

Southern Blue Ridge Forestry and Conservation Project

Asheville, North Carolina

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**SUSTAINABLE
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SFI-00001

REPORT

SOUTHERN BLUE RIDGE FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION PROJECT

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BACKGROUND

The Southern Blue Ridge Ecoregion (SBR) is one of the most biologically significant ecoregions in the United States. Its 9.4 million acres spans portions of five southeastern states: Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia (Figure 1). There are 136 natural terrestrial communities identified in the region, with over 90 percent considered endemic, or limited to the region (The Nature Conservancy & Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition, 2000). The forests in the Southern Blue Ridge are very diverse, hosting some of the richest sites in North America (Loucks et al., 2020). These forests provide a range of benefits and services, including recreation, aesthetics, and ecosystem services, as well as wood products.

Much of the forestland in this ecoregion is in second-growth conditions due to historic timber harvests. These harvests often employed silvicultural methods that resulted in alteration of the species composition and structural complexity of these forests. Current threats to forest condition and health include but are not limited to: conversion to

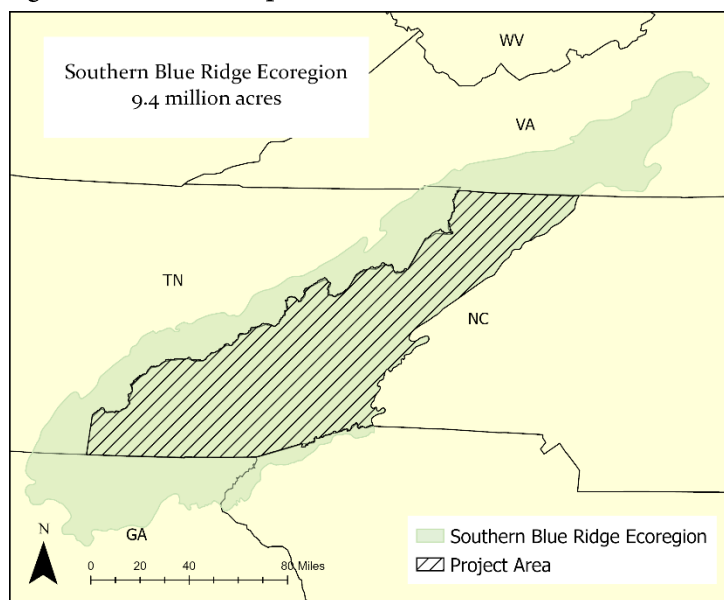


Figure 1. Map of the Southern Blue Ridge Ecoregion. Data from The Nature Conservancy. Map by Dakota Wagner, Forest Stewards Guild (2021).

developed lands, fire suppression, high densities of deer, increasing impacts of climate change, and the influx of exotic pests and diseases (Anderson et al., 2013; Loucks et al., 2020).

An opportunity to positively influence conservation efforts in the SBR of North Carolina has been identified through forest certification and wood procurement via the Sustainable Forestry Initiative's (SFI) Fiber Sourcing Standard. The SFI 2015-2019 (extended to 2021) Fiber Sourcing Standard distinguishes SFI from all other forest certification programs in that it sets mandatory practice requirements for the responsible procurement of all fiber sourced directly from the forest, whether the forest is certified or not. Several requirements must be met by SFI Certified Organizations procuring fiber under this standard, including, but not limited to: taking measures to protect biodiversity, following Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect water quality, using trained harvesting professionals, incorporating forestry research, and prioritizing landowner outreach. Additionally, the Fiber Sourcing Standard holds the individual mills and manufacturers accountable for promoting responsible forestry. This accountability structure, which is subject to third-party audit and verification, opens substantial opportunities for conservation.

The Southern Blue Ridge Forestry and Conservation Project represents a partnership between the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewards Guild whose primary goal is to connect conservation efforts by a variety of landowners to forest-based supply chains. In the context of this project, conservation means to wisely manage landscapes based on the specific ecological and social needs of the landscape to ensure its proper functioning. Throughout the SBR, there exists a need to "fill the gaps" between landowners, procurement foresters, and mills with actions that increase forest stewardship at every level of the supply chain. In response to this need, this project has convened experts and practitioners from across the focal region to link sustainable supply chains with positive conservation impacts by identifying what conservation targets in the SBR could be positively impacted by responsible forest management and SFI's fiber sourcing program.

The decision to engage SFI's Fiber Sourcing Program to advance conservation in this region is important because of their connection with the local fiber mills and procurement entities. In 2017, there were approximately 143 wood processing mills in North Carolina (USDA Forest Service, 2019). Each of these mills represent an opportunity to positively impact forest conservation using responsible forest management approaches. In western North Carolina, Evergreen Packaging was identified as a willing partner to engage in this discussion to advance conservation through procurement practices.¹ Their fiber procurement programs are certified to

¹ Evergreen Packaging operates a pulp and paper mill out of Canton, North Carolina, thirty minutes west of Asheville.



meet SFI's Fiber Sourcing standards and they are particularly interested in possibly integrating the outcomes of this project into their programs and trainings.

Stakeholders

The working group for this project is made up of natural resource experts and practitioners who are passionate about sustainable forest management. Participants in the meetings and workshops have included individuals from environmental non-profits, state and federal agencies, and wood products companies, each identified as having material interest and/or mission-driven responsibilities toward forest-related conservation outcomes. It was crucial to gain insight from a variety of stakeholders to understand the conservation needs and goals of the region from multiple viewpoints. Their input has helped identify practical actions that SFI-certified wood products companies could take to help advance conservation outcomes during the course of fiber sourcing activities.

Process

The proposed activities outlined in this report were developed during several in-person and virtual stakeholder meetings that occurred from fall 2019 to fall 2020. This process was inclusive and involved over 15 different organizations. Through guided activities and discussions, the working group identified conservation targets throughout the SBR region of North Carolina that could be most positively influenced by responsible forest management through SFI's Fiber Sourcing Program. The hope of this working group is that the actions outlined within this report will be integrated into the practices of one or more subscribers to the Fiber Sourcing program within our focal region, and advanced in partnership with the wide range of entities involved in this project.



IDENTIFYING PLACES OF IMPACT

What are the needs of this landscape?

The SBR ecoregion is a diverse and unique landscape that is facing several threats. While the entirety of this landscape is biologically significant, targeting specific forest types and conditions can help focus conservation actions on the species and natural communities in greatest need. Two forest types were identified by the stakeholder group as the focal conservation targets for this project: mountain oak forests and mountain cove forests. The stakeholders further developed the overarching goal of restoring and maintaining ecologically-appropriate forest structure and composition for both of the identified forest types.

Mountain oak forests occur on Blue Ridge and foothills slopes and ridges and are dominated by various species of oaks (*Quercus* spp.). These forests comprise much of the mountain landscape at low to moderate elevations and may be extensive at all but the highest elevations (Schafale, 2012). Mountain cove forests are low- to mid-elevation mesic communities found in the Mountain Region and foothills. Cove forests occur in broad to narrow valley bottoms, ravines, and on lower slopes. Cove forests are composed of a mixture of mesophytic hardwoods, usually with moderate to high tree species diversity (Schafale, 2012).

There are several factors that threaten the health of the identified forest types, most of which are anthropogenic or have at minimum been aggravated due to human influence. The stakeholders in this project identified the following direct threats affecting both forest types, each of which may be mitigated through responsible forest management activities.



- **Altered species composition**, which may be attributable to a variety of factors, can lead to a decrease in the richness and diversity of forests, and can also result in a shift toward an abundance of less desired, oftentimes invasive species. Increases in fire inhibitor species and woody encroachment can be attributed to a *lack of ecologically appropriate fire* whereas increases in the scale and scope of invasive exotic plants and common invaders (e.g. red maple, *Acer rubrum* Figure 2) can be linked to a **lack of active forest management**.



Figure 2. A sea of red maple seedlings under a canopy of oak.

- **Lack of active forest management**, particularly the lack of intermediate and release treatments in appropriate sites, can lead to decreases in the development of large-diameter and high-quality trees, and can result in stands with low structural and compositional heterogeneity (Franklin et al., 2007). The lack of appropriate management results from factors such as *forest operations constraints, negative perception of management, and limited forest management on public lands*.



Figure 3. Canopy gap from a single-tree selection thin.

- **Incompatible forestry practices** such as high-grading and selective logging² leave less valuable species, damaged trees, and trees with poor form, which reduces stand diversity and silvicultural options (Fajyan et al., 1998, 2002). Forestry practices that do not reflect natural disturbance patterns often reduce the ecological quality of a stand and lead to a lack of important habitat elements such as coarse woody debris. Often, *economic constraints*, or

² Note that selective logging should not be confused with selection silviculture. Selective logging, often synonymous with “diameter limit cutting”, is an unsustainable forestry practice of removing the largest and highest value trees in stand, with little to no thought for appropriate regeneration for the long term. Selection silviculture, such as single-tree (Figure 3) and group selections, works to maintain important habitat elements such as structural complexity and species diversity.

lack of professional forestry advice or engagement can lead to incompatible forestry practices.

- **Forest conversion and habitat loss** is another side effect of **incompatible forestry practices**. This loss of habitat includes the *lack of multiple successional conditions* that are important for many species of wildlife. Additionally, increased *development* of the area also leads to habitat fragmentation and ecological departure.
- **Deteriorating aquatic health**, particularly in mountain cove forests, poses a serious threat to overall ecosystem health as altered hydrology and stream sedimentation can adversely affect ecosystem function. Broadly, the capacity of agency personnel devoted to [developing, monitoring, improving, and implementing] *BMP programs is limited* while demand for these services continue to rise (National Association of State Foresters, 2019).

Conceptual Model

With guidance and support from the Forest Stewards Guild, the stakeholders in this project developed a conceptual model to determine the linkage between the identified conservation targets, their threats, and potential opportunities for positive impact. Conservation is a non-linear process where threats and mitigating strategies often overlap. Likewise, this conceptual model was developed in a non-linear fashion. To read this model, begin with our *vision* on the right. Working from right to left, *conservation targets* are linked to *direct threats* and *contributing factors*, and then finally on the left are the strategies that can be implemented to address said threats and contributing factors (Figure 4).

Strategies and management opportunities that may be utilized by stakeholders to mitigate threats are identified in this model and can aid in the development of action plans. Beyond the scope of this project, this “roadmap” will help guide partnerships and future forest stewards toward meaningful conservation action in the SBR of North Carolina.



Southern Blue Ridge Forestry and Conservation Project Conceptual Model

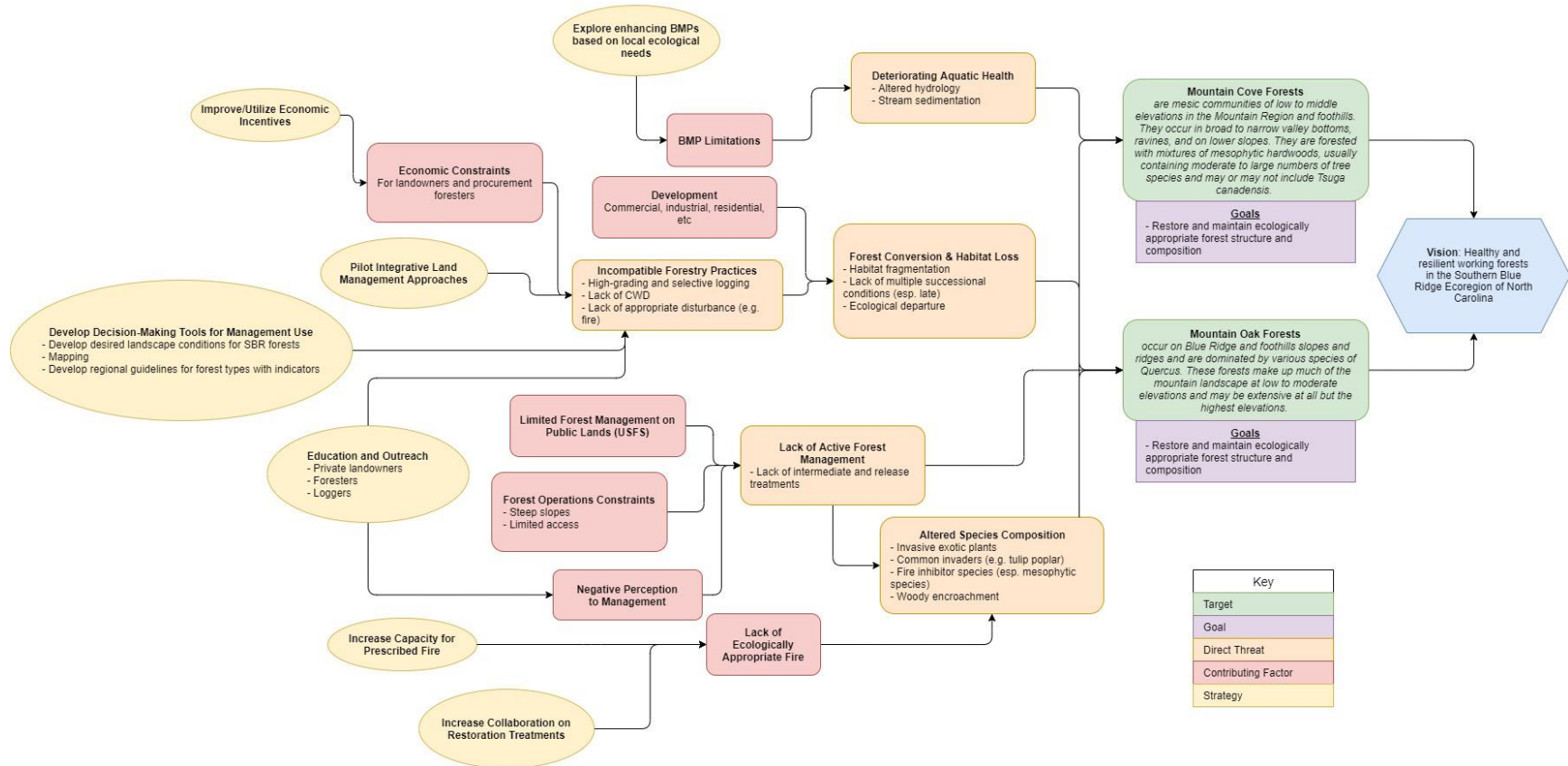


Figure 4. Project Conceptual Model. To read this model, begin with our vision on the right. Working from right to left, conservation targets are linked to direct threats and contributing factors, and then finally on the left are the strategies that can be implemented to address said threats and contributing factors.

What can we do?

After identifying the threats that have the potential to negatively impact successful conservation and restoration of healthy and resilient working forests in the SBR of North Carolina, discussion pivoted to identifying ways to implement conservation efforts. Using the conceptual model as a road map, seven strategies were identified as having the potential to address the threats previously conceived by the working group. These strategies were then used as umbrella topics to guide conversation towards developing tangible actions. The premise is that interested organizations, including procurement entities certified to SFI's Fiber Sourcing program, could undertake these actions to positively impact forest conservation. Ideally, the actions associated with each of the seven strategies can be widely implemented, and can fit into the unique operational plans of collaborating organizations.

Central Strategy: Water Quality and BMPs

SFI's Fiber Sourcing Program requires its participants to adhere to all state forestry BMPs. This requirement is beneficial to all landscapes because when implemented properly, BMPs both contribute to protecting water quality and the conservation of aquatic species (National Association of State Foresters, 2019). However, it was discussed that there may be gaps in certain ecosystems where water quality practices could reach beyond state recommended BMPs to have more of a positive impact. For example, to address deteriorating aquatic health in mountain cove forests, collaborators proposed to **explore ways to enhance water quality practices to address local ecological needs**. This strategy can be implemented through a variety of actions and the following listed are the options that were discussed.

Proposed Action Items:

- Develop recommended enhancements to water quality practices, beyond state recommended BMPs, based on site type (e.g. mountain cove forests) and terrain, to target specific intended outcomes. An example may be increasing the recommended width of streamside management zones (SMZ) under certain circumstances. Such recommendations would require collaboration and assessment to determine what enhancement practices could feasibly be integrated into procurement practices.
- Attend, host, and/or fund seminars and workshops focused on aquatic biodiversity of SBR forests and methods through which biodiversity can be maintained during the course of management activities.
- Produce education materials (and associated distribution approaches) on the ecological management of stream resources in SBR forests.
- Conduct research to determine if there may be instances where state-recommended BMPs could be enhanced to meet local ecological needs.



Implementing actions within this strategy meets SFI's Fiber Sourcing Standard Objective #2: Adherence to Best Management Practices, Objective #5: Forestry Research, Science, and Technology, and Objective #6: Training and Education. Other potential outcomes of implementing one or more of these proposed actions associated with the *Water Quality* strategy may include: increased awareness by loggers, landowners, and foresters about the importance of



Figure 5. *Lobelia* growing in the mountains of the Southern Blue Ridge. Just one of the many botanical treasures of the region. Photo by Dakota Wagner (2020).

BMP implementation; increased awareness about site-specific BMP enhancements; knowledge gains amongst practitioners about aquatic habitats; and increased aquatic health of the region.

Central Strategy: Economic Conservation Incentives

This strategy was originally proposed to address the economic constraints faced by landowners and procurement foresters when making management decisions. Oftentimes, landowners and managers make decisions based on the economic return of forest management or harvest practices. **Exploring the availability and/or utilization of economic incentives** for conservation practices could increase the implementation rates of forest management practices that render the best possible ecological results. Within the working group there was some recognition that improving access to incentive programs would be positive, however, stakeholders consistently agreed that

this strategy may not be feasible for partners to pursue at this stage of the project.

Central Strategy: Integrative Land Management

In the context of this project, integrative land management is defined as a collaborative effort that incorporates elements of sustainability in three facets: the ways in which the land is managed, the economics of the management activities, and the well-being of the community that is impacted by management activities. The goal of an integrated land management approach is to think about the impacts of management activities at the landscape-scale.

This strategy to **pilot integrative land management approaches** was met with some confusion from the working group about what this means for procurement, and specifically how other stakeholders can be involved. From conversation, one idea emerged that could be of use to procurement and conservation: encourage landowner aggregation. Private landowners, particularly with smaller holdings, want revenue from timber sales and are oftentimes less

interested in implementing sustainable practices, if those might yield less financial gains. Operational efficiencies across multiple ownerships can sometimes help mitigate this effect. Coordinating efforts between landowners to maximize the efficiency of procurement while incorporating sustainable management practices will benefit the landowner, the procurement entity, and the forest.

An additional concept that was brought to the table during conversation is that there needs to be a functional way for the procurement entities in the region to work with other stakeholders. Per Evergreen Packaging's suggestion, this could be accomplished by establishing a regional fund that helps sponsor efficient conservation efforts on the ground, across multiple ownerships. Additionally, it was noted that procurement entities may find it more efficient to provide a lump sum to a single fund rather than coordinate contracting efforts on a case-by-case basis.

Proposed Action Items:

- Facilitate communications between neighboring landowners regarding landscape-scale management.
- Target adjacent properties when conducting landowner outreach.
- Create a regional fund for restoration activities pertaining to this project, with appropriate oversight and rules for fund distribution.
- Solicit procurement entities to provide match for NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Programs on a project-by-project basis.

Implementing actions within this strategy meets SFI's Fiber Sourcing Standard Objective #7: Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach. Other potential outcomes can include, but are not limited to: knowledge gains among landowners about landscape-scale management techniques; increased use of sustainable forestry practices; and the advancement of reaching broad goals of the SBR landscape relative to biodiversity conservation.

Central Strategy: Decision-Making Tools

When making management decisions, land managers and practitioners consult various informational resources. Ecotype data, soil mapping information, satellite imagery, and LiDar data are a few tools that are often found in a professional's "toolbox". **Developing additional science-based tools specific to the SBR** will aid in increasing the sustainable practices implemented in these forests. Stakeholders within the working group acknowledged there are a number of powerful tools in existence that are used when making management decisions, such as Natural Heritage data. For these tools however, it was noted that there is a gap when it comes to making the data accessible to landowners and loggers that are actively making management



decisions in the field. Overall, creating or enhancing decision-making tools for the SBR was considered by the working group to be a positive potential approach.

Proposed Action Items:

- Increase opportunities for landowners to obtain and implement forest management plans.
- Create or enhance a science-based silviculture decision matrix that ties the current state of the forest to desired future conditions of SBR forests.
- Aid in the creation or revision of an SBR Ecoregional Plan.
- Streamline tools already in existence and make them more accessible to landowners and loggers.

Implementing actions within this strategy meets SFI's Fiber Sourcing Standard Objective #5: Forestry Research, Science, and Technology. Additionally, by implementing one or more of the actions associated with this strategy, potential outcomes can include, but are not limited to: a deeper understanding of the ecological needs of SBR forests; an increased number of landowners with forest management plans; knowledge gains amongst practitioners; and increased forested acreage under appropriate ecological management.



Figure 6. Landowner workshop (pre-2020). Photo courtesy of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Central Strategy: Education and Outreach

This strategy was well-accepted amongst the working group and has potential to make a broad impact by improving the implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs. Increasing, or adding to, logger training curriculum within the SFI certified Fiber Sourcing programs of Evergreen Packaging, proved to be of interest to Evergreen. When implementing this project's *Education and Outreach*

strategy relative to the identified conservation targets in the SBR landscape, it was decided that topics should focus on the threats within mountain cove and mountain oak forests and how management impacts these systems. Associated actions will increase awareness about the importance of integrating conservation efforts into everyday forest management. While *Education and Outreach* is a standalone strategy, it readily dovetails with other identified strategies.

Proposed Action Items:

- Target multiple audiences in outreach efforts including landowners, loggers, and foresters.
- Utilize existing programs within organizations such as NRCS to conduct landowner outreach.
- Utilize existing education and outreach programs under SFI Fiber Sourcing Programs, including logger training and landowner outreach.
- Focus education efforts on management activities with the highest risks/rewards such as non-native invasive species control, implementing prescribed fire, and following state recommended BMPs.
- Encourage landowners to think on a landscape-scale when making management decisions and inspire them to become a part of the solution to ecosystem restoration.
- Create a pilot program that connects restoration organizations and agencies to procurement entities, to leverage potential opportunity relative to SFI certified Fiber Sourcing programs.

Implementing actions within this strategy meets SFI's Fiber Sourcing Standard Objective #6: Training and Education, as well as Objective #7: Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach. Additionally, by implementing one or more of the actions associated with this strategy, potential outcomes may include, but are not limited to: increased awareness of loggers, landowners, and foresters about the importance of implementing site-appropriate silvicultural practices; knowledge gains amongst practitioners about better conservation practices; increased awareness about proper management of non-native invasive species, fire adapted communities, and more.

Central Strategy: Prescribed Fire

Altered fire regimes play a substantial role in determining the successional and compositional trajectories of Southern Blue Ridge forests (Chapman & McEwan, 2012; NatureServe, 2020). Namely, there is concern about the “mesophication” of Appalachian second-growth forests, i.e. that the species composition is shifting from oaks and other xeric species



Figure 7. Learn-and-Burn hosted by the Forest Stewards Guild and Berea College in 2019 for Kentucky landowners and natural resource practitioners.



to mesophytic species (Chapman & McEwan, 2012). To address the altered species composition in mountain oak forests, project collaborators agreed that **increasing the capacity for prescribed fire** will play a critical role in restoring the landscape. Most, if not all, of the collaborators made it clear that pairing prescribed burning with silvicultural treatments, particularly in mountain oak forest types, will be essential in the restoration of these landscapes.

Proposed Action Items:

- Spread awareness about the role that fire has in forest management.
- Assist existing networks and organizations to increase the capacity for prescribed fire particularly in mountain oak forests of the SBR.
- Develop decision-making tools for managing mountain oak forests using prescribed fire.
- Encourage landowners and foresters to write prescribed fire activities into management plans.
- Procurement entities connect landowners to appropriate fire personnel in the region.

Implementing actions within this strategy meets SFI's Fiber Sourcing Standard Objective #1: Biodiversity in Fiber Sourcing. Additionally, by implementing one or more of the actions associated with this strategy, potential outcomes can include but are not limited to: increased awareness of needs of the landscape; new partnerships established in the SBR region; increased and sustained partnerships; reduced risk of wildfire; knowledge gains among practitioners, landowners, and SFI Certified Organizations; increased habitat quality of fire-dependent ecosystems.

Central Strategy: Collaborative Restoration

There are many agencies and organizations committed to the health and quality of forests in North Carolina, and the opportunities for collaboration are numerous. **Increasing collaboration on restoration treatments** will be critical to ensuring optimal outcomes within the limited capacities of individuals and organizations. Additionally, collaborations can be leveraged to create greater spatial impacts and broader potential restoration. In stakeholder meetings, discussion often pivoted to the importance of coordination among practitioners to maximize the effectiveness of any restoration effort. Increasing the pathways of communication when making landscape-scale management decisions will be imperative to ensuring a healthy trajectory for forests in the SBR. While *Collaborative Restoration* is a standalone strategy, it readily dovetails with other identified strategies.

Proposed Action Items:

- Explore existing successful models of collaboration between organizations, companies, and private landowners that could be applied in the Southern Blue Ridge.

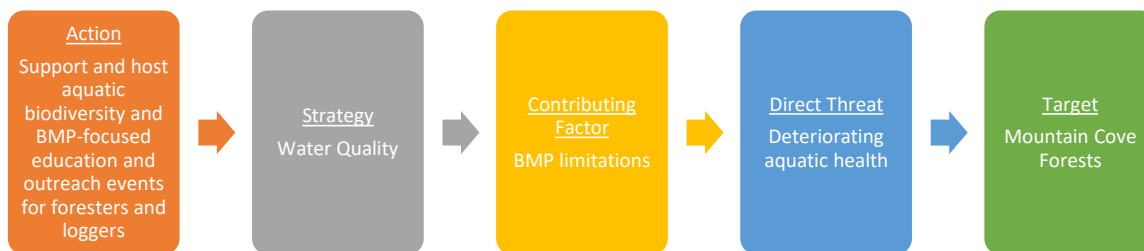
- Set up a framework for collaborative communication and action to help these partners work together to increase restoration activities.
- Use prioritization mapping or other tools to focus on areas in greatest need of restoration treatment.
- Create a pilot program that connects restoration organizations and agencies to procurement entities.

Implementing actions within this strategy meets SFI's Fiber Sourcing Standard Objective #1: Biodiversity in Fiber Sourcing. Additionally, by implementing one or more actions associated with this strategy, potential outcomes can include but are not limited to: restoration efforts will be maximized based on the allocation of tasks, enabling greater accomplishment; capacity sustained and increased; high-priority areas gain attention.

Engagement Examples

The following examples provide scenarios in which procurement entities and their partners implement actions to mitigate threats and ultimately positively influence SBR conservation targets.

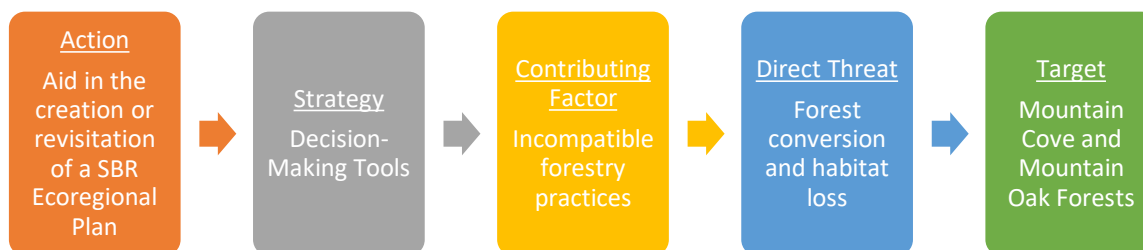
Engagement Example #1



As a procurement entity needs to fulfill the SFI Standard objective of adhering to BMPs, they could pursue an activity associated with the *Water Quality* strategy. To do this, the procurement entity could partner with a conservation-focused nonprofit (or similar organization) to host events (seminars, trainings, and workshops) for foresters and loggers that address the unique needs of aquatic habitats in the region and the best way to operate in these systems. This will address limitations of BMPs under certain local conditions and increase the health and viability of aquatic systems in mountain cove forests. This action will reduce the likelihood of negative impacts from timber harvests in mountain cove forests by influencing foresters to engage in specific protective actions in sensitive systems to mitigate threats to aquatic health.

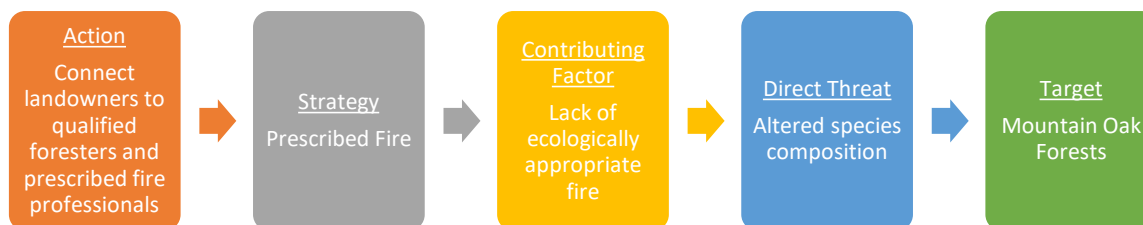


Engagement Example #2



As a procurement entity seeks to fulfill the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard objective of investing in forestry research, science, and technology they could pursue an activity associated with the *Decision-Making Tools* strategy. To do this, the procurement entity could support local conservation nonprofits and/or similar agencies to aid in the creation or revisitation of an SBR Ecoregional Plan. This tool will address the incompatible forestry practices occurring in the region and work to restore and maintain ecologically appropriate structure and composition of both mountain cove and mountain oak forests.

Engagement Example #3



If a procurement entity needs to fulfill the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard objective of conserving biological diversity, they could pursue an activity associated with the *Prescribed Fire* strategy. To do this, the procurement entity could partner with local prescribed fire professionals to increase the implementation of prescribed fire in appropriate sites by connecting landowners to qualified foresters and prescribed fire professionals. This will address the lack of ecologically appropriate fire and altered species composition of mountain oak forests. This action will improve the health of mountain oak forests and promote the growth and regeneration of oak and other fire-dependent species.

Next Steps

The next steps to take in 2021 and beyond broadly include engaging local procurement entities such as Evergreen Packaging to promote specific conservation actions, continuing

communications with collaborators, and pursuing additional funding sources to support collaboration.

1. **Engage with regional procurement entities** to gauge interest in collaboration efforts reflecting the actions identified in this plan, and to connect those entities to collaborators involved in this project to build relationships and develop actions that have positive impacts on the targets. Evergreen Packaging, which is a procurement entity certified to the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard, was initially interested in engaging with this conservation project to integrate actions derived from the Conceptual Model into their logger training curriculum. However, they harbor concerns over the economic and operational feasibility of their engagement which must be addressed. The proposed pilot program described below may help to alleviate those concerns.
2. **Start, coordinate, and monitor a pilot program.** Collaborators expressed interest in pursuing a pilot program wherein the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard certified organization would engage with a conservation nonprofit or similar agency to implement conservation actions consistent with the SFI Fiber Sourcing Objectives. Monitoring and critical review of mitigating actions would be performed as agreed by the participating partners and procurement entity directly implementing such actions.
3. **Continue communications with collaborators** as needed if a pilot program or other form of collaborative project (e.g. CFLRP) is deemed feasible at this time.
4. **Encourage organizations to take advantage of a diverse array of entry points** into conservation and restoration efforts in the SBR, and to maximize the effectiveness of conservation and restoration implementation through collaborative efforts.
5. **Pursue additional funding sources for collaboration.** Stakeholders in this project mentioned a number of funding sources that may be available to continue a collaborative program, including the Pisgah Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) and NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Each of these programs function to encourage the coordination of collaborative, science-based ecosystem conservation and restoration projects.





CONCLUSION

In Phase I of this project, the Forest Stewards Guild and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative began their partnership to develop a project in the Southern Blue Ridge Ecoregion (SBR) of North Carolina. It started with the following question: what conservation targets in the SBR can be positively influenced by responsible forest management and SFI's Fiber Sourcing programs? As part of these efforts, the Guild hosted the SBR Forestry & Conservation Stakeholder Meeting in Asheville, North Carolina in September 2019. This event brought together natural resource professionals to help answer this question.

During that workshop and in subsequent meetings, a vision was crafted for the potential outcome of this project: healthy and resilient working forests in the Southern Blue Ridge ecoregion of North Carolina. Additionally, priority conservation targets, the threats to those targets, and ways in which we might leverage SFI's Fiber Sourcing program to collectively and positively influence those targets through responsible forest management were discussed and identified. Identified strategies ranged across several topics and include activities such as: conducting research to determine whether BMPs meet local ecological needs; encouraging landowner aggregation; aiding in the creation or revisitation of an SBR Ecoregional Plan; targeting multiple audiences in education and outreach efforts; spreading awareness about the role of fire in forest management; and creating a pilot program that connects restoration organizations and agencies to procurement entities.

Next steps for this project include: 1) engaging local SFI Fiber Sourcing certified procurement entities such as Evergreen Packaging to develop interest in further collaboration, 2) continuing communications with collaborators to motivate engagement toward the identified actions, and 3) pursuing specific opportunities for collaboration such as establishing a pilot program.



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APPENDIX A: MEETING AGENDAS & MINUTES

Friday May 22, 2020

MEETING AGENDA	
10:30	Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name, organization association, expertise/specialty, icebreaker question Meeting Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will come to a consensus on the final version of the project's conceptual model and move forward with setting the stage for our large stakeholder meeting in late June. Address final comments on the Conceptual Model Introduce next steps, i.e. elements of the Strategic Plan
10:40	Addressing comments to the project Conceptual Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the scope of the project as it relates to <i>land ownership</i>? Characterizing and integrating <i>early successional habitat</i> into our targets Why is there no strategy linked to <i>BMP Limitations</i>? Defining <i>negative public perception to harvesting/management</i>
11:20	Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions? Asking the question “with these adjustments, do people feel comfortable moving forward onto the next steps?” remind folks the conceptual model is just the starting block and the items can change and grow as the strategic plan takes shape Defining goals, strategies, objectives, and activities in June meeting (date TBD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be reaching out soon with a date in late June. In-person (socially distant) vs virtual is still TBD
11:30	Adjourn
COMMENT DETAILS	
<i>Land Ownership</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haven't parceled out goals or strategies/objectives for each type yet, so far been thinking about these targets across all land ownerships Once we delve into talking about goals and strategies more, we can further define which aspects of public/private land ownership we want to speak to 	

<p><i>ES Habitat</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reframed the targets to include goals for different structural conditions. • This can be further defined in goals and indicators, as well as objectives within strategies
<p><i>BMP Limitations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the general feeling around BMP limitations, i.e. scope? Do people feel they are 1) all around not doing enough, 2) not doing enough in focal watersheds/for focal species, or 3) a combination of both? • SFI FS already adheres to state's BMPs, and it is not within the scope of this project to change state's BMPs as they relate to water quality • We've heard a lot of consensus that BMPs are a success story in this region, but wanted to mention this because there's been some concern...what can we develop as partners to address this? What can we do to encourage behavior that exceeds BMPs? Strategy could be outreach around BMPs etc. • Leverage point: only reason that loggers are thinking about BMPs is because there is a demand from SFIs FSS for the mills to host logger trainings on BMPS.
<p><i>Negative Perception</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and outreach can be a valuable tool for this project. To landowners, loggers, and the public. We can define specific goals and objectives when we move further into the strategic planning process • Increasing public awareness on ecological forest management can benefit these systems because if people felt better about forestry and cutting trees, they might be more willing to manage their own land or be okay with certain aspects of public land management.

MEETING MINUTES	
Introductions	<p>Mike Schafale (MPS)</p> <p>Chuck Roe</p> <p>Helen Mohr</p> <p>JJ Apodaca</p> <p>Paul Trianosky</p> <p>Rusty Conservation Trust NC</p> <p>Andrew Goldberg</p> <p>Michael Cheek</p> <p>Chris Coxen</p>
Land ownership:	<p>Paul: one of the drivers for this project, idea that we are looking for pathways to engage procurement practices to have favorable practices. Glad the scope is broader. If there are certain forest types that are more on public v private, if start to differentiate then we can differentiate approaches. Most interesting</p>



	<p>opportunities that come from sourcing opportunities on private lands. Public lands have mandates for protections.</p> <p>Amanda: lean towards private lands in activities.</p> <p>Helen: don't have an answer. FS but research, not plugged in to what kind of management is going on. My perspective is fire. Done work mostly public lands - vegetations and fuels response. Federal lands or state lands. Do get involved with some restoration work that involves cutting but more on conversion from LLP to SLP. Conversion to native systems.</p> <p>MPS: so if targets are mainly cove and oak forests, a lot on both private and public lands. Only high elevations do you tend to have more predominance on public lands.</p> <p>Andrew G: Interested in how the forest products industry can connect with procurement to drive conservation. Intrigued by framework. A lot of processes on public lands, what I'm not seeing is a way to expand beyond certification. That to me is additive and new about this opportunity.</p> <p>Encourage us to focus on that and model a way for the products industry to add value to their procurement to restoration.</p> <p>Paul: very much what we had in mind. Change the paradigm on the private lands where the biggest influence is the procurement of products. Maybe there's a way in that process to influence those activities in a positive way with positive outcomes. Adjust the paradigm. Promote positive outcomes.</p>
Early Successional Habitat	<p>Paul: for these forest types, basically the goals could be stated the same. Make sure the representation of all successional conditions are seen in both forest types. Useful convo could be: how much do you need, how should they be in the landscape? What are the appropriate levels?</p> <p>JJ: key there is 'how much'. A little uneasy with the way it is now. Slippery slope that's been used lately - everyone's take is different. To put a goal on there that's so wide open, theres no balance.</p> <p>MPS: agree. Another problem not just amount but also structure of it. Even saying shifting mosaic is a great risk of creating a wrong impression. The characteristic natural structure is the size of several trees- any timber operation will be creating gaps that are quite rare in a natural landscape. Not sure how best to deal with that. One of the problems we've had thinking about it is that people have thought as harvesting as creating 'x acres' of ES for whatever patch size they want to harvest.</p> <p>Amanda: how can we rephrase it to calm concerns?</p> <p>Chris Cox: inherently with maintaining structurally diverse canopies. Saying that phrase implies just harvesting, not necessarily true. It makes sense to me within the model. Can be refined. Concept of ES is kind of a weird fit for the</p>

	<p>model anyway - more of a condition type model. ES is usually wildlife habitat right? Might be different conversation. Square peg round hole. Frame this whole thing for what occurs naturally in cove forests, but were talking about using mechanical treatments to create these. There's so many shade of grey within ES and largely driven by what your goals are. IF you're just doing it for forest regen that's different than for managing for wildlife.</p> <p>Paul: opportunity here is to influence the operations that are already happening here. How do we guide the hand of those human activities during procurement practices? While I agree that all this is true for natural conditions, but thats not what its like anymore. What can we do now?</p> <p>Michael Cheek: driving good forest management here. All know that oak stands are declining bc proper mngmt to promote oak isnt occurring. So opportunity to drive change through the whole chain is the opportunity we have.</p> <p>Helen: current events on ES/coves. Huge stopping point on fed lands. Environmental groups stopping cutting in mtn cove areas. Any cutting at all in a mtn cove forest incites a lot of emotion and negativity. Challenging uphill battle on federal lands. Seeing right now a lot of challenges from emotions. Fed land looks different in the cove forests.</p> <p>Amanda: coming to consensus on the basic language Restore and maintain structural diversity</p> <p>JJ: 'ecologically appropriate' FS language</p> <p>MPS: take out shifting mosaic.</p> <p>"Restore and maintain ecologically appropriate forest structure and composition"</p> <p>Additional to-do: make the verbiage the same for the goals for each forest type</p> <p>Chris: understand concern about shifting mosaic, but depends on your opinion of what a working forest looks like.</p> <p>JJ/MPS: adding composition into the definition</p>
BMP Limitations	<p>Paul: BMP practices are voluntary in NC. What that means is the performance against those is variable. Within SFI FS BMP implementation is mandatory. However still limited to mandatory to the state guidelines. Even if we have 100% performance, is that adequate for the system? Procurement activites: is there an opportunity to influence these to be adjusted to apply bigger BMPs? More assertive? They can be stronger but cant be weakend. Opp to influence how those BMPs are applied through procurement activities.</p>




	<p>Amanda: strategy could also be Education and outreach. Making sure everyone is on the same page. Suggest adding education and outreach as a strategy. 'exploring enhancements to BMP application'.</p> <p>Paul: what adjustment to the standard BMP are needed at some for these sites? Why do they need to be better? Need to describe this so we can build it into educational opportunities. Missing piece - understandig what to do differently. "explore sceicne based enhancements to protect aquatic health"</p> <p>MPS: renaming "inadequacy of BMPs"</p> <p>Andrew: challenge us to be practical.</p> <p>Michael Cheek: are they inadequate? Or are we looking for enhancements?</p> <p>Andrew: additive, not that they're inadequate.</p> <p>Paul: That's a great point. I don't think we want to broadly suggest that BMPs are inadequate... so "enhancements" based on local ecological need sounds right.</p> <p>Andrew: opportunity to influence loggers</p> <p>Amanda: not rewriting BMPs...just looking how we can enhance BMPs for these forest types.</p> <p>To Do: reword 'BMP limitations' and connect education and outreach strategies</p>
Negative Public Perception	<p>Paul: like the way phrased. This is an interesting diversity of coalition we've built. This could look very different for each partner in this project. Using this coalition to advance these ideas can be a valuable tool. Each partner involved have to decide what they're comfortable with. Huge opportunity.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Amanda: refine wordings. Big picture are people comfortable?</p> <p>Andrew: geographic scope finalized and sharing a map!</p>

Thursday July 9, 2020

AGENDA	
10:30-10:35	<p>Introduction to Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick intro: Welcome to Jen Chandler • Finalized version of the Conceptual Model • https://forestguild.sharepoint.com/:i/g/southeast/ETcx4zZs5XdIvrFgbmmQEZYBUPTTFdB76L_UWjsHng70Ew?e=n5TyVN • Outline goals for this meeting: <i>what do we need to do to get where we want to go?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Come to consensus on list of strategies (sets of actions) ○ Use two to three strategies to introduce the process of turning strategies into objectives and activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder of overall goal of this project – get folks working together on high value conservation forest stewardship. • Timeframe for these activities: think 3 years.
10:35-10:50	<p>Strategies</p> <p>Goal for this section: Achieve consensus on list of strategies, from conceptual model.</p> <p>These are the strategies we can use to help us reach our vision of “<i>healthy and resilient working forests in the Southern Blue Ridge Ecoregion of North Carolina</i>.”</p> <p>Strategies relevant to Mountain Cove Forests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore enhancing BMPs based on local ecological needs - 1 <p>Strategies relevant to Mountain Oak Forests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase capacity for prescribed fire - 3 <p>Strategies that can be applied to both targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve/utilize economic incentives • Pilot integrative land management approaches • Education and outreach • Develop decision-making tools for management use • Increase collaboration on restoration treatments - 2
10:50-10:55	<p>Pivot to Objectives and Activities</p> <p>Goal for this section: determine which 2-3 strategies to focus on for the remainder of this meeting</p> <p>Take the poll “what top three strategies are you most excited about?”</p> <p>Poll results:</p>



	 <p>Review what an objective is vs activity and give example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy: What we're going to do (broadly speaking) to impact our targets to achieve our desire conservation outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g. Increase collaboration on restoration treatments. • Objective: What does that look like? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g. Build new connections between state & private forestland owners through an SBR landscape partnership • Activity: What will we actually do? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g. Support and host FLN learn-and-burn events in SBR landscape • Keep in mind that the impacts of the activities need to be measurable. • "T" = roughly 3-yr timeframe
10:55-11:10	<p>Identifying Objectives and Activities – Strategy 1</p> <p>In concurrent breakout rooms (5-7 minutes),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify objectives associated with your groups assigned strategy • Identify potential activities to reach each objective <p>Reconvene, consolidate activities (8-10 minutes)</p>
11:10-11:25	<p>Identifying Objectives and Activities – Strategy 2</p>

	<p>In concurrent breakout rooms (5-7 minutes),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify objectives associated with your groups assigned strategy • Identify potential activities to reach each objective <p>Reconvene, consolidate activities (8-10 minutes)</p>
11:25-11:40	<p>Identifying Objectives and Activities – Strategy 3</p> <p>In concurrent breakout rooms (5-7 minutes),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify objectives associated with your groups assigned strategy • Identify potential activities to reach each objective <p>Reconvene, consolidate activities (8-10 minutes)</p>
11:40-11:50	<p>Discussion on objectives and activities</p> <p>Answering remaining questions</p>
11:50-12noon	<p>Closing and Next Steps</p> <p>We will be synthesizing today's discussion and compiling responses into the first draft of the Action Plan.</p> <p>DRAFT Action Plan outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remotely completing a strong, diverse list of objectives and activities • Be looking for feedback on the first draft of the Action Plan

MEETING NOTES	
Breakout Room 1 Notes (AM)	Breakout Room 2 Notes (DW)
<p><u>Session 1: Explore enhancing BMPs based on local ecological needs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make sure anything we recommend is based in a robust dataset. Science understanding. Based on idea that BMPS are intended for water quality, statewide. Do BMPs do what they need to do to protect mountain cove forests? - Use wildlife buffers, consider applications of variable widths - 	<p><u>Session 1: Explore enhancing BMPs based on local ecological needs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Andrew G: we could have. Defining ecological features on the round. Portfolio of improvements that address particular habitat needs. In that portfolio would be based on facts on the ground. Outcomes – being able to put those on the ground. Find someone in the procurement chain who could use this as part of their certified sourcing stuff. - Michael Cheek: talking about ecological needs, maybe that's best management



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objective: Acquire necessary information to determine whether BMPs meet local ecological needs - Activity: - 1) Conduct a study to determine what BMP requirements are currently in place, and - 2) what does the science tell us about what the right BMP width in mountain cove forests? - Take info to SFI program participants where they have the opportunity to influence stream buffer width. 	<p>practices for dealing with certain ecological types. Have silv recs and standard practices, talking about ecological needs there's not a BMP out there for this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharon: objective, defining those ecological needs. What are those needs? Objective. - Michael: sounding like the same thing for developing tools, landscape needs. - BMPs for harvesting activities. - Andrew: enhance management for other values. - Looking at things on top of protecting water quality. - Q for Paul: beyond education, he has the hook to pull this through to change things on the ground. Getting harvesters to change their behavior, want to create incentive (activity). - Michael: NC is in the process of updating the current BMP manual, opportunity to add BMPs for consideration (activity).
<p><u>Objective: Understand the problem</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>Determine what BMPs are currently in place and how they impact Mountain Cove forests</u> 2) <u>Determine ecological needs of Mountain Cove Forests</u> 3) <u>Determine what protections are needed beyond existing BMP applications to protect ecological values in Mountain Cove forests/how they need to be refined for Mountain Cove forests</u> <p><u>Objective: Change behavior</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>Get harvesters and landowners to adopt needed behavior to protect Mountain Cove forests:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <u>e.g. take info to SFI fiber sourcing program participants</u> b. <u>e.g. educate landowners on BMPs</u> 2) <u>Explore incentives</u> 	

<p><u>Session 2: Increase collaboration on restoration treatments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define the ecological needs in greater detail both for Mountain Cove and Mountain Oak forests. What constitutes a “restored” forest? Restore ecological function vs. structure. Healthy trajectory. - Collaboration – loop back in the two people who spoke in first meeting on restoration treatments - Different approaches to restoration. Bring people together in groups to discuss approaches to restoration. E.g. Society for Ecological Restoration. Models used to determine proper structure and composition. Look to Forest Action Plan revision. - Collaboration actions: Identify landholders that make up that landscape scale. - Have the collaboration reveal to us where overlapping interests. Form common understanding. - Collaboration is an output as much as the restoration treatments themselves. - Ecologically appropriate age class distribution across the landscape - What happens post-harvest? SFI sourcing opportunity. 	<p><u>Session 2: Increase collaboration on restoration treatments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objective: Identify what restoration areas require treatment. - Objective: What organizations are best to collaborate on that? Looking for the best fit of people. - Activity: model the ones that have been deemed successful. Look to what’s worked. Learn from those that haven’t worked. - Directory? Personal relationships. There is no directory. Problem with maintaining the list. Typically with people staying in a position 2-5 years, the person that’s in the list might have left. - Sharon: lists are instantly out of date. What if we send people to a collaborative organization rather than individuals? E.g. shortleaf initiative rather than individual person. Landing pad. - Who’s identifying restoration areas? Is it SFI? Are they looking at restoration prescriptions on land that they’re working on? A lot of times the restoration is left up to the landowner and not the procurement forester. Who is identifying these areas? - Objective: having the people looking at and making harvesting recommendations also think about and make recommendations for post-harvest and want it looks like after the procurement foresters leave the site.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objective: Identify what restoration areas require treatment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Examine existing models and information sources o Identify landowners in desired areas of impact - Objective: Identify what the collaboration looks like. What organizations are best to collaborate on that? 	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Looking for the best fit of people, models of collaboration that have worked. ○ Resource experts for landowners <p>- Objective: having the people looking at and making harvesting recommendations also think about and make recommendations for post-harvest and want it looks like after the procurement foresters leave the site.</p>	
<u>Session 3: Increase capacity for prescribed fire</u>	<u>Session 3: Increase capacity for rx fire</u>

Friday October 30, 2020

AGENDA	
1:30 – 1:35	Introduction to Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief revisit of what we discussed in the last meeting in July • Outline goals for this meeting: <i>what do we need to do to get where we want to go?</i> • Reminder of overall goal of this project – clarify and develop pathways for conservation of critical forest-related targets through forest management practices (especially through SFI’s Fiber Sourcing programs)
1:35 – 1:45	Remaining Strategies <p>These are the strategies we can use to help us reach our vision of “<i>healthy and resilient working forests in the Southern Blue Ridge Ecoregion of North Carolina</i>”</p> <p>At the last meeting, strategies were ranked in order of highest interest to participants. Below indicated by H (high) M (medium) or L (low) scoring.</p> <p>Strategies that were discussed in the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore enhancing BMPs based on local ecological needs (H) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To address threats affecting Mountain Cove forests • Increase collaboration on restoration treatments (H) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To address threats affecting both Mountain Cove and Mountain Oak forests • Increase capacity for prescribed fire (some) (H) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To address threats affecting Mountain Oak forests

	<p>Strategies that remain (all to address threats affecting both Mountain Cove and Mountain Oak forests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot integrative land management approaches (M) • Education and outreach (L) • Develop decision-making tools for management use (L) • Improve/utilize economic incentives (L)* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This strategy has been dropped due to low interest and feasibility <p>Reminder of how Fiber Sourcing works Paul will give a brief reminder about how Fiber Sourcing works, to direct conversations into discussing feasible opportunities within the following strategies.</p> <p>Pivot to Activities Give example from last meeting</p>
1:45 – 2:05	<p>Identifying Activities – Education and Outreach Strategy 1: Tell the story through education and outreach mechanisms specifically of forest management and fiber sourcing within Mountain Cove and Mountain Oak systems. And, why it is important to implement ecological approaches to management and why management itself is important.</p> <p>In concurrent breakout rooms (8-10 minutes),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define what this strategy could look like on the ground • Identify potential activities associated with this strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Guiding questions</u>: Where is the education most needed based on your experience with x? Who is the audience, what are the topics? ○ How can SFI’s Fiber Sourcing Program be brought to bear to carry this out? <p>Reconvene, consolidate activities (10-12 minutes)</p>
2:05 – 2:25	<p>Identifying Activities – Decision Making Tools Strategy 2: Develop decision-making tools for management use</p> <p>In concurrent breakout rooms (8-10 minutes),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss what tools are out there that could be used. If there aren’t any appropriate, what characteristics would such a tool have?”



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential activities associated with this strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Guiding questions</u>: Who are these tools for? What tools need to be in the toolbox, i.e. what tools do you use day-to-day? What are the steps to developing these tools? <u>Some ideas</u>: priority mapping, management plan templates, desired forest conditions <p>Reconvene, consolidate activities (10-12 minutes)</p>
2:25 – 2:45	<p>Identifying Activities – Integrated Land Management</p> <p>Strategy 4: Pilot integrative land management approaches. Before moving into breakout rooms, host a brief discussion on the original intent of this strategy. If no one remembers, the conversation should focus on both the conservation targets, and on work (strategy implementation) that the participants can actually control.</p> <p>In concurrent breakout rooms (8-10 minutes),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define what this strategy could look like on the ground Identify potential activities associated with this strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Guiding questions</u>: What are the first steps towards an integrative way of managing forests? Is thinking about this scale of management feasible for you and your organization? How do we ensure procurement gets a voice? <u>Some ideas</u>: creation of an understanding of landscape-scale goals, landowner aggregations. <p>Reconvene, consolidate activities (10-12 minutes)</p>
2:45 – 2:55	<p>Discussion</p> <p>Answering remaining questions</p>
2:55 – 3:00	<p>Closing and Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final meeting: Friday November 20 at 1:30 ET Next draft of document summary we will be looking for feedback

MEETING NOTES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jen – overview of last meeting and the goals for this current meeting Paul – one of the reasons why this project is breaking new ground in some ways is because in spite of all the collaborative work that has been done in the Southern Blue

<p>Ridge, what's been missing is the perspective of procurement entities and what forest management activities could be influenced from the standpoint of the procurement entities. What could the procurement do to build the trajectory of that forest in a positive way? Find a new way to move the forest in the direction we would all want them to go, do this through the power of the marketplace that's already there. FSS places the responsibility on the procurement entity and ensures they are doing certain things when acquiring fiber. Those special attributes of the forest are protected during management activities. How they do that will change based on how difference procurement entities act. Focus on the strategies that we can diffuse into multiple stakeholders and encourage the practitioners in the FSS program to utilize these strategies.</p>	
Breakout Group 1 (Jen)	Breakout Group 2 (Dakota)
<p>Education and Outreach Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greg Cooper, JJ Apodaca, Jennifer Chandler, Clint Barden, Mike Schafale. - Greg - Multiple levels of those who we would like to reach. Landowners – importance of management and the kinds of management we would like to see. Foresters. Oak forests - Clint – A lot of folks don't understand the importance of young forests and benefits to wildlife. - Greg – Most research needed at the forester level (usually on board with ecological forestry practices, but not all landowners use foresters). What you often see on the ground is not always what this group wants to see on the ground. - JJ – Take a page out of NRCS playbook – do education lunch/dinner events and/or workshops, etc. - Greg – any landowner enrolled in tax incentives programs must have management plan in place, so targeting the folks writing those 	<p>Education and Outreach Session</p> <p>James (Rob) Elliot, Michael Cheek</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is it that can happen in regards to education and outreach, what can be passed to the landowner that can be used to influence their decisions made with the land/ what can be passed through a procurement entity. - Education and outreach concepts. Can be some other mechanism. - Rob: where there is a gap currently is a good summation of restoration priorities for an ecoregion. Canvassing TNC and Audubon, there are some common themes for restoration activities. Some of it is around invasive species, endangered species. Really good summary of those restoration priorities in one conglomerate map. "Here's how you particular timberland fits within that landscape, and here is something that you can consider." - Rob: other topics, calling out priorities. Help the landowner become part of the solution. FSC has their specified risk areas and lists of species and things but it would be functional



<p>management plans would be a good way to get the message out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mike – focus on invasives especially in cove forests. Best practices for harvest in coves to prevent invasive influx. - Clint – An invasive control practice under EQIP is going to pay more for certain invasive control (oriental bittersweet will apply). 	<p>for this program to have it all pulled together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paul: regional priorities for restoration. One thing we often don't do is tell them the bigger picture. Making the connection. - Rob: just gone through forest plan revision in Nantahala/Pisgah. Lots going on with natural disturbance patterns. That kind of regional assessment is important, that's why making it clear what role the landowner's land makes into the big picture. Haven't seen it glued all together between public/private. - Rob: defining who is the audience and what are the topics? - Paul: step 1 is what does the forest need and then making the connections with procurement. - Rob: within context of fiber sourcing, the audience Q is always an interesting one. - Michael: so many habitats and priorities. Have to find a way to figure out the best way to say that to the audience/landowners - _____ - Paul: what are those activities that procurement can do? - Greg: site preparation for oak regen. Oak shelterwood and prescribed fire. Having procurement get involved with fire?
<p>Decision Making Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are some important tools that everyone uses on the day to day? - Rob: Natural heritage database. A lot of initiatives everyday to help the streamline of naturserve data and making it readily available and how foresters should be considering what's on the landscape. Simple timber sale transaction, that info isn't 	

easily accessible that could get you some good info (landowner or logger) about the forest type they're standing in

- Michael: S. Simon GIS layer of vegetation mapping.
- Greg: Adam Warwick been working on a fire adapted ecosystems for the whole southern blue ridge. Silviculture decision matrix = tie the current forest to desired future conditions.
- JJ: contractor for a couple NRCS projects and were building a couple cell phone apps for NRCS agents in the field. People don't want some of the data to be species getting out. Assess the value of the tracts they're standing on without knowing exactly what's there. Gary Kaufman done a lot of that.
- Paul: sorts of things were thinking about – what are the desired landscape conditions, what is the projection of native vegetation, etc. challenge is how do we take these models and distill down the best thing to get us the shortest distance to the answer we want at the scale that we need.
- Paul: SBR ecoregional plan. Would set that at the scale.
- Paul: about LMVJV document, one of the things that been subject to criticism, done with ecological use just in mind but not really economical.
- Jen: tie between education and outreach and the decision making tools. Maybe there is a good way to naturally tie in some of these tools in the process of making these plans? Strongly encourage the use of some of these tools.
- Michael: definitely informing people of what tools are out there. Like Oak Silva, good for making recs about how to regenerate. Developed northern research station.
- Paul: guess that relatively few landowners in WNC have few management plans.
- Rob: in SBR you have pulpwood and sawtimber. Most of the timber transactions are based off of sawtimber. Where the missing link is the folks buying stumpage are sawmill procurement staff, not papermill procurement staff. How do you get it into the transaction with the primary buyer? There is no requirement for management plans at that level. It goes back to education and outreach part. Fiber sourcing is about trusting how you're getting product in your mill. Getting education and outreach to the small landholders that have a big cumulative footprint. How to get to that level when the certified entity isn't on the ground.
- Rob: logger trainings and that is a fantastic venue to present this topic and tool. Those are really the folks that are right there beginning of the conversation.
- Greg: rob do you have an idea of how many logging shops each of your chip mills is sourcing from?
 - o Rob: hundreds of different ones. 8-10 chip mills out there buying wood. So it's definitely hundreds from where they're sourcing from. Most loggers are engaged in logger training.



Integrated Land Management

- Paul: forestry an active optimization. Integrated strategies really about making sure procurement entities can implement these strategies in a profitable way. Talked about elements of biodiversity we might be trying to promote. Intersections of those biodiversity elements and the ability to be profitable.
- JJ: not sure any great insight in this or truly understand what you're asking but when I think about these types of problems I can't help but think this is the classic structured decision making problems. Finding optimal solution that fit the goals and outcomes of all parties. Process like that might be helpful? Solutions aren't really that obvious to each of us but that process could help.
- Greg: thinking about the ideas listed, as far as landscape scale goals I do have a masters student working at landowners in southern apps and we are thinking about landowner aggregation. **So maybe some sort of scheme to group landowners together.** Making sure that these landscapes are within the woodshed and in reach of procurement entities. A lot of pieces that are moving and would fit well with this but not sure if they could come all o a head.
- Rob: the notion of what this Q is getting to is a head scratcher. Whenever we interact with landowners we do have a group certification process. Gets back to that transactional thing. And what's profitable. More about how to make it functional across the whole landscape. If you have a program that can ensure more integrative management approach to forestry or whatever it really comes down to the easy way to pay for this stuff. Smaller landowners want revenue from timber sales and that's it. There has to be a functional way for the procurement entities in the region to work with other stakeholders to set up some kind of regional fund that helps sponsor a lot of this work being done when there's really efficient opportunities to do it. Procurement entities more interested in giving a lump sum to some kind of fund to make this work.
 - o What is the functional entity that helps actually get the work done? Since we all out doing our own stuff.
- Paul: clear willingness on the part of evergreen to explore what the future looks like however there's limitations on that with how the pathway look. Sweet spot of opportunity includes some shifted aspects of logger trainings, and bringing in the expertise and tools we talked about biodiversity/desired landscape conditions/etc.
 - o Who's responsible for this? We don't know yet but we SFI want to work through the channels available to us.
- JJ: longterm thing but NRCS RCPP program, but this would be a great fit for an RCPP application.

Friday November 20, 2020

FACILITATOR AGENDA	
1:30-1:40	<p>Introduction to Meeting (Dakota)</p> <p>RECORD THIS MEETING</p> <p>Welcome everyone to the meeting, give overview of the agenda, facilitate introductions of participants.</p> <p><u>Reminder of overall goal of this project:</u> the purpose of this project was to gather stakeholders from the SBR ecoregion to help identify practical pathways and actions for conservation of critical forest-related targets which can be favorably affected by forest management, especially through SFT's Fiber Sourcing programs.</p> <p><u>Clarify goals for this meeting:</u> Recap of the information that has been gathered over the last year and share the connections between actions and identified targets, discuss possible next steps for 2021, and answer any remaining outstanding questions.</p>
1:40-2:00	<p>Background – Presentation (Dakota)</p> <p>Goal of this section: recap what we have identified as the targets for conservation, the threats getting in the way of having healthy working forests, and our understanding of the actions that can connect targets to desired outcomes.</p> <p>Mention the specific target items that are within Mountain Cove/Mountain Oak Forests that will benefit from these outlined actions (determined via one on one conversations and research prior to this meeting). The purpose of this should be to pull out a couple species that are good at telling the story of the SBR, and which could truly be impacted favorably by these actions.</p> <p>Questions to ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Within these connections that we have drawn from your input, do you have any additional strategies to add?• If implemented, will the identified actions through this process favorably affect the conservation targets you're interested in? What's missing? <p>A copy of the presentation will be made available after today's meeting.</p>
2:00-2:50	Identifying Opportunities for Impact – Future Collaboration (Jen and Paul)



Goal of this section: determine the interest of stakeholders for future collaboration and share the idea for a potential pilot project that incorporates the strategies discussed leading up to this meeting. Make it clear that this is Phase 1, information gathering, and there is nothing “promised” at this point.

Share the ‘Action Impact Chain’ that shows the connections between actions, strategies, and desired outcomes. This is important to share a visual showing the detailed linkage between activities and desired conservation outcomes.



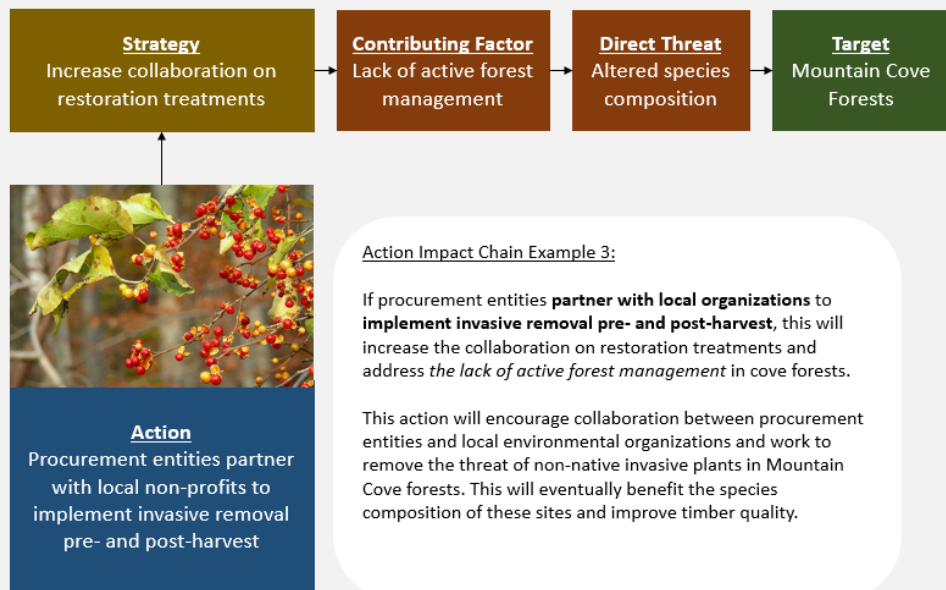
Action Impact Chain



putting the forest first



Action Impact Chain



putting the forest first



Discussion Question #1: (Jen)



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you were to continue involvement with this project, which actions would interest you most? Check all that apply. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Actions that directly influence private landowners ○ Actions that directly influence actions of procurement foresters ○ Actions that impact identified target species, e.g. wood thrush or hellbenders, etc. ○ Actions that impact an ecological niche, e.g. aquatic habitats or fire adapted communities ○ Other not listed <p>Based on the top three identified actions, ask people to explain why they chose what they did and how they could see themselves involved in these actions.</p> <p>How do you envision your identified action tying in with SFI’s fiber sourcing program? And, if anyone chose “other not listed” ask to elaborate.</p> <p>Before asking Q#2, briefly mention and describe what a ‘pilot project’ could look like.</p> <p>Ask if anyone needs clarification before asking the poll question below.</p> <p>Discussion Poll Question #2: (Jen)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would be your interest level in pursuing a pilot project that includes direct engagement with an SFI Certified Fiber Sourcing company (such as Evergreen packaging)? (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Very interested ○ Somewhat interested ○ Unsure ○ Unsure because I need more information ○ Not interested <p>If there is anyone that answers “unsure”, ask what needs more clarity.</p> <p>Jen ask the question: Does anyone have any stipulations, or requirements that would constrain their ability to participate in such a project.</p> <p>Discussion Question #3: (Paul)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyond the idea of a pilot project (which may or may not develop at this time), what opportunities do you see for continued convening of this group? What would be most helpful to you, and to the forest-based conservation targets in this region?
2:50-3:00	Final Thoughts and Wrap Up (Paul)

	<p>Goal for this section: thank everyone for their involvement over the last year in this information-gathering project, be clear about next steps, and provide opportunity for additional questions.</p> <p><u>Next Steps:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Guild will complete a report that details the findings from each of our stakeholder meetings since September 2019. It will include a summary of this process and detailed linkage between fiber sourcing activities and desired conservation outcomes. • SFI will engage with procurement entities about their desired role in the future of this project. • We will be staying in touch with any updates via email, and may or may not organize a group call if necessary. Would you be willing to participate in these future communications?
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MEETING TRANSCRIPT	
	<p>Dakota: alrighty well I think we'll get started and if anybody ends up joining us just get them up to speed yeah so thanks everybody for joining us today this afternoon a Friday afternoon before maybe a crazy next week for people before the holiday so thanks for being here today before we get started I do want to do a round of introductions so we all can get to know each other and recognize faces and put faces to names and whatnot. My name is Dakota I work with the Forest Stewards Guild and I've been involved with this project for the last year or so. And I guess I can just hand it off to the next person I see on my screen and that is actually you Paul.</p> <p>Paul: all right thank you. Paul Trianosky, I'm Chief Conservation Officer at the Sustainable Forestry Initiative</p> <p>Dakota: all right thanks, and Jen you're next</p> <p>Jen: hey guys I'm Jen Chandler the Southeast Region Manager with the Forest Stewards Guild working with the Dakota in Asheville.</p> <p>Aimee: good afternoon Aimee Tomcho. I'm a conservation biologist with Audubon North Carolina I'm working out of the mountains but I work statewide.</p> <p>Greg C: Hi everyone Greg Cooper, forester with The Nature Conservancy here in Asheville</p> <p>Dakota: all right thanks and then I think Mike Schafale you're next</p> <p>Mike: Yes I'm Mike Schafale with the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program</p> <p>Dakota: all right thanks and Michael Cheek</p> <p>Michael: hi guys Michael Cheek I'm the Assistant Regional Forester with the North Carolina Forest Service. I work in North Carolina.</p> <p>Dakota: all right thanks Michael and then the next one I see is a phone call and it's an 828 number two two six two six zero two</p>



Greg W: oh yeah that's me this is Greg Ward I'm the Fiber Certification Manager for Evergreen Packaging

Dakota: all right thanks everybody thanks for joining us today. Yeah so first I just want to kind of give a little reminder about the overall goal of this project and I do have a little recap presentation that I'll share in a second but just wanted to restate that the purpose of this project was to gather different stakeholders from the southern blue ridge ecoregion in North Carolina to help identify practical pathways and actions for conservation of critical forest related targets which can favorably uh be favorably affected by forest management especially through SFI's fiber sourcing programs and so today for today's meeting we're just going to go over the information that's been gathered over the last year and share the connections that we've identified and discuss possible next steps for 2021 and answer any remaining outstanding questions um so with that I'm going to share my screen and hope that zoom cooperates with me

Paul: and Dakota I'll just add to that and say that one of the things we'll talk about towards the end of the call is uh is our next steps together whether there's you know what might be the future of uh any collaboration that we decide to continue with or um you know what do we think would be the right best next thing to do and we'll try to entertain that discussion as well

Dakota: right exactly thanks Paul alrighty

Dakota: so really in phase one of this project the Guild and SFI began our partnership to develop this project in this region of north Carolina and it really started as a question and that question was what conservation targets in the southern blue ridge or ecoregion can be positively influenced by responsible forest management and SFI's fiber sourcing programs so as a part of these efforts we first hosted the southern blue ridge forestry and conservation stakeholder meeting in Asheville back in September of 2019 and that event brought together natural resource experts and practitioners such as yourselves to help identify these conservation targets that have the potential to be positively influenced by forest management and from this meeting we first crafted a vision for the potential outcome of this project and that was healthy and resilient working forests in the southern blue ridge ecoregion of north Carolina and also during this workshop and in other meetings after that we brainstormed on priority conservation targets and the threats to those targets and how we might collectively positively influence those targets

Dakota: okay so some of you might remember this conceptual model and don't get too overwhelmed because I am going to go a little bit more in depth onto each one so yeah don't get overwhelmed with this right now but eventually we did pare down our collective thoughts into this road map that could guide further action and this just shows a basic overview of our conservation targets over on the right in green some identified threats to those targets in orange and red and then the current proposed strategies in yellow to overcome those threats and eventually positively influence these targets to reach our collective vision and so now I'm going to kind of focus in on our two conservation targets that we talked about and that is

mountain cove forests and mountain oak forests and mountain oak forests really occur really expansively all across the region on foothills and slopes and ridges and are dominated by various species of oak and mountain coal forests are music communities and the low to middle elevations in mountain regions and foothills and they often are very diverse containing a lot of mesophytic tree species and an incredible incredibly rich understory and the goals for both of these targets are the same and that is to restore and maintain ecologically appropriate force structure and composition and I really decided upon these two forest types because we felt that they could benefit the most from implementing responsible forest management at this point in time

Dakota: so going back to the conceptual model now that we've kind of talked about our conservation targets there are several factors that threaten the goals of these two forest types and often these threats stem from human factors or have been aggravated due to human influence and so you all and others that have been involved in this project have identified these following threats affecting each forest type each of which may be mitigated through forest management activities and so this recap will only focus on the four circled threats and that is deteriorating aquatic health altered species composition incompatible forestry practices and lack of ecologically appropriate fire okay so up in the left-hand corner we have the deteriorating aquatic health and we decided that particularly in mountain coal forests this poses a serious threat to forest health and as altered hydrology and stream sedimentation impact the overall health of the watershed and among other things the limitations of BMPs in certain forest types can lead to a decline of aquatic health of a system and it was discussed that that is a really important piece in conservation work in this region and you can see in the picture that this culvert while it is appropriate for water flow it's not necessarily appropriate for wildlife movement as it is about four inches up off the ground so areas like this have some room for improvement and then moving into incompatible forestry practices such as hydrating or selective logging they leave less valuable species and damaged trees perform which reduces overall stand diversity and silvicultural options and so these forestry practices that don't reflect natural disturbance patterns often reduce the ecological quality of a stand and lead to a lack of important habitat elements such as coarse wooded debris and then eventually also degrades the stand enough where it's no longer valuable for timber as well

Dakota: and then moving down into altered species composition which is due to a variety of factors can decrease the richness and diversity of forest sites and within this threat there was kind of an encompass of like increases in invasive exotic plants increases in common invaders such as red maple and tulip poplar and fire inhibitor species in fire suppressed areas as well as woody encroachment in open sites and this picture I love and hate because it's an oak pine it's supposed to be an oak pine woodland but because of fire suppression all the little green that you see is red maple and it's just completely taken over the site so that is definitely a big threat in this area and then kind of tied to that is the lack of ecologically appropriate fire which is due in part of um to fire suppression of the region over the last century or so has changed the



disturbance regimes and species compositions of several forest types and namely mountain oak forests which is really crucial to this project

Dakota: okay and so after identifying the threats we moved over into the yellow bubbles which is which were our strategies where we discussed ways that we could implement restoration efforts and be successful and so using this conceptual model as kind of a road map we really picked out these seven strategies but during our last couple meetings and in other conversations we really identified uh the circled five that are the most feasible and attractive for projects such as this and those were exploring enhancing BMPs based on local ecological needs developing decision making tools for management use education and outreach increasing the capacity for prescribed fire and increasing collaboration on restoration treatments

Dakota: all right so I just want to go in a little bit to how those five strategies will really help us reach like that vision of healthy and resilient working forests in the southern blue ridge ecoregion so the first one is education and outreach and this strategy was well accepted among the working group and everybody else and has a high potential to make a broad impact and so this objective really works to improve the implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate trainings and education programs and so within this it was decided that the topic should focus on the threats solely within mountain cove and mountain oak forests and how management really impacts these systems and this overall will increase awareness about why it's important to integrate conservation efforts into everyday forest management and the next one increasing capacity for prescribed fire um like I talked about the altered fire regimes have played a pretty heavy role in determining the successional and compositional trajectories of the forest types namely mount oak forest within this region and there is a concern about like uh altered species composition

Dakota: um within these forests and so we really talked about how increasing capacity for prescribed bar is going to be really important for restoration of these systems and kind of playing off each other and working together which goes into the next strategy really well which is increasing collaboration on restoration treatments so we all know that there are a lot of agencies and organizations committed to the health and quality of forests in north Carolina particularly western north Carolina and so the opportunities for collaboration like there's just a lot of opportunity for collaboration and so leveraging these relationships and these entities and working together in a way that works towards a common goal will be really crucial and really important and really fun to just reaching our vision and our goals

Dakota: all right and number four is developing decision making tools for management use and so when making management decisions I know we all use like a huge toolbox of resources like ecotype data and soil mapping and lidar and so much data um and we discussed that developing additional tools specific to the southern blue ridge could aid in increasing the sustainable practices implemented in these forests um and something that we did recognize within our discussions what that there are currently a number of really powerful tools in

existence um kind of like nature serve and all the natural heritage data it's sometimes there's a gap in making this data accessible to landowners and loggers that are actively making these management decisions in the field and so we discussed several actions that could be done to really increase these opportunities for landowners and land managers to get these tools
Dakota: and number five exploring enhancing BMPs based on local ecological needs so SFI's fiber sourcing program does require its participants to adhere to all state forestry BMPs and this is really beneficial to all landscapes because when implemented we all know that BMPs contribute to protecting water quality and the conservation of aquatic species of a region but it was discussed that there might be gaps in certain ecosystems where water quality practices can reach beyond existing BMPs to have more of a positive impact so we discussed that there's some actions within that strategy that can be done to really influence these forest types in a positive way

Dakota: all right so that brings me to so what do we do next um so there are opportunities for responsible forest product companies participating in SFI's fiber sourcing program to improve positive forest conservation impact by integrating the outcomes from this project into their sourcing policies and outreach efforts and so for today we really want to hear from you and continue our conversation because we know that there are limits to what an SFI program participant can reasonably implement towards um conservation targets especially when multiple entries are required and so by partnering with other entities better suited to implement certain management practices such as you all we can achieve broad conservation impact that includes commercial harvesting and non-commercial tending treatments and so we have several questions today to guide our discussion that we can go into later but before ending this presentation and moving forward we do have a couple questions about what we've talked about so far and so that first one is within these connections that we have drawn from your input do you have any additional strategies to add and feel free to just chime in whenever and I can move around the slides or um whatever suits you best

Mike: this is mike Schafale I don't know if this is the place but I'm going to want to ask this at some point you can decide where to put it I heard you say once again selective logging is a problem and so what are you proposing instead and I certainly hope it's not clear cutting because ecologically that's a whole lot worse

Dakota: yeah and Paul I saw you unmute um and you might be talking about this but when we talk about selective logging it's it is different than um like selection cutting like selective logging is really more like diameter limit and high grading so really just picking out the best and leaving the stand in it not as good condition um but Paul I don't know if you want to add anything else to that

Paul: yeah mike I think that's a great question I think it's a really important point of clarification so I think I think the important thing here is to try to determine practices and it's going to vary by standard vary by local condition and aspect and slope and all the rest to try to determine what sorts of management practices and harvest approaches actually are going to



render the kind of stand diversity in the residual stand that really is going to get you where you want to go and so we talk about um the mountain cove forest and the mountain oak forest those are pretty broad descriptors and so I think what probably should happen is that there should be some greater specificity made with regard to the kinds of um particular harvest strategies they're going to get you where you want to go with regard to the um the conditions and the components of the residual stand and I don't think that we've gotten to that level of detail in this approach I also want to point out that there's confusion between the terms right and so we heard um that Dakota mentioned I had diameter limit versus uh selective cutting versus you know um other kinds of uh monikers this all sound quite similar and so the key is what is it that you're taking what is it you're leaving and the focus here I think should be on uh what's being left in terms of ensuring that diverse the appropriate diversity of the residual state so mike I hope that helps you out

Mike: well i mean that that all makes sense I but I do think the way you're wording things if this is going to get published is unclear and that perhaps you should put clear cutting in there is one of the big problematic uh harvest techniques too uh because I mean it's it almost always and unless you have a stand that's completely planted or completely off-site trees is more ecologically destructive than hydrating even though hydrating can be a problem uh so I mean if you just add that as an appropriate harvest techniques maybe that's all you need to do but and then that can help steer people to better things rather than worse things

Paul: right well thanks mike I appreciate that comment and I guess um I'd want to learn more to be honest you know my experience is um and it's been a long time since I've worked directly in the in the hardwoods of the Appalachians that I have a long time ago and my experience is that uh you know even clear cutting depends uh quite a lot on scale and the degree to which it's harvested and also what sort of stand improvement activities take place following the clear cutting and so um there's a lot that depends on the local circumstances of what the residual desired residual stand needs to be where the desired regeneration approach needs to be and so uh but I do want to assure you this that we aren't intended to publish with a capital P any of these results this really is intended to be an exercise that will be um useful to the parties involved here in helping us to know how to work together towards trying to improve conditions on the ground and so um I've been uh pleased by the diversity of thought that's been brought to this group and I think you know the what we can do is try to combine those ideas and come up with the best possible solution so um it may be in many cases that clear cutting is really a bad idea and I would I would concede that that's the point uh that we need to take note of but I also don't know that it's appropriate for us to you know categorically exclude it and so I think we just need to consider that and figure out what those details look like

Paul: and I'd be happy to hear from others because I know we have other experienced foresters on the phone who do work in these in these stands and in these uh conditions on a daily basis and I'd be very interested in reactions to any of that discussion

Michael: Paul this is Michael cheek uh I would second your thoughts there it really is stand dependent uh objective dependent species dependent there are a lot of situations where clear cuts are very uh very warranted and needed and then there's some conditions where it is not so there's a lot of variables depending on the specific stands and landing objectives uh that drive what the proper harvesting method might be

Paul: thanks Michael and again you know by training and forestry my experience on the ground is uh it the goal of course is what is the residual stand and what is the uh what are the conditions look like that you're driving towards and I think if we gain clarity about that we can we can also then gain clarity about the practices needed to get there

Paul: okay um so I'm going to echo Dakota's question again because I think this is important with regard to additional strategies you know I just mentioned my observation it's just mine that the idea of mountain cove forest and mountain hardwood forests or mountain oak forest I should say are those are those are stand conditions and types that we might recognize but it's also a pretty broad brush and so I guess what I'm really wondering is with regard to harvest strategies in particular because uh fiber sourcing entities that are certified to the SFI fiber sourcing standard are engaged in procurement of fiber and so I can see intersection for example with educating landowners through outreach about the conditions that we're striving towards I've just admitted my impression that we need a little greater detail on what those conditions should be I can see influencing landowners and also procurement practices with regard to the details of bmp implementation I think that's really an interesting avenue as well what other kinds of strategies especially at the point of harvest might be of value to us to think about with regard to the targets that have been focused on

Dakota: yeah and I think the next question as well which I'll put onto the screen kind of gets into this as well but if anyone wants to add to it too but if implemented will the identified actions and strategies through this process favorably affect the conservation targets that you're interested in and what's missing so this kind of goes along the same thread of what Paul just asked is yeah what's missing and what else can you see fitting into this and affecting our goal Aimee: positively I think we've talked about this to some degree before but coordinating impacts on a landscape level is going to be important um I think as a whole but certainly you know where birds are concerned uh that shifting mosaic that we like to talk about um so I guess um I would just add that the temporal scale of any kind of treatments, or you know things that we do in the future, be communicated and planned so that all of us have input about how that potentially could impact the resource

Paul: Aimee do you have a sense or does anyone on this call have a sense about the um you know I'm fascinated by the shifting mosaic idea too and I think that can be a really useful construct uh to try to think about you know what practices are uh need to be implemented more frequently or less frequently and uh is there is there uh clarity on that desired condition that's been generated by somebody whether it's TNC eco regional planning or maybe



Audubon's work or others that that give us would give us some greater clarity about what that mosaic should look like in those conditions

Aimee: yes it's been talked about ad nauseam with the national forest plan revision I can't say that there's a an absolute standard of agreement but um Katie Greenberg US forest service did write up a substantial chapter about range of variation of disturbance in our region that we could get from her but in general I think that it's fairly it's and I might get pushback on this but it's like 30 percent disturbance or and I don't know the scale of that like but um you know kind of landscape level shifting

Mike: yes the scale is crucial because the modeling that came up with those numbers the state transition models, most of that disturbed area early so-called early successional is in very small gaps and gaps that are forming anyway I mean they're forming in the background so if you had an old-growth forest that nobody was messing with that's what you would have somehow that's gotten turned into we need thirty percent in young stands that are results of clear cuts or some sort of cutting and that is completely ecologically unrealistic most of that is stuff that takes care of itself in mature stands if you have dog hair young stands then you don't have it uh but it's most canopy gaps are very small canopy gaps the size of even relatively small harvest units or something that very seldom occurs in nature I think

Paul: thank you mike

Greg C: yeah I've seen so we have like a number of different natural range of variation models for the southern blue ridge for the smokies for the Cherokee, north zone, south zone, Nantahala-Pisgah being probably the newest one that we have for the southern blue ridge um but I think maybe a useful place to focus in on, maybe not as much the early seral condition, but maybe more the open forest condition or specifically for fire adapted oak forests, the montane forest, because there is a need for restoration intervention in those places. That would look like [procurement] combined with prescribed fire and that's a I don't know the percentage off top my head for what that looks like across the landscape but it's a reasonable chunk

Paul: thanks Greg and so can you help me to understand I'm trying to picture uh that that condition and so is that something that could be you mentioned prescribed fire is that also something that could be um uh sort of rendered as a result of uh certain types of silvicultural practices too

Greg C: yeah absolutely um and you know it really varies depending on kind of the amount of disturbance that is traditional in that type of ecosystem so it would be a pretty open forest for a pine-oak-heath which has low merchant ability low value could have decent fiber in it usually kind of harder to get through areas and probably a less open structure in kind of the more mesic sites the kind of the more montane sites um but so the trick is if you open it up if you open up some of these drier oak forest types you'd have to pick the sites where either you can burn or if it's a low enough site index or not a place where oaks are competitive enough you might be able to attempt to get there through thinning alone um kind of a low side index site at south aspect low quality where oaks can compete so there is a place again I think I think

thinning fits in really well here there's a lot of literature pointing that you know fire can get you there, but it's going to take a long time. If you want to be a little faster, combining it with silvicultural treatments such as thinning would be the way to go.

Mike: but if you thin it without fire you're increasing mesophication you're creating conditions for maples to come in uh and in fact fire will get you there eventually uh I think some of the reason people think it won't is because they have an unrealistic idea of what it wants to be with fire and without people cutting it but one place where there is a great need is where you've already got mesophication seriously underway where you've got a lot of like red maple that's in your understory and coming up in your canopy that everybody agrees doesn't belong uh and so that's a place where you know that could be a good fiber source where getting rid of that would be you know something to make everybody happy yeah but you know if you take a stand that's got a lot of oak cover and you take out half the oak trees or you go into lower sizes you're actually taking out 80 percent of the oak trees to create an open stand I think that's justifiably going to be controversial in a lot of oak forests

Paul: and from what I hear you guys saying especially if it's not combined with prescribed fire right

Mike: what was that

Paul: if I understand you correctly that's especially problematic if you don't combine it with prescribed fire in order to maintain the species distribution that you're looking for right

Mike: yeah i think if you don't combine it with prescribed fire you know at moderate intervals going forward not just one time then you're going to end up something that everybody agrees is undesirable

Paul: yeah that's what I'm picturing as well. I get it

Mike: you're going to end up with a canopy

Paul: yeah so this is really helpful to me and uh you know Jen and Dakota all admit it was to going off script a little bit but I'm trying to get a picture of not just the fact that we're trying to conserve these forest conditions the cove forest and the oak forest but trying to get a better understanding of what conditions within those forest types really are considered to be either lacking on the landscape or desirable and especially as they might be affected by silviculture and that's really what I'm trying to zero in on the reason for my questions so I appreciate the indulgence of everybody

Dakota: yeah absolutely no worries I mean the last question I had on this slide was just any further questions and so if there's not um I might go ahead and just pass it off to Jen and then you Paul to facilitate the next all section

Jen: if there's no further questions um first off thanks to Dakota so much for putting together a good recap of the project kind of taking us from where we started to where we all now are now and thank all of y'all for your input for the additional strategies and for the actions that need to be taken um I'm going to kind of pivot this discussion in a little bit of a different direction now so for the next bit of time I'd like to really focus on taking these targets that we've identified the



threats and the strategies and thinking through potential ways in which we can collaborate to provide practical pathways and actions for the conservation of these targets particularly those that can be favorably affected by forest management especially through SFI's fiber sourcing programs so to really get us into this mindset I wanted to walk you guys through some example what we're calling action impact chains that we put together these are 100 hypothetical but they could represent a way through which procurement entities could collaborate with non-profits and agencies to influence responsible forestry practices as they're laid out in SFI's fiber sourcing standards we chose to outline uh action impacts for the top three threats and strategies that were originally identified by this group and I'm really excited because one of them has to do with prescribed fire actually so I'm glad that last discussion um took place but if we want to go ahead and get into these I think Dakota is going to share the screen again and again these are just very much some examples of how maybe we can we can come together we can actually get some good work done so I'll start with this first one uh the first action impact chain example focuses on the mountain cove forest target and threats to the aquatic health caused at least in part by bmp limitations this group suggested that education and outreach may be a potential strategy to mitigate these threats one thing I do want to point out and Paul made a point of this earlier before this meeting started when we talk about education and outreach one thing to keep in mind is that education and outreach is not the end product it's not the goal it's the tool we use to get to the goal of healthier working for us so how can we use this tool of education and outreach to get to our actual final target our final goal so just keep that in the back of your head um one thought that we had for this action impact chain was that program participants could host events for foresters and loggers that speak to the importance and the uniqueness of aquatic habitats in our region and actually provide training on the best ways to operate responsibly in these systems both within and beyond BMPs and we hope that this training in this education would be a direct action that reduces negative impacts from harvest by providing this education and actually influencing foresters to operate in a manner that reduces threats to aquatic systems so again

Paul: and Jen I just want to add something to this I think this is really important something a lot of folks may not understand is that the um the fiber sourcing program one of the fundamental tenets of the fiber sourcing program is logger training and bmp implementation and so I didn't want anybody to think that this isn't already going on to some degree but I think the point that's being made here is that they're to the extent that there could be enhancements to those practices made that are specifically responsive to the conditions in this region and the particular forest types that we're especially interested in that's the kind of additional detail that could be built into these programs so the good news is that there's a there's a foundation of longer training and engagement with loggers and uh in harvesting professionals and foresters that already exist and so we're looking at that as an opportunity to kind of springboard these particular details that are going to and you're the benefit of the targets that we have in mind

Jen: absolutely thank you so much for the clarification Paul that's a very good point so that is one of the action impact chain examples that we identified as possibly having very positive outcomes on this target of mountain cove forest in a way in which collaboration could be had among all the parties um another action impact chain if you'll be the next slide Dakota thank you so much this kind of got me excited because of the conversation we had at the end of the last section about the mountain oak forest and the fire so this moves this action impact chain moves further out of the realm of education and outreach and more into actual boots on the ground work so this example focuses on the second identified target the mountain oak forest you folks identified altered species composition as a significant threat in this system and cited the lack of ecologically appropriate fire as the primary factor that contributes to this threat and I think we've reiterated that um over the past 10 minutes or so um the strategy that y'all identified to overcome these this threat and the contributing factor was to build capacity for prescribed fire so an action impact chain that that we developed just hypothetical again could include procurement entities connecting with local nonprofits and agencies with fire personnel in order to increase the implementation of prescribed fire particularly post-harvest on appropriate sites and this leads of course to an increase in ecologically appropriate fire and an increase in the health growth and regeneration of fire dependent species in these mountain oak forests so collaborations that involve um increasing our ability to put good fire on the ground to build these more healthy resilient forests

Jen: I'll move on to the third one and again this is just an example but the last action impact chain takes us back to our target of mountain cove forests and the threat of altered species common uh composition as a result of a lack of active forest management so one strategy that was identified to address this threat is an increased collaboration on restoration treatments an example of altered species composition that's very common in this area and that can result from improper management is the influx in non-native invasive species so a potential boots on the ground action that could address this threat could be a procurement entity partnering with a local organization non-profit or agency to actively implement invasive species control and removal both before a timber harvest and again after the timber harvest um and this this collaborative action this this work that's being done in the field will kick off a trajectory toward healthier more resilient working mountain cove forests

Jen: so I guess I just I just want to make clear that with each one of these targets each one of these threats that I just spoke about this is just us putting our brains rubbing our brains together and saying okay as a collaborative effort how could we have a positive impact on these targets by using our strategies to reduce the threats that we have already identified and this is some of the ideas that we came up with and some of the ways that we could work uh that we think we could possibly work with procurement entities to better the forest to increase the health of the forests um in a very synergistic way but I do have a question for you all thinking through some of these action impact chains but also about the information that Dakota presented at the beginning of this meeting the work that you guys have done so far the



discussions that we had at the beginning of this meeting um if you were to continue involvement in this project we wonder which actions would actually interest you the most so again actions um our actions are addressing the strategies to mitigate the threats to our target so what actions would interest you the most and I think Dakota is going to put a poll up on zoom so that you can read through all these options and think about in the work you do what's of most interest to you and what would be most impactful for you and please feel free to choose as many as you'd like

Jen: about another 30 seconds

Dakota: all right I'm going to end pulling in five four three two one

Jen: these polls are like an even more exciting version of the new year's countdown

Dakota: okay I'm going to share the results

Jen: okay can everyone see the results those of you whose pretty faces I see give me a thumbs up maybe awesome thank you okay so if we were to continue involvement which um actions would be of most interest to us. It seems that kind of overwhelmingly the action that is of most interest to everyone would be actions that impact an ecological niche for example aquatic habitats or fire adapted communities. Those of you who answered this as one of your top actions do you want to elaborate why you chose this specifically and if it's an ecological niche that wasn't mentioned here what is the niche you're thinking about um and maybe how can you see yourself involved in these actions or your organization involved in these actions

Jen: and just a heads up I'm going to ask the same thing for actions that directly influence landowners and procurement foresters so get the wheels turning Greg I think I saw you on mute

Greg C: yeah so TNC I mean we'd be super like our goal our objectives for the wholesale employees are fire adaptive communities and we'll continue to be that um as far as how we're involved we already have uh several fire crews in the area we have a 20 person fire crew based in Asheville right now that goes out and supports but it's focused on public lands um that's one of the way the under the MOUs are written now and where the agreements are it'd be a whole other thing for private lands and that's something that we've talked about um but and I've talked about that with fire practitioners in the area and there's lots of barriers there but definitely something that I think we would want to pursue and kind of explore that path as well

Paul: okay Greg if I can ask a question or two and follow up I'm just curious the uh so I'm familiar with the impediments of burning on private lands and I get it's very it's it can be very difficult and the liability issues and all the rest um but if uh if some of those could be surmounted because I think there are examples uh elsewhere in the US south in particular Florida and Georgia some of the examples I know and some of them involving TNC as well if some of those issues could be surmounted in some way how valuable might it be from TNC's perspective to be to sort of have exposure to those landowners where harvest is taking place so that those burning practices could be brought in post-harvest as you know as a way to achieve some greater scale is that something that that might be of interest

Greg C: in my opinion we'd have to be I mean I know currently our strategies don't necessarily align with that but going forward we have to address that I mean private lands of the fire adapted ecozones and in the southern blue ridge, 60% are owned by private landowners. And so it has to be a priority going forward and if we can if we can get past you know liabilities and you know who can run those burns um and have it at an appropriate scale where it makes sense so you're not you know if you can do a you know a 2000 acre burn on public lands a 50 acre burn on private lands you're going to choose a 2000 acre one every day give them limited burn days but it's not to say that it's an either or you can do both um just based on capacity um and you know when you can get to it and so yeah I think I think TNC would be interested I know internally we have interest um to pursue that right now it's not necessarily a stated goal but it very well can be in the future got it all right thank you

Jen: did anyone else want to share um I guess why they chose what they did or how they see themselves involved or does aquatic and fire adapted pretty much cover okay um by the way I'm going to put right now my email and Dakota's email in chat so that if you just don't have the chance to speak up and share information about any of these you can always feel free to email us because we're very interested in your and your thoughts about this um it seems the next two most popular um Paul I think you're muted

Paul: yeah I'm sorry I just added mine as well um always happy to hear from folks about uh about what we're thinking about in terms of uh trying to motivate uh positive conservation outcomes through these methodologies you know I'm happy to discuss it thanks

Jen: thank you so much unfortunately Paul I don't have your email memorized like I do mine in Dakotas so thank you um let's see the next two more actions that directly influence private landowners and actions that directly influence the actions of procurement foresters does anyone want to elaborate on this at all or how they see their organization directly involved in these actions

Jen: and I'll follow up with that um since no one's elaborating on that another thing we'd like to think through is these actions that you've identified influencing private landowners procurement foresters ecological niches um how or can you envision these actions tying in with SFI's fiber sourcing program and Paul you might want to provide a little bit of clarification there but I'll pose that question

Paul: yeah let me just offer and Greg ward I might uh turn to you in a moment uh you're obviously the most familiar with the fiber sourcing programs but let me just say that um the entities like evergreen that have responsibility uh under the SFI fiber sourcing certification um among the things that they do that might connect easily with this project is to they develop your relationships with landowners quite often uh through uh the procurement of fiber which means harvesting operations but also uh you know it's not so unusual for fiber sourcing entities and I don't know about evergreen but it's not so unusual for them to engage with landowners on a longer term basis as well and to gain some degree of familiarity and access which I think might be a value the other thing I would say is that the responsibility of those



entities is to ensure that that g1 g2 species are protected through the course of harvest where they have a direct engagement with those landowners so there's uh and to utilize BMPs on harvest operations those are the sorts of things that have specific application towards ensuring uh you know uh do no harm at least with regard to conservation related outcomes and so um the other things at a sort of a larger more remote scale I would say is that they engage in landowner outreach which can be diffuse from the standpoint of public announcements and participation workshops to landowner outreach reached through their loggers or foresters directly on the ground during the course of harvest and procurement activities and so it operates at both scales and the other is logger training as I mentioned before logger training can be a great way to sort of infuse some of these ideas if there's longer training that's specific to this geography then some of these ideas that are brought forward here could become part of longer training programs and therefore you're reaching directly to people that are holding the saw during the course of those activities but um well let me just pause there that's uh generally speaking that's the sort of approaches that fiber sourcing takes the idea is excuse me that um an organization like SFI which was started as a standards organization now we're a broad-based sustainability non-profit organization but we still employ the use of standards for certification and certifiable sustainable forestry practices we recognized early on that most forests are not certified most forests are never going to be certified uh something like 90 percent of the world's forests are not certified and so you have to come up with other approaches and one of the ways that we thought would be most impactful is to try to find a way during the course of procurement activities which is when things can either go very well or very badly that during the course of those procurement activities that there's a there's an opportunity there to try to elevate sustainability on those places and that's really what that private sourcing idea is about and so let me pause there and Greg I don't know if you have anything that you'd like to add as well

Greg W: um no I think you summarized it pretty well uh Paul um we do reach out to landowners especially through our FM certificate and help guide them kind of through the certification process we meet up we work with through our contractors sawmills everything else to work to communicate with the landowners at that level and introduce them to the concept of certification and what that means to sustainability to sustainable forestry practices um so we try our best to out there um some landowners we do find have some reservations um especially whenever you get when things become more stringent um and require a lot of say for signatures on forms and everything uh we have one landowner liking it to the uh something to like the us government they said that they uh they weren't sure if we were trying to take their land rights they're like no so we had to get carefully go through the uh some of the forms and letter of acceptance and things like that and just let them know that this is really just a you know demonstration that you are wanting to manage your forests sustainably um and that you are aware that you are enrolled in this program so some of it is really kind of taking kind of these preconceived notions that landowners have about certification and trying to just

um get rid you know just let them know that this is not you know we're not in any way shape or form trying to take any land rights away through this it's really just a simple uh exercise to show that you are actually wanting to sustainably you know harvest your forests and things of that nature so we've had some really good conversations and some pretty interesting ones that I guess

Aimee: I would just add that um you know any entry point either with landowners or land-based entry point should be maximized and there's so much so many of us scurrying around doing so much good work uh if we can share those messages at any entry point that's good um you know like Greg said whether they're absorbed or um just a piece of paper that goes in the trash after you leave at least we've you know tried to maximize that entry point and um having worked with private landowners for the last seven years uh being able to share information with them has always been welcome whether it's something that they thought they wanted to know or not and even if you don't get the reaction that you think you might when you're talking to them face to face I've got data that shows that there's you know a decent call back rate or at least a thought pondering that happens afterwards and so um you know I would just I would just say that if we can maximize that you know the effectiveness of any entry point we have by whether that's you know providing Greg and the people who are you know actually talking to the landowners with information um through a training or just flyers or website link you know knowing how to do that effectively also just any entry point with a landowner is good if they're interested in other programs you know what programs can you share with them that it's a huge wide range but something that just pops up in my radar which may or may not be relevant at this point I think Kendrick was on but jumped off um we're starting our statewide breeding bird atlas which is kind of a gridded survey of birds across the state or one of the only southeast states that don't have that and so that atlas and so you know having access to a place to survey even might be a way that you know that landowner or SFI or whatever could give back I don't know um but just thinking out loud you know how can we maximize that entry point is you know something that I think we could have on our list

Jen: thank you so much Aimee I think that's a really good point um and something to be really cognizant of as we move forward does anyone else have any comments or thoughts about this

Jen: okay I did notice that one person indicated actions that impact identified target species that that person whoever you may be and you can say it out loud if you want to now but if not um if you could just um shoot us an email with that species because that'd be very I I'm a wood thrush girl hellbenders they bite so um but if there's another um another species that you were thinking of uh please feel free to shoot it my way

Jen: all right so I'm going to move on then to our next our next section um so while completely hypothetical at this time and I do want to reiterate that um we want to gauge interest in the development of a pilot project of sorts so this hypothetical pilot would basically connect non-profits and other agencies with an SFI certified fiber sourcing company such as evergreen for example and the two could devise an action plan maybe similar to those we fleshed out in



those action impact chains or in our discussions we've been having during this meeting or just something completely novel but the overall goal of this very hypothetical pilot would to be to use the tools and the people in the southern blue ridge to protect and enhance the health of our identified forest targets so maintaining those high standards in SFI's fiber sourcing standard

Jen: um so Dakota's going to put up a poll and all we would like to know or what we'd like to know now I guess is what would be your interest level in pursuing a pilot project that includes direct engagement with an SFI certified fiber sourcing company like evergreen

Dakota: and it is anonymous

Jen: yes let's make that clear

Paul: and carries no commitment I know this is a small group and it's hard to be but so anonymous in this circumstance uh but you know we're trying to understand whether or not uh it feels to me like some of the ideas that we've talked about are potentially intersecting appropriately with uh fiber sourcing related activities and so we're just looking to see if there are folks who would be interested in doing that

Dakota: yeah, I'm going to go ahead and end polling Jen if that's what you were going to say

Jen: yes it was all right fantastic so we have um it looks like two folks very interested in pursuing some sort of a pilot project, one somewhat interested, and one unsure so I guess I will ask is there is there any clarity that needs to be given um I guess for whoever was unsure or somewhat interested is there is there any clarity that that you need I don't want to I don't want to pick somebody out of the group either like I don't know who it was so um maybe we could get at that question through another question

Paul: yeah maybe a way to ask the question Jen would be to say um you know what sorts of information would uh elevate people's uh potential level of interest what kinds of information might we add uh that that uh would help to do that whether regardless of what level they're currently at

Mike: I was the unsure and then I may unsure mainly because of my time availability and what kind of commitment would be called for

Jen: yeah that's fair I think that's a very fair concern

Jen: let's see so thinking then about some hypothetical pilot project where organizations are working directly with SFI certified procurement does anyone have any stipulations or requirements or perhaps concerns aside from time which I think we all have that would constrain their ability to participate in such a project

Aimee: well i do um Audubon has uh come from high not from me and there's a history with SFI and Audubon that I'm not entirely um in invested in or knowledgeable about but there's ways to get around that locally um and so and certainly stuff like information provision or um that sort of thing is totally fine so um I'd I'll just speak up from it from my

Paul: thank you thanks Aimee and let me just mention too that we've had um you know there's been some variable history and uh let me say it that thankfully it was not anywhere in this part of the country uh but uh that there has been um some concerns raised uh you know uh that

about that relationship at a local level like I say elsewhere we've had great success here in the east in a couple of different states and a couple of different opportunities and working directly with Audubon on substantive projects on the ground and that's not been a problem thank goodness and it shouldn't be right you know if we're doing things together that makes sense and that are near to the benefit of the uh of the conservation targets and that everybody should be happy and we found that to be true so everybody's got ancient history

Jen: see any other requirements stipulations concerns that um y'all or your organizations would have uh and this is not necessarily negative or positive just any barriers or any considerations about um

Paul: or stipulations about outcomes you know what would the outcomes need to be um well let me just let me just pause there you know Greg is aware that I worked for the nature conservancy for a long time and so I have some ideas about how the nature conservancy might think about the biodiversity outcomes for example not to pick on Greg and TNC but um you know but those are the kind of things I think would be informative to help us to understand you know what kind of outcomes would you need to get

Greg C: you know for me I don't know just I mean I don't think it would be we're not looking at like TNC I don't think TNC lands be on the table for a pile of projects um specifically um but you know partnering and giving information and helping you know the process and being involved the process of a project to make restoration work through fiber sourcing and procurement foresters and southern blue ridge would be something we were very interested in um you know I would yeah I want to see it work I want to see you know essentially low value timber move off woods and restoration effort I want to see that I think TNC wants to see that

Paul: thank you

Jen: all right guys well there's no other comments about that I'm actually going to turn this um the rest of the meeting over to Paul um to go through another couple questions and then just to discuss some wrap-ups and next steps

Paul: yeah thank you um I appreciate that Jen and uh let me just start by sort of um reiterating what this whole idea was about we had the notion that if uh we know that our fiber sourcing certified companies are out there on the ground doing certain things that are required of them bmp implementation protection of glg2 species for example and um and so uh we know also that they do other things that are required of them that that have uh sort of fuzzier edges right like landowner outreach and uh the engagement of uh of loggers and longer training there are certain parts of logger training that are very hardened and hardwired like training about bmp implementation and you know uh you know how not to leave oil on the log deck you know there are some things that are part of every training however there's other aspects that could be change shifted adjusted you know made malleable so we had this idea that if we utilized the power of the fiber sourcing on the 90 of forests that are not certified maybe we could make some shifts and changes there that would benefit the outcomes in the forest and this is the process that we came up to with to try to do that so we had a year-long agreement with the



forest stewards guild to provide some leadership to that I think they've done a super job I've really enjoyed working with Jen and Dakota and uh prior to that nick as well and uh just uh found that to be a very positive engagement across the board but now this thing is wrapping up and so what we're thinking about now is okay what next what do we do with this and I can tell you that there are some of the concepts here that I want to have a discussion with uh certainly with evergreen but also even more broadly with other fiber sourcing entities that might operate in this region and say what can we do with the with the actions that they are already implementing to try to uh you know adjust it at the margins in the way that I talked about what things might we be able to do differently or better that could benefit the outcomes in the forest as we've been informed by all these partners so I'm going to do that for sure however I think there's also room for all of us to think about is there room for this collaboration to continue to think together either about a pilot project you know and I heard some uh some uh you know a little bit of support for the concept of a pilot project on the ground what would that look like where can we go and work together and try to see if we can you know promote more positive outcomes through this fiber sourcing approach and by the way one of the things that occurred to me just by this discussion one of the things that fiber sourcing might offer an opportunity for these procurement entities are unlikely to go out and sponsor a prescribed burn because that's nothing but an expense to them from the standpoint of fiber procurement however what they might be able to do is open the door of landowner interaction right so they could they could do a couple of things they could change the way in which the fiber is procured so that the residual material is different than what it had been before that's a possibility it also could be that the BMPs and the way that they're implemented on the ground could be adjusted a bit to accommodate these aquatic resources it could be that there's connections made because they connect with the landowners connections between those landowners and entities that could do prescribed burning on the ground so there are some things that I can envision there that could work and so the question here before us is do you all see the value of continuing to collaborate together as a group and if so should that focus on merely continued collaboration around trying to clarify conservation outcomes so I offered my observation that I thought the outcomes were still a little fuzzy notwithstanding that we heard some more details today about composition structure um you know the density of residual stands and those sorts of things I think there's some work to be done there should we collaborate around that is that a possibility is that of interest or should we collaborate around a pilot project on the ground let's just get into it and see if there's a region that we might try to affect and try to affect the landowners that are that are uh having their timber procured and try to see what we could do that would be a positive move with those landowners within a certain geography what's of interest to this group and the possible answer is also Paul please leave us alone we've done all we could do you know and I'm open to that possibility too although I hope that's not it

Greg C: I think there's real opportunity coming up here specifically in you know evergreens wood basket with the hopeful uh Pisgah CFLR coming out the you know the what does it stand for my flooring just blank completely um but basically a lot of this forest restoration thing is that what that is yeah the forest landscape restoration initiative yeah um and so which extends beyond foreign service boundaries and would include things like fuels reduction um and allow the forest service to potentially pay for uh prescribed fire outside of forest service boundaries on private land so I think there's a real opportunity to have a project that involves fiber sourcing with a follow-up you know treatment that is going to benefit both forest service and the private landowners within a certain area so I think there's ways to look at evergreen's wood basket specifically to potentially roll out a pretty cool project relatively quickly here

Paul: okay neat now Greg let me just ask it sounds like you're pretty close to the um the forest service's processes and maybe the implementation of the CFLR or cooperative forest landscape restoration I think I did get that right CFLR program so is that are those connections something that you might help bring to the table I don't know I'm not trying to commit you to anything I'm just trying to understand what the scope of people's connections are

Greg C: yeah um so TNC and others here are also involved with the Nantahala-Pisgah partnership which you know currently has um a new subcommittee I guess of uh implementation and so kind of coming up with strategizing future projects and so yeah we are tied into kind of upcoming forest service projects and kind of know what they're adjacent to and honestly you know SFI and um evergreen can be more nimble than the forest service is ever going to be as far as getting products on the ground fast but you know we can have a timeline for when those project forester is going to happen and I think once the CFLR is in place I think it's relatively quick um as far as how you can roll out dollars and as far as where the agreements are put in place so I think I think yeah I would be well positioned to know those things

Paul: all right thank you yeah

Aimee: I would say um as far as coordinated effort and this goes back to the species specific thing that was me I wasn't very helpful in that survey I checked all those boxes I think but um you know uh in the southern Appalachians at certain elevation in certain places uh harvest benefits golden wing warblers I always hesitate to mention that because it's uh used too much to justify early successional habitat in my opinion um but I think supplying Greg or whoever with those parameters to have in his binder when he talks to landowners and if they meet that qualification to pass them to me either before or after harvest or whatever and talk about the options for maintaining whatever they create that works uh for that habitat for golden wings I think that's going to be a good way to keep our organizations connected and to keep that conservation moving

Paul: okay thank you

Paul: you know I think what you said is really important Aimee and let me just underscore it you know the idea that you know we hear about early successional habitat and all of a sudden



you know that becomes the thing and it becomes a justification at least in the minds of some uh for you know overdoing it and for assuming that that's the that's the key uh outcome that we're going for and that's just an oversimplification I really like the idea that um that you and other partners might be in a position to help really tailor that understanding on the ground you know so that when a particular harvest takes place it could reflect some really sensible thinking about what should happen in that place as opposed to the sort of you know hit everything with the same ball bat all the time and so um so I really appreciate that that brand of thought

Paul: anyone else

Paul: well uh so what I'm hearing is and I'm going to make a an assumption uh that you know for the people who are not here as well but I have a feeling that the idea that there would be some opportunity created by direct engagement with landowners through the fiber sourcing approach and with also through the training and outreach opportunities to present themselves really sounds like it could have some traction and some benefit uh for some critical outcomes and so you know I'm thinking um uh Jen and Dakota I'm thinking that's going to be that should be the focus of how we think about moving forward and uh at this point you know it's already uh late November thanksgiving Christmas are coming up everybody's otherwise occupied I had already suggested that Jen and Dakota myself probably should get together in a couple weeks just kind of sort of process all this information as well as the uh the final report that they owe to SFI as a consequence of this engagement and the contract that we have with them so we're going to be covering all of that but I think that we ought to shoot for some time maybe mid-January kind of ginning this thing back up again and thinking about okay what could be our next steps if we really want to bring this down to the ground how do we do that and I think really get down to some brass tacks and make sure the people in there are in the room with us that have those aspects of implementation uh Aimee and Greg in particular I appreciate your all's involvement in this thing and the kind of practical thinking you brought to it and so you know let's make sure that uh you know mike and mike and others that are uh that are interested and have this kind of fundamental knowledge that we need to bring to bear that we get together and really figure out what that could look like and who are the willing partners and how would that happen you know because that's really where we're trying to get to you know there's some things that I can converse with fiber sourcing entities about based on these conversations but I really like the idea even more than that like the idea of being able to bring some of these concepts down to the ground in real specific instances and seeing where they take us you know so I'm excited about that possibility so if that sounds agreeable to everybody maybe we could try to uh to gear up that discussion for the new year and really get down to some brass tacks and look at pilot approaches

Paul: I see nodding heads sounds good

Paul: I was told earlier today that what I was nodding it was making a sound and so I can only assume that was rattling um but I don't know I don't know if you all heard that or not um I

think we're at the conclusion of this discussion anything anybody else wants to mention anything we might have forgotten or failed to touch on or anything like that

Dakota: I think that's it from my end Paul um yeah, I think that's it just after this meeting we'll definitely compile some of the notes and keep folks up to date and be in touch

Paul: excellent yeah we'll definitely be in touch and uh again I'm thinking mid-January just you all know already what my thinking is uh we'll talk soon I'm sure but um but I'm thinking maybe mid-January would be the time to kind of uh to set up to ensure that that conversation is set up prior to that time so we could get off to a good start in the new year

Jen: looking forward to talking to you in 2021

Paul: awesome hey thanks everybody I really appreciate it appreciate you sticking with us through the process and uh through this call this afternoon in particular it helps uh you know get a set for a good place in the new year so I'm excited about it thanks

Dakota: thanks everybody

Paul: all right have a good day

all right thank you bye

