workforce Program is an applied social science research and extension program built on the fundamental belief that ecology, economy, and governance are intimately interconnected. EWP is a joint program of the Institute for a Sustainable Environment at the University of Oregon and the College of Forestry at Oregon State University. EWP was founded in 1994 to support the development of a high-skill, high-wage ecosystem management industry in the Pacific Northwest, and has evolved to provide state-of-the-art social science research and communication aimed at promoting the resilience of forests and people.

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