INCORPORATING TRIBAL PRIORITIES AND TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE INTO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE WILDFIRE CRISIS STRATEGY: ASSESSING PROGRESS

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The following section provides a high-level synopsis of the report which begins on page six. References to corresponding sections of the report are hyperlinked to facilitate the reader's access to key areas of interest.

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service, in partnership with the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) and the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation's National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (National Center), conducted an interim assessment of how Forest Service and Tribal partners are collectively implementing the Wildfire Crisis Strategy[1] (WCS). Assessment objectives included:

- Examining WCS implementation in partnership with Tribes.
- Evaluating how Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Tribal priorities are incorporated into efforts to reduce wildfire risk through WCS implementation and related land management policies and activities.
- Gathering lessons learned for effective co-stewardship implementation of WCS during its remaining years.
- Identifying additional Tribal capacity and workforce considerations to address in WCS implementation.

In Spring of 2024, National Center staff facilitated conversations with 30 Tribal and Forest Service personnel engaged in wildfire risk reduction work across the country. Responses were anonymized and collated to explore overarching themes. Assessment themes are described below and further detailed in the full report.

Assessment findings related to the WCS as a whole

All participants identified reducing catastrophic wildfire risk as a priority, whether under the WCS or more generally; however, not all participants felt connected to the WCS itself. Participants' definitions for successful wildfire risk reduction fell into three categories:

- **Improved forest condition** (healthier, more fire-resilient landscapes).
  - If a fire comes through, it will be more manageable.
  - Professionals know priority areas where treatment is needed to bring fuel loading down to manageable level.
- **Sustainable funding for wildfire risk reduction work**.
  - Increased Forest Service base funding for this work.
  - Equal amount of wildfire risk reduction funds per acre for Tribes and Forest Service.
- **Enhanced collaboration, communication, and coordination among cross-boundary partners.**
  - Communities on the landscape are "smoke-ready" (know how to prepare for wildfire smoke).
  - Community members and partners are fluent on the topic of Forest Service work to achieve forest resiliency and risk reduction.
  - Communication between Forest Service and Tribes is not contingent on resource availability (conversation flows two ways whether funding is available or not).
  - Forest Service and Tribes have established and are using clear points of contact for effective collaboration.

These definitions are explored in detail in Section 3.1.2 of the report.

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[1] Link to report: https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/Confronting-the-Wildfire-Crisis.pdf

Most participants reported that they have seen progress on reducing catastrophic wildfire risks under the WCS. They felt that the funding influx from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) had enabled an increased pace and scale of risk reduction. However, the degree of progress reported varied among participants. Some participants felt that great progress is being made, while others felt that adjustments were needed to maximize increases in pace and scale of wildfire risk reduction and others recommended modifying the way progress is measured.

Assessment findings related to the incorporation of TEK and Tribal priorities into WCS implementation
Participants shared five indicators that would define success in incorporating **Tribal priorities and TEK** into WCS implementation, including:
- TEK is incorporated into Forest Service burn plans and other vegetative treatments.
- The Forest Service consistently engages in effective collaboration, communication, and coordination with Tribes.
- Co-stewardship between the Forest Service and Tribes is the norm with TEK incorporated into co-stewardship agreements.
- Tribes resume, and control their own use of, cultural burning.
- The Forest Service consistently seeks to maximize opportunities for joint decision making and minimizes procedural barriers to facilitate stronger partnership between Tribes and Forest Service in managing ancestral lands currently under Forest Service stewardship.

For some Forest Service units, the above conditions are still aspirational. Other units demonstrated success in some, but not all, of these areas. More information on these indicators can be found in Section 3.2.1 of the report.

Lessons Learned
Both Forest Service and Tribal respondents identified factors that facilitated and others that challenged progress in incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation.

Facilitative factors include:
- Shared goals and open communication.
- Forest Service staff who are knowledgeable about the Tribes they work with (i.e., their sovereignty, history, and governance structures).
- Flexible and creative contracting and agreement mechanisms.

Impediments to progress include:
- Differences in worldview and culture, and associated distrust due to a legacy of historical injustices (discussed further on p. 20). This includes uneven knowledge among Forest Service staff about the history of the Tribes with whom they seek to partner, Tribes' status as sovereign Nations, the Federal government's trust responsibility, Tribal decision-making processes, and engagement protocols. It also includes different perspectives on forest management, on risk, and on the information needed to learn together.
- Bureaucratic barriers to processes and agreements.

Section 4.1 and 4.2 cover these facilitative factors and impediments to progress. It also includes a deeper dive into the benefits and drawbacks of different authority and agreement mechanisms.

Recommendations

Participants offered the following insights into enhancing success in WCS implementation overall and more specifically, in incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation:

- Strengthen Tribal workforce capacity and Forest Service experience and knowledge of Tribal relations.
- Collect and disseminate key organizational learnings.
- Clarify existing policies and create guidance where needed.
- Provide procedural flexibility.

Assessment findings described in this report will be used to facilitate further incorporation of TEK and Tribal priorities into future WCS implementation. The conversations held during this assessment underscored the importance of Forest Service and Tribal personnel working together on developing future joint projects from the very earliest stages (e.g., conceptualizing a new project), co-developing metrics of WCS success, connecting early in the agreement process to sync up on desired goals and staff capacity, and learning together to bridge cultural differences. In addition, since some Forest Service units and Tribes are working extremely well together, the Forest Service should look for opportunities to support peer-to-peer learning to help those on other WCS landscapes achieve similar successes.

See Section 4.3 for a deeper dive into participant recommendations and Section 4.4 for opportunities for Forest Service and Tribes to learn together.

1.0 BACKGROUND

In 2024, the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC), with support from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service ("Forest Service" hereafter), worked with the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation's John S. McCain III National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (National Center) to assess progress on integrating Tribal priorities and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into implementation of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy (WCS). The WCS is a ten-year strategy, developed by the Forest Service, Tribes, and partners, to tackle wildfire risk reduction at a scale commensurate with the scope of the problem. The strategy seeks to protect critical infrastructure and communities and to improve the resiliency of forests by focusing high levels of investment in 21 at-risk landscapes across the West.[2]

Prior to this assessment, ITC and the Forest Service designed and facilitated multiple virtual engagements with Tribes to help identify Tribal interests and concerns regarding WCS implementation[3]. This assessment was intended to build on that work, at the WCS' three-year milestone mark. The goal for the assessment was to converse with a sample of Tribal and Forest Service personnel working primarily on or around WCS landscapes with some inclusion of personnel working on other wildfire risk reduction work and use the qualitative data from the conversations to learn more about the success of incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation thus far.

The findings from the National Center's assessment were used to help facilitate a discussion that occurred on September 4, 2024 (see link to view a recording of the webinar). The findings presented and discussed during that webinar are the basis for this report.

2.0 ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The National Center collaborated with representatives from ITC and the Forest Service's Wildfire Risk Reduction Infrastructure Team (WRRIT) and Office of Tribal Relations (OTR) to help design this assessment, including creation of the interview questions. Assessment participants were selected based on a variety of factors, including:

- Geography – participants included representatives from across the 21 WCS landscapes and a selection of participants from areas outside the WCS landscapes dealing with wildfire concerns.
- Position – participants included Forest Service and Tribal staff in various positions to help facilitate a diversity of perspectives this included leadership positions, partnership coordinators, on-the-ground implementers, etc.
- Tribal land base, size, and staffing arrangements – participants included individuals associated with Tribes that had varying capacities to implement and prioritize the WCS. Likewise, participants varied in terms of their relationship with Forest Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), whether they worked through contracted or compacted forestry/fire programs, or whether they received direct fire protection services and those with other arrangements.
- Types of agreements being used for WCS implementation – participants included both those working under various types of partnership agreements (e.g., co-stewardship agreements,

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[2] WCS landscapes were identified using scientific research and analysis that considered the likelihood that an ignition could expose homes, communities, infrastructure and natural resources to wildfire.

[3] Engagements included: an informational webinar December 1, 2021, an Intertribal Roundtable April 26, 2022, and a Tribal Workforce dialogue series (four separate sessions, Feb. 23, 2023, March 9, 2023, March 23, 2023, and April 6, 2023).

approved proposals under the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA), Reserved Treaty Rights Lands (RTRL), etc.) and those without such agreement structures.

- Association with ITC – participants included individuals associated with Tribes that are members of ITC and Tribes that are not members of ITC.

After finalizing the list of potential participants, the National Center team reached out to those individuals and invited them to participate in the assessment. Participants received a background document that provided an overview of the assessment goals and a list of the questions that the National Center wished to discuss with them. A copy of these documents can be found in Appendices A and B respectively. All participants were encouraged to suggest additional participant candidates. Due to Forest Service and Tribal capacity, and the nature of the project timeline, the National Center did not converse with everyone originally invited to participate in the assessment. However, from May through early June 2024, the National Center held 22 confidential virtual conversations with 30 people. Some conversations were conducted individually while others were held with groups where all group members favored this approach.

The National Center team documented the interview responses[4], checking with the source for clarification where needed. The National Center team then applied qualitative data analysis to identify themes across the interviews, along with examples and illustrative quotes; similarities and differences between Forest Service and Tribal responses; and interviewee suggestions for how to strengthen incorporation of Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation.

The initial draft "findings" document was distributed to participants for review and comment, and the participants were asked to verify the accuracy of the National Center team's interpretation of the themes. The revised draft "findings" document was then circulated to ITC, WRRIT, and OTR for their review and comment. This document was then used as the basis for a slide presentation, which was delivered at a September 4, 2024, roundtable for Forest Service and Tribal personnel. In addition, the National Center produced a brief narrative summary of the slide presentation. The slides, narrative summary, and summary of the roundtable discussion can be found at this link. This assessment report is the final work product related to this interim assessment.

The term Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), used throughout the report, is also commonly referred to as Indigenous Knowledge (IK). The interviewees were using TEK to be interchangeable with IK, as well as with other terms of Native Science, Traditional knowledge, Tribal Ecological Knowledge, Indigenous Applied Science, Indigenous Science and other terms to describe this body of knowledge, practices, and science system. For more information and definitions of TEK and IK, see the following resources: the Forest Service's Planning Rule update in the Federal Register effective May 6, 2024 (36 CFR Part 219) and the November 2022 Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge published jointly by the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy and Council on Environmental Quality.

The terms co-stewardship and co-management are also used throughout the report. These terms are not used interchangeably. Where the report references these two terms together, participants were referring both to models of co-stewardship and co-management. When a specific term is used, this is

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[4] National Center notes from these conversations are confidential mediator work products internal to the Udall Foundation's National Center staff.

consistent with feedback heard from the participants. Participants generally considered the term co-management as representing more Tribal decision-making authority than co-stewardship and used this term intentionally.

3.0 ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

The assessment findings can be grouped into three themes: (i) insights about the WCS as a whole (Section 3.1); (ii) insights about specifically incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation (Section 3.2); (iii) and lessons learned around WCS implementation (Section 4.0).

3.1 FINDINGS: WILDFIRE CRISIS STRATEGY AS A WHOLE

3.1.1 How the Wildfire Crisis Strategy fits into participants' priorities

Participants were asked if they felt connected to the WCS as a whole. All participants identified reducing catastrophic wildfire risk as a priority, whether under the WCS or more generally; however, not all participants felt connected to the WCS itself. This was true for both Forest Service and Tribal personnel.

For those who felt connected to the WCS, Forest Service and Tribal participants both felt they had a clear role to play in the WCS. One Forest Service participant shared: "Yes, I feel very connected and closely tied to the implementation. I connect to this work on a personal level. I have seen first-hand how Tribes and communities are impacted by fire. So, I am very passionate about the strategy." Similarly, a Tribal participant shared that: "my role is 100% aligned with the WCS" and noted the various funding they are managing to support this work. Multiple Forest Service participants reported that wildfire risk reduction work has been underway for a while, but that the WCS helps take this work to "the next level" by providing the resources needed to significantly increase the pace and scale of these efforts.

Both Tribal and Forest Service representatives who were less connected to the WCS, but still involved with wildfire risk reduction, cited geography as a reason for their lack of connection to the WCS, given that the WCS focuses largely on western landscapes.

Other reasons that Tribal personnel gave for feeling less connected to the WCS included:
- Resource constraints that led to a need to prioritize management (e.g., Tribes with reservation land may prioritize their own land before working on ancestral lands under Forst Service management on the National Forest System (NFS) versus Tribes without reservation land that may have more bandwidth to work on ancestral lands under Forest Service management).
- Uncertainty about the WCS landscape definition and boundaries, and thus uncertainty about whether their wildfire risk reduction work was part of the WCS.
- The perception that for the WCS to be a true strategy, the priorities that drive the WCS need to be more clearly articulated, as do the metrics by which progress in its implementation will be measured.
- Waiting for opportunities for meaningful input into WCS projects (i.e., starting at the project conception stage), as their local forests were initially focused on completing WCS projects that had already undergone National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review.

3.1.2 Defining and measuring success for implementing the Wildfire Crisis Strategy as a whole

When participants were asked how they would define success for the WCS as a whole, three components to such a definition emerged: (i) improved forest conditions; (ii) sustainable funding for

wildfire risk reduction work; and (iii) enhanced collaboration, communication, and coordination among cross-boundary partners.

Improved Forest Conditions

Both Forest Service and Tribal participants defined success as improved forest condition with some variation across participants on what that looked like. Most participants indicated that the desired forest composition would be one where "wildfire risk is manageable, not the edge of crisis." Participants suggested a range of metrics for assessing progress toward wildfire risk being manageable, including:

- When fire does come through, firefighters would be able to keep it at the surface level, out of the forest canopy.
- Wildfire risk would be reduced and cultural burning[5] can resume (i.e., controlled fires that promote forest health and protects Tribal cultural resources and foods).
- Fire would play a natural role on the landscape.
- Professionals would know the priority areas where treatment is needed to bring fuel loading down to a manageable level.
- Catastrophic wildfires would become less frequent and intense.
- There would be less damage from wildfires (loss of life; damage to property, infrastructure, and cultural resources).
- Forest conditions would be restored to what they were prior to European settlement.

Sustainable funding for wildfire risk reduction work

Many Forest Service and Tribal respondents felt optimistic about the opportunities afforded through the current influx of resources. One Tribal participant shared how funding is "forcing conversations that haven't happened. In the past, people were being more reactive rather than proactive." However, multiple respondents pointed out that the one-time nature of WCS funding creates an impediment to success since managers are reluctant to hire staff necessary to match the new workload if funding will not continue. At the same time, Forest Service managers feel pressure to spend the available funds expeditiously, resulting in already-stretched employees being asked to do even more. If managers knew they could count on a permanent funding source for wildfire risk reduction work, they could hire accordingly and maximize progress. Thus, both Forest Service and Tribal respondents described success as securing ongoing funding for this work, with that funding structured in a way that resources will always be available to sustain these efforts (rather than ending after the 10-year life of the WCS). One Forest Service participant shared: "We are doing fuel management around communities. There are projects underway on the ground, in and around communities that will continue to do great things and produce results, if funding continues. But it feels like the funding situation is coming to a halt and I am concerned."

Participant-suggested metrics for this component of success included:

- The Forest Service securing increased base funding for this work.

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[5] Cultural burning was consistently identified as a Tribal priority during this assessment. For more information on cultural burning see these resources: "Tribal and Indigenous Fire Tradition" and "The meaning of fire"; https://medium.com/@intertribaltimbercouncil/cultural-burning-has-lessons-for-todays-sustainable-forest-management-f565e37806c7; and

- Equal amounts of wildfire risk reduction funds for staff and equipment provided to Tribes and Forest Service units.
- Additional Tribal staff hired to help with treatment. Resources are used more efficiently because Tribes and Forest Service are working together more collaboratively (e.g., Forest Service could send staff to support Tribes and vice versa).
    - This idea is illustrated through the following quote from a Tribal participant: "The Tribe and Forest Service would both be able to communicate and utilize resources freely – send staff both ways, no problem. We'd be sharing resources to manage the landscape in its entirety."
    - Participants also flagged opportunities for collaboration on thinning, watershed improvement, prescription writing, and cultural surveys, etc.

Both Forest Service and Tribal respondents understand that Tribes are facing more severe staffing challenges than their Forest Service counterparts. One Forest Service participant pointed out that the Tribe they work with has a Department of Natural Resources one tenth the size of the local Forest Service's unit, and a need to liaise with many partners beyond the Forest Service (e.g., BIA, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service, etc.). Further, a Tribal participant shared that: "For many Tribes, their level of engagement will be dictated by the capacity they have. The Tribe's budget is 40% of the Forest Service budget, so our Tribal priority is working on reservation land."

Enhanced collaboration, communication, and coordination among cross-boundary partners
The third major element of participants' definition of WCS success was effective collaboration, communication, and coordination among cross-boundary partners. Respondents underscored the importance of cross-boundary partners syncing up on definitions, boundaries, strategies, priorities, and messages for the public. Respondents emphasized the importance of open lines of communication, and expressed the hope that this could enable expanded use of Tribal expertise to support catastrophic wildfire risk reduction. One Forest Service respondent shared how success would mean having "clear alignment with Tribes, other Federal agencies, State, Local, and county government on where we are implementing, how we are doing that, and how that makes a difference when we have a wildfire. We have done a lot of work in that realm, but it's not fully coordinated and as we have been doing this, we have found that all these different groups are doing good work. We need a map of who is doing what, where; we're working on that." Metrics suggested for this element of "success" in WCS implementation were more qualitative and goal oriented. Metrics included:
- Communities on the landscape are "smoke-ready," meaning they know how to prepare for smoke during wildfires and are fluent on the topic of Forest Service and Tribal work to achieve forest resiliency and risk reduction.
- Communication between the Forest Service and Tribes is not contingent on resource availability -- rather, Forest Service and Tribal staff continue to engage with one another despite funding ebbs and flows.
- The Forest Service and Tribes have established clear points of contact for effective collaboration.

3.1.3 Assessing Wildfire Crisis Strategy progress as a whole
When respondents were asked about their perceptions of progress toward successfully implementing the WCS, responses from both Forest Service and Tribal personnel varied from: "not seeing a great deal

of progress yet" to "seeing a great deal of progress." Below is a synopsis of the comments received along that spectrum.

Progress toward successful Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation
Assessment participants shared that the funding infusion supporting the WCS has enabled significant increases in pace and scale of wildfire risk reduction work. As a result, projects focusing on smaller diameter trees that were not addressed in the past can now be supported, more fuel management work is being done in and around communities, treated forest areas have become less dense and more open, and Forest Service and Tribes are collaborating to support healthier ecosystems.

Multiple Tribal and Forest Service participants expressed that relationships between Forest Service units and Tribes have strengthened since implementation of the WCS. One Tribal respondent stated "our Tribe met with the head of the Forest Service and his delegation; they were very open to our perspectives. They listened; they want to build trust and relationships, and there is movement in this direction. I see a sincere change from what we saw in the past. The Forest Service is reaching out to us more, and vice versa."

Mixed progress toward successful Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation
Both Forest Service and Tribal respondents named funding as key to increasing wildfire risk reduction work to the necessary pace and scale and facilitating collaboration opportunities between Forest Service units and Tribes. As described above, one-time funding leads to a reluctance to hire additional permanent positions and creates pressure to spend quickly. Further, Forest Service personnel told the National Center team that the pressure to spend quickly means that managers have prioritized NEPA-ready projects (those for which the NEPA requirements have been completed); these may or may not be the projects that are priority for achieving the primary WCS goals. Respondents pointed out that, by definition, NEPA-ready projects are too far along for meaningful Tribal involvement to occur if it did not begin long ago. By contrast, participants identified "successful" engagement of Tribes in NEPA as: incorporating TEK considerations into the pre-compliance stage; supporting Tribes to survey and write Environmental Assessments; inviting Tribes to be a Cooperating Agency and be involved from project planning stages through implementation; and including language that provides for scoping documents to consult Tribal elders on projects. Participants viewed success as long-term sustainable funding that is not soley project based.

A related theme was that the implementation of the WCS needs to be done in a more strategic manner; for example, identifying and treating priority areas within a landscape to maximize pace and scale, and establishing meaningful metrics to measure progress. One Tribal respondent shared their perspective that: "The way in which Forest Services counts acres treated contains several types of redundancies. The amount of treatment has increased, but not commensurate with the problem, and the amount of treatment is significantly over-stated due to these redundancies." Both Forest Service and Tribal participants agreed that acres treated was not the right metric to measure WCS progress. For example, a Forest Service participant said: "Success doesn't mean the number of acres or number of communities – but quality work (e.g., reducing wildfire impacts)," and a Tribal participant said: "Forest Service is using the wrong measure of success in looking at the number of acres treated." Participants suggested alternative indicators of success, including that fire slows down when it reaches limited fuels, a reduction in extreme fire behavior, and that wildfires are of a lower intensity and shorter-lasting. Both

Forest Service and Tribal respondents also suggested that indicators of program success should be informed by Tribal needs.

3.2 FINDINGS: INCORPORATING TRIBAL PRIORITIES AND TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE INTO WILDFIRE CRISIS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

3.2.1 Defining success for incorporating Tribal priorities and Traditional Ecological Knowledge into Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation

Forest Service and Tribal participants expressed similar thoughts on what successful implementation of Tribal priorities and TEK into wildfire risk reduction would look like. Both Forest Service and Tribal personnel defined success in the following ways:

- Tribal priorities and TEK are incorporated into the Forest Service's updated management plans, burn plans and other vegetative treatments.
  - Sample metrics:
    - Tribal priorities and TEK are integrated and evident in the Forest Service's updated forest management plans, including lists of specific Tribally initiated projects done on Forest Service land with Forest Service support.
    - Tribal priorities and TEK are integrated and evident in Forest Service project work and management practices from planning through project completion, monitoring, and maintenance.
    - Forest Service incorporates Tribal priorities and TEK as success measures for Forest Service program reviews.
    - Tribes affirm that Tribal priorities and TEK have been incorporated.
      - Some examples of Tribal priorities mentioned during the conversations held for this assessment included: prioritizing hunting and gathering rights (huckleberries, ramps, acorns), protecting water quality and quantity for fish and aquatic species, and restoring cultural burning and related songs and life ways.
- The Forest Service consistently engages in effective collaboration, communication, and coordination with Tribes (at both leadership and staff levels, as measured at the level of the individual and of the Forest Service unit).
  - Sample metrics:
    - The Forest Service and Tribal partners act "as one" in maintaining intervals for introduced fire to sustain a healthy ecosystem for all to use.
    - The Forest Service develop better relationships with Tribes (i.e. personnel are willing to show up, listen to each other, and intentionally cultivate relationships with one another.)
      - Example: "Our burn windows and the timing of specific burns is informed by TEK. We have gained knowledge of the [Tribe's] cultural practices and values, such as the importance of water to the Tribe; we must conduct our burns and construct roads in a way that avoids contamination of the water. We have learned from the Tribe when to thin Emory oak and when not to."
    - Regular meetings occur so Forest Service can learn more about Tribal priorities.
    - Engagement happens from the earliest project stages with TEK as a part of the project planning stage.

- Tribal members are included in decision-making processes and TEK experts (e.g., Tribal Elders) consulted on projects at the onset of project initiation and development.
- TEK and western science are both utilized to manage forests and treat landscapes.
- More local and place-based collaboration with Tribes.
- Open and transparent conversations on co-stewardship and co-management options.
- Co-stewardship efforts that incorporate TEK becoming the norm between the Forest Service and Tribes.
  - Sample metrics:
    - Forest Service units build relationships with Tribes, cultivating more co-stewardship opportunities using a variety of available funding sources.
    - Co-stewardship is a standard practice.
    - The Forest Service tracks the number of co-stewardship projects that are co-led with a Tribe from the ground up (from scoping to implementation).
    - Forest Service gains more clarity on how to work with Tribes in a co-stewardship fashion, bridging potential differences in understanding between Tribes and Forest Service.
- Tribes resuming and controlling their own use of cultural burning.
  - Sample metrics:
    - Cultural burning is supported, including Tribal authority to conduct cultural burns.
    - Cultural burning becoming a readily acceptable practice by the Forest Service due to proven reductions in fuel loading and associated risk.
    - Bureaucratic barriers to Tribes engaging in cultural burning have been reduced or removed. Barriers include:
      - Credentialing requirements, permits, liability, workforce capacity, and compensation for Tribal work on Forest Service land and awareness of ways to do the latter.
    - Tribes and Forest Service work together on prescribed burns.
    - Tribes consulted on prescribed fires within their ancestral territory.
      - "Indigenous people are able to resume and revitalize resource management methods that are consistent with their belief systems, knowledge and practices within their traditional homelands (e.g., cultural burning vs. "prescribed fire")"
      - "Success would also mean the Forest Service supports sovereignty and capacity building for us to manage forest programs."
      - "An indicator of success would be Tribes controlling authority for cultural burns and "there would be dozens of agreements with millions of dollars where Tribes have a leadership role."

The National Center saw more divergence around the theme of co-management with Tribal respondents expressing it as a priority and Forest Service representatives being hesitant about its implementability. The bulleted list below highlights key metrics raised by Tribal participants.

- The Forest Service maximizes the decision space and minimizes procedural barriers for Tribes to facilitate greater partnership in managing ancestral lands currently under Forest Service stewardship. This might include the transfer of land ownership back to Tribes under certain circumstances and co-management in others. Two co-management sub-themes were expressed by participants: (i) co-management is desirable but it is not clear to many Tribal and Forest Service employees whether or not it is allowed; and (ii) co-management is a "right" and Tribes are doing it (as Tribes define it) whether the Forest Service calls it co-management or another term.
    - Sample metrics:
        - The Forest Service recognizing Tribes as having a seat at the table that is equal to the seat of the U.S. Government with respect to decision-making authority.
        - The Forest Service acknowledges the role of Tribes as co-managers.
        - The Forest Service enters into Master Stewardship Agreements that support co-management mechanisms.
        - Tribes are able to gather plants on Forest Service land without obtaining a permit.
        - Tribes having greater autonomy in land and resource management.

More information on defining success for incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation can be found in Appendix C.

3.2.2 Assessing progress in incorporating Tribal priorities and Traditional Ecological Knowledge into Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation

When asked about their perceptions of progress being made in incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation, responses from both Forest Service and Tribal personnel varied considerably (as was the case for their perceptions about progress in implementing the WCS as a whole). Responses ranged from: "I'm not seeing a great deal of progress yet" to "I'm seeing a great deal of progress." This variation reflected differences between landscapes, Forest Service units, and Tribes.

Some Tribal and Forest Service respondents described cases of very intentional investment of resources and time to incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation. One Forest Service respondent highlighted how their agency team has been making a significant effort to attend a local Tribe's natural resource staff meetings, noting that: "It's a (multi-hour) drive. It's a big commitment of time to do that – we have been doing that for specific things and our presence has paid off." A Tribal respondent noted that they have seen success due to improved communications, sharing that the: "Forest Service listens when the Tribe identifies a location important to protect."

Some Forest Service respondents who experienced mixed progress expressed a lack of understanding of Tribal priorities and TEK. Others saw a mismatch in the alignment of Tribal interests and WCS project objectives. Some Tribal respondents with mixed feelings about progress said that they have experienced "haphazard" incorporation of their priorities; others described what they see as a "check the box effort."

Respondents shared that some of these challenges may be because some Forest Service personnel have limited knowledge about Tribal Nations and their priorities, including a lack of understanding of Tribes' history, Tribal status as sovereign Nations, the Federal government's trust responsibility, Tribal decision-

making processes, and engagement protocols. Others felt some Forest Service personnel hold biases or make unfounded assumptions about Tribes.

Both Forest Service and Tribal respondents also spoke to how the Forest Service's culture could both serve to advance or hamper progress in incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK. Some respondents reported that the leadership and work culture of their Forest Service unit had a big influence on progress, and having a leader who was eager to partner with Tribes really set a tone for collaboration across the Forest Service unit.

One Forest Service participant spoke to how previously Forest Service had been working rather insularly but have transitioned to working more collaboratively. This is harder for some local staff to adapt to than others. Participants suggested that it could help to use the periodic Forest Plan reviews to reinforce agency leadership's expectation that their staff will incorporate Tribal priorities and TEK into plan updates by requiring reviews to look at whether this has occurred. This review could include listing Tribal projects done on Forest Service land with Forest Service support.

In addition, Forest Service personnel may be unaware of their authority to do certain constructive work. Thus, they may benefit from leadership messaging that certain actions are desirable and not "risky." Examples include:

- Exploring ways in which Forest Service personnel can maximize decision space for Tribal partners.
- Identifying priority treatment locations with the goal of increasing pace and scale of wildfire risk reduction.
- Examining options for wildfire risk reduction treatments in Wilderness Areas.

Various participants suggested that the Forest Service provide policy or guidance on these topics – or if the policy and guidance already exists, then communicate that flexibility in these areas.

Lastly, both Tribal and Forest Service participants mentioned staff turnover as a challenge. The Forest Service traditionally encouraged personnel mobility in pursuit of professional opportunities. This constant movement can get in the way of creating long-lasting relationships with Tribal partners and create an administrative burden for Tribes who need to get new Forest Service personnel up to speed.

Table 1 below provides supporting quotes reflecting some of the challenges identified above and impacts of Forest Service agency culture.

Table 1: Challenges to Incorporating Tribal Priorities and TEK into WCS Implementation

Challenge	Supporting quote highlighting that challenge
Not understanding TEK and its role in the WCS	Forest Service participant: "Our National Forest is using Infrastructure money to work with a Tribe on cultural burning. We're unsure of the role of fire here and need TEK and research to better understand it."
Feeling that cultural burning is not clearly spatially aligned with the goals of WCS	Forest Service participant: "Haven't yet incorporated TEK into how we do WCS projects because those Tribal interests tend to be small scale (an acre, in a specific location). That scale

	doesn't match the scale of WCS project objectives."
Biases and taboos held towards historically marginalized groups	• Forest Service participant: "As a Forest Service staff member, I see a lot more scrutiny of the actions and decisions of Forest Service staff from historically marginalized groups and a lot of bias and distrust toward their intent. These conditions exist despite the fact that metrics on these landscape projects show leaders from historically marginalized groups being successful at managing projects of national significance and leading in the wildfire crisis." • Tribal participant: "There is a taboo about working with Tribes, on one hand everyone wants to work with Tribes, but there is also a taboo that the Tribes don't like anyone else and don't want to work with them. These taboos are decreasing though."
Agency culture: Leadership choices	• Forest Service participant: "Our Forest Supervisor has made it clear that this is what we are about -- this is a major component of our work, and it is not something we are going to screw up."
Agency culture: Personnel turnover	• Tribal participant: "In less than a year we have had three different Forest Service project coordinators. We need more continuity to build relationships." • Forest Service participant: "political turnover among Forest Service Line Officers and navigating that space is difficult. Tribes are not going anywhere, but we do have Forest Service turnover, and then the new folks have to start over."
Agency culture: Resistance to change	• Tribal participant: "Forest Service doesn't invite Tribal input into where they treat on Forest Service lands. They treat based on their timber production goals." • Tribal participant: "we get 'just enough' information but when we dive deep into process the lack of trust surfaces. This plays out from planning to implementation."

3.2.3. Methods for incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Tribal priorities into Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation

Both Tribal and Forest Service respondents offered examples of methods that they felt had been effective in incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into implementation of the WCS strategy. Examples offered included:

- Engaging in joint learning.
    - Example: "Fire leadership in two areas [Tribal Nations] is really experienced and knowledgeable about fire. When our fuels crews and fire management officers work together, they bring a traditional perspective. We are planning projects across the Forest Service/Tribal border – i.e., what and when to treat."
    - Example: "Under the Master Stewardship Agreement, we lay out timber sales, marked per TEK. Then we harvest, thin, and under burn…. the Forest Service helped on the under burns until we got credentialed for doing the burns ourselves. We are now better credentialed than the Forest Service."
    - Example: "Forest Service is learning how to harvest, what to look for, how to maintain a number of species."
- A Tribally led workshop on TEK.
    - Example: "We are putting forward a participating agreement under which the Forest Service will send funds to a particular Tribe to organize a workshop on what TEK would look like in implementing wildfire crisis work (including what Tribes have traditionally done to manage land, plants, and animals)."
- Early engagement and collaboration between the Forest Service and Tribes on project planning.
    - Example: "Yes, we have ongoing discussions with Tribes through dialogue on our agreements. We listen to understand Tribal values and what's important to Tribal partners. One Tribe helped define purpose and need for this district with respect to big game hunting; their hunting and gathering rights are a priority for them in this district and one other."
- Participation by both Forest Service and Tribes in shared communities of practice.
    - Example: "The Forest Service meets with us separately in addition to meeting with us through participation in the (community of practice) meetings."
- Co-stewardship projects where TEK was incorporated from the earliest stages.
    - Example: "There is $29M in funding for Tribal co-stewardship projects. We have (multiple) different projects with seven different Tribes as partners. All of our area forests are working with Tribes on fuel reduction… Previously we did not have the funding to do that."
- Leveraging Tribal partnerships to support land and resource management.
    - Example: "The Forest Service invited us to help inventory Emory oaks, write prescriptions to increase regeneration and produce larger acorns, and do treatments… We also shared a Tribal handbook, and we are waiting for them to let us know if they need something else added…. they are willing to allow Tribes to help manage the Emory oak on Forest Service land."

4.0 LESSONS LEARNED

Both Forest Service and Tribal respondents identified factors that facilitate progress in incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation and other factors that impede progress. The facilitative factors are detailed below in Section 4.1 and a more comprehensive list is available in Appendix D. The impediments to progress are detailed below in Section 4.2 and a comprehensive list is available in Appendix E.

4.1 FACTORS THAT SUPPORT PROGRESS

Shared goals and good communication

Participants suggested the importance of establishing shared goals (e.g., passions for fire and forest restoration) between Tribes and the Forest Service and communicating about ongoing work early and often. For example, a Forest Service participant said: "I think the quarterly meetings that we have to keep everyone up to date on current activities and the schedule are very important to the success of the plan. We also meet in the intervening periods if something pops up (e.g., small meetings between leaders and project proponents) – delicate, high priority. Supporting our relationships with Tribes, we have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) laying out our mutual intentions, a good consultation process, and processes for sending letters to Tribes for formal communication." Similarly, a Tribal respondent shared how "inviting Tribes to participate at the beginning of a project in the planning stages sets the conditions for the incorporation of Tribal priorities and TEK."

Numerous participants noted that the internal decision-making processes of Forest Service and Tribal partners is often unclear, and this can contribute to faulty assumptions and frustration about what is possible within a given timeframe. Clear communication about this could help. Relatedly, one Tribal participant indicated they would like to have a Forest Service staff member come and work with the Tribe for a short stint during off season to learn how the Tribe operates; the idea behind this "exchange" was to increase awareness about Tribal processes which the Forest Service may not understand and or be aware of.

Another suggestion from a Tribal participant was that the arrangements that Forest Service personnel put in place for meetings with Tribal partners affect the meeting's productivity. This person suggested that the Forest Service could encourage Tribal guests to bring whomever they considered relevant, share information transparently, and encourage questions.

Forest Service staff being knowledgeable about the Tribes they work with

Another major facilitative factor was having qualified and effective staff within the Forest Service. Participants spoke to the importance of having Tribal Liaisons with: "Proper skills in communication." Participants noted that it can be challenging to hire qualified staff as the government has to compete with private sector rates, however, if the government was able to hire such staff the preferred skills included:
- Being familiar with the Tribes with whom they work.
- Understanding that each Tribe is unique.
- Having effective communication skills.
- Knowing the agency's mission and pertinent laws and policies.
- Supporting consistent messaging and collaboration.
- Not being the only Forest Service team member with these skills.

When a Tribal liaison has these requisite skills, a Forest Service respondent shared that Tribal Liaisons have been "key to preparing staff for successful engagement." Respondents noted that hiring someone with strong communication skills does not mean they will be the right fit for the role. Tribal engagement is a more specialized skill. Conversations with Forest Service and Tribal participants underscored that this role should be staffed carefully and thoughtfully to ensure both Forest Service and Tribal needs are being adequately met. One Forest Service participant flagged that the: "Value of a Tribal Liaison depends on the person. They have to understand that their role is not Tribal 'advocate' – that could put

them in conflict with the agency mission or interests. They have to know agency law and policy and understand that they represent Forest Service."

Flexible and creative contracting mechanisms and agreements
Forest Service participants reflected positively on agreements that help streamline engagement with Tribes and stand the test of time. During one conversation, a Forest Service participant reflected that, while Forest Service staff cycle in and out of various roles, the Tribe is not going anywhere. Creating longstanding documents, like a MOU, shows a commitment to continued work. From the National Center's conversations with participants, there appeared to be a mutual appreciation for simplicity, and the recognition that if both Tribes and Forest Service go through the work to put together an agreement, it should be long-lasting.

Respondents also mentioned that Forest Service Grants and Agreements (G&A) staff are key to supporting Federal-Tribal partnerships. One Forest Service employee noted that a qualified G&A expert may be able to help develop workable approaches for addressing requirements for matching funds. Tribal respondents also commented on the importance of this role, noting that a good way to measure success would be "tracking the number of Forest Service-Tribal agreements." The G&A staff have a critical role to play and are an important piece of the puzzle. However, Forest Service participants said that recruiting and retaining well-qualified G&A staff is a challenge; perhaps for this reason, G&A staff are reportedly now based at the regional level, but the teamwork between G&A and program staff works most efficiently when G&A staff are based at the forest level and are accountable to the Forest Supervisor.

The below figure depicts a Venn diagram showing the overlap between factors that support progress identified by Tribal and Forest Service respondents.
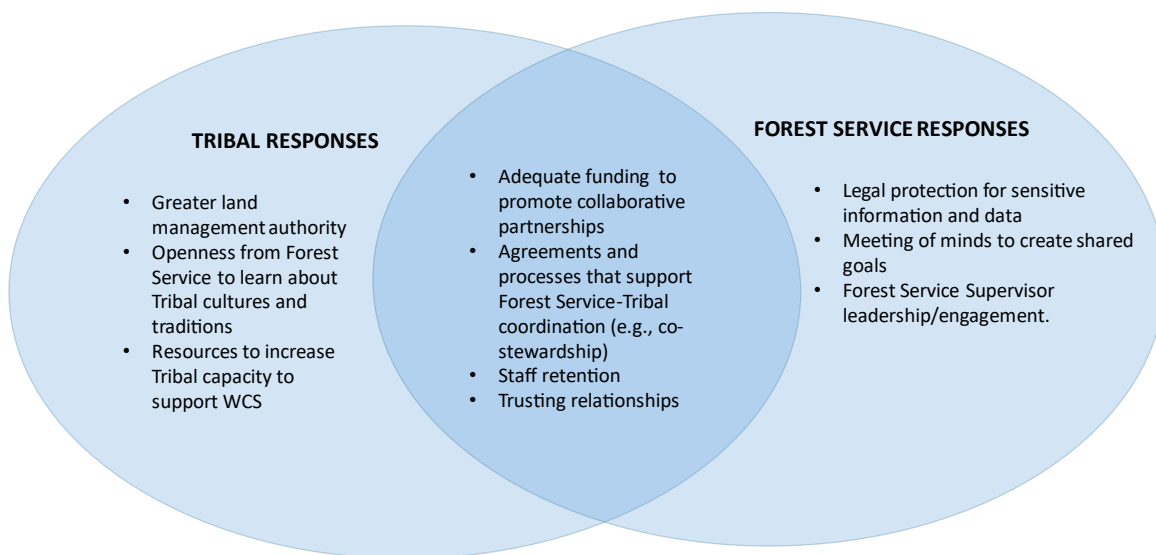
TRIBAL RESPONSES

- Greater land management authority
- Openness from Forest Service to learn about Tribal cultures and traditions
- Resources to increase Tribal capacity to support WCS

- Adequate funding to promote collaborative partnerships
- Agreements and processes that support Forest Service-Tribal coordination (e.g., co-stewardship)
- Staff retention
- Trusting relationships

FOREST SERVICE RESPONSES

- Legal protection for sensitive information and data
- Meeting of minds to create shared goals
- Forest Service Supervisor leadership/engagement.

Figure 1 Facilitative Factors that Support Success in Incorporating Tribal Priorities and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

4.2 FACTORS THAT IMPEDE PROGRESS

Differences in worldview and culture and associated distrust due to a legacy of historical injustices
Both Tribal and Forest Service respondents acknowledged their differences in worldview and culture. Tribal and Forest Service respondents shared:

- Different perspectives on managing forest lands (e.g., government land and multiple use vs. cultural heritage and traditional ecological knowledge).
- Different ways of learning and sharing information (e.g., quantitative / empirical vs. lived experience / oral tradition).
- Different views of risk (e.g., a narrower or more interdisciplinary approach to assessing risk versus tapping expertise across staff – from Tribal archeologists to native species specialist).

One Forest Service participant flagged how: "There is a challenge in integrating those two worlds on the Forest Service side as our legal system generally differentiates between natural resources and cultural resources while the Tribe sees them as the same." Forest Service personnel who were able to make the investment to learn and engage with their Tribal counterparts seemed able to bridge these differences in worldviews and appreciate one another's contributions to shared goals.

Several participants mentioned the legacy of injustices perpetrated by the U.S. Government against Native people, and the deep distrust left behind, as an obstacle to progress in incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into the WCS. For example, one Forest Service respondent talked about how: "Past actions have left baggage… that prevents work from moving forward." Various participants referred to baggage as past historical wrongs against Tribal Nations and dismissal of Tribal sovereignty, knowledge, and worldviews. Both Tribal and Forest Service participants noted that many Forest Service employees

have very little understanding of the cultures of the Tribes with whom they may seek to partner, and that this can be very challenging.

Bureaucratic and procedural barriers

Aspects of systems, procedures, and structures that can impede progress in incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation include:

- A disconnect between Forest Service leadership and field staff – i.e., leadership may be promoting Tribal engagement but staff working on the ground may not have experience working with Tribes and not see the importance of collaborating.
- Feeling that Forest Service staff are looking over Tribes' shoulders (e.g., perception that Forest Service is applying extra scrutiny when dispersing funding to Tribes).
- Strict application of Federal processes for Tribal members engaging in cultural lifeways (e.g., requiring permits to gather mushrooms and berries on Federal land).
- Slow bureaucratic processes that impact project implementation.

One Tribal representative shared the following personal anecdote highlighting a roadblock they had faced: "I developed a funding proposal to buy equipment to outfit firefighters and purchase fire engines. I couldn't get answers on how to submit the proposal. The Forest Service staff didn't know what was needed to approve the grant proposal... Finally, Forest Service leadership told a Congressional committee that Forest Service approved it, but the funds had run out!" Another Tribal participant shared how lengthy processes can slow down progress, and that it might be too early to tell whether progress has been made in incorporating Tribal priorities "We have done sales with Forest Service (e.g., normal annual harvest and reforestation). I think it takes so long to get work moving through the Federal system due to the NEPA compliance timeline, etc. It's too soon to see the fruits of our labor."

The below figure depicts a Venn diagram showing the overlap between factors identified by Tribal and Forest Service respondents.
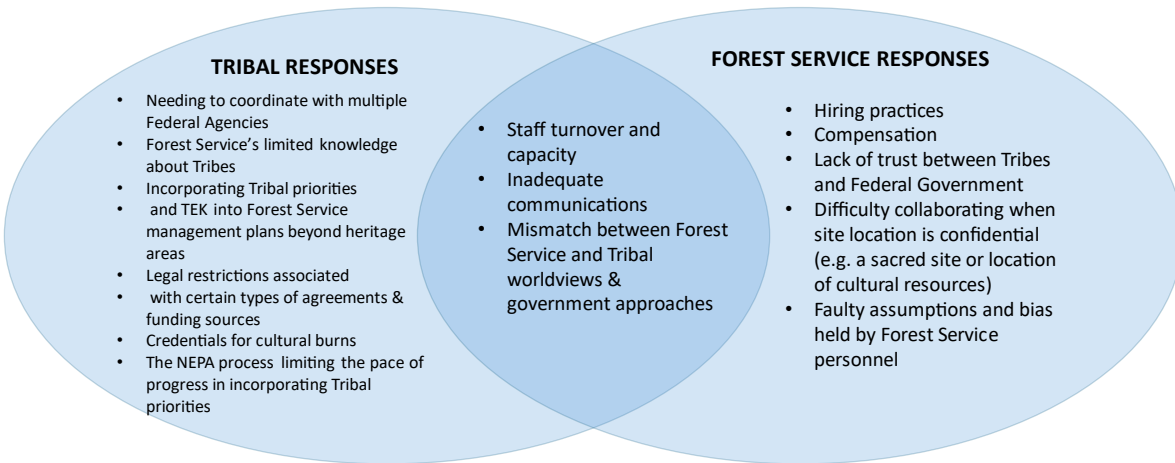
TRIBAL RESPONSES
- Needing to coordinate with multiple Federal Agencies
- Forest Service's limited knowledge about Tribes
- Incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into Forest Service management plans beyond heritage areas
- Legal restrictions associated with certain types of agreements & funding sources
- Credentials for cultural burns
- The NEPA process limiting the pace of progress in incorporating Tribal priorities

- Staff turnover and capacity
- Inadequate communications
- Mismatch between Forest Service and Tribal worldviews & government approaches

FOREST SERVICE RESPONSES
- Hiring practices
- Compensation
- Lack of trust between Tribes and Federal Government
- Difficulty collaborating when site location is confidential (e.g. a sacred site or location of cultural resources)
- Faulty assumptions and bias held by Forest Service personnel

Figure 2 Factors that Impede Progress between Tribes and Forest Service

Certain authorities and agreement mechanisms support the incorporation of Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation and others serve as obstacles. The themes that emerged from conversations around existing authorities and agreements are listed below.

Perceived Strengths of Various Authorities and Agreement Mechanisms:
- Authorities (coupled with funding mechanisms) that support co-stewardship/co-management pave the way for more meaningful engagement with Tribes.
    - Participants mentioned TFPA with USDA 638 agreements and the Good Neighbor Authority as examples.
        - Sample Forest Service quote: "TFPA was a game changer. It [USDA 638 authority] gave us the authority to do co-stewardship agreements. TFPA is a big picture tool used to engage in meaningful ways with Tribes (forest health, traditional ecological knowledge, co-stewardship)."
- Tribes would like to see funding mechanisms enable them to:
    - Protect lands both on and off Tribal reservations (i.e., including adjacent public lands).
        - Sample Tribal participant quote: "The Forest Service also can work with us under DOI's Reserved Treaty Rights Lands Program to provide resources for Tribes to conduct fuel treatments on ancestral lands within Forest Service-controlled lands. The Tribe can initiate projects on Forest Service land this way and BIA funds it. Tribes are using this mechanism more."
    - Increase permanent full-time Tribal staffing.
    - Promote cross boundary collaboration.
    - Meet Tribes where they are capacity-wise.

- Generally, mechanisms that are Tribally driven and give Tribes more authority were viewed favorably. (Participants mentioned USDA 638 agreements and Co-Stewardship Agreements as examples).
  - Sample Tribal participant quote: "I like that 638s have existed within BIA for decades, so Tribes are familiar with it. They are good because the Tribes identify the priorities."
- Long-lasting agreements are preferred:
  - Memoranda of Understanding can facilitate a good baseline for ongoing communication and coordination between Tribes and Forest Service. They can live beyond an individual or leader.
  - Good Neighbor Authority can be used for long time periods (e.g., 10 years) as well as Master Stewardship Agreement combined with Special Project Agreements (e.g., 20 years)

Perceived Drawbacks of Various Authorities and Agreement Mechanisms:
- Themes regarding preferences for certain barriers to be removed were also clear from discussions:
  - Required funding matching for Tribes and where matching is not required, the inconsistent application of match waiver by G&A staff.
  - Lengthy and complex administrative agreement processes.
    - High administrative burden on Tribes to respond to multiple monitoring and reporting requirements. Agreement due dates for these requirements are not aligned.
    - Administrative burden of managing contracts with two different findings sources.
    - Administrative burden of managing contracts and agreements processes across multiple Federal agencies with different policies, procedures and G&A staff.
      - For example, being able to utilize single sources of funding to manage across jurisdictions (i.e., Tribal and Forest Service lands).
  - Not allowing Tribes to keep revenue from projects that Tribal personnel supported on Forest Service land.
  - Not supporting Tribes doing cross-boundary work within their own territories. Most agreements and funding mechanisms with Forest Service support Tribes doing work only on National Forest Service lands.
- More learning and clarity is required around BIA versus USDA Forest Service funding authorities and existing opportunities for streamlined collaboration:
  - Tribes are familiar with BIA 638 Agreements but face a learning to curve to navigate USDA 638 Agreements and how they differ from DOI funding mechanisms.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Center team grouped participant recommendations into four themes, which include what the team heard as the intent of both Forest Service and Tribal participants. (Individual bullets, or examples, came from individual participants from both those groups.) These four groups of recommendations are detailed below. For a comprehensive list of participant suggestions, please see Appendix F.

4.3.1 Strengthen workforce capacity.

Respondents suggested that the Forest Service take the steps below to strengthen agency and Tribal workforce capacity. (Note, some of these suggestions would be dependent on securing increased funding.)

- Hold quarterly meetings to keep Forest Service and Tribal teams up to date on current activities and project schedules. If something pops up in the intervening periods connect on high priority items.
- Forest Service staff need resources and time to support relationship building (e.g., to facilitate one-to-one and community meetings and support ongoing communication).
- Forest Service should invite Tribes to participate at the beginning of a project, in the planning stages.
- Encourage a Forest Service staff member to come and work with the Tribe for a short stint during off season to learn how the Tribe operates.
- Forest Service encourages Tribal guests to bring whomever they considered relevant to Forest Service "hosted" meetings, share information transparently, and invites questions.
- Track the number of Forest Service-Tribal agreements.
- Remove barriers to cultural burning (e.g., credentialing requirements, permits, liability, workforce capacity constraints, and roadblocks to compensating Tribes for work on Forest Service land.
- Actively support expanded use of cultural burning.
- Offer and incentivize Forest Service training on the knowledge and skills that are key to effective collaboration with Tribes (e.g., Tribes' history, Tribal status as sovereign Nations, the Federal government's trust responsibility, Tribal decision-making processes, and engagement protocols).
- Explore ways to hire Tribal members as Forest Service employees.
- Provide a Tribal Liaison with the right knowledge and skills for this role (e.g., Liaison familiar with Tribes with whom they work, understands each Tribe is unique, has effective communication skills, knows agency law, mission, policy, supports consistent messaging and collaboration, not the only Forest Service team member with these skills).
- Enable Forest Service units to hire Tribal members by setting up an Intergovernmental Agreement (or similar) between Forest Service and BIA that allows Forest Service to tap into BIA's Direct Hiring Authority
  o Suggestion to provide one Tribal liaison per Forest and one Tribal liaison per Tribe.
- Hire more G&A staff within the Forest Service and base them at the Forest level so that they can develop the local relationships and understandings that enable them to provide this function efficiently.
- Publicize multiple ways in which the Forest Service and Tribes can share labor and build on one another's respective capacities.
  o Assess ability to compensate Tribal personnel for work on Forest Service land – remove barriers to doing so or publicize existing methods.
- Secure base funding for sustainable wildfire risk reduction work to support this critical need into the future (well beyond the 10-year WCS horizon).
- Strive to provide equal amounts of wildfire risk reduction funds for Tribes and the Forest Service.
- Allocate staff time for relationship-building and collaboration with Tribes.
- Have a Tribal person to be the "lead" on cross boundary work; communicating across the different departments within the Tribe.
- Two interviewees mentioned that, while Forest Service turnover is still a bit of an obstacle to relationship-building and trust, staff are switching positions less than they used to be. It could be worth unbundling this trend to see ways staff turnover could decrease in the interest of investing in long-term local relationships.
- Advance funding to Tribes with limited funds and fundraising capacity.

4.3.2 Collect and disseminate key organizational learnings.

Respondents suggested collecting and disseminating organizational learnings about:
- Types of authorities and agreements to use for different goals; and
- How to:
  - Do co-stewardship.
  - Support cultural burning.
  - Incorporate TEK into Forest Service work and systems.
  - Utilize Tribal Liaisons' time for maximum benefit (e.g., minimize turnover; ensure clarity on duties; and ensure that the Tribal liaison is not the only agency staff person knowledgeable about Tribal partners).
  - Support cultural and behavioral change within the agency to better partner with Tribes.

4.3.3 Clarify existing policies and create guidance where needed

Respondents suggested that the Forest Service develop policy and guidance (or social license where policy and guidance already exist) in the following areas:
- Forest Service leadership's commitment to, and strategy for, working with Tribes.
- Ways the Forest Service can maximize decision space for Tribal partners.
- How to collaboratively identify priority treatment locations and timing.
- Wilderness Area treatment options.

Participants suggested that the Forest Service pursue further problem-solving on how to:
- Make WCS implementation more strategic.
- Remove barriers to cultural burning.
- Minimize Forest Service personnel turnover.
- Strengthen Federal agency coordination (particularly between the BIA and Forest Service) to reduce burden to Tribes.

4.3.4 Provide procedural flexibility

Respondents suggested that the Forest Service provide additional flexibility in the following areas to expedite progress in incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation:
- Utilize specific agreements and authorities that:
  - Support co-stewardship/co-management.
  - Give Tribes more autonomy.
  - Allows the Forest Service to meet Tribes where they are capacity-wise.
- Align monitoring and reporting requirements when one Tribe has multiple Forest Service agreements.
- Allow flexibility in the timeframe for spending funds (e.g., fuel management work).
- Allow Forest Service personnel the discretion to offer one-time waivers on a variety of agreement requirements.
- Allow the use of Forest Service funds (e.g., under TFPA) for Forest Service personnel to do work on adjacent Tribal land if the Tribe wishes[6]; and

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[6] Tribal lands are near Forest Service lands and can affect the National Forest and vice versa.

- Create a mechanism to certify Tribes to help with National Historical Preservation Act surveys for cultural resources when the resources at a particular site are associated with both non-Tribal cultures and Tribal cultures.
- Recommendation that Forest Service find ways to use WCS money on Tribal lands with no strings attached (e.g., that it must be cross-boundary work).
  - TFPA has become a two-way street (e.g., Forest Service and Tribes can do work on each other's lands (via agreements) as appropriate and as desired by Tribes).

4.4 LEARNING TOGETHER

The conversations the National Center team has had with Tribal and Forest Service respondents shed light on the successes and challenges people are experiencing. This includes managing the risks associated with catastrophic wildfire, the scale of the work needed to reduce that risk to manageable levels, and the critical need for Federal-Tribal collaboration in a context that is burdened by a legacy of distrust. Despite some on-going challenges, a lot of progress has been made in strengthening trust and cooperation between these cross-boundary partners. Below are two opportunities to help further build off the progress already underway.

4.4.1 Look for opportunities to create projects together

One-time funding leads to agency pressure to spend quickly, so the priority for Forest Service units implementing the WCS has been on NEPA-ready projects. These NEPA-ready projects are often so far along in the pipeline that opportunities for further meaningful Tribal involvement in shaping activities, priorities or methods are minimal. This sentiment is illustrated in the following quote: "If meaningful Tribal engagement did not occur during the original project conception, it is typically too late for it to have impact at the point where NEPA compliance has been completed." With the Forest Service nearing completion of shovel-ready projects, they have an opportunity to begin conceptualizing new projects and working with Tribes from the beginning on those projects. There could be incentives provided to encourage Forest Service units to engage with Tribes early and often.

4.4.2 Learn from successful relationships

There has been varying levels of success across Forest Service units on incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into WCS implementation. There could be a benefit to sharing stories of successful Tribal-Federal partnerships in implementing the WCS to help equip those on other priority landscapes to achieve similar successes.

4.4.3 Opportunities to enhance communication

Tribal and Forest Service respondents had varying views on co-stewardship and co-management. Tribal and Forest Service respondents hold differing perspectives as to what the desired outcomes of co-stewardship/co-management are, as well as what can and cannot be done. It could be helpful to have more explicit conversations as to what is possible under Forest Service's existing authorities and what Tribes expect from a co-management or co-stewardship relationship.

4.4.4 Bridging differences across cultures

Differences in culture and worldview between Tribes and Forest Service may result in varying perceptions on what successful wildfire crisis prevention looks like and ways to track progress towards that end. There could be benefit to Forest Service and Tribes co-developing metrics for project success, integrating both qualitative and quantitative considerations to ensure that the updated metrics reflect strategies to maximize the pace and scale of wildfire risk reduction (e.g., guidance on priority locations

and timing of treatments). Forest Service staff could become better educated on Tribal culture, sovereignty, and history. Having more Forest Service staff knowledgeable on these topics may help all concerned navigate difficult conversations and cultural differences.

4.4.5 Forest Service and Tribes connect early in authority or agreement mechanism progress to explore desired goals, capacity, and timeline

Both Forest Service and Tribal respondents indicated confusion around how differing authorities and agreement mechanisms could be applied to support Tribal priorities and TEK. Forest Service has an opportunity to engage in more dialogue around the room for flexibility in existing authorities. Generally, respondents expressed a desire to see long-lasting authority or agreements mechanism that promote lasting collaboration and coordination (e.g., Memoranda of Understanding) and provide Tribes with more autonomy to realize their priorities. Successful mechanisms to achieve those goals included utilizing TFPAs with USDA 638 agreements, Good Neighbor Authority, and Co-Stewardship Agreements. Different arrangements have varying strengths and drawbacks (e.g., some require Tribal matching, some are lengthy to stand-up, and others have more 'teeth'). It could be beneficial to discuss these tradeoffs at the onset of the project.

Respondents also noted that Tribes are more familiar with navigating BIA 638 agreements. Based on the National Center's conversations with participants, there appears to be an opportunity for more dialogue on the differences between these agencies' authorities to identify and clarify any confusion or misconceptions. Respondents mentioned cases where partnership between the BIA and Forest Service facilitated successful arrangements (e.g., Tribes being able to conduct fuel treatments across jurisdictional boundaries on ancestral lands within Forest Service-controlled land as well as Tribal reservation territories) and other examples that resulted in more complexity and paperwork for the Tribes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW SHARED WITH PARTICIPANTS

INTERIM ASSESSMENT OF WILDFIRE CRISIS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

WITH RESPECT TO TRIBES' PRIORITIES:

Objective, Methods, Interview Topics, and Anticipated Use of Interview Data

I.   **Objective:** The Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) and USDA Forest Service seek to conduct an interim assessment of how Forest Service and Tribal partners are implementing the 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy. This assessment will inform a report to current and future Tribal and Forest Service partners as part of a 2024 Roundtable session convened by the Forest Service and ITC. The assessment will be based upon approximately 30 confidential interviews with current program participants and others. Interviews will be conducted by staff of the National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (National Center), which is a program of a small independent federal agency called the Morris K. and Stewart L. Udall Foundation (www.udall.gov).

The assessment will:

1.   Examine WCS implementation in partnership with Tribes.

2.   Evaluate how traditional knowledge and Tribal priorities are incorporated into efforts to reduce wildfire risk through WCS implementation and related land management policies and activities.

3.   Gather lessons learned for effective implementation of WCS during its remaining years.

4.   Identify additional capacity and workforce considerations to address in WCS implementation.

II.   **Background:** In December 2021, the ITC and Forest Service entered into an agreement to support Tribal engagement and involvement in the implementation of the Forest Service's 10-year strategy to address the wildfire crisis in the places where it poses the most immediate threats to communities.[7] In 2022, the ITC and Forest Service convened a National Intertribal Roundtable discussion regarding the implementation of the WCS, identifying key areas for Forest Service and Tribes to consider in implementing the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. After a year of progress in collaborating with partners across 10 initial landscapes to address wildfire risk to infrastructure and communities, the Forest Service added 11 more landscapes to the program in early 2023. These 11 additional landscapes included significant Tribal interests. Also in 2023, the ITC and Forest Service convened a dialogue series to discuss workforce capacity and development issues identified as concerns for implementation of the WCS (See Highlight Summary). The Wildfire Crisis Strategy is 20% through implementation.

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[7] "Confronting the Wildfire Crisis: A Strategy for Protecting Communities and Improving Resilience in America's Forests,"

III. **Methods**: The ITC and Forest Service are partnering with the National Center to develop the assessment process, conduct interviews and collate the final report. These entities coordinate their efforts through the Wildfire Risk Reduction Implementation Team (WRRIT), facilitated by the National Center.

National Center staff will conduct one-on-one interviews with Forest Service personnel and Tribal implementation partners from a representative group[8] of participants from the 21 current Wildfire Crisis Strategy landscapes. As needed, additional interviewees from adjacent at-risk areas will be considered to provide a national overview of Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation considerations. Based on these interviews, National Center staff will create a summary report of findings and present this report to Tribes and Forest Service staff at a virtual Roundtable which will occur in 2024. Interviewees will be identified by the National Center, Forest Service and ITC team. Interviewees will be identified based on the following factors:

- **Geographic diversity**. The team will look for Tribes working with the Forest Service throughout the United States. Most interviewees will be identified from Tribes located on (or in proximity to) the 21 Wildfire Crisis Strategy landscapes. A select number of Tribes will be invited for interviews from areas outside the Wildfire Crisis Strategy landscapes, with a focus on those who are actively working to address wildfire concerns.
- **Representation across Forest Service and Tribal staff**. Interviewees will be identified to allow for representation across Tribal and Forest Service partnerships. This diversity in staff will be included to provide balanced and comprehensive feedback. Interviewees could include, for example:
  a. Tribal Natural Resource and/or Cultural Resource Staff, Tribal Foresters, Tribal leadership, Tribal administrative support staff, and wildfire and fuels staff; and
  b. Forest Service Line Officers, grants and agreements staff, Tribal Liaisons, and landscape managers.
- **Tribal land base, size, and staffing arrangements**. Interviewees will be identified to allow for a diversity of Tribal land holdings, capacity, and implementation ability and priorities. In addition, we will seek to interview those from Tribes with direct service

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[8] For budget and time considerations, not all participants will be interviewed. However, the team will identify a representative cross- section of Tribal and Forest Service individuals to interview.

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) forestry/fire programs, and those without, to explore challenges associated with cross-boundary management when Tribal staff are BIA employees.

- **Partnership methods**. Interviewees will also include those Tribal and Forest Service partners working together through various processes. These are likely to include, for example, those working under co-stewardship agreements, approved proposals under the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA), or other partnership agreements and those not working within an agreement or contract structure.
- **ITC Linkage**. Interviewees affiliated with Tribes are not limited to just those Tribes who are members of ITC.

All interviews will revolve around the interview questions listed in the attached document, which focus on current Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation tactics and methods. However, the interviewer may concentrate on a subset of these questions for a particular interviewee and may ask unique follow-up questions depending on answers to these questions. Topics explored through the interview questions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Landscape management activities and planning;
- Limitations to Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation posed by current Forest Service or Tribal management plans and/or policies;
- Tribal roles versus Forest Service roles in implementation.
- Administrative factors (challenges, obstacles), including issues on reporting, transfer of funding, and coordination of capacity;
- Measures of success; and
- Lessons learned.

We understand that each Tribe and Federal agency has unique protocols for participating in efforts initiated by Federal and other external partners. We trust that Tribal government staff and partners invited to participate in an interview will follow their respective leadership's protocols for accepting or declining the invitation. Similarly, we trust that Forest Service personnel invited to participate in an interview will determine what approvals they may need to obtain to accept the invitation. We are looking for interviewees to speak from their own individual experience working on Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation or other wildfire risk reduction initiatives, rather than officially on behalf of their Tribe or employer. If we can provide any further information to assist you in determining how to respond to this request, please let us know and we will do our best to provide it.

IV. **Anticipated Use of Interview Data**: The National Center will maintain records of the individual interviews until report completion, collating results of interviews to identify themes, areas of commonality and areas of difference consistent with the assessment objectives. Each assessment interview will be considered confidential -- the results of all interviews will be presented as themes and opportunities without attribution of comments to the individual (unless explicitly requested by the interviewee and appropriate for the findings). These notes are considered National Center work products.

For the purposes of this assessment, the final report is intended to be shared with a broader audience (see details below), and if shared, it will become a public record. However, standard National Center processes allow interviewees to review the report before it is distributed to a larger audience to ensure the report does not attribute comments to individuals and maintains the confidentiality of interviewee's comments, to the best for our ability. The National Center does not disclose interview notes, and maintain those as mediator work products, subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) exemptions noted below. The National Center will do everything in its capacity to maintain the confidentiality of any specific information, including interview notes, and documents shared as confidential and maintain them as such. As a federal entity, the National Center is subject to the FOIA. Under 5 U.S. Code §552(b)(3), a communication between National Center staff as the neutral mediator/facilitator and a party may not be disclosed if that communication is confidential and made during a conflict resolution-related proceeding. The types of confidential discussions that occur during an assessment and as part of mediated disputes are customarily exempt from FOIA if they are not shared outside the mediation team (i.e., National Center staff) and related to documents we prepare internally to conduct our work (i.e., work product). However, the exemptions for protecting the information collected via interviews and documents collected by the assessment team are varied with respect to whether they are shared with others, whether they were developed by us, whether there are additional protections on that data or documents (e.g., National Historic Preservation Act), among other factors. While information collected during an assessment is unlikely to be released via a FOIA request, there is a remote possibility the information will not be able to be protected.

After completing the assessment phase and confirming distribution of the assessment report with interviewees, the National Center will work with the Forest Service and ITC in developing a report or presentation that protects interviewee anonymity. This report will be presented via webinar to facilitate discussion on this interim evaluation and next steps for Tribes and Forest Service interested in Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation.

Interim Assessment of Wildfire Crisis Strategy Implementation

with Respect to Tribes' Priorities:

Proposed Questions

A. Background Questions:

1. Do you feel connected to the Wildfire Crisis Strategy?
2. Are you involved in Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation?
    a. If so:
        i. What is your role?
        ii. How does your work on this fit into your priorities?
    b. If not:
        i. Are you involved in other efforts to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire?
        ii. Can you tell me a bit about what you do in that area, and how much of a priority it is for you?

B. Program Success:

1. If after 10 years, the Wildfire Crisis Strategy was fully successful, what would that look like?

    Possible prompts:
    a. How would we know it was a success?
    c. What would you expect to see on the ground?
    d. What might success look like for:
        i. The land?
        ii. People and communities?
        iii. Tribes, in particular?
        iv. Forest Service, in particular?

3. Implementation of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy has been underway for 2-3 years now. Are you seeing any of those indicators of success that would suggest things are moving in the right direction?

C. Tribal Priorities and Indigenous Knowledge: From your experience working with the Wildfire Crisis Strategy (or wildfire risk reduction):

1. Do you see *Tribal priorities* being incorporated into that work?
    a. If so:
        i. Can you provide examples?
        ii. What factors have helped make that possible?

b. If not:
    i. Do you have insights about obstacles to that happening?
    ii. Ideas about how those obstacles could be overcome?

2. Do you see *indigenous knowledge* being incorporated into that work?
    a. If so:
        iii. Can you provide examples?
        iv. What factors have helped make that possible?
    b. If not:
        v. Do you have insights about obstacles to that happening?
        vi. Ideas about how those obstacles could be overcome?

3. Linking back to our earlier questions about what success might look like after the 10-year implementation period or currently proposed work, do you have any thoughts about indicators that would demonstrate:
    a. That Tribal priorities had been incorporated during Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation?
    b. That indigenous knowledge had been incorporated?
        Possible prompt: What might a fire adaptive landscape that supports tribal priorities and incorporates indigenous knowledge look like?
    c. Are you seeing any of these indicators?
    d. Are these indicators of success shared with your partners?

D. Lessons Learned: We'd like to delve more deeply into your insights about what factors will help the Wildfire Crisis Strategy be successful, and what factors might get in the way of that. We're open to hearing what you have to say about relationships, systems, procedures, structures, policies, work culture, different kinds of intergovernmental agreements – anything that you have seen either foster success in cross-boundary wildfire risk reduction work or impede success. So I'll ask you about those things, one by one, and please feel free to mention other things that we haven't thought of!

1. *Working relationships between Federal and Tribal personnel* – what's important? What gets in the way?
   - Possible prompt for Tribal interviewees: Have you had access to a Tribal Liaison from the Forest Service? If so, has there been an impact on implementation of Tribal priorities and indigenous knowledge within the wildfire risk reduction efforts/Wildfire Crisis Strategy?

2. *Work culture* (for example, expectations about how one should do one's work, or behave in the working environment; things you should always do, or should never do) – anything that you have seen in this regard as being really helpful, or really problematic?

3. Are there any **systems, procedures, or structures** related to your wildfire risk reduction work that stand out in your mind as helpful to the success of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy? Or that have gotten in the way?

- Possible Prompt: Are there structures that you know of that can be put in place to support good collaboration between different jurisdictions or entities working on wildfire risk reduction, specifically between:
  - Federal agencies; and
  - Federal agencies and Tribes?

- Possible Prompts:
  - In your work with the Wildfire Crisis Strategy, have you seen examples of really good coordination between Federal agencies and Tribes?
  - Have you seen examples where the Federal agencies involved in Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation were very much in sync with one another or not in sync at all? Does this seem to affect the likelihood that Tribal priorities and indigenous knowledge will be incorporated into Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation? In what way?
    - Which agencies have you seen do this well? What type of personnel were involved – i.e., Line Officers, Tribal Liaisons, others?
    - For federal interviewees, any insights about what helps cross-federal agency collaboration occur effectively?

4. We're interested in understanding whether having a formal agreement in place between a Tribe and the Federal government makes a difference in the likelihood that Tribal priorities and indigenous knowledge will get incorporated into Wildfire Crisis Strategy implementation / wildfire risk reduction, and if so, what types of agreement best support that goal. We have several questions about that for you:
   a. In your Wildfire Crisis Strategy / wildfire risk reduction work, is the Forest Service supporting Tribal participation in implementation through agreements, contracts, or other means?
   b. If so, what type of agreement (e.g., a cooperative agreement, a co-stewardship agreement, an approved proposal under the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA), a Memorandum of Understanding, a combination of some of these, other)?
   c. If you have an agreement:
      i. Does it include funding? Have you received the funding?
      ii. Does it require a match?
      iii. Does the agreement cover the scope of work that is needed?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEWEE-SUGGESTED INDICATORS OF SUCCESS IN INCORPORATING TRIBAL PRIORITIES AND TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

<u>Joint Tribal and Forest Service Responses for Indicators for Success:</u>
- Tribal priorities and TEK are integrated and evident in the Forest Service's project work and management practices from planning through project completion, monitoring, and maintenance.
- Cultural burning is supported, and Tribes would control authority for cultural burns.

<u>Tribal Responses for Indicators of Success</u>:
- Tribes' authority for cultural burns has less emphasis on credentials (e.g., a partnership agreement with a State government can suffice in lieu of a permit to cover liability, in an effort to support Tribal sovereignty).
- Incorporation of Tribal priorities and TEK are success measures for Forest Service program reviews.
- Co-stewardship and co-management is standard practice.
- Tribes can independently manage land resources without excessive Federal oversight and Forest Service takes action to support Tribal capacity building.
- Tribes have increased financial and other resources to manage forestry operations (e.g., advance funding to Tribes to help enable them to build meaningful capacity for fuels reduction work).
- Tribes are provided with funding to hire a Tribal liaison themselves for coordinating with the Forest Service
- Track communication between the Forest Service and Tribes (e.g., how many prescribed fires had Tribal input) to promote accountability.

<u>Forest Service Responses for indicators of success</u>:
- More agreements with Tribes (e.g., TFPA).
- Co-stewardship is standard practice.
- Forest Service receives affirmation from Tribes that Tribal priorities and TEK have been incorporated.
- Forest Service has developed better relationships with Tribal nations.
  - Examples:
    - Forest Service and Tribal personnel are willing to show up, listen to each other, and intentionally cultivate relationships with one another.
    - Forest Service personnel have a better understanding of Tribal workforce capacity constraints, decision-making processes, and timeframes.
    - Forest Service asks Tribes how they want to be involved at the outset of a project and then plan the time to accommodate those requests at appropriate points in the life of the project.
- Progress is made on protecting Tribal priority resources.
- Tribes are afforded more autonomy as key knowledge holders and partners to the Forest Service
  - Examples:

- Tribes are part of Forest Service planning and forest management decision processes.
- Tribes have increased financial and other resources to manage forestry operations.

APPENDIX D: FACTORS THAT SUPPORT SUCCESS INCORPORATING TRIBAL PRIORITIES AND TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Factors mentioned by Forest Service and Tribal participants:
- Funding.
- Frequent Forest Service – Tribal communication.
- Personnel stability and longevity.
- Strong relationships.

Additional Factors Mentioned by Tribal participants:
- Agreements between the Forest Service and a Tribe that gives both the authority to take action.
- Fundraising skills.

Additional Factors Mentioned by Forest Service participants:
- Legal protections for sensitive information.
- Shared goals.
- Systems to support Forest Service and Tribal collaboration.
- Commitment to trusting relationships.
- Hire more Tribal members into Forest Service via Public Land Corps authority (waiving the associated requirement for a 20% match) to more easily hire young Tribal members into the Forest Service.

APPENDIX E: OBSTACLES TO INCORPORATING TRIBAL PRIORITIES AND TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Factors mentioned by Forest Service and Tribal participants:
- Staff turnover, capacity.
- Inadequate communications.
- Mismatch between Forest Service and Tribal worldviews and governance approaches
  - Sample quotes:
    - *"I think the Forest Service works strongly with us on the cultural/heritage section of the forest. However, incorporating Tribal priorities into the rest of the forest, that crossover, and integrating it into the management plans – that's what needs a little work."*
    - *"The Federal Government has rules to protect old growth trees. [Tribe name redacted] has no definition of old growth and does not separate trees based on age. The Tribe is asked to comment on rules such as these which do not fit within their TEK. [Forest Service] rules for what we do and don't do don't mesh with TEK."*
    - *"Also, humility is important. Tribal personnel are knowledge owners … and Forest Service is heavy on process – those two things don't necessarily line up, but at the same time, we the Forest Service can't forget ourselves either at the end of the day. We are what we are, and we have a Federal mandate to manage the forest so we have to stay within those boundaries … the inherent challenge is to be open and adaptive to different ways but still navigate the system we are in."*
    - *"It seems that there is a basic difference in perspective between Forest Service and Tribes: the Forest Service sees forests as government lands that the Forest Service manages for multiple uses. From the Tribal viewpoint, these are Tribal lands that we want Forest Service to manage as they always were when Tribes managed these forests. Tribes have lost resources and things are not managed the way Tribes want. If the Forest Service recognizes the strength of TEK, it may lead them to change how things are done."*

Additional Factors Mentioned by Tribal Personnel:
- Needing to coordinate with multiple Federal Agencies and each agency's policies and procedures.
- Individual Forest Service personnel's limited knowledge about Tribes.
- Incorporating Tribal priorities and TEK into existing Forest Service management plans beyond heritage areas.
- Legal restrictions associated with certain types of agreements and funding sources that do not accommodate Tribal needs and governance systems.
- Credential requirements for cultural burns.
- The NEPA process in that it limits the pace of progress in incorporating Tribal priorities, particularly if Tribes were not engaged in development early on (e.g., in the development of a Purpose and Need statement).
- Lack of flexibility around co-management; desire to see Tribes consulted about the type of management activities on which they would like to engage; and creative thinking on how to

realize that given Forest Service restrictions (e.g., suggestion to utilize Master Stewardship Agreements to support this type of collaborative management work).

Additional Factors Mentioned by Forest Service Personnel:
- Lack of Tribal representation among Forest Service staff.
- Compensation relative to the private sector (e.g., for Tribal liaisons)
- Lack of trust between Tribes and Federal personnel
- Difficulty collaborating when a site location is confidential (e.g., a sacred site or location of cultural resources)
- Faulty assumptions and biases held by Forest Service Personnel

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEWEE SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS TO STRENGTHEN INCORPORATION OF TRIBAL PRIORITIES AND TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOLWEDGE INTO WILDFIRE CRISIS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Strengthening workforce capacity:

- Forest Service hires more Tribal Liaisons (e.g., one per Tribe per Forest) with the right knowledge and skills.
- Forest Service hire Tribal members to join Forest Service Staff.
    - Give Forest Service units Direct Hiring Authority to hire Tribal members
    - Enable Forest Service units to hire Tribal members by setting up an Intergovernmental Agreement (or similar) between Forest Service and BIA that allows Forest Service to tap into BIA's Direct Hiring Authority
- Forest Service sends employees to work with Tribe(s) on cross-boundary work from start to finish.
- Forest Service invites Tribes to do vegetation treatment on Forest Service land and to help Forest Service integrate TEK into Forest Service work.
- For efficient coordination, ensure Forest Service messaging is consistent and have a single point of contact for each National Forest and each Tribe.
- Train Forest Service personnel in:
    - What resources are available for Tribes (e.g., to set up a "fuel module" – a unit of fire-fighting equipment and personnel) and related procedures for requesting and approving such funding.
    - Meaning of Tribes as sovereign Nations and the U.S. Government's trust responsibility.
    - The meaning and importance of sacred sites to Tribes.
    - Reserved treaty rights / enforceability of treaties.
    - Tribal decision-making processes.
    - The reasons for a requested change, such as incorporating TEK into Forest Service work – i.e., how the change will benefit Forest Service personnel in the field.
    - Best practices for Tribal engagement.

Best Practices:

- Forest Service invites Tribal participation in the full project life cycle, beginning with project conception through monitoring.
- Forest Service uses multiple engagement methods – informal consultation, formal Nation-to-Nation consultation, co-stewardship.
- Give Tribes more time to absorb what Forest Service is proposing, and the feedback requested (e.g., two-week review time vs. one day).
- Ask Tribes when and where they want to engage on a particular project and then set aside intentional time for that.
- Forest Service should welcome Tribal staff to meetings at Forest Service (encourage them to bring whomever they wish; share information and encourage questions; welcome all input on project plans).

- o Example quote: "*We would like to see Forest Service be more welcoming to outside resources (such as Tribal members) when we come to their offices for meetings and not be so "kept to themselves." When we meet with Forest Service, it takes a while for them to open up and share information. But when Forest Service holds a meeting they say, "we only need x, y, and z to attend from the Tribe." The Tribe wants to include the people who will actually be doing the work so they are aware of what the project will entail and the work that will be needed after the survey starts (e.g., archaeology, roads, etc.)."*
- Foster relationship continuity (e.g., reduced turnover and establishing long-lasting agreements such as MOUs that stand the test of time).

Funding:

- Forest Service should work to obtain increased base funding to support wildfire risk reduction work on an ongoing basis; WCS goals will take longer than 10 years to realize.
  - o Sample quote: *"While it's a 10-year strategy, it's unclear what they will be able to fund over the entirety of that period. The funding doesn't cover 10 years (only three years initially – a good start, but we need 10 years of funding)."*

- Forest Service should identify and pursue ways to remove barriers to compensating Tribal personnel for doing fuels reduction work on Forest Service land (e.g., credentialing and permit requirements, workforce capacity, compensation for Tribal work on Forest Service land and awareness of ways to do the latter).
- Tribes need grant writing capacity (on staff or subcontracted) to support collaborative agreements. Identify the ways in which the Forest Service could help provide such support.
- Be creative in justifying minimal or no match requirements.
- Increase understanding of opportunities and implementation of advance funding to Tribes with limited funds and fundraising capacity
- Forest Service staff need resources and time for relationship building (one-to-one and community meetings; ongoing communication)

Organizational Learning:
- Forest Service should consider the metrics the agency uses to measure the success of the WCS, drawing upon the findings to:
  - o Move away from – or add to "acres treated" with some of the other measures that would reinforce efforts to treat "the right places at the right time."
  - o Eliminate the redundancies in the way "acres treated" are counted.
- Forest Service should provide guidance to the field in how to identify "the right places" and "right time" to treat and convey doing so as an agency-wide expectation.
- Forest Service should initiate efforts to surface and share out lessons learned by Forest Service personnel about:
  - o How to do co-stewardship.
  - o How to enable more consistent and widespread cultural burning.
  - o Best practices related to Tribal Liaisons.
  - o How to incorporate TEK into Forest Service work and systems.

- - Types of agreements to use various authorities and agreements to achieve different goals.
    - How best to support culture change / behavioral change within Forest Service toward partnering with Tribes on resource management.
- Better results come with strong leadership that makes an explicit commitment to working with Tribes.
- Address high turnover rate at Forest Service.
    - To get promoted, Forest Service personnel feel they need to move around between forests. This puts a burden on Tribal partners who constantly bring new Forest Service employees up to speed and adjust project direction due to new leadership.
- Take the time to understand Tribal procedures and policies rather than making Tribes bend to Federal policies.
- Tribes would like to work in a co-management mode. There is a general perception by Forest Service that this is not workable due to a lack of legislative authority for co-management. Some Tribes choose to use the term anyway. If feasible, Forest Service can share clear guidance with the field and Tribes on Forest Service legislative authority or lack thereof in terms of co-management and facilitate open dialogue on this topic.
- In some cases, Tribes would like Forest Service to consider transferring land ownership back to them. Forest Service participants were unclear as to whether this is an option and if so, under what circumstances. Forest Service should share information with the field and Tribes about circumstances under which this can be considered, if at all.
- The Forest Service should identify ways to continue policy problem-solving on removing barriers to cultural burning, until the barriers are removed. This will prevent dialogues from ending prematurely when current commissions hosting these "dialogues sunset."

Needed Policy, Guidance, and Social License:
- Make the WCS truly strategic, seeking Tribal input on this topic (i.e., jointly set priorities within landscape; revisit metrics to ensure they support maximizing increased pace and scale of wildfire risk reduction rather than maximizing acres treated; measure progress)
- Assess / provide guidance on when and where to treat to achieve increased pace and scale of wildfire risk reduction
- Assess / determine how to overcome barriers to widespread cultural burning (e.g., credentialing requirements, permits, liability, workforce capacity, compensation for Tribal work on Forest Service land and awareness of ways to do the latter).
- Tribes hire retired prescribed fire staff for three to five years to train and mentor Tribal fire staff.
- Assess approaches used by selected States (e.g., California) for possible Federal replication (e.g., streamlined certification process factoring in experience and knowledge; no permits required for cultural burning; partnership agreement with State for liability)
- Forest Service strengthen Grants and Agreements capacity (more staff; return these staff to forest level vs. regional level).
- Some Tribes have the capacity to conduct cultural resource surveys for Forest Service. However, many Tribes need increased staff or staffing capacity (via direct hire or through contracting work) to partner with the Forest Service on cross-boundary work and cultural resource surveys. Options to address both contingencies should be utilized.

- Use Federal "Recognition of Prior Learning" to reduce credentialing barriers.
- Best practices for pursuing meaningful Tribal engagement (differs by Tribe).
- Address any "discrepancies" between Forest Service leadership and intent and what happens at local unit on the ground level. Leadership may be out of sync with rank-and-file employees who may not understand the value of increased collaboration.
- Forest Service and BIA should identify ways to work together to better serve sovereign Tribal Nations
- Explore and expand understanding of wildfire reduction treatment options in wilderness areas.
- Federal agencies should find ways of coordinating their work with Tribes to reduce the burden to Tribes (e.g., increased communication between BIA and Forest Service).
- Require periodic Forest Plan reviews to look at whether Tribally driven burning (whether prescribed or cultural) and Tribal priorities have been incorporated and to list Tribal projects done on Forest Service land with Forest Service support.
- Explore how cultural burning can be used to impact resource management on a large scale (e.g., allowing large landscape burns on Forest Service lands adjacent to Tribal lands)
- Look for ways to reduce Forest Service personnel turnover (e.g., the current promotion structure provides incentives to move around -- are there ways employees could be supported or even rewarded for staying at their local unit long-term and developing long-lasting relationships with the local community?)
- Explore ways the Forest Service can maximize decision space for Tribal partners / support self-determination (e.g., remove permit requirement to gather food plants on Forest Service land; have Tribes at table with equal authority for problem-solving efforts and decision-making)

Needs for Procedural Flexibility:
- Align monitoring and reporting requirements when one Tribe has multiple Forest Service agreements
- Allow one-time waivers when justifiable (e.g., situation where quarterly report was required to modify a Good Neighbor Agreement, but the modified agreement was necessary before a quarterly report could be prepared).
- Allow Forest Service to use TFPA funds for Forest Service personnel to do work on Tribal land if that is requested by the Tribe.
- Create mechanism to certify Tribes to help with National Historic Preservation Act surveys when the cultural resources are associated with non-Tribal cultures as well as Tribal cultures.
- Offer flexibility in timeframe for spending funds. Forest Service consider adopting the US DOI approach in agreements with Tribes. (Various participants mentioned the BIA approach to doing 638 agreements as preferable to the Forest Service approach, for example, as well as the DOI Reserved Treaty Rights Land Program which Forest Service can use to provide resources for Tribes to conduct fuel treatments on ancestral lands within Forest Service-controlled lands. Reportedly, the Tribe can initiate projects on Forest Service land this way and BIA funds it, and Forest Service isn't in the middle of it.