WASHINGTON FOREST PRODUCTS ROUNDTABLE

Sponsored by the Washington Department of Commerce

Facilitated by the William D. Ruckelshaus Center

NE side of Rainer Image by Kate Watts

Western Forest Economists
Friday May 16, 2025 Meeting

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Image courtesy of Dept. Of

- Background on the Ruckelshaus Center
- Situation Assessment to Gauge Appropriateness of Collaboration on Issues Connected to WA Forest Products
- Convening & Facilitating the Roundtable
- What the Roundtable Has Done to Date
- Lessons Learned

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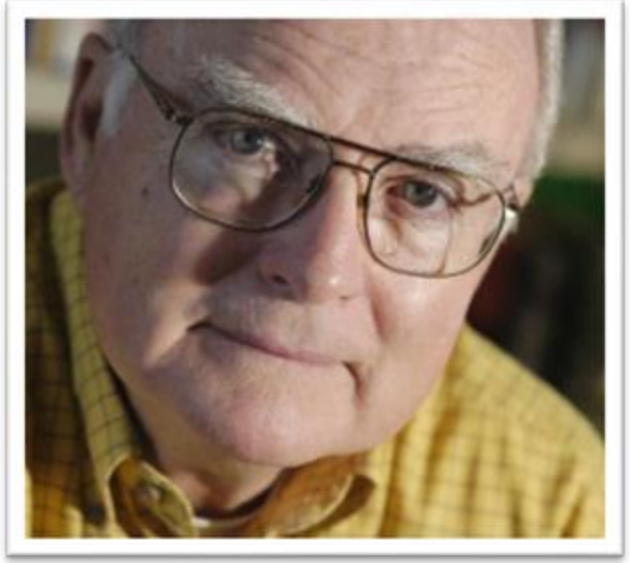
The William D. Ruckelshaus Center

We help governmental leaders, policy makers, stakeholders, and citizens work together to develop shared solutions to challenging public policy issues.

- Neutral resource for collaborative problem solving
- Improve availability and quality of voluntary collaborative approaches
- Advance teaching and

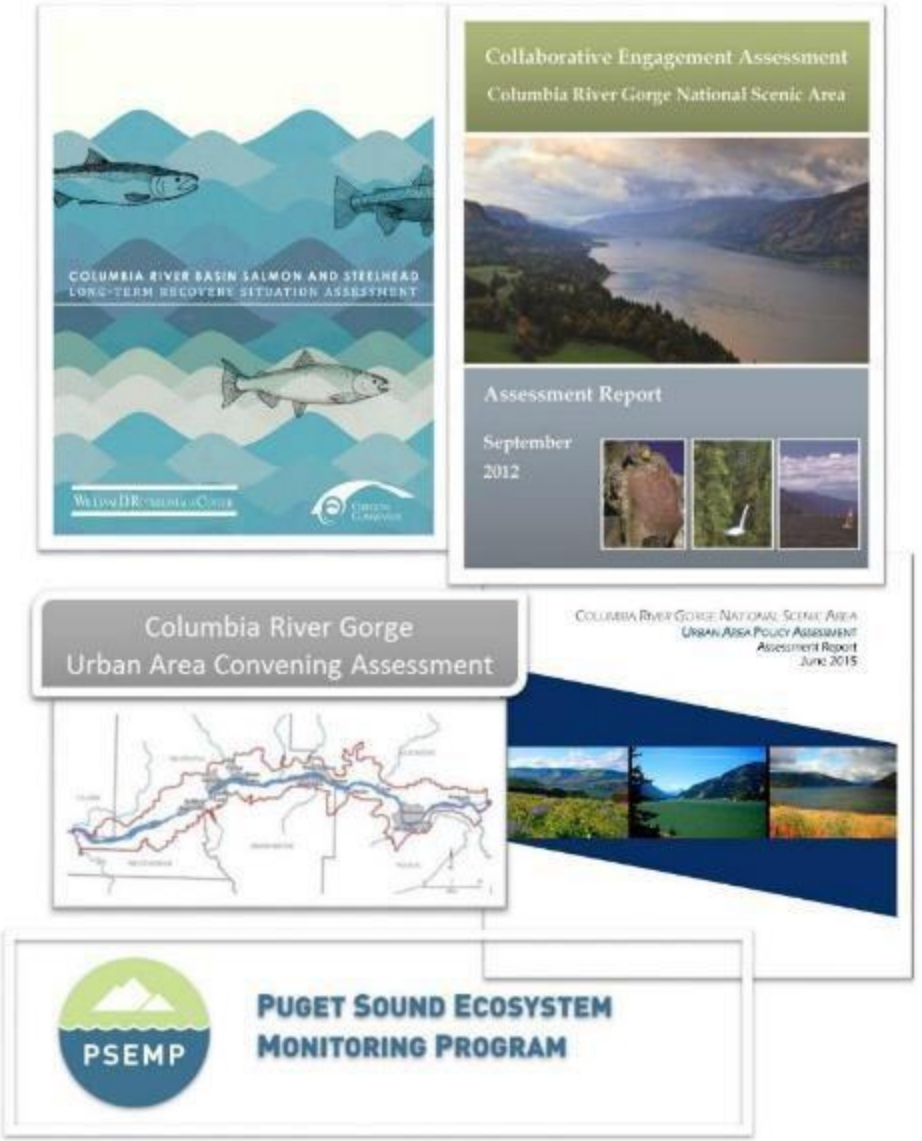


Ruckelshaus Center Services

- Initial Consultation
- Situation Assessment
- Collaborative Process Design
- Facilitation and Managing Collaborative Processes
- Applied Research and Fact Finding
- Collaborative Capacity Building and Training
- Applied Learning Opportunities

Some Project Examples

- Chehalis Basin Strategy
- State Oversight of For-Profit Higher Ed
- Spokane River Toxics
- Developmental Disabilities Housing
- Aviation Biofuels
- Capitol Lake Assessment
- Tri-Cities Governance
- Puget Sound Monitoring
- Public Records Act Assessment



When to Use a Collaborative Process?

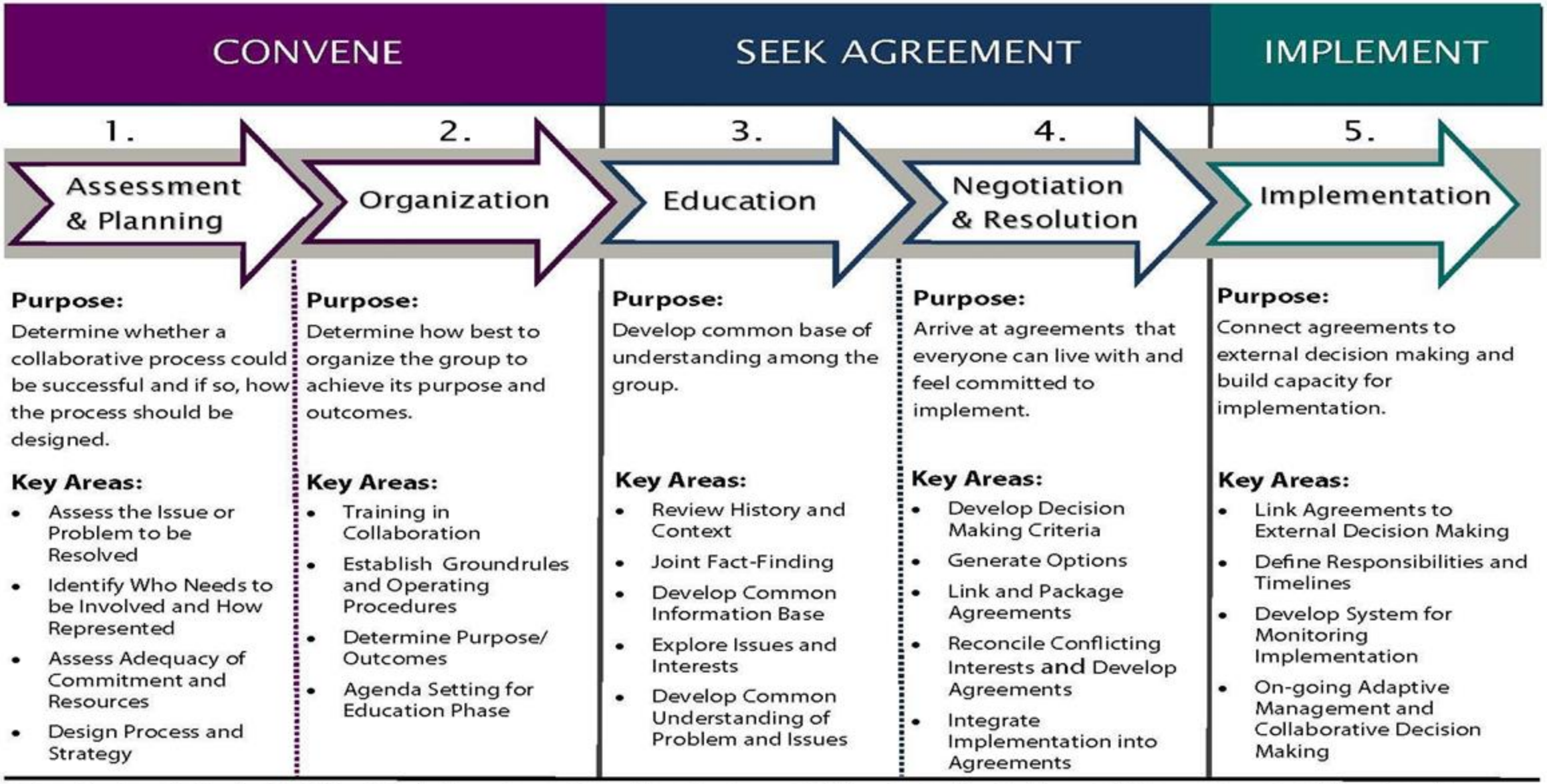
- Many parties in settings of dispersed authority
- Issues characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and interdependence
- Issues can’t be solved by one party working alone - requires others’ commitment to ensure success
- Solutions have long time horizons or require the concerted efforts of many parties over time
- No clear solution is evident
- Issues are negotiable
- Parties are willing to negotiate

"Sometimes I think the collaborative process would work better without you."

When Not to Use a Collaborative Process

- Level of concern over the issue is not great
- Basic values or principles are the focus of the problem
- Extreme polarization prohibits face-to-face discussion
- Insufficient time or quick action is required
- Funding for implementation is not available
- Legal clarification is needed

Stages of a Collaborative Process



Designed by Amanda Murphy, The William D. Ruckelshaus Center. Adapted from *Five States of Collaborative Decision Making on Public Issues*, Center for Collaborative Policy, California State University, Sacramento and the National Policy Consensus Center, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon.

Situation Assessment

The Why

- *"As of Spring 2024, no entity in WA exists to convene industry and stakeholders to focus how to best build and support a sustainable forest products sector.*
- *As markets and environmental conditions change rapidly, it's crucial to build a stakeholder consortium devoted to the economics and sustainability of wood products."*

The What

- Dept of Commerce asked the Ruckelshaus Center to research the feasibility, test the need, and (if appropriate) design the format for a WA Forest Products Roundtable.
- The Center reported back to Commerce with recommendations on how to organize, network, and engage WA's diverse industry, governmental, and environmental forest product stakeholders

April to June 2024

- 35 interviews
- Key Challenges Identified
- Common Themes Synthesized
- Recommendation to Convene a WA Forest Products Roundtable
- 15-page Summary Report

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Situation Assessment: a series of structured interviews to understand issues, challenges & opportunities, levels of trust, and whether or not circumstances lend themselves to collaboration

From April to June, the Ruckelshaus Center interviewed 35 reps of interested & affected parties: Academics, NGOs, Industry (small & large forest landowners), Trade Associations, Forest Collaboratives, Labor Unions, Governments (Local, State, Federal, Tribal), Architects, Mass Timber Startups, etc.

WA Forest Products Roundtable Assessment Qs

1. Please tell us about your background, affiliation, involvement, and interests with respect to the forestry sector and/or wood products in Washington state.
2. What does a healthy & sustainable forestry & forest products sector look like 15-20 years from now?
3. What issues do you see as most important around forestry and forest products in WA?
4. Do you think it makes sense to convene and facilitate an ongoing group around Washington forest products and the forestry sector to share information, address shared challenges, help advance each other's interests as mutually beneficial? (Why or why not?)
5. [If so:] Would you / your organization want to participate? Who do you see as the major players?
6. What would you find most valuable (education & info-sharing, relationships, collaboration in general, launching projects around shared interests, problem solving)

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WA Forest Products Roundtable Assmt Qs (cont.)

7. If you attended a kickoff meeting, what would you feel it should accomplish?
8. What advice do you have to sustain and make it worth people's time?
9. What challenges do you see and how to address them?
10. Would your org have a role in a potential workgroup focused on the Mass Timber supply chain? Who else would have a role in that?
11. Given that forest products have a regional nature and WA has some shared issues with Oregon, do you believe it's beneficial to have combined WA/OR meetings, e.g., quarterly meeting w/joint presentation and discussion?
12. Is there anyone in particular you think it is important we interview? Why is it important to speak to them?
13. What should we have asked that we did not?

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What Did We Find?

Vision: Characteristics of Healthy & Sustainable Forest Products Sector

- Abundant, healthy forestlands preserved from development.
- Societal recognition of the benefits of healthy managed forests (termed “social license”) from public & decision-makers.
- The innovative use of forest products.
- Robust markets for all parts of trees.
- A strong workforce.
- Available mills that can process all sizes of logs and can operate sustainably.
- Appreciation for the benefits of building with wood.
- A balance of forest management (on private, tribal, State & Federal lands) prioritizing BOTH ecological health and local economies and grounded in science.
- Forest health & wildfire issues on federal lands addressed

+

Widespread Support for a WA Forest Products Roundtables

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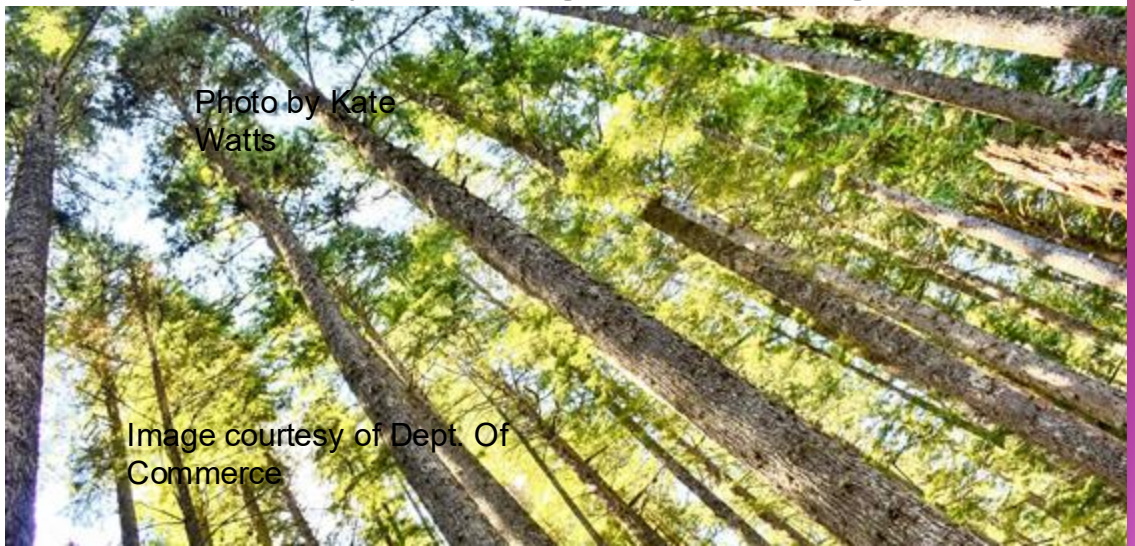

Photo by Kate Watts

Image courtesy of Dept. Of Commerce

What Did We Find?

Challenges for an Ongoing Roundtable

- Lack of trust around these issues (+ the polarized nature of public discourse in general)
- Existence of (at least 14!) other multiparty forestry forums
- Lack of time / availability of potential key participants
- Dominant land base of federal (USFS) acreage
- Need for leadership from state and local elected officials
- Debates over the science
- History of contentious litigation

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What Did We Find?

Opportunities & Suggestions for an Ongoing Roundtable

- Identify & agree on most important challenges to address
- Share info to establish common understanding of those key challenges
- Identify actions and strategies (initiatives) to address them
- Designate responsible parties to implement those initiatives
- Develop metrics to gauge progress
- Track implementation over time and adjust as needed

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Roundtable Convening (Year 1 Funding c/o USFS Wood Innovations Grant)

- Kickoff meeting in geographic center of WA (Wenatchee) in late June
- Included key parties from multiple sectors:
  - Governments: state (DNR, Commerce), federal (USFS), tribal (rep from Intertribal Timber Council + 2-3 individual tribes), local (WA State Ass'n of Counties, 2-3 forest-connected smaller cities)
  - NGOs: primarily environmental or eco-adjacent
  - Private forest landowners: multiple large industrial (+ trade associations WFPA/AFRC), WA Farm Forestry Ass'n to rep small private)
  - Architects, small businesses (e.g., mass timber or biochar or another emerging sector)
- Agenda focus on Why Are We Here & What Are We Doing, Info-Sharing (from WFPA) on forestry/forest products in WA

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September 2024 to June 2025

- **Key Issue Focus each month**
  - **Pulp and paper mills, chemical engineering, and wood biomass—novel products on horizon**
  - **Forest products infrastructure mapping**
  - **Washington State Comprehensive Climate Action Plan**
  - **Oregon/Washington Biomass Partnership for Community Resilience**
  - **Clallam County's Forest Products Innovation Program**
  - **Small diameter timber**
  - **Forest health treatments**
  - **Mass timber**
  - **Workforce development programs and needs**
  - **Infrastructure: existing mill base, wood supply**
- **Parties work through "aim formulation" (where do we want to go together) & "collaborative architecture" (foundations of *how* they'll to work together): Vision, Purpose, Goals, Shared Interests ALL codified in a Charter agreed on by consensus**
- **30 rostered Roundtable members + non-rostered participants from academia, private interests, etc. collaboratively ID key initiatives and begin to advance them**

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Vision & Purpose

VISION

Washington's forest products industry and forest-dependent communities are thriving by fostering sustainable economic growth, ecological stewardship, and community well-being. Supported by local communities, it stands as a leader in the lumber and wood-based bioeconomy, earning global recognition for its commitment to responsible forestry practices.

PURPOSE

1. Create a network of forest industry professionals, research and educational institutions, Tribal Nations, conservation organizations, economic development organizations, and government to:
   a) Exchange information, technical knowledge, and expertise and improve cross-sector collaboration.
   b) Collaborate to develop shared interests, goals, and actions that advance the WFPR's vision.
2. Create measurable, action-oriented initiatives aimed at revitalizing the Washington forest products industry through sustainable forestry and maintaining healthy, managed forests.
3. Identify, understand, and respond to policy and regulatory barriers to forest and wood products infrastructure critical to active management and stewardship of forest resources

Goals

a) Build infrastructure, public trust, and confidence in the management of forestlands and the use of wood.

b) Improve rural economies.

c) Provide the predictable, sustainable wood supply needed for industry and community planning and investment.

d) Maintain the health of mill infrastructure and develop markets for all Washington wood products AND match supply to markets.

e) Reduce conversion risk and grow working forest acreage through enhanced small forest landowner support and engagement on the benefits of managed forests.

f) Enhance the integration, balance, and utilization of forest products and infrastructure throughout the state.

g) Reduce risks of catastrophic loss from manmade or natural disasters.

h) Sustain and improve ecosystem structure and processes that promote resiliency, biodiversity, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

i) Seek to promote technologies, regulations, and permitting related to existing and new manufacturing infrastructure.

j) Support workforce development and reduce job loss in the sector.

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Shared Interests

- Sustainable management of healthy, resilient forests that support multiple uses.
- Rural community wellbeing.
- Increased awareness of the benefits of forestry and active management to maintain healthy forests and ecosystem services.
- Reliable business opportunities, markets, supply chains, timber supply, and infrastructure.
- Innovative and efficient use of forest resources.
- Stable, public support and policy landscape.

Key Messages

Managed forests are vital to natural climate solutions

•Sustainably managed forests enhance climate resilience by absorbing carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen, and storing carbon in wood products and forest ecosystems.

Good forest management is essential to forest health

•Responsible forest management is essential for healthy forests that provide clean water, wildlife habitat, and wood for society, as well as reduce wildfire risks. Policies and funding that recognize these benefits are key to safeguarding our forests and communities.

Our innovation economy needs wood

•Wood is a versatile, renewable resource essential to Washington's innovation economy. When sourced from sustainably managed forests, wood typically has lower embodied carbon than commonly used materials in construction and manufacturing.

•A consistent supply of sustainable wood is critical for creating products like mass timber, biochar, biofuels, bioplastics, packaging, and textiles. Keeping working forests productive is key to this future.

Infrastructure - existing and future - is critical

•Robust forest products infrastructure is essential for processing, distribution, and economic growth. The absence of mills and manufacturing facilities, transportation barriers, and lack of capital adversely impact Washington's forest economy.

•Strengthening this infrastructure is crucial for unlocking Washington's full economic potential.

Workforce protection and expansion is vital to support current and future needs

•A strong, supported workforce is essential for sustaining and growing the forest-based economy and green jobs. Protecting and expanding the workforce in forestry and wood-dependent industries, such as mills, pulp and paper manufacturing, and engineered wood products, is critical.

•Investing in workforce development for these industries is essential to driving economic growth and building resilient

WA Forest Products Roundtable: **Initiatives**

- Develop and disseminate Key Messages
- Agree on and advance Legislative Goals
- Sponsor *Forest Products Day* in Olympia on Capitol Hill
- Promote biomass utilization
- Review and evaluate workforce development assets & initiatives
- Illustrate the interdependency of the forest products sector supply chain
- Update 2007's *Future of Washington's Forests & Forest Industries* report

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Lessons Learned *Using challenges from Situation Assessment*

- **Trust takes time to build** ***(lack of trust)***
- **Make sure your "lane" is clear** ***(at least 14 other multiparty forestry forums)***
- **If you build it w/quality & care (+ attention to the bottom line), people will come** ***(lack of time / availability of potential key participants)***
- **Partnerships and persistence pay dividends** ***(dominant land base of USFS acreage)***
- **Leadership matters** ***(need for leadership from state and local elected officials)***
- **Joint factfinding can play an important role** ***(debates over the science)*****—and relationships MATTER**
- **Make it clear early AND OFTEN that the focus is on finding common ground** ***(history of contentious litigation)***

Participant Views

- April 2024: WA Dept of Commerce asked Ruckelshaus Center to survey participants to assess Roundtable's usefulness & make recommendations.
- 94% of the respondents stated that the Roundtable was valuable to them.
- Each of these benefits was cited by more than 80% of the respondents:
  - News and information
  - Networking and camaraderie
  - Listening to different perspectives
  - Opportunity to work cooperatively on initiatives
- 79% of respondents were satisfied with the facilitation and meeting support. Participants expressed that professional and independent facilitation was essential.
- 77% of respondents supported making a direct appropriation request to the Washington State Legislature to continue supporting Roundtable facilitation and participation.