

WestCAN

Western Collaboration Assistance Network



What is WestCAN?

The purpose of the Western Collaboration Assistance Network (WestCAN) is to advance the field of collaborative stewardship of public lands. The National Forest Foundation is working in partnership with the Sonoran Institute, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to provide WestCAN services.

Collaboration

U.S. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth has described collaboration as "...coming together with those you disagree with, suspending distrust, accepting that others have legitimate interests and roles... finding common ground and coming to some agreement based on the goals you share".

Learning from Each Other

WestCAN seeks to broaden the community of people working together toward shared goals on public lands issues. By providing "nuts and bolts" technical assistance and documenting best practices and lessons learned, we hope to raise the general knowledge and skill level of collaborative stewardship practitioners and prevent repetition of common mistakes. We encourage those experienced in the field to share their expertise with others new to collaboration to help us all improve overall effectiveness, spur innovation, and recognize successes.

What WestCAN Provides

- Free information and referrals to public agency employees and community organizations working collaboratively on stewardship of public lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, or U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Western states (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, KS, MT, ND, NE, NM, NV, OR, SD, UT, WA, WY). In-depth mentoring or technical assistance may require payment or cost sharing from the recipient organization.
- Access to a knowledgeable person to talk over the challenges your collaborative group is facing.
- Online examples of lessons learned, best practices, sample documents, examples of successes, and other nuts and bolts information about diverse interests working together on public lands issues.
- A way to connect with and learn from others who are working on collaborative stewardship projects, and to get the specific help you need (such as developing agreements or contracts, setting up ground rules, working with a board of directors, etc.).

WestCAN is not a source of grant funds, though we can help identify potential funders of collaborative work on various topics.

Situations Where WestCAN Can Help

- A National Forest has been informally working with a collaborative community group for several years to design and prioritize trails projects. Over that time, the group has supplied volunteers to help with on-the-ground trail work. Now, the group and the U.S. Forest Service are ready to formalize and expand their relationship and are putting together a formal agreement. WestCAN provides sample documents of other successful agreements, and connects the group leader with a person in another region who has experience in the various types of formal documents used by the Forest Service.
- A collaborative group is about to fall apart because members are questioning what the group is accomplishing. WestCAN provides technical resources on how to design a monitoring and evaluation plan so they can demonstrate results, and if necessary, adapt their plan to make it more effective.
- A Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representative is participating in a collaborative effort to design and implement a plan to protect a watershed that supports a native trout population. He is frustrated with the pace of the meetings and wants to talk with someone who's been through a similar process about what is reasonable to expect and how to be most constructively engaged. WestCAN connects him with a "coach," another agency employee from a different field office who listens, shares her own experiences, and offers suggestions in a series of phone calls and/or meetings.
- A group of conservation, timber and agency people meet informally to try to figure out how to reach agreement regarding management of the Wildland Urban Interface on and adjacent to a specific section of a National Forest. Their goal is to reduce appeals and litigation of projects. The group knows what they want to do, but not how to do it. One of the group members contacts the WestCAN Coordinator, who provides easy-to-digest information about how similar efforts have been structured, steps in the process, successes, and lessons learned.

Where to Go for Information

- Contact Karen DiBari, WestCAN Coordinator, at (406) 542-2805 ext. 13 or 1-866-773-4NFF (4633) ext. 13, or email kdibari@natlforests.org. Karen can refer you to resources or link you with a coach, mentor or specialized technical assistance provider.
- WestCAN information will be posted on the Web in mid-March of 2007, and you'll be able to go to www.natlforests.org or www.sonoran.org to link with the WestCAN site. In the meantime, www.partnershipresourcecenter.org site provides partnering and collaborative organizations and agency staff with the information and access they need for enhanced working relationships. Click on "resources for partnerships" to find links to information on specific topics, including funding, monitoring and evaluation, success stories, and tools and guides.