

SDC 2019 Annual Meeting Abstracts

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Title: Fostering Health Forests and Communities through Collective Action on Landscape Management



In the western US, the health of forests and the safety and economic vitality of rural communities are interdependent. Precipitated by restructuring of the global timber industry and tightening of environmental protection laws, forest management has dramatically declined in this region, along with local wood product mills and associated industries, public services, and rural well-being. In the absence of logging and thinning, dense stand conditions have developed that are now vulnerable to insect and disease outbreaks, drought stress, and large uncontrollable wildfires. Forests once managed to support schools and jobs in timber-dependent communities, are now considered risky places. Recognizing that traditional centralized government has failed to protect forests and the communities that depend on them, new decentralized networks have emerged to govern forested areas. In these networks, private, tribal, state, and federal landowners act collectively to manage multi-ownership forest landscapes with the goals of forest restoration, fire protection, and economic development. We compare and contrast six cases of collective action for the management of forest landscapes in the western US. We identify the governance arrangements through which state and private actors manage forest landscapes, the socio-economic factors that enable and constrain management of landscapes for the goals of forest restoration, fire protection, and economic development, and the policy tools and institutions that foster forest health and rural community well-being in the western US and other similar regions.