



INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY (CBF)

Defining CBF

Roots and Dimensions of CBF

The concept of CBF has its roots in resource management schemes that have sought to incorporate a set of diverse voices into the decisions that affect the long-term health of forests. These include town forests that emerged in colonial New England, urban forests, and watershed councils. It is based in a collaborative approach, rejecting an “us versus them” attitude toward forest management, and is an inclusive process that seeks to improve social equity and provide opportunities for underserved groups.

What CBF Means

CBF is founded on the premise that human communities and natural ecosystems are interdependent and that the successful cooperation between diverse groups is integral to the sustainability of forest ecosystems. Communities of place are integral to resource sustainability because they represent a scale and set of interactions with ecosystems that people can understand and affect. However, communities of place cannot be sustainable in and of themselves; they must cooperate with others on ecological, social, and economic issues that supersede social or political boundaries and involve communities of interest. It is these considerations that guide the principles of CBF: stewardship, process, investment, and monitoring.

The CBF Principles

Stewardship

The commitment to maintain and restore the health of the land is the underlying principle guiding CBF efforts, as the concept of stewardship naturally draws diverse groups together. This management approach is not output- or product-based, but rather concerned with the condition of the land. This respect for the land is paralleled by a respect for people, their communities, and their relationship to the land.

Process

The decision-making process must provide a meaningful and effective way for communities to engage. The process must be inclusive, accessible, transparent, adaptable, and provide an atmosphere of mutual learning where participants from diverse backgrounds can learn with and from one another.

Investment

CBF constitutes the active management of natural capital assets, and proper long-term investments must be made to ensure the sustainability of those assets. Short-term investments in forests have traditionally recognized only the resource output capacity of forests, leading to rapid local resource depletion that neglects the long-term social and economic health of surrounding communities.

Monitoring

It is important to properly monitor CBF projects in order to better understand what works and what does not. These monitoring systems should engage all stakeholders, promote collaborative learning and adaptive management, ensure accountability, and ensure that corrective action is taken based on lessons learned throughout the process.

The Emergence of CBF Policy

A Strategic Approach

The implementation of CBF policy is aimed at reducing the conflict amongst interests that has hindered efforts to manage forests on the basis of ecosystem health. The collaboration of stakeholders should be framed in both a horizontal and a vertical context. CBF policy activities should begin with CBF practitioners forming networks, thereby building capacity to understand and engage in policy efforts. A national policy agenda must then be developed to identify and communicate the basic principles and messages for CBF practitioners. Once on the ground networks have articulated their policy goals, there must be collaboration up through national policy audiences in order to develop policy recommendations and affect real policy action.

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