

ROUNDTABLE ON SUSTAINABLE FORESTS

Meeting Summary
November 16, 1998
Washington, D.C.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Tim Mealey of the Meridian Institute, welcomed participants to the third meeting of the Roundtable on Sustainable Forests (the Roundtable). (Attachment A contains a list of the attendees.) He thanked Bill Imbergamo, Executive Director of the National Association of State Foresters, for providing the meeting space at the Hall of States. Mr. Mealey then initiated a round of introductions and turned to Phil Janik, Deputy Chief, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), for opening remarks.

Phil began his comments by observing that progress is being made in sharing the leadership of the Roundtable as evidenced by the process now being called the "Roundtable" rather than the "Chief's Roundtable." He referenced his October 26, 1998 memorandum to Roundtable participants in which he intended to clarify the relationship between the Roundtable and other related efforts sponsored by the Forest Service and other organizations. He acknowledged that the Forest Service may have inadvertently created some confusion about the relationship between the Roundtable and a number of other Forest Service activities regarding sustainability. He reiterated that the action plan that had been developed by the Forest Service's Sustainable Development Issues Team (SDIT) on the *Integration of Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management in the USDA Forest Service* was developed prior to the initiation of the Roundtable and actually contemplated the formation of something like the Roundtable. It also included a number of other activities that had already been initiated prior to the formation of the Roundtable. One of these activities was the workshop on the "State of the Knowledge on Implementation of Criteria and Indicators" that took place on November 3-4, 1998.

Phil stated that the Forest Service intends to update and amend its internal action plan regarding implementation of the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators (C&I) based on discussions that take place in the Roundtable. He commented that the Roundtable should be made aware of any related related events that may be sponsored by Forest Service or any of the other the organizations represented on the Roundtable. For example, he noted that he was aware of some satellite events on sustainability occurring outside of the Roundtable, including the November 18, 1998 meeting on the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF). Phil urged Roundtable participants to share their knowledge about other similar events with the group.

Phil also referenced some other recent related events. He commented that, at a meeting on watersheds in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, there was high interest in forest sustainability issues. In Oregon, at the meeting of the National Network of Forest Practitioners, Phil became aware of many successful regional grass-roots efforts on sustainability. He noted that sustainability is also at the top of the list of issues for the Yale University's Forestry Advisory Board. Phil also noted that there is a lot of activity in the western part of the U.S. where Western Governors are

promoting the concept of “*Enlibra*,” (balance and stewardship) as an approach to environmental management. In addition, Phil commented that the Forest Service is prioritizing its commitment to C&I. He explained that the Forest Service has begun to focus on using C&I as performance-based success measures.

Phil then commented on the tension between the subject of C&I and other dimensions of forest sustainability. He observed that some people would prefer to address C&I separately from the other dimensions of sustainability, and others would like to address them together. While Phil felt that either approach would achieve the same end, he asked Roundtable participants to be patient and recognize that people have different approaches to solving the same problem. He urged participants to focus on the value of the forum and work together to find an approach that would allow the Roundtable to proceed into its substantive agenda.

Following Phil Janik’s opening remarks, Tim Mealey provided the group with an overview of the agenda for the day. He explained that, after the Meridian Institute had distributed a draft agenda for the meeting, he had had a number of conversations with many Roundtable participants and tried to reflect their comments and concerns in the revised agenda which was distributed at the meeting (and is included as Attachment B). He also referred the participants to a draft “Charter” for the Roundtable (the final version of which is included as Attachment C). Mr. Mealey commented that he hoped this meeting would represent a transition for the group from discussing organizational issues to identifying actions for the future. Mr. Mealey stated that the agenda focused first on the draft “Charter,” including the question of whether and how to consider rangelands, and later on identifying key elements of a Roundtable action plan the overall aim of which is to further the implementation and incorporation of the Montreal Process C&I into existing forest inventory and assessment programs.

Draft Charter

Mr. Mealey began the discussion by explaining that the draft Charter was essentially a revised version of the “Prospectus” that had been distributed after the September 10, 1998 Roundtable meeting. Mr. Mealey noted that the revisions to the “Prospectus,” and its conversion to a “Charter,” were based on feedback received subsequent to the distribution of the original document. He then highlighted where the two documents differ as follows:

- The Purpose section is the same with the exception of the last sentence in the first paragraph that now includes a sentence that reads, “An initial focus of the Roundtable process is to refine and promote utilization of the Criteria and Indicators...towards achievement of this goal.”
- The section that addresses the Initial Focus Areas was reorganized slightly to give even greater emphasis to the initial focus on C&Is.
- The Charter focused solely on the topic sustainable forests and removed language that implied sustainable rangelands would be co-equal to the focus on sustainable forests.

Mr. Mealey commented that, the draft Charter was intended to make it clear that while the initial focus of the Roundtable process was implementation of the Montreal Process C&I, it could remain open to addressing other issues related to the goal of sustainable forest management. He

also noted that, based on conversations with Roundtable participants, including rangelands alongside of forests in the Roundtable process raised technical and political questions on where to draw the line between forested land and rangelands. In addition, there was concern about whether the right set of people had been identified and/or self-selected to discuss rangeland issues as part of the Roundtable. Mr. Mealey suggested that the Roundtable consider identifying a smaller group of individuals drawn from current Roundtable participants that could begin a discussion of how C&I could be used to monitor and assess the sustainability of rangelands and other ecosystems.

Mr. Mealey then proposed, for the purpose of determining the best way to move forward with the Charter, that the individuals in attendance at the meeting agree to consider themselves to be the de-facto but temporary steering committee for the Roundtable process. Roundtable members agreed to the proposal.

After the opening remarks, Mr. Mealey invited participants to comment on the draft “Charter.” While many Roundtable participants were supportive of the “Charter” as proposed, several members of the group raised questions and concerns.

Some participants noted that the Charter did not reflect the agreement to develop an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a common set of national measures, develop a national platform for inventory and assessment activities, and contribute to a *National Report on Sustainable Forest Management* by 2003. These objectives were stated in a document entitled *Statement of Support for Sustainable Management* which was circulated for signatures at the very first meeting of the Roundtable process held on July 14, 1998 (attached hereto as Attachment D, along with the signatures collected as of 7/14/98). It was suggested that the Charter for the Roundtable process should build upon the agreement to develop a MOU.

It was noted that the document distributed at the 7/14/98 meeting was not signed by some of the agencies that are currently part of the Roundtable process. One participant explained that the lack of signatures was not due to a lack of support, but because of a reluctance to show agency commitment to the specific objectives listed at that time.

The facilitator pointed out that the Charter did address the overarching goals expressed in the 7/14/98 document but it did not specifically mention the proposed use of a MOU, or the goal of producing a national report by 2003. In addition, the Charter did not use the terminology of “developing a national platform” based on the feedback that was received at the September 10, 1998 Roundtable meeting.

Some members did not want the proposed interagency MOU to obscure or consume the Roundtable process. They felt that the agreement between the federal agencies should be separate from the Charter. Another member observed that forests are not owned solely by the federal government, consequently the Charter is broader than the federal agencies. She viewed the Roundtable process as a partnership effort. One member recognized the need to achieve greater clarity and coordination regarding the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies of the federal government. It was suggested that once these roles and responsibilities are clarified, others from the outside of the federal government, including states, private industry, and non-

governmental organizations, could develop symbolic equivalents to the proposed federal interagency MOU. Another member asked if it was the responsibility of the Roundtable to help the agencies develop the MOU? Phil Janik responded that he would take the responsibility of obtaining commitment from the agencies that had not signed the July 14, 1998 commitment, and would also help to prompt the drafting of the MOU. The member suggested that it might help if there was some interaction between members of the Roundtable and the agencies in this process. Phil Janik made a commitment to complete an MOU with signatures of all willing federal agencies and that the MOU would be based on the Roundtable Charter. Phil saw no reason to solicit additional signatures on the old July 14, 1998 document.

The group also discussed the question of whether to include rangelands as an explicit focus of the Roundtable process. One member observed that the transition from rangeland to forested land was a seamless ecological continuum and that delineating between the two environments tended to be driven more by political considerations than scientific or technical considerations. He stressed the need to apply the Montreal C&I to a seamless ecosystem, including rangelands. Another participant agreed with the underlying scientific basis of this comment but had a different conclusion. It was pointed out that the Montreal Process itself was one of several international processes that have focused on the development of C&I for sustainable forests. These efforts grew out of the Forest Principles contained in Agenda 21 from the Earth Summit. This participant stated that the technical question of where forests begin and end is one that has received significant attention in these processes, and should continue to receive attention in the Roundtable process. Nevertheless, this participant expressed the view that the primary focus should continue to be “sustainable forests” rather than “sustainable forests and rangelands.”

Other participants pointed out that the Roundtable process itself was prompted and initiated by stakeholders who are primarily concerned about forests. Several participants stated that if the Roundtable decided to include rangelands as an explicit topic to be addressed by the Roundtable, it would have to be expanded to include a broader representation of individuals with rangeland interests and expertise.

Mr. Mealey clarified that the intention in the draft Charter was that the Roundtable process would continue to include people with an interest and expertise in rangelands sustainability issues, but that the primary focus of the process would be on forests. He suggested that the Roundtable process could also play a role to help initiate and provide information to a similar process that would be aimed at applying C&Is to rangelands.

Several members supported the idea of forming a smaller group drawn from current Roundtable participants to identify any ongoing or “satellite” efforts that may be exploring whether and how the Montreal Process C&I could be utilized to monitor and assess sustainability of other ecosystem types, including but not limited to rangelands. It was suggested that this small group should strive to include other knowledgeable people who are not currently part of the Roundtable. Another individual suggested that the small group should try to establish mechanisms to ensure the exchange of information between the Roundtable and any such “satellite” efforts.

One participant commented on the importance of the Roundtable monitoring related efforts of other groups. He suggested a steering committee could be used to help the Roundtable track other efforts where sustainability C&I are being used, or are being considered for use, to track and report on progress towards sustainability in the area of rangelands and/or other ecosystems or sectors of society. Robert Hendricks, from the USFS Office of International Forestry, offered to provide the group with information on C&I efforts within the Forest Service related to the mineral and energy sectors.

Preliminary Discussion on the Elements of an Action Plan and Based on the Initial Focus Areas of the Draft Charter

The group began a discussion on the need to develop an action plan for the Roundtable that could be used to guide its efforts to focus on C&I implementation. Forest Service representatives distributed copies of an internal action plan that had been developed by the Sustainable Development Issues Team (SDIT) of that agency (Attachment E). However, they stressed that this was only an internal document that preceded, and indeed contemplated the formation of, the Roundtable process. They stated that the Forest Service's internal action plan on implementation of the C&I will be revised, as necessary and appropriate, to reflect the direction that is taken by the Roundtable. In other words, the Roundtable process is the process the Forest Service intends to use in determining what future actions it may take to implement the Montreal Process C&I.

In the course of grappling with preliminary ideas about an action plan, the group returned to the section in the Draft Charter on *Initial Focus Areas*. The draft that was distributed at the start of the meeting included four subtopics: institutional coordination, scientific and technical underpinnings, international connections, and communication and outreach.

In summary, Roundtable members agreed that the Roundtable process should:

- Include individuals with expertise and interest in the application of C&I to rangelands, but maintain a focus on sustainable forests, rather than sustainable forests and rangelands;
- Focus initially on the implementation of the Montreal Process C&I, leaving open the possibility that the Roundtable may include other issues associated with sustainable forests at some time in the future; and
- Find a way to build upon commitments expressed at the July 14, 1998 meeting in the form of signatures from a number of federal agency officials which committed their agencies to the development of a formal MOU clarifying roles and responsibilities associated with implementing the Montreal Process C&I. The Roundtable Charter will be the principal focus in developing the MOU.

In agreeing that the initial focus of the Roundtable Process will be on implementation of the Montreal Process C&I, the group also clarified that this will include a discussion of the policy choices and implications relate to the implementation of C&I. It was also clarified that and “refinement” of the C&I should take place as part of and in the context of implementation, rather than making an effort to refine the C&I prior to implementation.

Based upon the discussion, a second version of the Charter was distributed during the afternoon session of the meeting. This final version of the Charter (which is included as Attachment C) reorganized the initial focus areas as follows:

1. Institutional Coordination and Commitments – How should agencies and non-governmental organizations demonstrate ongoing commitment to C&I implementation? Who is collecting and/or reporting data related to the C&I and what are the gaps in data collection and/or reporting? Who (i.e., what agency or institution) should play the lead role in collecting and/or compiling both missing data or to avoid duplicative data collection efforts related to C&I? And, how to achieve improved intra- and interagency coordination between the various existing and ongoing sustainable forest inventory and assessment mechanisms?
2. Policy Issues Related to Implementation of C&I – How should existing forest inventory and assessment programs such as Resources Planning Act (RPA), the Forest Inventory and Assessment (FIA) program and Forest Health Monitoring (FHM), as well as other integrally related but broader assessment and reporting efforts, such as those that are taking place under the Governmental Performance and Review Act (GPRA), be harnessed and utilized to further the goal of C&I implementation? As part of the implementation process, how should the Montreal Process C&I be refined, over time and if necessary, to enhance their scientific and technical underpinnings?
3. International Connections – What are the outputs from or inputs into the ongoing deliberations of the Montreal Process that will affect domestic implementation of the C&I? How is the non-legally binding commitment of the U.S. to implement the Montreal Process C&I related to and other international processes and commitments related to sustainability of the nation's forests and how should these interrelationships be addressed?
4. Communication & Outreach – What steps should be taken to promote a greater awareness of and support for the goal of sustainable U.S. forests, as well as greater support for utilizing the Montreal Process C&I as the principal means of measuring national progress toward the achievement of this goal.

In deciding to maintain a focus on sustainable forests, rather than sustainable forests and rangelands, the group agreed that some Roundtable participants might play a role in helping rangeland stakeholders initiate a separate process on the application of C&I to rangelands. However, this was seen as an ancillary function of the Roundtable process, rather than a primary goal or objective of the process.

Members of the Roundtable recognized that there may be a need for some type of steering committee in the future to help guide the Roundtable process and facilitate the coordination of the Roundtable with other related efforts. The Forest Service and the facilitator agreed to keep all Roundtable participants informed as steps are taken to address this need.

Next Steps and Action Items

The group decided that the next Roundtable meeting should be a one-day meeting during the week of February 22, 1999. *(Since the meeting, we have determined that February 24, 1999 from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. will be the best date.)*

The group agreed to take the following next steps in preparation for developing and agreed upon action plan (the participants who volunteered, or were volunteered, for each action item are indicated under each item.)

- 1) **Federal agencies** – A designee for Phil Janik will work closely with Chris Jauhola and Paul Geissler to coordinate involvement and input from all relevant federal agencies on:
 - Moving forward with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding C&I implementation (Janik will take responsibility);
 - Conducting an “institutional gap analysis” to determine what the various federal agencies are currently doing or planning to do regarding C&I implementation and where might there be big pieces missing; and
 - Building on prior analyses, complete a “data gap analysis” to determine what C&I-related data is currently being collected and by whom (i.e., what federal agency), what C&I data might easily be collected with a small additional amount of effort, and what C&I data is currently not being collected and would require new resources to begin collecting.
- 2) **Non-federal participants** – Julie Jack, Suzanne Mangino or Keith Argow, Terry Bates, Mike Washburn, Bill Imbergamo, Bill Mankin, Robing Grove, Dominic Della Sala, and Mike Higgs (as liaison to the Forest Service) agreed (or were volunteered) to:
 - Explore whether there might be some symbolic equivalent(s) to an interagency MOU and, if so, what might they be, to capture the commitment of the non-federal stakeholders to C&I implementation;
 - Undertake an effort to determine “who is doing what” outside of the federal agencies (i.e., are there any data collection efforts that are taking place outside of the federal government that might have some relevancy to implementation of the Montreal Process C&I and, if so, what are they, who is involved, how might the data be used, etc.)
- 3) **Find out about any “satellite” efforts on use of sustainability criteria and indicators for rangelands and/or other ecosystems/sectors** – Joel Holtrip or Bertha Gillam (as designee for Phil Janik), Bill Imbergamo, Robin O’Malley, Lee Delaney (as designee for Chris Jauhola), and Rob Hendricks for information on minerals and energy sectors:
 - It was agreed that the results of this effort will be a brief written description, rather than an agenda item for the next Roundtable meeting, about any “satellite” efforts where criteria and indicators are being used, or being considered for use, to track and report on progress towards sustainability in the area of rangelands and/or other ecosystems or sectors of society.
- 4) **Compilation of agreements/commitments of U.S. Government, other than those entered into the “Montreal Process,” related to: a) C&I implementation; and b) sustainable forest management more generally** – Ellen Conway of the State Department volunteered to

compile this information which will build on the packet provided after the July 14, 1998 meeting of the Roundtable. The information will be reviewed to determine what commitments are missing on C&I and Sustainable Forest Management.

5) **Develop the outline of a communication and outreach strategy for Roundtable process –** Bill Banzhaf, Bill Imbergamo, Paul Geissler, Julie Jack, and Carl Holguin.

Staff from the Meridian Institute will be available to help with the logistics and/or facilitation for each action item group, as appropriate. However, they will focus their efforts on action items # 2 and # 5 unless otherwise requested. All action item work products should be submitted to Tutti Tischler at the Meridian Institute by January 29, 1998 via e-mail at ttischler@merid.org or facsimile at 970-513-8348 in preparation for the February 24 meeting of the Roundtable.

Closing Comments

Following the discussion on next steps and action items, the group requested some additional time to explore some of the concerns regarding the decision not to include rangelands as a focus of the Roundtable.

A representative from the rangeland community reiterated his concern about applying a political definition to the distinction between forests and rangelands when ecosystems are seamless. He explained that distinctions between land types are complicated and are not based solely on use. This participant observed that there are different definitions of the term “forest,” and the resulting distinctions between land types may differ, depending on who differentiates and what they consider. He suggested that as a result of removing rangelands as a focus of the Roundtable, the impetus to form a “satellite” group to address the implementation of C&I to evaluate sustainable rangeland management is diluted.

A representative from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) asked for clarification on why rangelands should be included as a Roundtable focus when rangeland issues are addressed under other programs. She reiterated that unless a broader array of rangeland stakeholders express the need for utilizing C&Is to assess rangeland sustainability, it would be difficult for BLM to support the inclusion of rangelands in the Roundtable process or the formation of a satellite group for that purpose. She supported relying on a smaller group to explore whether there may be such interest rather than fully incorporating rangelands into the Roundtable process as it was currently organized.

Other members reiterated their support of a smaller, related group effort to explore the application of C&I to rangelands and other ecosystems. One individual suggested taking advantage of the progress made toward measuring sustainability in forests by using it as a model for other ecosystems.

Mr. Janik stated that he saw as an opportunity to advance the application of C&I to monitor progress toward sustainable rangeland management. He viewed input from the rangeland community as important to the Roundtable process and expressed the hope that representatives with rangeland expertise would continue their involvement in the process.

The attachments for this meeting summary are not available.