



## Western Collaborative Conservation Network (WCCN)

### INSTITUTIONALIZING COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING AS A WAY OF DOING BUSINESS WITH FEDERAL NATURAL RESOURCE AGENCIES

## Public Policy Summary

BY THE WESTERN COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION NETWORK'S PUBLIC POLICY WORKING GROUP

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#### VISION STATEMENT

*"We work with Federal partners to obtain public trust to ensure the health and integrity of our landscapes and to build resilient, thriving communities".*

#### WHY INSTITUTIONALIZE COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING?

Collaborative problem-solving requires listening of all voices, is powered by empathy, invites participation, and ensures diverse ideas (including local voices) are reflected in decisions. Collaborative problem solving with federal agencies incentivizes innovation, learning, leveraging of resources and meeting as many interests as possible. Collaboration should be the way agencies do business.

### Issue 1: Lack of relationships and trust at local levels

#### Recommendation 1: Support Professionalism in Place

Develop human-resource and management policies that allow managers and staff to move up the organization while raising a family in one place, becoming part of the community, and having the clear regulatory tools to balance local and national interests. This will allow relationships and trust to develop within a clear imperative to manage for both national and local interests.





## Issue 2: Collaborative Capacity Within Agencies

### Recommendation 2: Institutionalize Collaboration as a Way of Doing Business

Provide the training, regulatory tools, and language in order to nurture agency culture to be able to partner with the public in all aspects of decision making including the development of alternatives and the co-creation of the preferred solution. Agencies retain decision making authority but the promise would be to: incorporate advice and recommendations into decisions to the maximum extent possible (see IAP2 Spectrum) <https://iap2usa.org/cvs>

## Issue 3: Social Capacity

### Recommendation 3: Build Social Capacity within Federal Agencies

Maintain an awareness of interpersonal relationships and judiciously and empathetically apply this awareness in public lands management and decision-making. Hire collaboration experts and social scientists, reward collaborative efforts, require leadership to make decisions based on collaboration.



## Issue 4: Inconsistent Public Engagement Approaches

### Recommendation 4: Create Consistent Collaborative Capacity across all Federal Natural Resource Agencies

Make true collaboration the standard approach of agencies. Define it, fund it, and train people. We recommend cross-agency training and mentoring programs that highlight the benefit of collaborative conservation, emphasize the importance of collaborative leadership competencies, and clearly articulate the benefits for and adoption of collaboration standards and guidelines for all federal agencies.

## Issue 5: Policies and Agency Funding

### Recommendation 5: Update Policies and Fund Agencies Adequately

Clarify language in the Federal Advisory Committee Act to enable place-based working groups and deconstruct barriers to collaborative problem-solving. Enable agencies to use collaborative problem-solving in NEPA decision-making. Adequately fund all base agency programs and provide funding capacity to enable community-based collaboration to implement actions on the ground.