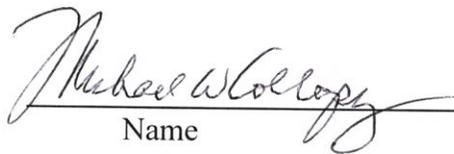


**Final Report to the Bureau of Land Management**

**The Great Basin Consortium 3: A Landscape under Fire  
(Cooperative Agreement #L13AC00294; JFSP 13-2-01-4)**

Submitted by

Dr. Michael W. Collopy  
Assistant Vice President for Research  
University of Nevada, Reno

 6/10/14  
Name Date

## Final Report

### **The Great Basin Consortium 3: A Landscape under Fire (Cooperative Agreement #L13AC00294; JFSP 13-2-01-4)**

Submitted by

Dr. Michael W. Collopy  
Assistant Vice President for Research  
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Dr. Todd Hopkins  
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The Great Basin Consortium (GBC) is an established group of partners who meet annually to coordinate and collaborate on science delivery to achieve sustainable and resilient Great Basin ecosystems and human communities. Support provided through this cooperative agreement was used to help reduce the registration costs associated with the third regional conference hosted by the GBC on 9-10 December 2013, on the campus of the University of Nevada, Reno.

This conference brought together a wide range of resource managers, fire science practitioners and scientists in a context that provides for information sharing, synergistic interaction, and new and creative ways of collaborating to address the major threats to the Great Basin. Wildfire is changing the nature of the Great Basin on an unprecedented scale; burning 3.3 million acres in 2012 alone. The Great Basin is North America's largest desert encompassing 135 million acres, nearly 75% of which is managed by federal and state programs.

#### ***Conference Co-Sponsors***

The Consortium partners include the Great Basin Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (GB-CESU), the Great Basin Environmental Program (GB-EP), the Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GB-LCC), the Great Basin Research and Management Partnership (GB-RMP), the Great Basin Restoration Initiative (GB-RI), and the Great Basin Fire Science Delivery Project (GB-FSDP). Our mission is to increase communication and coordination among the partner organizations in order to enhance the effectiveness of their research, management, outreach and funding activities. To that end we have coordinated the web presence of each organization through a Consortium website (<http://environment.unr.edu/consortium/>).

The activities that the Consortium supports are broadly interpreted by the partner organizations. Research includes scientific studies, science delivery, and science application. Management includes land uses such as grazing and restoration activities such as prescribed fire, weed control, and seeding. Management also includes identifying priority treatment areas from landscape assessments, project planning, on-the-ground implementation, and post-treatment monitoring and evaluation. Outreach includes disseminating science-based information by conducting education and extension activities, including a web-based clearinghouse of information, webinars, social media, stakeholder forums, workshops and symposia. Funding activities refer to efforts to support research, on-the-ground project implementation, and outreach through various sources including grants, agency budgets, state legislative and federal congressional sources, private donations and gifts

The GB-CESU is a partnership for research, technical assistance and education to enhance understanding and management of natural and cultural resources of the Great Basin. It is part of a national program that provides a funding mechanism for transferring funds from federal partners to universities to conduct projects

The GB-EP seeks to develop funding for on-the-ground projects and related research and outreach education to facilitate landscape-scale, on-the-ground projects by engaging NGOs, state agencies and their coalitions, and the private sector in collaboration with universities and federal agency partners.

The GB FSDP provides fire and fuels science information to Great Basin land managers through a variety of venues, and builds direct connections between managers and scientists.

The GB-LCC enhances understanding of the effects of changing climate and other natural and human impacts across the region and promotes the coordination of science-based actions to enable human and natural communities to respond and/or adapt to those conditions. It is a DOI initiative working with stakeholders to develop landscape-scale tools and monitoring to address climate change and other regional stressors.

The GB-RMP promotes comprehensive and complementary research and management collaborations to sustain ecosystems, resources and communities across the Great Basin. It is a grassroots organization that provides a web-based clearinghouse of information for the Great Basin and mobilizes teams of researchers and managers to fund and implement projects that address priority science needs.

The GB-RI maintains and/or restores public lands in the Great Basin using science-based strategies supported by stakeholders by reducing the impacts of wildfires and invasive species.

### ***Conference Format***

The theme of the third Great Basin Consortium meeting was “*The Great Basin: A Landscape Under Fire.*” The conference was opened by Dr. Marc Johnson, President of the University of Nevada. Following his opening remarks, President Johnson introduced Amy Lueders, BLM State Director, who gave a keynote address entitled “*BLM’s Landscape Approach Taking the Next Step Beyond the Boundaries*” ([http://environment.unr.edu/consortium/downloads/gbc3-presentations/Final\\_GBC\\_Amys%20Keynote.pdf](http://environment.unr.edu/consortium/downloads/gbc3-presentations/Final_GBC_Amys%20Keynote.pdf)).

The remainder of the conference was comprised of the annual business meetings of the six partner organizations and five plenary sessions organized around the following topics:

- Sage-grouse Visioning and Panel Discussion
- Discussion of High Priority Issues from Various Agency and Organizational Perspectives
- Joint Fire Science Program – Program Overview, Future Directions and Challenges
- Climate Change – Adaptation Strategies and Panel Discussion
- Challenges and Opportunities on the Changing Landscape Under Fire

The meeting schedule, information on each of the invited speakers, and abstracts of their presentations, was provided in the conference program that was handed out at the registration table and posted online ([http://environment.unr.edu/consortium/downloads/GBC-3\\_Conference\\_Program.pdf](http://environment.unr.edu/consortium/downloads/GBC-3_Conference_Program.pdf)). We explored the feasibility of videotaping the presentations and/or streaming them on the web; however, technical difficulties locally resulting in the meeting planning committee decide not to pursue these options. Instead, we have posted copies of the PowerPoint presentations given at the conference on the GBC website (<http://environment.unr.edu/consortium/conference3.html>).

The target audience for the conference includes individuals interested in increasing the effectiveness of collaboration in the Great Basin to address new and emerging issues; this includes federal, state and local governments; tribes; NGOs; elected officials, and private individuals. A list of the 165 registered meeting participants and their email contact information is appended to this report (Appendix 1); we also posted their names and affiliations on the GBC website (<http://environment.unr.edu/consortium/downloads/GBC%203%20Participants%20List-web.pdf>).

### ***Great Basin Consortium World Café Discussion Notes***

The last session in the conference randomly assigned participants to tables where they were then asked to review and discuss two questions, one related to planning for climate change and the other related to need for more collaboration and cross-program efforts. Each of the groups then reported out on the top three (or best) ideas that were suggested. These are summarized below:

#### Question #1

Many groups are actively planning for climate change. What specific climate adaptation actions should we be taking now for the Great Basin?

Responses: (Tables were asked to report out on their top 3)

#### *Table 1*

- Long-term monitoring
- Triage – what’s important and tied to money
- Collaboration

#### *Table 2*

- Water. More attention to conservation for urban communities on water availability for the future. Impacts that extreme events have on water availability
- Ecological Impacts. Soil potentials = ecological site potential. Research on plant community impacts (especially pollinators)
- Synthesis and Data. Clearinghouse of studies, like a data exchange to avoid duplication
- Understanding restoration Metrics. Invest for the future, with an eye toward the return on investment.

#### *Table 3*

- Pick winners and losers – what do stop doing?

- Focus on land treatments that will be successful
- Create climate change resistance where it counts
- Rethink post fire emergency stabilization and rehabilitation – it’s dysfunctional now
- Climate change will decreased rangeland productivity – grazing practices will need to change
- Long-term monitoring is needed

*Table 4*

- Water management, especially applied to cities
- Habitat connectivity
- Incentives for private landowners – use a neighborhood association concept
- Fire – get ahead of the curve somehow
- Key syntheses and decision support tools

*Table 5*

- Climate predictions and habit shift maps for managers
- Understand the variability in regional weather such as microclimates
- Increase flexibility of all permitting processes
- Identify regional guidelines

*Table 6*

- Ecosystem services in the future (for example, the increasing grape industry increasing in southern Idaho)
- Climate change could cause a decrease in forage (grazing) availability in lower elevations
- Action requires engagement of people: not just the agencies, states, etc... you need to engage the public as well

Question 2.

Many are talking about the need for more collaboration and cross-program efforts. What specific ideas do you have to increase the effectiveness of collaborations or partnerships? (Note: Participants moved to new tables between Questions 1 and 2. Tables were asked for their top “best” answer.)

*Table 1*

- For the next Great Basin Consortium use “Ignite” type sessions (5 min max time limit)
- Assign questions, transformative ideas. Pre-distribute responses to attendees and in the end focus on the two best ideas, then have the LCC fund those two ideas.

*Table 2*

- Create a central organization that funds all the studies (all money goes into one pot for redistribution)

*Table 3*

- Use Cooperative Extension efforts to bring the people together not the federal agencies

*Table 4*

- Use the “Southern Rules of Engagement” ([http://www.ntc.blm.gov/krc/uploads/412/10\\_MbN\\_rules-of-engagement.pdf/](http://www.ntc.blm.gov/krc/uploads/412/10_MbN_rules-of-engagement.pdf/))
- Use more teaching and communications methods, maybe utilize universities or professionals for this.

*Table 5*

- At the local and regional levels collaboration is OK and getting better. Often the ‘right people’ are not at the meeting though. Need to find a way for the lower levels of organizations to be empowered to act

*Table 6*

- Work toward a Secretarial (DOI) or Presidential Initiative for the Great Basin or sagebrush ecosystems (Top Down approach)

***White Paper on Increasing the Effectiveness of Collaboration and Communication in the Great Basin***

Consortium participants expressed an overarching desire of improving collaboration and communication to maintain sustainable ecosystems in the face of changing climate, staffing, and funding stability. The following are concepts and ideas extracted from the World Café notes which tables submitted following that event.

*New Collaboration Approaches Should Be Considered*

The Great Basin is a well-established geography and 50+ science, management, and conservation organizations using Great Basin in their name. This geographic focus creates a sense of unity that should be exploited further. Collaborative workplaces foster [innovation](#) which requires trust and familiarity to thrive. Novel staffing arrangements such as having multiple state and federal program staff are co-housed allow these natural synergies form. Likewise, Consortium participants expressed a desire for a centralized funding approach. Creating a pool of funding from which a science team could direct funds toward strategically chosen projects had been sued by several landscape-scale efforts (e.g., San Francisco Bay Delta, Everglades, etc...)

Recent [work](#) has shown that changing existing group dynamics by adding additional members causes increased distrust and decreases the group’s performance. A certain lack of change is also necessary in group dynamics. Additional research has shown that successful collaborations [rotated](#) control of the project back and forth between two leading partners. This rotating leadership process worked better than domineering or consensus-based approaches where a single partner controlled all phases of the collaboration or the partners shared control of every phase, respectively.

*Approaches for Improving Communication*

Conduct a social network analysis for Great Basin leaders or organizations to improve knowledge creation and sharing. Social network analysis views social relationships in terms of network theory, consisting of *nodes* (individuals within the network) and *ties* (relationships between the individuals, such as friendship, organizational alliances). Social network analysis

allows managers to visualize and understand the myriad of relationships that can either facilitate or impede knowledge creation and transfer.

*Try More Innovative Sessions at the next Great Basin Consortium*

Use an “Ignite” style session. [Ignite](#) is a type of event at which participants speak about their ideas and personal or professional passions according to a specific format (e.g., 5 minutes with a maximum of 10 slides). The event’s motto is “Enlighten us, but make it quick!”

Have a storytelling [storytelling](#) session. Everyone has a story about their work, and most people are both passionate and excited to talk their work. The key is to provide a focal topic, such as success over cheatgrass, and ask the presenter to provide a short story (orally) about their success with combating cheatgrass.

Get rid of moderators at [panel sessions](#). Force your smart, committed, verbose guests into a high-wire act without the net of the moderator. Get rid of the old hub-and-spoke format, and make them engage with both each other and the ideas.

*Overall Effectiveness of Conference*

Following the conference, a survey was sent to conference participants to gauge their satisfaction with the meeting and to get suggestions for future meetings.

- 86% of the respondents thought the meeting length was “just right”
- 64% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the information provided would aid in decision-making
- 78% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the conference was a productive use of their time
- Feedback was also received on topics and issue areas that should be a focus of the next meeting, as well as suggestions on changes to the format that we might use. These suggestions are being incorporated into the planning activities currently underway for the GBC-4 meeting that will take place on 17-19 February 2015, in Boise, Idaho.

## Appendix 1. Registered Attendees at the Third Great Basin Consortium Conference

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