CFLRP Collaborative Governance Assessment Report

FOR THE SOUTHWEST COLORADO COLLABORATIVE FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION INITIATIVE

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SWERI Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes
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Document Development: In FY21, the USDA Forest Service led a collaborative process to develop a CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy that will be required for all newly authorized and reauthorized projects under the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). The USDA Forest Service Washington Office requested assistance from the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) in developing and deploying an assessment tool to track collaborative governance within and across CFLRP projects through time. The collaborative governance assessment is intended to assess whether CFLRP is encouraging an effective and meaningful collaborative approach, a component within the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy. We developed an online, confidential survey that was administered to CFLRP project participants. With support from the USDA Forest Service Forest Management, Range Management, and Vegetation Ecology program, SWERI conducted regional webinars to introduce the assessment and identify project-level points of contact, which were followed by in-depth engagement with key contacts to determine recruitment strategies, administration timing, and project-specific questions. In FY22 and FY23, SWERI will be collecting baseline information for all newly authorized and reauthorized projects. SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects. The Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University funded survey administration using state funding (Arizona Board of Regents through the Technology, Research and Innovation Fund), which was used as a match to annual federal appropriations to the SWERI.

Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI)
The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes include three university-based restoration institutes: the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWRI), the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI), and the Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI) in Arizona. These institutes were congressionally appointed in 2004 by the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act (PL 108-317), and the Institutes work together to develop a program of applied research and service to help create healthy forests, prevent uncharacteristic wildfires, sustain the resiliency of water supplies to wildfires, and create jobs. The SWERI receive funding from five primary sources: 1) federal appropriations; 2) additional federal funding (e.g., the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act); 3) state appropriations; 4) in-kind support from host universities; and 5) extramural funding such as grants and agreements. The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes receive federal appropriations under the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act administered through the USDA Forest Service. In accordance with Federal law and USDA policy, these institutions are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights Room 326-A, Whitten Building 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC, 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice & TDD).

Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI), Northern Arizona University (NAU)
The Ecological Restoration Institute is nationally recognized for mobilizing the unique assets of a university to help solve the problem of unnaturally severe wildfire and degraded forest health throughout the American West. ERI serves diverse audiences with objective science and implementation strategies that support ecological restoration and climate adaptation on Western-forest landscapes.

Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI), Colorado State University (CSU)
The Colorado Forest Restoration Institute is a science-based outreach and engagement organization hosted by the Department of Forest and Rangeland Stewardship and the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University. Colorado State University (CSU) is a land-grant university with a mission to provide teaching, research, public service, and engagement that CFRI strives to uphold. CFRI was established by Congress as part of the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes to serve as a bridge between researchers, managers, and stakeholders working to restore and enhance the resilience of forest ecosystems to wildfires in Colorado, the Southern Rocky Mountains, and the Intermountain West. CFRI leads collaborations between researchers, managers, and stakeholders to generate and apply locally relevant, actionable knowledge to inform forest management strategies. CFRI's work informs forest conditions assessments, management goals and objectives, monitoring plans, and adaptive management processes.

NAU Land Acknowledgment: Northern Arizona University sits at the base of the San Francisco Peaks, on homelands sacred to Native Americans. We honor their past, present, and future generations, who have lived here for millennia and will forever call this place home.

CSU Land Acknowledgment: Colorado State University acknowledges, with respect, that the land we are on today is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations and peoples. This was also a site of trade, gathering, and healing for numerous other Native tribes. We recognize the Indigenous peoples as original stewards of this land and all the relatives within it. As these words of acknowledgment are spoken and heard, the ties Nations have to their traditional homelands are renewed and reaffirmed. CSU is founded as a land-grant institution, and we accept that our mission must encompass access to education and inclusion. And, significantly, that our founding came at a dire cost to Native Nations and peoples whose land this University was built upon. This acknowledgment is the education and inclusion we must practice in recognizing our institutional history, responsibility, and commitment.

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Executive Summary

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) developed a collaborative governance assessment as part of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Common Monitoring Strategy. The collaborative governance assessment was designed to assess the following questions:

1. What are the structural and functional dynamics of the collaborative? Does the collaborative exhibit characteristics generally associated with healthy, well-functioning, and resilient collaboratives?
2. What do participants need or recommend to improve the process?
3. To what extent do participants feel the project is meeting process, socio-economic, and ecological goals?
4. What challenges or disruptions affect collaborative performance and durability?

The SWERI administered an online survey to members of the Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (SW CO CFLRP) from April 25 to June 5, 2023.

A majority of respondents reported that a representative set of stakeholders were involved in the CFLRP collaborative process, and that participants worked together to identify shared interests and concerns. The majority of respondents generally agreed about key problems that have impacted their landscape, strategies to solve problems, and the purpose of their collaborative restoration project. Also, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the process has helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect of others' positions and interests. Respondents noted strong commitment to the process among themselves, other organizations, and by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service). A majority of respondents reported the presence of strong leaders who worked well across organizations and entities, communicated a collaborative vision, and motivated others to work together. Respondents also felt the SW CO CFLRP had adequate technical expertise to carry out tasks and accomplish their work. They generally agreed that participants worked together to co-generate knowledge and solve problems, were committed to adaptive management, and had some flexibility when forest conditions or the collaborative changes.

However, there were several areas for improvement. A large proportion of respondents felt that they did not have adequate funds, time, and facilitation resources to accomplish needed work. A relatively high proportion of respondents felt some work could be done to develop shared understanding and agreement on the key problems the group faced and actions to solve them, improve collaboration between collaborative members and the Forest Service during implementation, and share information. Some respondents indicated the need for more clarity around why Forest Service decisions were made, how collaborative input was considered in decision-making, and how and when collaborative members could inform management actions. Finally, respondents felt the need for processes and protocols for managing conflict. These areas for improvement were reiterated in open-ended responses on the needs and recommendations to improve the collaborative process. Three themes emerged from our assessment, including the need for: 1) third-party facilitation; 2) mechanisms for productive and inclusive participation and engagement; and 3) clear understanding of collaborative structure, function, and decision space across scales and levels of authority. Decision authority over restoration activities on Forest Service-managed lands rests with the Forest Service. A goal of collaborative engagement in public lands management is for collaborative groups to inform land management decisions. Thus, it is important to understand the allowable decision space, i.e., the range of options that are available to decision-makers and feasible to implement.

Survey results indicated that the SW CO CFLRP has started to make progress on a number of process, socio-economic, and ecological goals of the CFLRP, despite this being the first year of CFLRP funding. Respondents reported an increase in landscape-scale and cross-boundary planning, and a majority of respondents indicated the project had included diverse perspectives, enhanced communication, and enhanced decision-making. A majority of respondents also reported progress on reducing fuel hazards.

Personnel turnover, moving from direction setting to implementation, limited agency capacity, conflict among participants, and limited industry capacity were the most substantial disruptions faced at the time of the survey. Yet, the SW CO CFLRP has reportedly started to address

4 Rivers collaborative group members defining and aligning their values with SW CO CFLRP desired future conditions. Source: Anthony Culpepper.

several of these disruptions. For instance, respondents noted the Forest Service was adding staff dedicated to the CFLRP, and the group was in the process of hiring a third-party facilitator, which may be helpful to establish and enforce fair, inclusive, and transparent accountability and address conflict among members. The assessment represents a snapshot in time. The assessment was administered during the first year of funding and at a time of transition for the SW CO CFLRP. Collaboration is a dynamic and evolving process, and thus results may change as collaborative groups create value in different ways or their needs and priorities change. Collaboration should be periodically re-evaluated to assess whether collaboration is meeting expectations and what is needed to continue making progress towards desired outcomes. The SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects.

Introduction

The Forest Landscape Restoration Act (FLRA) was passed in 2009 and established the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). The purpose of the CFLRP was to "encourage the collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes"[1] through a competitive funding program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service hereafter). In 2021, CFLRP coordinators, Forest Service personnel, and partners led a collaborative process to develop a CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy consisting of ecological and socio-economic monitoring questions and indicators that will supplement local project multi-party monitoring plans and will be required for all newly authorized and reauthorized projects.[2]

One core component of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy relates to monitoring collaborative governance.[3] While the CFLRP requires projects to collaborate throughout planning, implementation, and monitoring, 'collaboration' was not defined in the FLRA or CFLRP requirements, nor did the CFLRP provide specific guidelines by which collaborative groups convened and engaged in collaborative restoration throughout the life of the CFLRP project. This has resulted in a multitude of collaborative structures, processes, and practices implemented in diverse social and ecological contexts across the country. Also, collaborative groups are nested within and impacted by changes that occur within their group, external changes in social and ecological conditions, and a fluid institutional environment, all of which require groups to adjust and evolve their structures, practices, and processes (Beeton et al., 2022; Ulibarri et al., 2020). Yet, a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating attributes of collaborative governance and resilience is lacking. Systemic evaluation could lead to better understanding of what factors promote or challenge collaboration across different contexts, help target what kinds of investments are needed, and where to maintain and enhance collaborative capacity.

To address this need, the Forest Service Washington Office requested assistance from the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) in developing and deploying an assessment tool to track collaborative governance.[3] During the development of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy, CFLRP coordinators from the Washington Office elicited feedback from CFLRP practitioners, CFLRP coordinators, and subject matter experts to identify monitoring questions, indicators, and available data sources. With respect to collaborative governance, partners wanted to address the question, how well is the CFLRP encouraging an effective and meaningful collaborative approach? CFLRP practitioners, coordinators, and subject-matter experts expressed interest in documenting collaborative health, function, and resilience, as well as performance (perceived outcomes). CFLRP practitioners, coordinators, and subject matter experts also emphasized the need for a tool that is straightforward, not time-consuming, easy to administer, and longitudinal.

We incorporated stakeholder feedback and questions of interest developed while drafting the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy to directly inform the components of the collaboration assessment. Our objectives are as follows:

1. Develop a rigorous, systematic, and longitudinal assessment of collaborative governance that is grounded in the science and practice of landscape-scale collaborative forest restoration.
2. Support program-wide evaluation of collaborative progress and performance, and report on findings to Forest Service staff and Congress.
3. Facilitate project-level engagement, reporting, and peer-learning to inform local collaborative work and adaptive management.
4. Contribute to the theory and practice of collaborative governance through the synthesis of findings and lessons learned.

The SWERI administered the collaborative governance assessment—an online survey—to Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (SW CO CFLRP) members from April 25 to June 5, 2023

[1] PL 111-11 CFLRP Authorizing legislation - https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/110th-congress/senate-report/370/1
[2] CFLRP National Core Monitoring Strategy - https://www.fs.usda.gov/restoration/documents/cflrp/CMS-Fact-Sheet-final-20221013.pdf
[3] Here, we define governance as "the system of institutions, including rules, laws, regulations, policies, and social norms, and organizations involved in governing environmental resource use and/or protection" (Chaffin et al. 2014).

during the first year of funding for the SW CO CFLRP. The report herein summarizes findings from the collaborative governance assessment. See Appendix 1 for a report brief summarizing our findings. We briefly highlight the approach, followed by a baseline assessment of findings and document recommendations from respondents to improve the collaborative process. The assessment represents a snapshot in time, and it was administered during a period of transition for the SW CO CFLRP. Notably, the project was in the process of hiring a third-party facilitator to convene collaborative activities, develop rules and protocols for collaborative engagement, and support communication and negotiation on a shared purpose for and approach to collaborative forest restoration in southwest Colorado.

Approach

We developed an online survey to assess:

1. What are the structural and functional dynamics of the collaborative? Does the collaborative exhibit characteristics generally associated with healthy, well-functioning, and resilient collaboratives?
2. To what extent do participants feel the project is meeting process, socio-economic, and ecological goals?
3. What challenges or disruptions affect collaborative performance and durability?
4. What do participants need or recommend to improve the process?

Framework

The survey was structured using concepts from an integrative collaborative governance framework (Emerson et al., 2012), resilience and adaptability literature (Emerson and Gerlak, 2014; Folke et al., 2005; Gupta et al., 2010), and empirical findings from the first 10 years of the CFLRP (Beeton et al., 2022; Butler and Schultz, 2019; McIntyre and Schultz, 2020; Schultz et al., 2018).

Collaboration dynamics – To assess collaboration dynamics, we operationalized the Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance (Emerson et al., 2012). The framework incorporates multiple components of collaborative governance that are grounded in collaborative practice, link collaboration dynamics to socio-economic and ecological outcomes, and promote assessment of collaboratives across settings and time. The components include principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action (Emerson et al., 2012).

Principled engagement refers to ensuring the right people are involved, i.e., a representative cross-section of people and entities who have a stake in the issue. Principled engagement also emphasizes the principles of open and inclusive communication and negotiation, where individuals with diverse perspectives and knowledge work together to identify shared problems, agree on strategies to solve those problems, and agree on the purpose or scope of the collaborative.

Shared motivation refers to the interpersonal and relational elements of collaborative dynamics. Shared motivation includes the sub-components mutual trust, understanding, and commitment. It is often referred to as social capital, or the "glue" that holds groups together through networks, norms, rules, and trust that promote collective action (Pelling and High, 2005). This glue is crucial for effective collaboration; social capital is built through investments in social relationships and can be expressed through mutual commitment of individuals and groups to common collaborative goals.

Capacity for joint action comprises four sub-components: leadership, knowledge and learning, resources, and institutional arrangements (Emerson and Gerlak, 2014). Leadership is essential for managing collaboratives, and leaders can fill many roles including convener, sponsor, public advocate, facilitator, and others. They are important for: building trust, sensemaking, bringing people together, initiating partnerships, motivating people to work together, compiling, generating, and disseminating knowledge, developing visions of and support for change, and managing conflict (Folke et al., 2005).

In a collaborative setting, participants should work together to co-create and co-develop shared understanding and knowledge through social learning; knowledge and information should be equally accessible to all members of the collaborative; and learning and knowledge should be used to inform flexible, adaptive management (Emerson and Gerlak, 2014). Social learning occurs through repeated interactions and joint problem-solving among participants. It emphasizes testing, monitoring, and reevaluating participants' assumptions and understanding of ecosystem responses and feedbacks to learn and adapt management actions (Folke et al., 2005; Lebel et al., 2010; Sharma-Wallace et al., 2018). Collaboratives often pool and share resources to accomplish tasks and get work done. These can include funding, personnel, science and technical expertise, facilitation, and coordination.

Institutional arrangements are the processes, protocols, and structures needed to manage collaboration over time, i.e., the rules of the game. Collaborative structures,

processes, and protocols should be clearly understood, transparent, perceived as fair and equitable, and include mechanisms of accountability (Emerson et al., 2012; Gupta et al., 2010; Stern and Coleman, 2015). Capacity needs change through time, and the relative amount of these four capacity types is contingent upon the local context — e.g., history of conflict, people involved, purpose and objectives of the group, among others (Imperial et al., 2016).

Perceived outcomes – Our assessment focuses both on perceived "process" outcomes (e.g., did the collaborative process reduce conflict, or increase the ability to plan at a landscape scale?) and socio-economic and environmental outcomes. The outcome metrics chosen for evaluation were derived from several sources: the intent of the FLRA of 2009 and the CFLRP, project proposals, and conversations with local, regional, and national CFLRP coordinators while developing the Common Monitoring Strategy.

Challenges or disruptions that affect collaborative performance and durability – Disruptions—i.e., personnel turnover, legal or policy changes, and biophysical disturbances like wildfires or insect outbreaks—can happen at any time. These disruptions may impact collaborative progress and performance, and/or force groups to adapt. We developed a list of common challenges that CFLRP projects and other landscape-scale forest collaboratives reported in: 1) breakout group discussions and focus group sessions at the 2020 SWERI Cross-boundary landscape restoration workshop (SWERI, 2020) and the 2020 Idaho forest collaborative shared stewardship workshops; 2) the 2020 CFLRP Collaboration Indicator Survey administered by the National Forest Foundation[4]; and 3) a survey administered to Forest Service staff engaged in 2010 and 2012 CFLRP projects (Schultz et al., 2018). Identifying current challenges or disruptions that CFLRP projects are grappling with can support strategic investment toward solutions to maintain collaborative performance and durability.

Needs or recommendations to improve the process – We captured respondents' perspectives on needs and recommendations to improve the collaborative process by including open-ended survey questions.

Data Collection and Analysis

We developed a standardized survey in the online survey tool Qualtrics that consisted of 21, mostly closed-ended statements using a Likert scale. SWERI piloted the assessment with and elicited feedback from the Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership and Northern Blues CFLRP project participants (n=37), as well as participants of the Colorado Front Range CFLRP (n=3) in FY21 (Beeton et al., 2022).

Members of the SW CO CFLRP Coordinating Council and Science and Monitoring Committee provided support in recruiting participants and administering the survey through the SW CO CFLRP listserv in from April 25 to June 5, 2023. The survey was open for 6 weeks. We received 35 usable responses, representing 32% of the population. We used the Statistical Software for Social Sciences (SPSS) to document mean responses and variation in responses. Open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Small sample sizes prohibited further statistical analyses, though this will be possible when more data has been collected.

Findings

Our results are organized as follows. The first section includes responses related to respondents' affiliations, motivations for being involved in the CFLRP project, level of engagement, and the degree to which respondents felt the project was collaborative. We then provide a description of findings related to collaboration dynamics (i.e., **principled engagement**, **shared motivation**, and **capacity for joint action**). We provide a short description of each collaboration dynamic construct in italics to orient the reader. We follow with findings on perceived outcomes, disruptions that are challenging collaborative progress and performance, and recommendations to improve the process. In Appendix 2, we present results from the appended question set that was developed in coordination with key points of contact affiliated with the Southwest Colorado CFLRP. For clarity, we describe majority or strong majority results as greater than or equal to 60% agreement and slight majority as greater than 50% agreement. We indicate disagreement when 20% or more of respondents somewhat to strongly disagreed with statements.

Introductory questions

The majority of participants represented non-governmental organizations (NGO), the Forest Service, and local government agencies (Figure 1). The most frequently reported motivations for being involved in the CFLRP project were to restore forest resiliency and reduce wildfire risk to communities (Figure 2). The level of engagement in the CFLRP project during the past 12 months varied between participants – 72% reported that they were moderately to highly engaged, while 29% reported low engagement, and 0% reported that they were not engaged (Figure 3).

[4] https://www.nationalforests.org/assets/pdfs/Collaboration-Indicator-Survey-Results-2020-publish.pdf

We asked respondents to reflect on the degree to which they thought the CFLRP project was collaborative (on a scale from not collaborative at all to very collaborative), which we defined in the survey as, "Collaboration occurs when multiple parties come together to address problems that could not be achieved by acting alone. Effective Collaboration should typically include: inclusive and diverse stakeholder interaction throughout the process; venues for open communication and negotiation about values, interests, and appropriate management actions; and opportunities for social learning." A strong majority of respondents (77%) indicated the CFLRP project has been collaborative to very collaborative; 1 participant (3%) felt the project had not been collaborative and 7 (20%) felt the project had been somewhat collaborative (Figure 4).

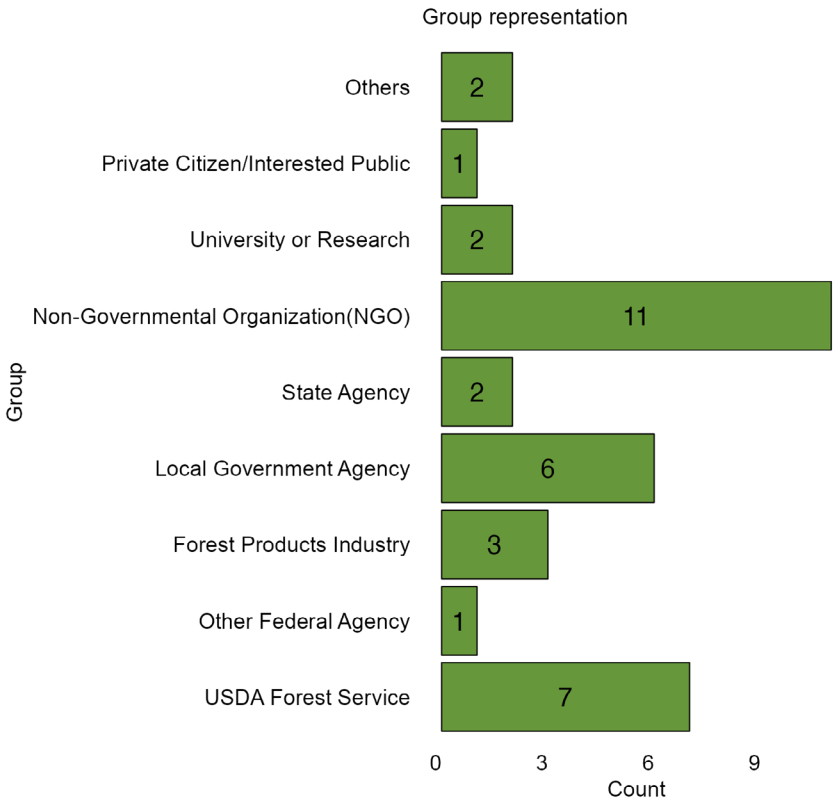

Figure 1: Respondents' self-identified representation with associated organizations (n=35).

Principled engagement

Principled engagement refers to having the right people involved in iterative and inclusive dialogue to determine shared problems, identify shared strategies to solve problems, and agree to the shared purpose of the project.

A strong majority of respondents (91%) agreed to strongly agreed that a representative cross-section of individuals who have a stake in the issues and outcomes of the project were involved (Figure 5). A strong majority of respondents (85%) agreed to strongly agreed that participants worked together to identify shared interests and concerns and that the collaborative process created a neutral space for CFLRP participants to openly discuss controversial issues (68%) (Figure 5).

A strong majority of respondents indicated that participants had a shared understanding of the problems that impact their landscape (71%), the strategies to solve those problems (68%), and the purpose of the CFLRP project

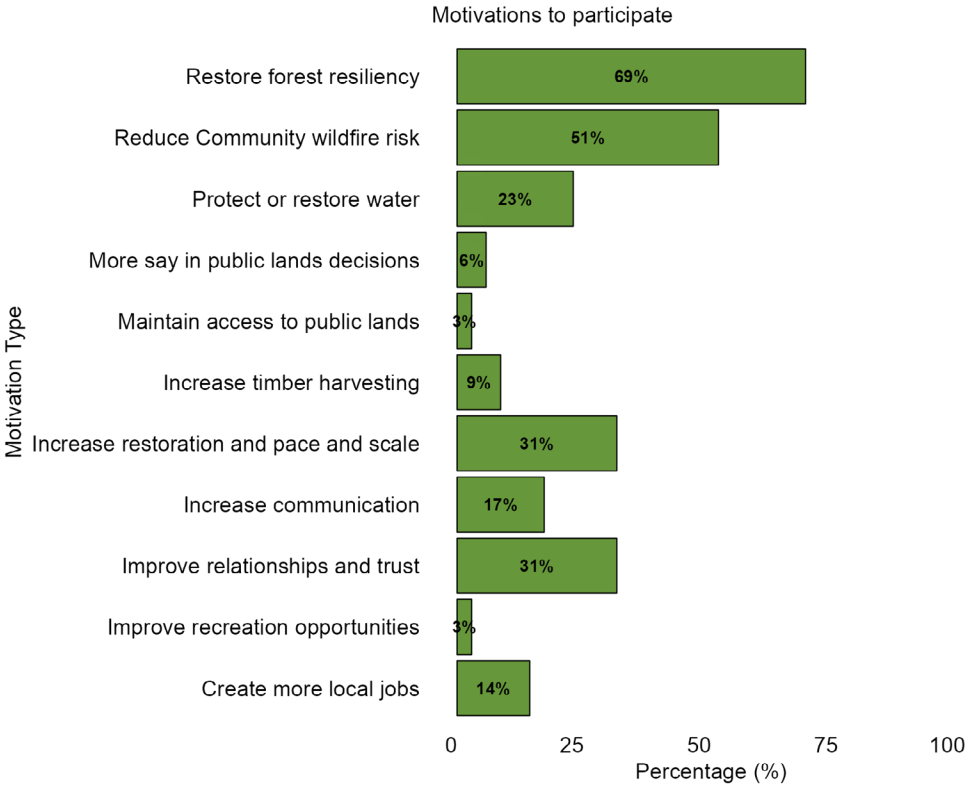

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who identified the associated motive as reason for their participation in the collaborative. Note – respondents were able to select multiple motives (n=35).

(75%) (Figure 6). A notable proportion (~20%) felt some work could be done to improve shared understanding and agreement on the key problems and strategies to solve problems.

A majority of respondents felt that the level of collaboration between the members of the Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative and the Forest Service met their expectations during planning (68%), implementation (69%), and monitoring (67%) (Figure 7). Yet, 24% of respondents somewhat to strongly disagreed that collaboration met their expectations during implementation.

Shared Motivation

Shared motivation refers to trust, mutual understanding, relationship-building, and commitment to the collaborative process.

A strong majority of participants agreed the collaborative process helped build trust in each other (90%), relationships (87%), and mutual respect of others' positions and interests (81%) (Figure 8). Also, a strong majority (74%) of participants trusted in the group's ability to achieve desired actions and outcomes (Figure 8). Respondents indicated that they were committed to the collaborative process (94%), the Forest Service unit level staff was committed to the process (83%), and other project participants were committed to the process (87%) (Figure 9).

Capacity for Joint Action

Capacity for joint action includes four components: collaborative leadership, knowledge and learning, resources, and institutional arrangements that support fair governance.

Leadership

Leadership is a critical component for collaborative governance. Leaders are needed to convene partners, communicate a shared vision, and motivate people to work together.

A strong majority of respondents agreed that the Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative had leaders who work well with

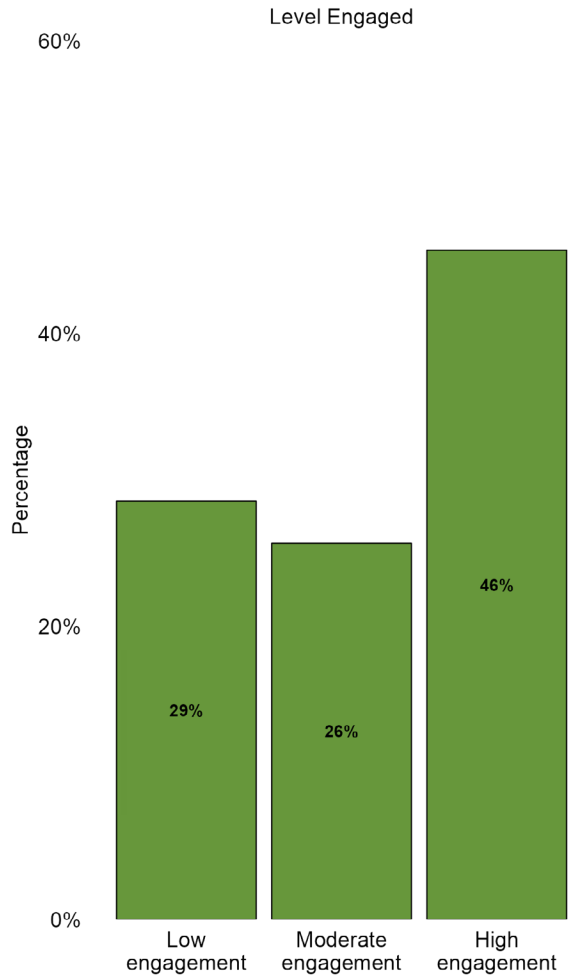

Figure 3: Percent of respondents who rated their involvement in this project as "Not engaged," "Low engagement," "Moderate engagement" or "High engagement"(n=35). No respondents indicated they weren't engaged.

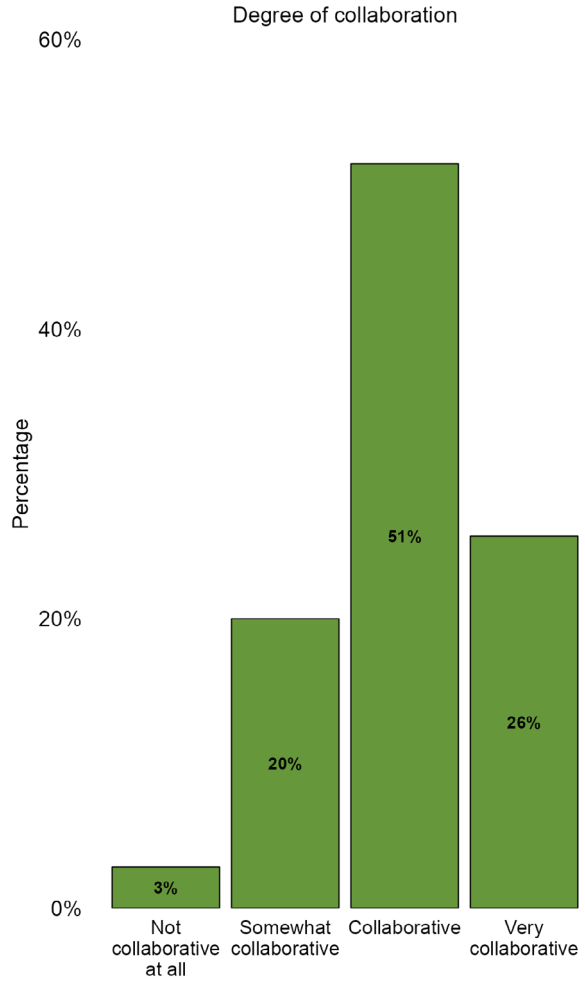

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who reported this project to be "Not collaborative," "Somewhat collaborative," "Collaborative" or "Very collaborative"(n=35).

other people (89%), maintain and communicate a common vision and direction (79%), and motivate others to work together (82%) (Figure 10).

Knowledge and Learning

Collaboratives should engage in a knowledge generation and social learning process for joint action. Knowledge should be co-produced, equally available to all partners, and be used to implement adaptive management.

For the SW CO CFLRP, a strong majority of respondents somewhat agreed to strongly agreed that the CFLRP process provided opportunities to co-generate knowledge to learn and solve problems together (79%), and that participants were committed to informing adjustments to management practices based on learning and feedback, i.e., adaptive management (75%). Likewise, a strong majority felt that participants had the flexibility to alter course when landscape conditions change (e.g., wildfire affects a planning unit; 71%) and when the collaborative changes (e.g., new faces or priorities; 71%). While still a majority, fewer agreed to strongly agreed that information was shared equally among members (63%), and a relatively high proportion of respondents disagreed with the statement (26%) (Figure 11).

Resources

To accomplish tasks and get work done, collaboratives often pool and share resources, including funding, personnel time, technical expertise, and facilitation, which, in turn, can support buy-in.

The majority of participants somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the project had technical expertise (74%) to get work done (Figure 12). While a majority of respondents suggested the CFLRP project had adequate facilitation skills to accomplish work (63%), more than 20% of respondents disagreed and open-ended responses suggested the need for a facilitator to address conflict among members (see Recommendations). A slight majority agreed that the project had adequate access to funds to get work done (58%) (Figure 12). Meanwhile, only 33% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the group

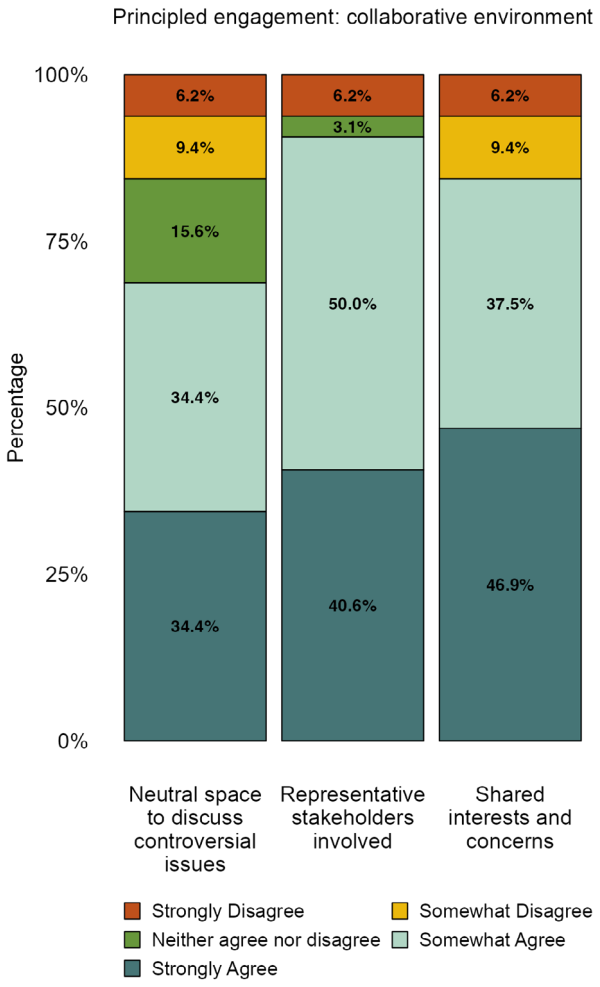

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who disagreed or agreed that representative stakeholders are involved, stakeholders have shared interests and concerns, and the collaborative is a neutral space to discuss controversial issues (n=32).

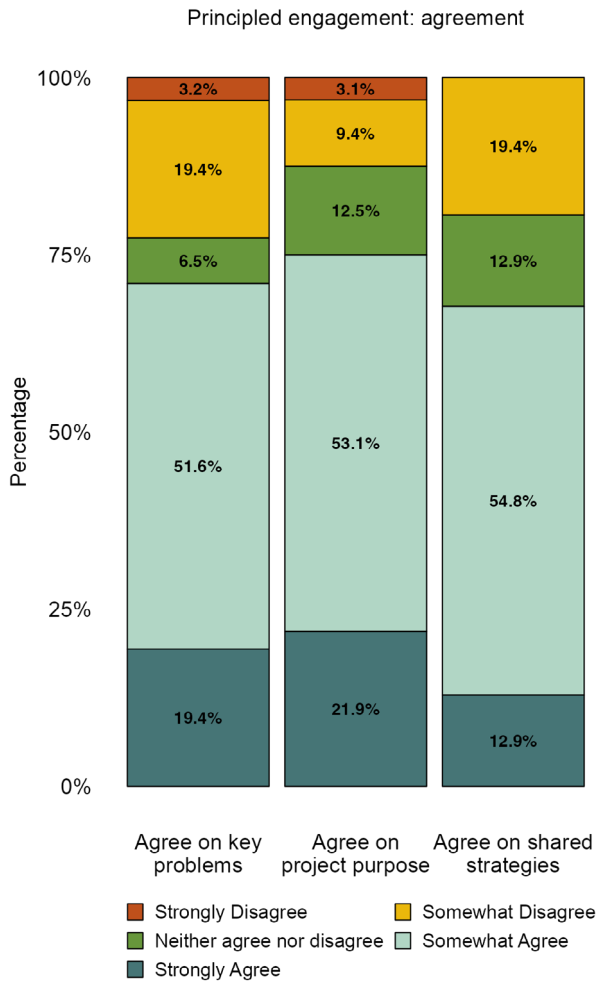

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents who disagreed or agreed on the key problems that impact the landscape (n=31), strategies to solve problems (n=31), and purpose of the collaborative (n=32).

had adequate time to carry out tasks and accomplish their work (Figure 12).

Institutional Arrangements

Institutional arrangements are the rules of the game. They include processes, protocols, and structures needed to manage collaboration over time. They should be clearly understood, perceived as fair and equitable, and include accountability mechanisms within and between entities.

A strong majority of survey respondents somewhat to strongly agreed there were protocols in place that promote accountability among CFLRP participants (77%) and between the Forest Service and CFLRP project participants (e.g., decision rules, charters, memoranda of understanding; 71%) (Figure 13). Fewer, but still a majority of, respondents agreed those protocols were clearly understood among participants (62%), fair and equitable (64%), and used appropriately (61%) (Figure 13).

A strong majority of respondents felt the Forest Service was responsive to collaborative input (76%) and the agency was clear with CFLRP project participants about the decisions they make and why they make them (68%). A relatively high proportion of respondents (24%) disagreed that the Forest Service was clear about their decisions (Figure 14). A minority of respondents (40%) felt that project participants understood when and what collaborative input was useful to inform Forest Service decisions (Figure 14).

Outcomes

We assessed perceived progress on process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes for the SW CO CFLRP. Notably, the assessment was administered during the first year of funding for the SW CO CFLRP, and thus several socio-economic and ecological outcomes may not be realized for several years after implementation.

A strong majority of respondents agreed to strongly agreed that the collaborative process enhanced

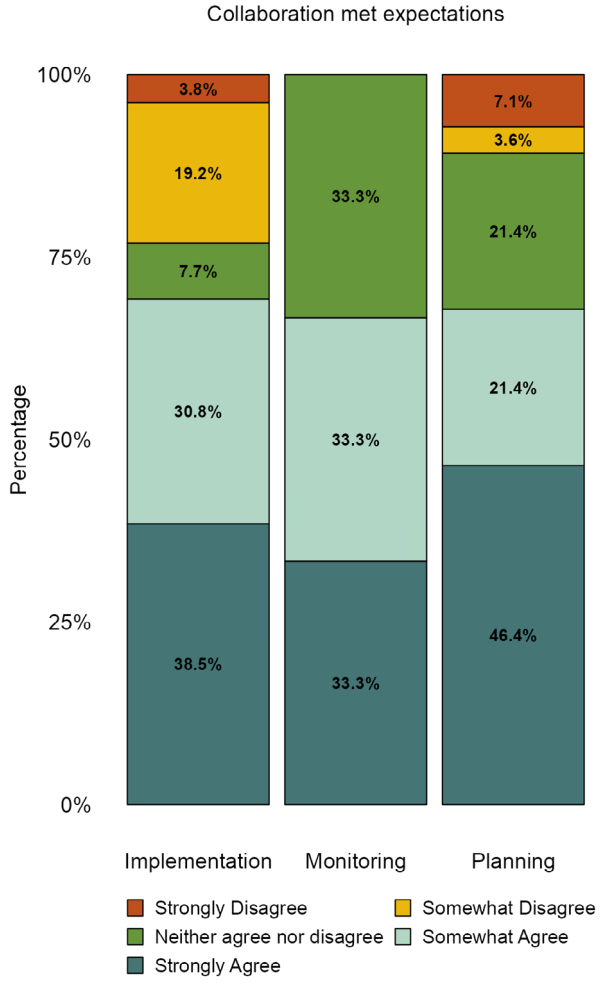

Figure 7: Percent of respondents who disagreed or agreed that the Forest Service collaborates during planning (n=28), implementation (n=26), and monitoring stages (n=24).

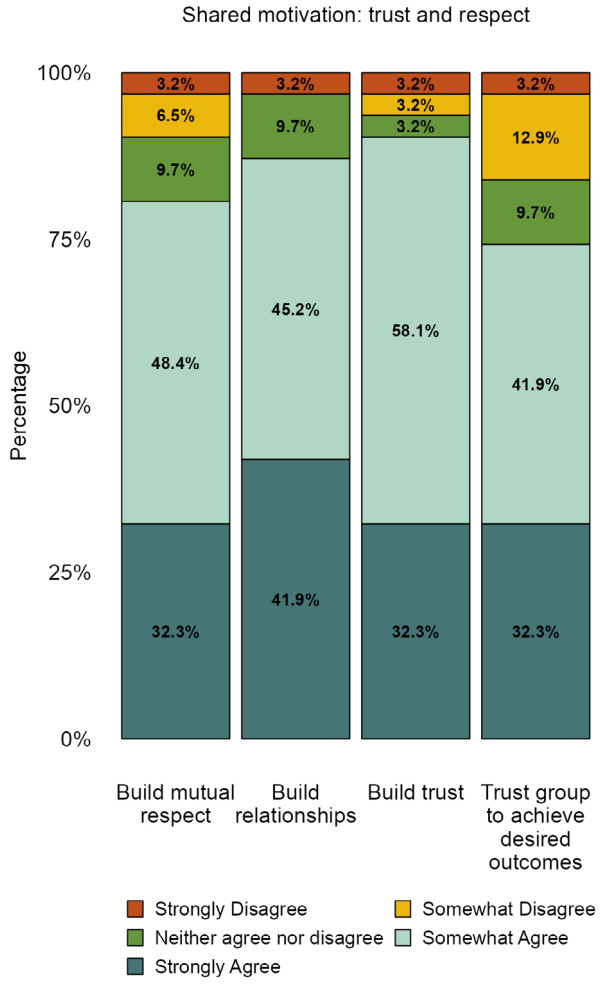

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents who disagreed or agreed that the collaborative process has helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect, as well as the extent to which participants trust the group to achieve desired outcomes (n=31).

communication among participants (73%) and decision making (72%) (Figure 15). Similarly, a strong majority agreed the collaborative process included diverse perspectives (80%), enabled landscape-scale planning (85%), and enhanced planning across boundaries (89%) (Figure 15). While still a majority, fewer somewhat to strongly agreed the collaborative process minimized conflict among stakeholders (62%) and reduced (or improved outcomes of) litigation (63%). Notably, 35% of respondents somewhat to strongly disagreed the process had minimized conflict.

A strong majority reported moderate to substantial progress in meeting the ecological goal of reducing fuel hazards (6%) (Figure 16). Half of the respondents reported progress towards maintaining or improving the pace and scale of restoration, and contributing to the control of invasive aquatic or terrestrial species (Figure 16). Meanwhile, a minority of respondents felt the process led to progress in contributing to restoration of old-growth stands (33%), improving the use of planned or unplanned wildfire (i.e., prescribed or managed, 39%), improving habitat for focal species or species of conservation concern (38%), and maintaining or improving watershed function (e.g., aquatic habitat, water quality, soil productivity, 36%) (Figure 16). In terms of socio-economic goals, a slight majority reported moderate to substantial progress in offsetting treatment costs with restoration byproducts (e.g., woody biomass, 54%) (Figure 17). However, less than half of respondents perceived progress towards reducing the risk of wildfire to the communities (29%), supporting local employment or training opportunities (e.g., forest products industry, youth/citizen science, 42%), and accomplishing more work on adjacent lands (e.g., tribal, state, private lands, 42%) (Figure 17).

Disruptions

We developed a list of common disruptions CFLRP project participants and other landscape-scale forest collaboratives reported in forest collaborative meeting breakout groups and in the literature. Based on that list, personnel turnover (92%) and moving from direction-setting/planning to implementation (76%) were the most substantial disruptions the SW CO CFLRP faced at the

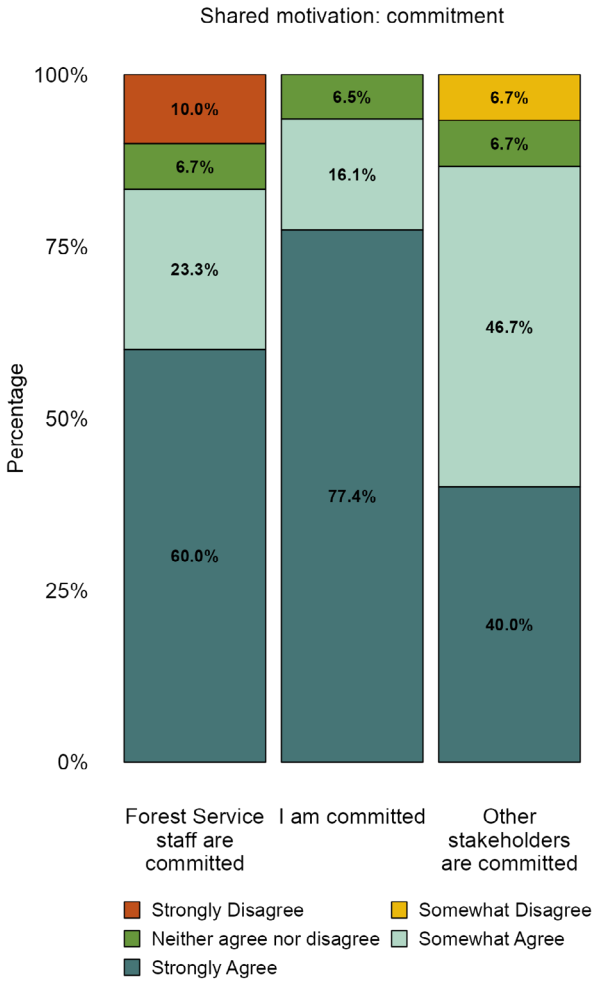

Figure 9: Percentage of respondents who disagreed or agreed that they (n=31), the Forest Service (n=30), and other stakeholders are committed to the process (n=30).

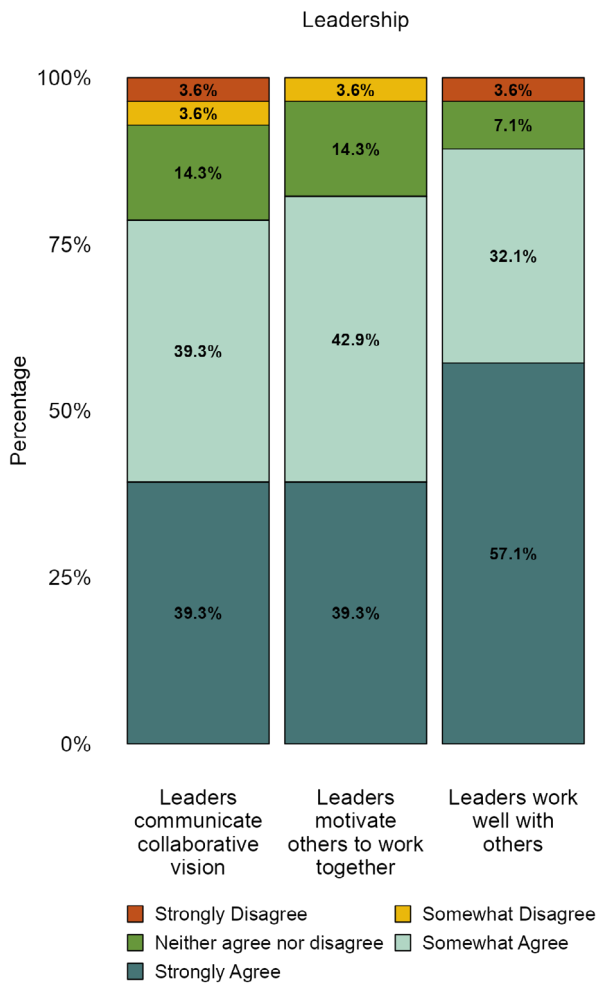

Figure 10: Percent of respondents who disagreed or agreed that the leaders work well with others, communicate a common vision and direction, and motivate others to work together (n=28).

time of this survey (Figure 18). Participants also listed other notable disruptions that affected collaborative progress and performance, including limited agency and industry capacity (67% and 65%, respectively), and conflict between participants (62%). Open-ended responses reiterated these and other disruptions. For example, respondents indicated that multiple and conflicting demands and priorities of collaborative members challenged the ability to get work done on the ground. Diminished trust among some members at the district level (Dolores) was also reported due to a perceived lack of adherence to stakeholder objections on a proposed action. Respondents also mentioned challenges with landscape-scale collaborative engagement without a third party-facilitator.

One respondent noted the ways agency capacity and turnover has disrupted progress and performance, but also acknowledged that the Forest was making progress in hiring staff:

> *Agency capacity has been a major factor here. We have seen disruptions due to staff on detail and turnover in key positions at the SO and Districts. This has slowed a couple of NEPA processes that will add projects within the District I am focused on. The turnover issue is abating with roles now being staffed.*

It was also noted that the demands of multiple collaboratives working in parallel put strain on the capacity of some collaborative members to engage. For example, one respondent noted that multiple collaborative efforts in the region placed tensions on individuals' and entities' time, participation, and funding. Parallel (and perhaps redundant) planning efforts at the local and regional scales had affected their capacity to engage:

> *another performance barrier has been the need of partners to engage in parallel planning efforts: place based; CFLRP; RMRI (Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative); county focused.*

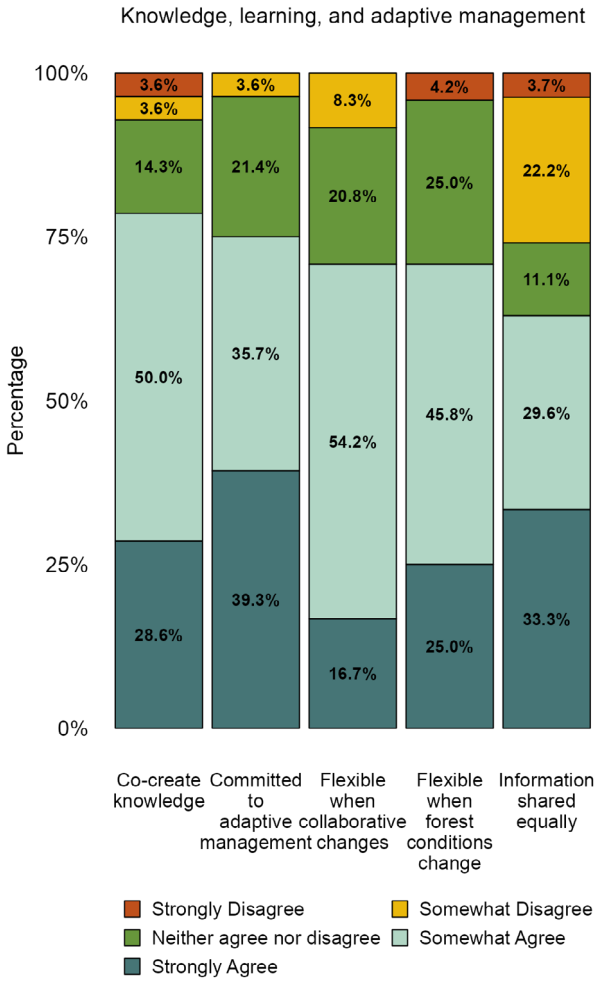

Figure 11: Percent of respondents who disagreed or agreed that knowledge and information is co-generated by participants (n=28), shared equally (n=27), they have the flexibility to adapt when forest or collaborative conditions change (n=24), and knowledge is used by participants to adjust management practices (n=28).

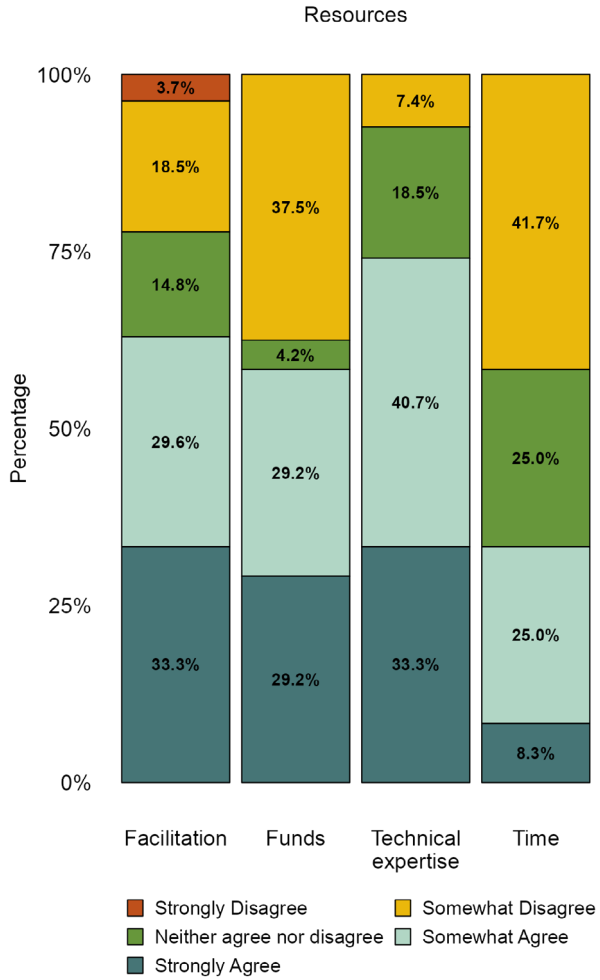

Figure 12: Percent of respondents who disagreed or agreed that the collaborative has adequate: funds (n=24), time (n=24), technical expertise (n=27), and facilitation skills (n=27) to accomplish work.

A few respondents suggested the lack of neutral, third-party facilitation was a disruption, or at least enabled ongoing disruptions to occur, e.g., conflict among participants:

> *we have also had issues with contention in committees for developing monitoring plans and "project pipeline" processes. This stems from lack of third-party facilitation.*

Others expanded how disruptive members affected collaborative progress and performance, and particularly how these disruptions have affected forward momentum among sub-committees:

> *we have a couple of very vocal, disruptive and highly opinionated participants who refuse to accept collaborative decisions that may run counter to their personal opinions. This disruption has resulted in delays in our Projects and Places, Science and Monitoring and Desired Conditions (project committees) outcomes.*

These hardline views have reportedly led to reduced participation among some members and shifted the focus of the project away from the types of management activities that one respondent suggested could provide more holistic and community benefits:

> *Active participants with narrow or hardline views of ecological restoration have created spaces where diverse participants feel processes and discussions stall and/or have no negotiation room and therefore elect not to participate fully during meetings and activities and/or opt out of processes entirely. Hard line participation is also over emphasizing ecological restoration above socioeconomic restoration activities, making the CFLRP process less holistic and based in place-based, community need than it could be.*

Another respondent felt that the lack of a facilitator limited the ability of members to file grievances, and that the space for collaborative members to inform decisions was not balanced, instead favoring the Forest Service. Hiring a third-party facilitator may be an initial step towards addressing some of these disruptions.

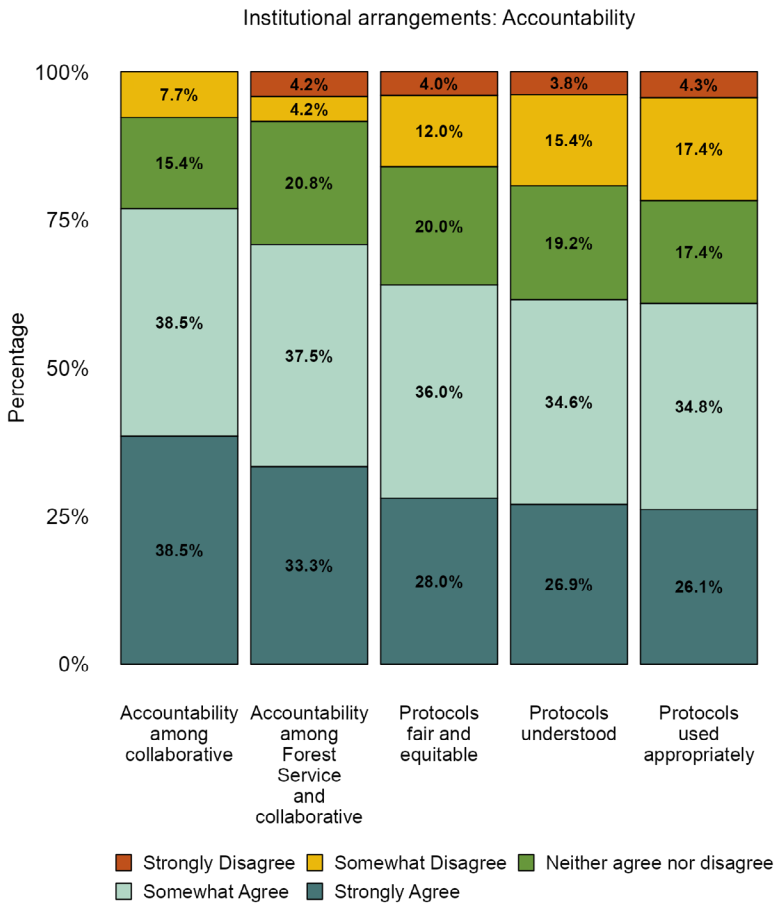

Figure 13: Percent of respondents who disagreed or agreed that protocols promote accountability among participants (n=26), between the Forest Service and the collaborative (n=24), and that protocols are understood (n=26), fair and equitable (n=25), and are used appropriately (n=23).

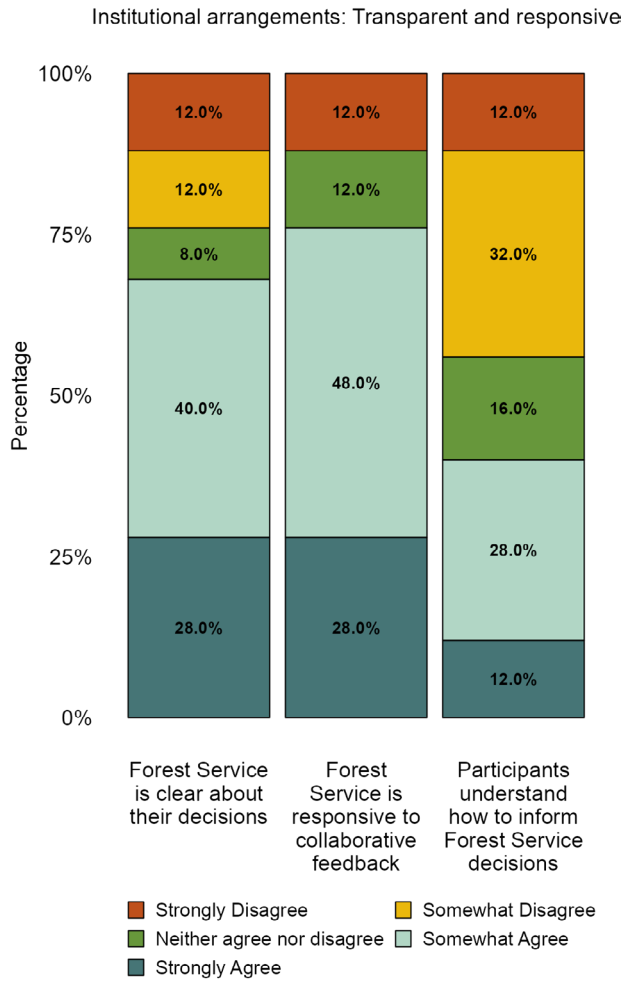

Figure 14: Percent of respondents who disagreed or agreed that they understand how to inform Forest Service decisions, the Forest Service is responsive to feedback, and the Forest Service is clear about their decisions (n=25).

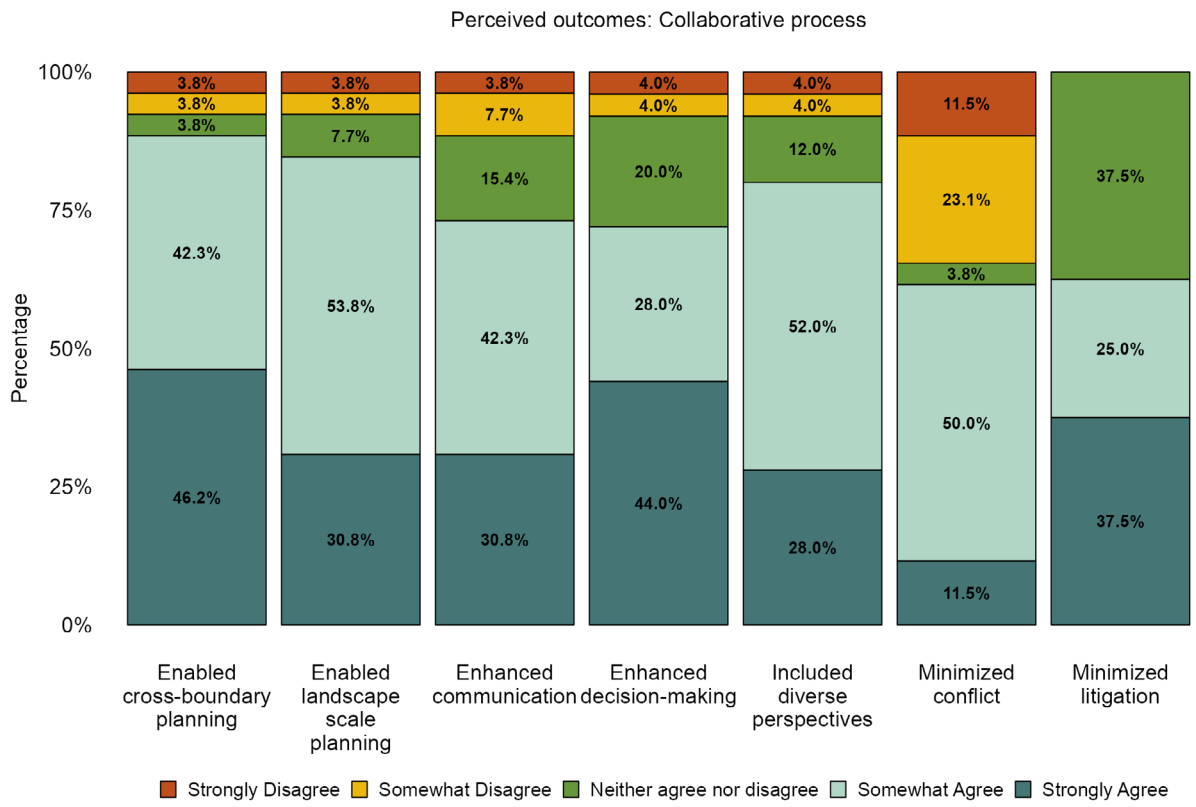

Figure 15: Percent of respondents who disagreed or agreed that the collaborative process has impacted the function and capacity of the collaborative (n=26).

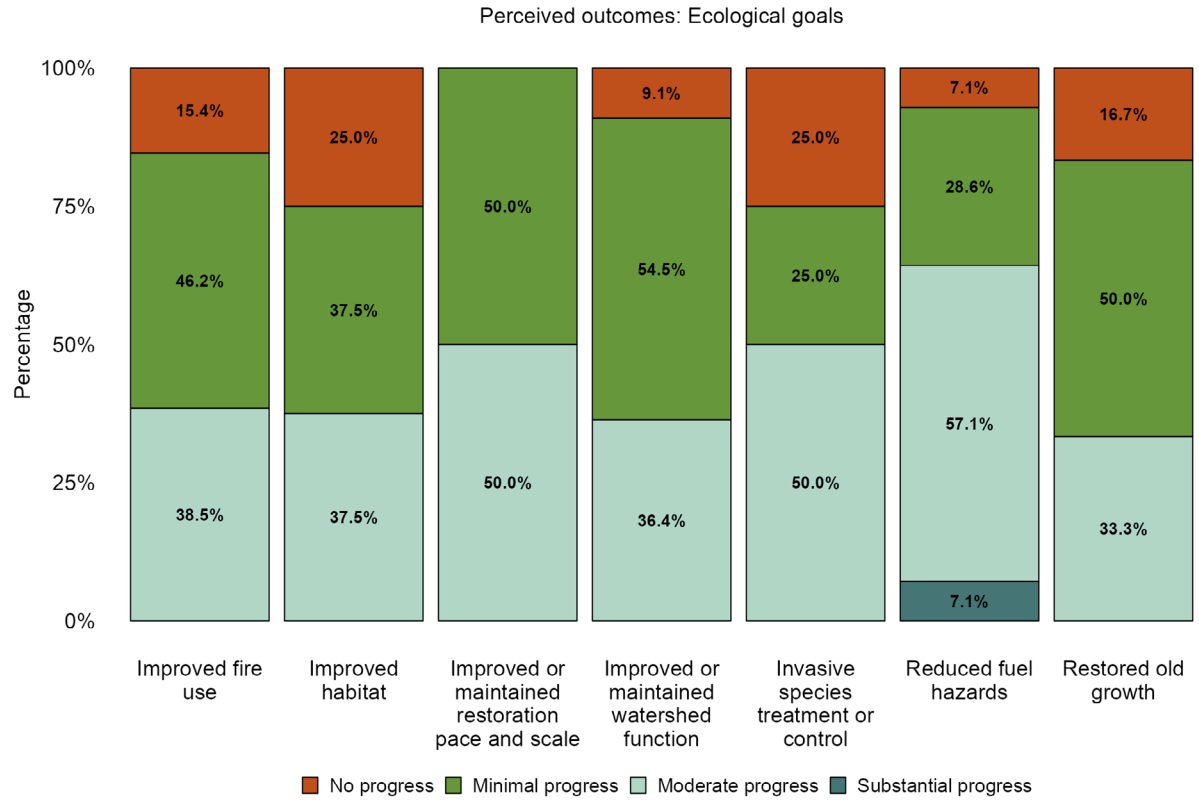

Figure 16: Percent of respondents who reported no, minimal, moderate, or substantial progress towards ecological goals (n=14).

Members reported several responses to disruptions. First, the group was in the process of hiring a third-party facilitator to make progress on moving from direction-setting and planning to implementation. The SW CO CFLRP has since hired a facilitator. Participants reported that third party facilitation and work in the last year to develop foundational documents and protocols will hopefully improve some of the disruptions listed above. Others noted that the San Juan National Forest had increased staff capacity to support CFLRP-related activities, members were working to align redundant planning and prioritization processes, and when momentum on CFLRP progress slows, members have shifted attention to local, place-based collaboration and utilized alternative funding mechanisms to get work done.

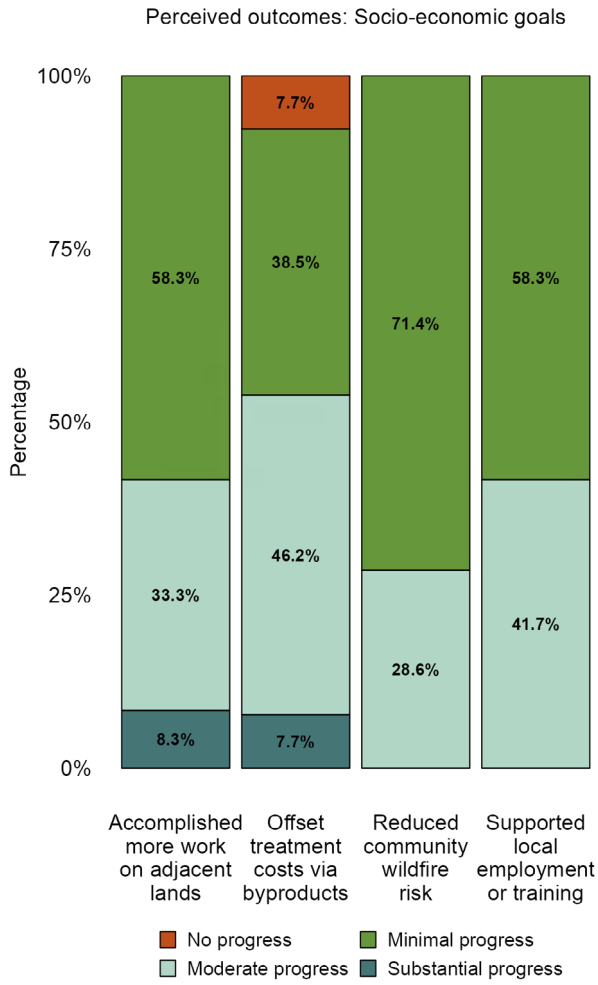

Figure 17: Percent of respondents who reported no, minimal, moderate, or substantial progress towards socio-economic goals (n=14).

Recommendations to Improve the Collaborative Process

We asked participants to suggest recommendations to improve collaborative process, durability, and performance. Based on open-ended responses and the quantitative data reported herein, we identified three key themes for improvement. These included: 1) third-party facilitation; 2) mechanisms for productive and inclusive participation and engagement; and 3) clear understanding of collaborative structure, function, and decision space across scales and levels of authority.

Recruitment of Third-Party Facilitation

Several respondents recommended that the collaborative could strongly benefit from the services of professional, third-party facilitation. They indicated that a facilitator could help promote efficient and effective communication within the collaborative and provide space for diverse viewpoints and opinions:

> *A facilitator for the coordinating council, the decision-making body of the SW CO CFLRP that makes recommendations to the USFS [Forest Service], would be very helpful in consistent and timely communication as well as ensuring diverse voices are represented and respected in the collaborative space.*

After the survey closed, SW CO CFLRP hired a third-party facilitator to support their efforts.

Mechanisms for productive and inclusive participation and engagement

Some participants recommended more engagement and participation from industry representatives during planning and implementation, recreation interests, and among diverse viewpoints. In this vein, members acknowledged the need for clear processes and protocols for dealing with disruptive members in ways that accommodate minority opinions while supporting forward progress towards stated goals and objectives of the group:

> *We need a stronger set of protocols for working with highly disruptive participants. We lack the ability to ask a stakeholder to step away from the process when they become obstructive and persistently interfere with progress by the greater group.*

Members noted the importance of hearing perspectives of all individuals, while also acknowledging the need to move forward with decisions with which most can agree:

> *We need a way to hear the thoughts of each individual but then have a process and expectation to move past it*

(and not revisit) if it is a minority opinion. We spend the majority of our time trying to work through issues held by one or two people.

Clear understanding of collaborative structure, function, and decision-space across scales and levels of authority

Respondents from the SW CO CFLRP suggested the need for clearer understanding of the collaborative structure, function, and decision space across scales and levels of authority. For example, collaborative members suggested the need for clear articulation of how the SW CO CFLRP process compliments and supports existing place-based collaborative efforts going on within the CFLRP footprint, with the goal of reducing redundancies and the formation of layered—and potentially conflicting—processes:

A clearer understanding of how the SW CO CFLRP governance structure and processes compliment and support existing place-based collaborative structures is also important - the goal wasn't to form a new collaborative that spanned all of the place-based groups on the San Juan National Forest, but rather to network and leverage the work they are doing successfully to plan, implement, and monitor work at the landscape-scale. Making the connection between place-based groups and the SW CO CFLRP more clear and not a huge lift for participants could use improvement. Using the strengths of existing groups, rather than re-inventing functional processes is also important.

When these cross-scale interactions and roles are not clear, a respondent worried that those who are not highly engaged could perceive a lack of transparency in the process:

We have decentralized project/priority collaboration, eg. NEPA, to our place based collabs, while creating a formalized structure around [the SW CO] CFLRP. While I am on the "inside" with decision making with the CFLRP centralized process, and that these meetings are open to all, I do see a threat of perception of a "black box" with CFLRP specific decision making from the Coordinating Council and Committees.

Respondents mentioned the need to clarify roles, responsibilities, and commitments within and between place-based collaboratives, Forest Service district staff, and Forest Service leadership for the SW CO CFLRP. In this vein, others suggested more clarity on how cross-boundary work will occur, and developing sideboards on project prioritization and implementation in order to move projects along in a realistic timeframe. For example, one respondent was worried that unclear and complicated

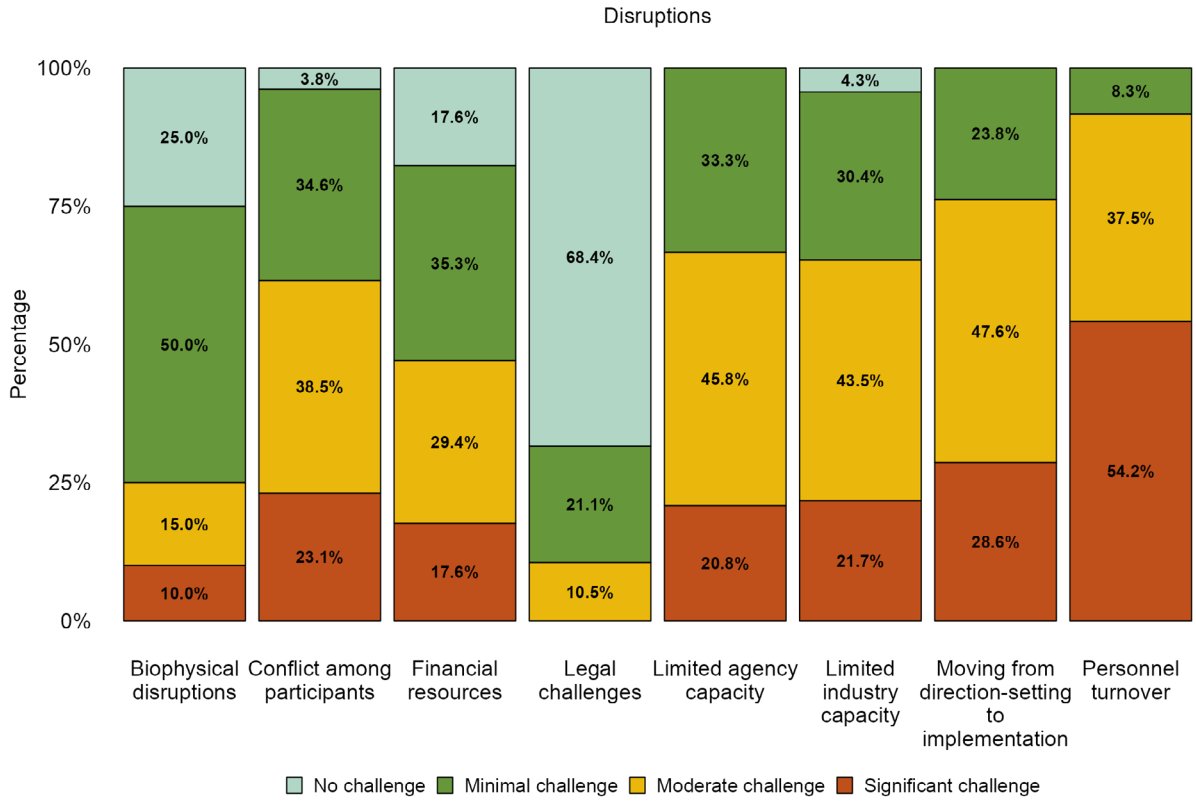

Figure 18: Percent of respondents who reported disruptions posed no, minimal, moderate, or substantial progress to collaborative performance and durability (n=26).

processes for proposing projects has caused meeting fatigue and a reduction in participation.

Additionally, some respondents wanted to see more transparency from the Forest Service in relation to annual treatment schedules, projects selections, funding decisions, and more generally what, how, and why decisions were made. This may be in part due to limited discussion—and thus understanding—of, Forest Service funding timelines, and the socio-economics of forest management decisions, which is often outside the purview of non-Forest Service partners.

Two participants were particularly critical of the current SW CO CFLRP governance structure and function. They argued for the Forest Service to uphold a stronger "adherence to the words and spirit of the CFLRP-enabling legislation," and the need for more decision-making power from non-Forest Service partners:

> *the stakeholders [should] make the decisions and a steering group helps coordinate and carry them out, not a steering committee, stacked with USFS [Forest Service] personnel and MSI [Mountain Studies Institute] staff who are under contract with USFS, who make all the decisions with the stakeholders themselves having no power.*

In sum, participants from the SW CO CFLRP may benefit from a third-party facilitator, which may be able to help articulate roles, commitments, capacities, and responsibilities across entities and scales, deal with disruptive members, and address inconsistent understanding of the allowable decision space and opportunities for collaborative members to inform decisions on Forest Service-managed lands.

Discussion and Conclusions

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) deployed an online survey to the Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (SW CO CFLRP) from April 25 to June 5, 2023 to assess collaborative health, function, and resilience, as well as perceived outcomes of collaborative work. Specifically, we assessed: whether the CFLRP project exhibited characteristics generally associated with healthy, well-functioning, and resilient collaboratives; the extent to which the project has made progress on meeting process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes; what challenges or disruptions affected collaborative performance and durability; and actionable recommendations to improve the collaborative process from respondents' perspectives. The assessment serves as the collaboration assessment for the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy (question #12).

A majority of respondents reported that a representative set of stakeholders were involved in the CFLRP collaborative process, and that participants worked together to identify shared interests and concerns. The majority of respondents generally agreed about key problems that have impacted their landscape, strategies to solve problems, and the purpose of their collaborative restoration project. Also, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the process has helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect of others' positions and interests. Respondents noted strong commitment to the process among themselves, other organizations, and by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service). Mutual commitment, especially among those with decision-making authority, is critical for collaborative durability. The Forest Service retains decision-making authority in treatment planning and implementation on Forest Service-managed land. The agency also gives substantial discretion in decision-making to local units; thus, it is often up to Forest Service unit-level line officers to make collaboration a priority by providing staff, resources, etc., or not (Beeton et al., 2022).

A majority of respondents reported the presence of strong leaders who worked well across organizations and entities, communicated a collaborative vision, and motivated others to work together. Often, groups benefit from multiple collaborative leaders who represent a diversity of interests across organizational and institutional levels, and provide a variety of functions (e.g., coordination, expertise/experience) (Emerson and Gerlak, 2014; Ryan and Urgenson, 2019). Having diversity and redundancy in leadership roles is critical for continuity through personnel turnover.

Respondents felt the SW CO CFLRP had adequate technical expertise to carry out tasks and accomplish their work. They generally agreed that participants worked together to co-generate knowledge and solve problems, were committed to adaptive management, and had some flexibility when forest conditions or the collaborative changes. A number of activities can be used by collaboratives to support social learning and co-development of knowledge, including field trips, multi-party monitoring, and joint fact-finding missions. Field trips are a critical component of social learning because they provide opportunities for groups to let their guard down and come to common understandings. Field trips can help illustrate how restoration principles translate to operations on the ground and allow collaborative groups to provide feedback on restoration treatments. Joint fact-finding—where stakeholders work together to co-generate local knowledge and translate it into decision-making—provides opportunities to develop contextual

understanding of local landscapes to support decisions. Yet, some respondents felt information was not shared equally among the group. Documenting this learning and knowledge exchange is critical to maintaining transparency, equity, and institutional knowledge (Beeton et al., 2022; Cheng et al., 2015).

There were several areas for improvement. A large proportion of respondents felt that they did not have adequate funds, time, and facilitation resources to accomplish needed work. A relatively high proportion of respondents felt some work could be done to develop shared understanding and agreement on the key problems the group faced and actions to solve them, improve collaboration between collaborative members and the Forest Service during implementation, and share information. Some respondents indicated the need for more clarity around why Forest Service decisions were made, how collaborative input was considered in decision-making, and how and when collaborative members could inform management actions. Finally, respondents felt the need for processes and protocols for managing conflict.

These areas for improvement were reiterated in open-ended responses on the needs and recommendations to improve the collaborative process. Three themes emerged from our assessment, including: 1) hire a third-party facilitator; 2) develop mechanisms for productive and inclusive participation and engagement; and 3) enhance clear understanding of collaborative structure, function, and decision space across scales and levels of authority. A goal of collaborative engagement in public lands management is for collaborative groups to inform land management decisions. Thus, it is important to understand the allowable decision space, i.e., the range of options that are available to decision-makers and feasible to implement. However, decision space is often murky and the result of many intervening variables, including legal, financial, physical, technological, political, and socio-cultural considerations. Collaborative groups often lack clear, comprehensive understanding of what actions are possible (and which aren't) and how they might inform decisions. It is imperative to make explicit the allowable decision space in any collaborative forest restoration effort.

Personnel turnover, moving from direction setting to implementation, limited agency capacity, conflict among participants, and limited industry capacity were the most substantial disruptions faced at the time of the survey. Yet, the SW CO CFLRP has reportedly started to address some disruptions and recommendations for improving the process. For instance, respondents noted the Forest Service was adding staff dedicated to the CFLRP, and the group was in the process of hiring a third-party facilitator, which may be helpful to establish and encourage fair, inclusive, and transparent accountability and address conflict among members.

Survey results indicated that the SW CO CFLRP has started to make progress on a number of process, socio-economic, and ecological goals of the CFLRP, despite this being the first year of CFLRP funding. Respondents reported an increase in landscape-scale and cross-boundary planning, and a majority of respondents indicated the project had included diverse perspectives, enhanced communication, and enhanced decision-making. A majority of respondents also reported progress on reducing fuel hazards.

This report provided a baseline assessment of collaborative health and performance among SW CO CFLRP. The assessment represents a snapshot in time. It was administered during the first year of funding and during a period of transition for the SW CO CFLRP. Partners were working to hire a third-party facilitator to coordinate collaborative activities, develop collaborative protocols and rules for engagement, and support open, inclusive, and efficient communication and negotiation on the purpose, need, and approach for collaborative forest restoration in southwest Colorado. Collaboratives are dynamic - they continue to adapt and evolve as needs or priorities change, and in response to internal and external disruptions (Imperial et al., 2016). Thus, it is important to continue to self-assess collaborative progress, durability, and resilience, so that groups can identify what is working well, what may need some work, and what support and/or guidance is needed to address challenges to maintain performance. The SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects. There will be multiple opportunities locally, regionally, and nationally for peer-networking and learning events to share successes and challenges and learn together about how to encourage healthy, durable, and resilient collaboration.

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Appendix 1: CFLRP Brief

COLORADO FOREST RESTORATION INSTITUTE
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

SWERI Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes
Colorado State University | New Mexico Highlands University | Northern Arizona University

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY
Ecological Restoration Institute

CFLRP collaborative governance assessment:
Summary of findings for the Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) developed a collaborative governance assessment as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service) Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Common Monitoring Strategy. The collaborative governance assessment was designed to evaluate collaborative health, function, resilience, and perceived outcomes of collaborative work. The SWERI administered an online questionnaire to members of the Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (SW CO CFLRP) from April 25 to June 5, 2023. We received 35 usable responses, representing 32% of the population. Figure 1 illustrates what groups were represented in the questionnaire. The purpose of this brief is to:

- Summarize high-level findings from the collaborative governance assessment; and
- Document participants' recommendations to improve collaborative performance and progress.

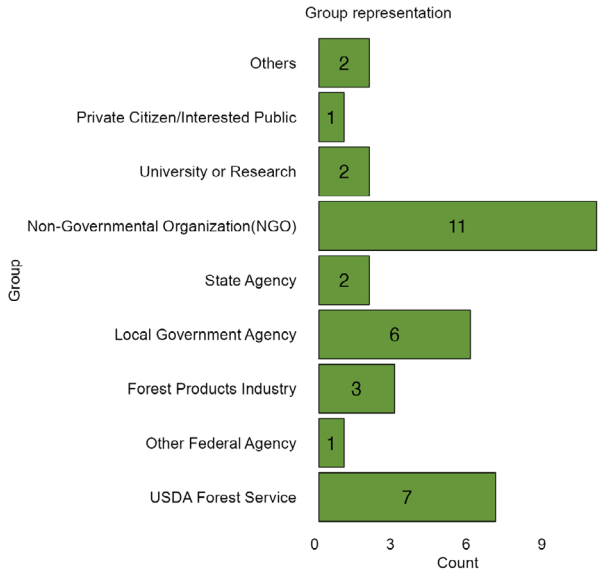

Figure 1: Respondents' self-identified representation with associated organizations (n=35).

Findings

What is working well for the SW CO CFLRP?

A majority of respondents reported that a representative set of stakeholders were involved in the CFLRP collaborative process, and that participants worked together to identify shared interests and concerns. The majority of respondents generally agreed about key problems that have impacted their landscape, strategies to solve problems, and the purpose of their collaborative restoration project. Also, respondents agreed that the process has helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect of others' positions and interests. Respondents noted strong commitment to the process among themselves, other organizations, and by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service) (Figure 2). These findings have positive implications for the SW CO CFLRP. Mutual commitment, especially among those with decision-making authority, is critical for collaborative durability. A majority of respondents reported the presence of strong leaders who worked well across organizations and entities, communicated a collaborative vision, and motivated others to work together. Respondents also felt the SW CO CFLRP had adequate technical expertise to carry out tasks and accomplish their work. They generally agreed that participants worked together to co-generate knowledge and solve problems, were committed to adaptive management, and had some flexibility when forest conditions or the collaborative changes.

Source: Danny Margoles.

[1] USDA Forest Service Common Monitoring Strategy - https://www.fs.usda.gov/restoration/documents/cflrp/CMS-Fact-Sheet-final-20221013.pdf

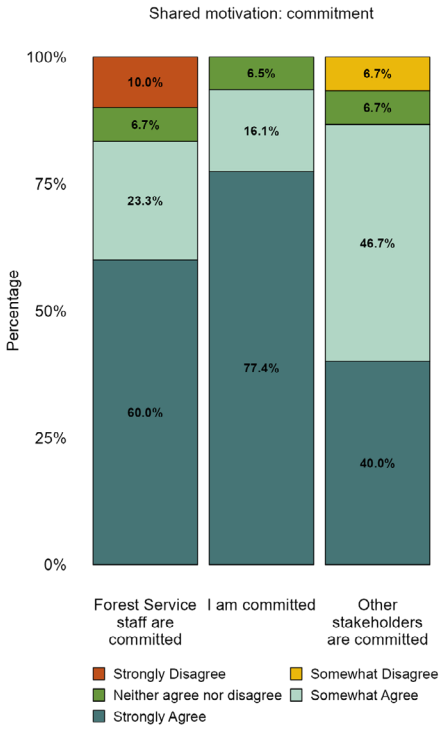

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who disagreed or agreed that they (n=31), the Forest Service (n=30), and other stakeholders (n=30) are committed to the process.

What disruptions and challenges have affected collaborative progress and performance?

Personnel turnover, moving from direction setting to implementation, limited agency capacity, conflict among participants, and limited industry capacity were the most substantial disruptions faced at the time of our assessment. Turnover can undermine relationships and trust, slow progress, and lead to lost institutional knowledge. Open-ended responses reiterated these and other disruptions. For example, respondents indicated that multiple and conflicting demands and priorities of collaborative members challenged the ability to get work done on the ground. Further, respondents noted that a small, but vocal, minority disrupted collaborative progress and performance. Yet, the SW CO CFLRP has reportedly started to address several of these disruptions. For instance, respondents noted the Forest Service was adding staff dedicated to the CFLRP, and the group was in the process of hiring (and has since hired) a third-party facilitator, which may be helpful to address conflict among members.

Progress toward desired process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes

Respondents reported progress towards collaborative process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes, including:

- increased landscape-scale and cross-boundary planning and inclusion of diverse perspectives;
- enhanced communication and decision-making; and
- reduction of fuel hazards.

It is important to note that the assessment was administered during the first year of funding for the SW CO CFLRP. Many of the desired process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes may take time to achieve.

Recommendations to improve the collaborative process and performance

Respondents provided recommendations to improve the collaborative process and performance, including:

- Establish mechanisms for productive and inclusive participation and engagement. Respondents voiced interest in enhancing engagement and participation among industry representatives from planning through to implementation and among recreation interests. Members also recommended clear processes and protocols for acknowledging and considering minority perspectives while supporting forward progress towards stated goals and objectives the majority of the group can agree upon.
- Clear understanding of collaborative structure, function, and decision space across scales and levels of authority. Collaborative members recommended more clarity on how the SW CO CFLRP process compliments existing place-based collaborative efforts going on within the CFLRP footprint. Others recommended more transparency on how cross-boundary work would be implemented, sideboards on expectations for collaborative project prioritization and implementation, annual treatment schedules, project selections, and funding decisions. Others felt the collaborative could benefit from more clarity on how and to what extent collaborative members can inform decisions on Forest Service-managed lands.

Next steps

Results from this questionnaire provided a baseline assessment of collaborative governance among the SW CO CFLRP. The assessment represents a snapshot in time. It was administered during a period of transition for the SW CO CFLRP. Collaboration is a dynamic process, and thus results may change as the group creates value in different ways or their needs and priorities change. The SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects, the goal of which is to identify where capacities lie and areas for improvement to target investments and activities that support resilient and durable collaboration.

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IRB approval – This work is approved by the Institutional Review Board at Colorado State University (#2679) and Northern Arizona University (#1809777-3).

Appendix 2: Appended questions for the Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative

The results to the following questions reported here were developed in coordination with local CFLRP project staff, coordinators, and partners affiliated with the **Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (SW CO CFLRP)**. These questions are not part of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy. We asked respondents to select the collaboratives and partnerships that they were involved with. There was some representation from each of the collaboratives and partnerships we listed. The largest frequency of respondents were affiliated with Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest Collaborative, Four Rivers Resilient Forest Collaborative, Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative, and San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership (Figure A1). Other groups not listed included Fort Lewis College and the Wildfire Adapted Partnership.

Participants were involved in a number of CFLRP committees. The most frequently reported committee represented was the Coordinating Council, Projects and Places Committee, Governance planning group, and the Science and Multi-party Monitoring Committee (Figure A2).

A strong majority of respondents somewhat to strongly agreed (76%) that the current governance structure advanced the vision of the SW CO CFLRP (Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative). Three individuals strongly to somewhat disagreed (12%) and 12% were neutral.

We asked respondents how they perceived the current CFLRP work group structure. Twelve respondents felt the work groups are sufficient and effective, though others suggested additional work groups may be needed (n=4), existing work groups could be modified (n=7), and some may need additional participation, capacity, and resources to be effective (n=8) (Figure A4). In particular, one respondent noted:

> *[The] Agreements and Funding Committee needs to be rebranded and/or revamped to be about leveraging resources across boundaries. [The] Projects and Places committee needs a narrower focus and specific expectations/procedures.*

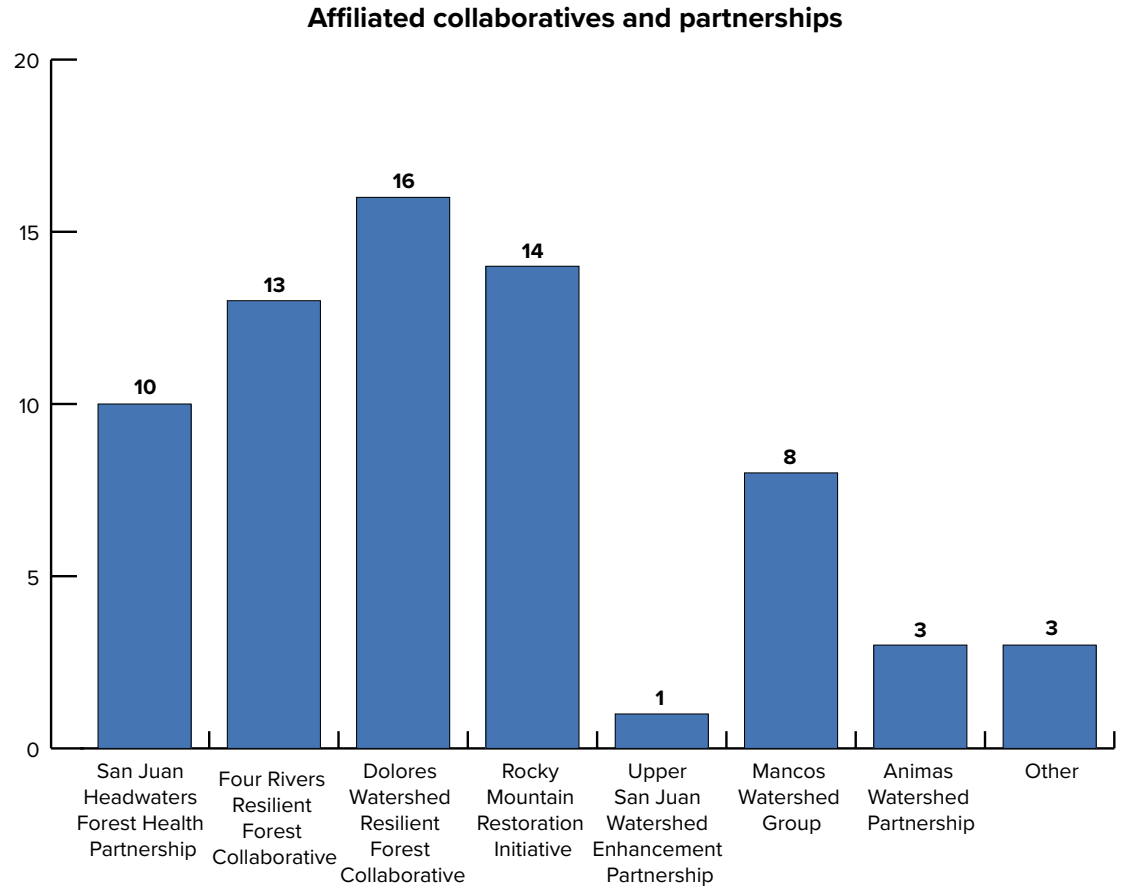

Figure A1: The number of respondents who identified as involved with affiliated collaboratives and partnerships to this CFLRP.

Another member suggested the Agreements and Funding committee should be replaced and thought the collective work of the Projects and Places committee and Coordinating Council had served the role of the Agreements and Funding committee.

We also added an open-ended question so that participants could provide specific suggestions or recommendations to improve the SW CO CFLRP governance and committee structure. It is important to note that we only received 11 responses to this question. Members reiterated the importance of impartial, third-party facilitation in large and small working groups in improving the SW CO CFLRP governance and committee structure and particularly for developing agendas, coordinating meetings, and dispute resolution. In this vein, some members called for dedicated funding for facilitation, note taking, website development and maintenance where meeting information and decisions could be housed, and other outreach. Others noted the need for training of committee leads to support effective communication and cross-walk between committees and among the place-based collaboratives:

> *Training for committee leads so they can define and communicate the processes being used to carry out committee work and how it relates to and serves both to the place-based collaboratives (Headwaters, DWRF, 4 Rivers) and the SW CO CFLRP.*

Some respondents suggested a clear and consistent timeline of activities and meetings to encourage Forest Service participation in the Coordinating Council meetings and provide opportunities for collaborative members to inform projects planned on Forest Service-managed land, as indicated here:

> *developing a timeline upon which the [US]FS shares it's potential projects would be a significant step in the CFLRP being able to provide input into priorities.*

Respondents recommended some work could be done to clarify roles, expectations, and commitments among group members, including documenting how communication should occur between committees and the role of "at large" elected members as representatives of the public interest, for example. Others recommended wholesale changes in the collaborative governance structure, or suggested aligning the governance structure

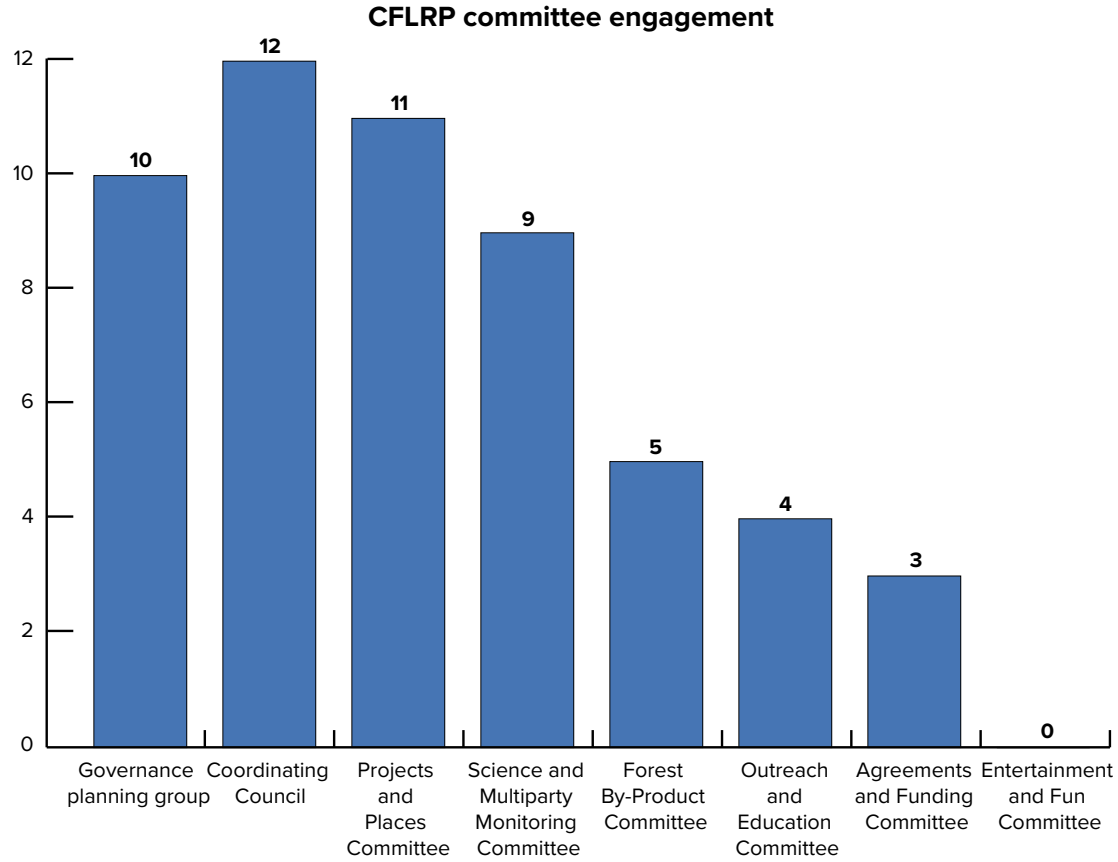

Figure A2: Number of respondents who indicated they engaged with a specific committee associated with this CFLRP.

and process with the type and scale of work occurring on the ground. For example, one participant suggested the following changes to decision-making and coordinating council:

> *[We should] change [the] governance structure so the stakeholders are the decision-makers, the coordinating council just helps execute decisions and run/coordinate meetings, work is done in small working groups that are given charges and report out to the main stakeholder decision-making group.*

Another, suggested changes should align with on the ground work:

> *Currently the governance structure is overbuilt and overly complicated for the small portion of landscape scale restoration that most of our time revolves around. If the group remains narrowly focused the structure needs to be simplified and streamlined. However, the structure is appropriate if the group takes a more inclusive approach (of needed activities and cross boundary) that would encompass much more of the funding and projects happening in SW CO CFLRP.*

72% (n=18) of respondents somewhat to strongly agreed that the SW CO CFLRP collaborative process had met their expectations. 20% somewhat to strongly disagreed (n=6; Figure A5). We also asked respondents to expand on how the process had met their expectations or not in an open-ended response. It is important to note that we only received 10 responses to this question. The SW CO CFLRP was authorized in 2022, and thus was only one year into their funding when we administered the survey. Several respondents suggested that the CFLRP project was too young to evaluate whether it had met their expectations. In this vein, a respondent noted the importance of being responsive to emerging needs of the landscape, project, and participants:

> *It's new, what matters is that we reflect upon functionality and need and adapt governance processes based on the needs of the project, landscape, and participants collectively.*

A couple participants expected more collaborative engagement and decision-space with respect to project selection and planning on projects within Forest Service-managed lands, and one respondent expected the CFLRP to fill unmet needs in current project work, but felt the CFLRP has duplicated many of the collaborative processes that were already in place prior to CFLRP funding. Two respondents expected more congruence between CFLRP legislation and decision-making, as noted here:

> *The USFS [Forest Service] either has a weak understanding and/or a disregard for the vision and/or objectives of the CFLRP legislation including a working definition of "restoration" that is so broad and unfocused that projects are being funded that would be seen by many members of the public as not being appropriate/applicable… the CFLRP should be following the specific guidance of the legislation and the SW CO CFLRP Charter that was derived from the legislation.*

Yet, another respondent offered a counter explanation, suggesting that some of the initial project work should lay the foundation for more restorative work in the future:

> *There is frustration about the use of some of the CFLRP funds to support projects that may not result directly in restorative work but will provide the infrastructure for eventual restoration projects.*

Finally, a few respondents noted that they expected a collaborative environment where members work well together, are committed and excited to contribute to committees, and where one person or a small, minority

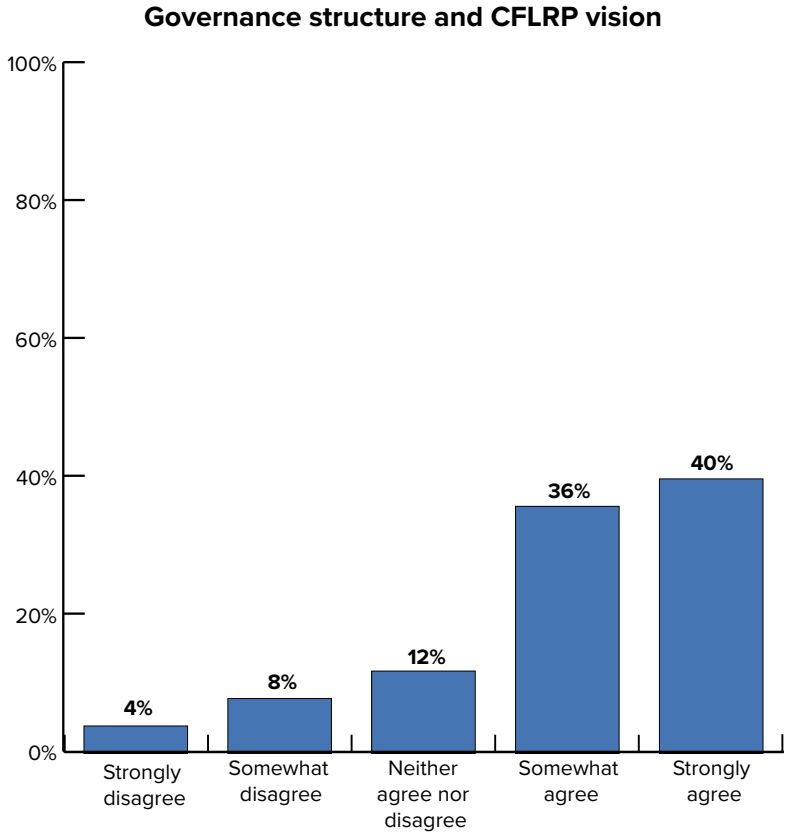

Figure A3: Percent of respondents who disagreed or agreed that the current governance structure advances the vision of the SW CO CFLRP (n=25).

of voices don't derail progress. While one respondent felt the group worked well together, they were concerned that progress was impacted by strong, minority voices. This was exemplified by one respondent:

> *The Southwest Colorado CFLRP is lacking camaraderie and laughter. Most participants don't seem to enjoy their time with subcommittees or on the Coordinating Council. For me, it's because of the very slow progress towards implementation and the common fear of one person disrupting the whole process.*

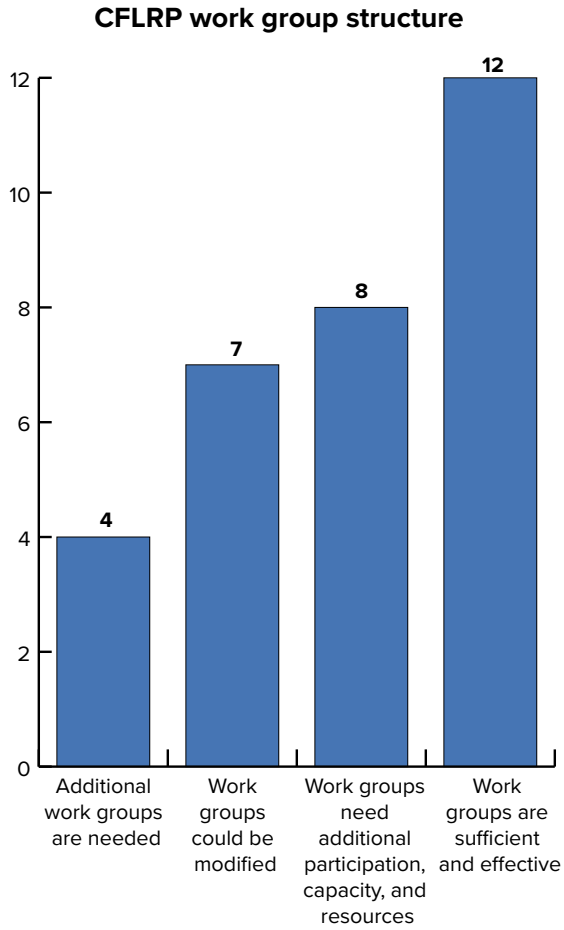

Figure A4: The number of respondents who reported a preference for work group structure.

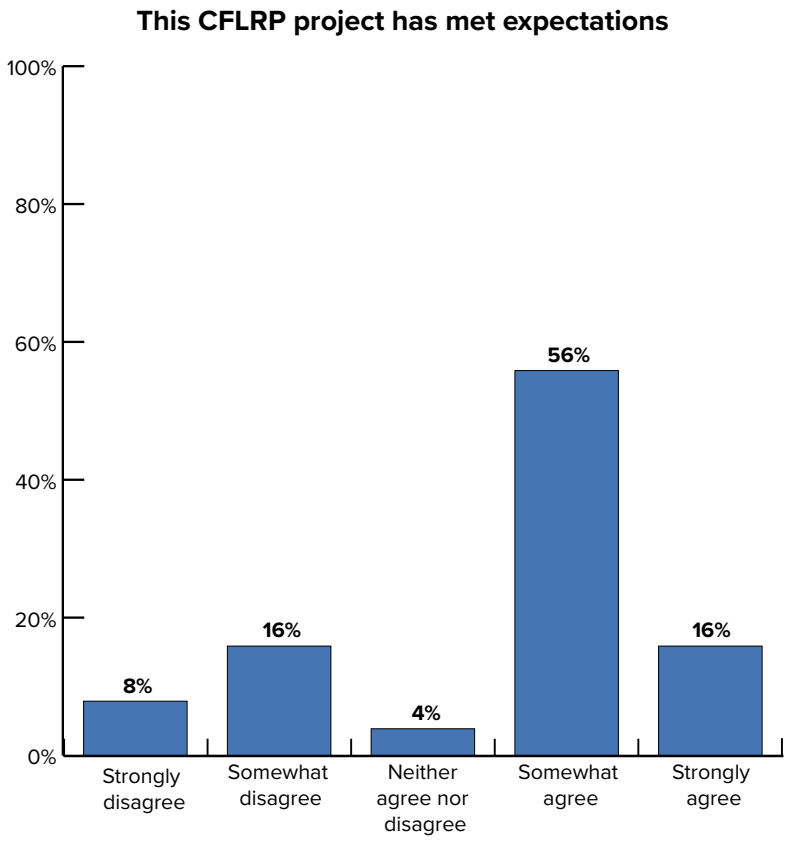

Figure A5: Percent of respondents who disagreed or agreed that this CFLRP has met their expectations (n=25).

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