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Subject: Additional comments on Unified Federal Policy
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Part 1

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Part 2

ARPA MESSAGE HEADER

Part 3

I attended the Portland session on March 7, 2000. I have some additional comments to make, and will follow the format provided in the conference materials:

Name: Jerry Magee
Address: P.O. Box 2965, Portland, OR 97208
Affiliation: U.S. Dept of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Meeting Location: Portland, OR Date: 3/7/2000

Comments:

1. Data Standards: From the early days of ecosystem-based management, a constant issue has been a general lack of data standards. Without the "common language" data standards would provide, assessments and monitoring efforts become "closed systems" that are incapable of being compared across landscapes or aggregated to facilitate broader contexts. The fact that the issue remains reflects the degree of "pain" perceived to be involved in resolving it -- no matter what standards are chosen, many offices or entities will be required to drastically revise their existing data. Almost no other component of ecosystem assessment would entail such a degree of "backtracking." And the problem becomes worse with time, as each agency and office continues to conduct inventories and assessments using differrent data standards.

I believe the key is to identify a "core" set of data standards that can represent common threads through all of the various efforts and scales of assessment. These core data could then be compared across assessments at a particular scale, aggregated to refine broader scales of assessment, or used to establish context to finer scales of assessment.

2. Definition of Collaboration: A definition of Intergovernmental Collaboration was unanimously approved by the NW Forest Plan Regional Interagency Executive Committee (which at that time, i.e., pre-FACA challenge, also included State and Tribal members) to facilitate intergovernmental implementation of the NW Forest Plan. It was later adopted for use in the Subbasin Review Guide for collaborative priority and context setting within the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) area. The definition recognizes the influence (physical, jurisdictional, political) each partner has over successful management of each other's lands and interests, and that collaboration is therefore necessary to achieve shared management goals across diverse ownerships and jurisdications. The definition is as follows:

"Collaboration is an open and interactive process whereby all participants work constructively together to address their collective needs. The collaborative process embodies the concept of partnership -- a powerful relationship among people to achieve a mutually beneficial goal. A partner has a strong sense of ownership in the group product and shares the responsibility for the outcome of the effort. In achieving a shared vision, partners in collaboration can influence, and be influenced by, each other while retaining their respective decision-making authorities."

3. Collaborative Template: A "template" outlining a 6-step process for designing a collaborative strategy was developed and tested in association with developing the collaborative Subbasin Review process for the ICBEMP effort. That template is designed to be used and adapted to any situation where collaboration is either required or desireable. The template is described in Appendix C of the Subbasin Review Guide (Ecosystem Review at the Subbasin Scale, Version 1.0 -- August 1999), and can be found on the internet at: http://www.icbemp.gov/implement/subbas.shtml under "Appendices."

4. Determining priority watersheds: A primary function of the Subbasin Review process developed for ICBEMP implementation is to set collaborative priorities for "where to take the next closer look" within the subbasin. This mid-scale assessment process characterizes subbasins (USGS 4th-code Hydrologic Unit Code) or groups of subbasins (about 1-5 million acres) and establishes context for focusing efforts in subsequent finer-scale analyses and project planning. Most efforts lay out the findings and priorities by watershed (5th-field HUC or about 15,000 - 150,000 acres). As such, I would recommend consideration of the SBR process as one approach to determining priority watersheds in a collaborative fashion (if the Unified Federal Strategy defines watersheds as 5th- or 6th-field HUCs). The prioritization process recognizes both ecological priorities (biophysical and socioeconomic) and collaborative priorities (all partners' needs relative to funding, personnel, schedule conflicts, political pressures, court-ordered mandates, etc.) Again, the Subbasin Review Guide (Vol. 1 and its appendices) and Vol. 2 (Text and Graphics Examples of SBR steps from Prototypes & Landscape Analyses) are available on the internet at: http://www.icbemp.gov/implement/subbas.shtml

An example of a complete Subbasin Review report (Rock Creek Pilot Subbasin Review) can be found at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/lolo/main/rockcr-nf-plan.html

And if you were not already aware, Ecosystem Analysis at the Watershed Scale, Federal Guide for Watershed Analysis, Version 2.2 (August 1995) is also available on the internet at: http://www.or.blm.gov/ForestPlan/Watershed/watrtitl.htm

5. Hierarchical Assessments: Large ecosystem or planning efforts are recognizing the need for hierarchical ecosystem assessments to "step-down" science findings and ensure that on-the-ground projects help to achieve broad-scale as well as local objectives. From my experience on the team that developed the Watershed Analysis Guide for the NW Forest Plan, on another team that developed the Subbasin Review Guide for ICBEMP, and on a strategy team for development of a BLM National Assessment program, I developed the attached 2-page handout for training (e.g., joint FS/BLM NTC Course 1730-17) and field presentations about links between hierarchical ecosystem assessments and agency planning/decisionmaking hierarchies. I'm providing it in hopes of fostering compatibility between existing assessments and the Unified Federal Strategy:

(See attached file: Stp-DwnHndout2-00.wpd)

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your Portland session and to offer follow-up comments. --Jerry Magee--

Part 4

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- National-level assessments use both national-level data and aggregated regional data from all relevant assessment processes to characterize conditions, risks and opportunities across federal lands that will inform proposed legislation, regulations, policies, priorities and budget allocations by region.

- Regional ecosystem assessments inform national assessments as well as regional policies, priorities & budget allocations. Findings inform Land Use Plan amendments or revisions or may be incorporated into regional plans (e.g., NFP & ICBEMP) that automatically amend LUPs. Would incorporate information from a variety of sources, including other relevant assessments (e.g., criteria and indicators from Montreal Protocol, Rangeland Health Standards, etc.).