

Leadership Summit for Climate, Wood & Forests: Primary Take-Aways, Priority Solutions

The following primary take-aways, and potential solutions are outcomes of the Leadership Summit for Wood, Forests and Carbon, held on April 2021. We encourage organizations to take the principals, conclusions, and outcomes of this Summit and continue this necessary work. The observations have been broken out according to the four working groups which supported the summit: Measuring Progress, Forest Management & Incentives, Procurement, Collective Action.

Measuring Progress Working Group

Stephanie Carlisle, Carbon Leadership Forum -- Working Group Chair

The primary observation of the Measuring Progress working group is that there is currently a lack of shared vocabulary, and understanding of the existing standards, convention, and data that comprises wood product Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) and Whole Building LCA (WB-LCA) models that hinder the collaboration across the full supply chain from forest to building. Further, it is our understanding that although there is significant research on the importance of forest management and wood markets, **the current conventions of industry-wide and product-specific EPDs do not sufficiently capture landscape-level carbon flows or the impacts and benefits associated with climate smart forestry practice and environmentally preferable management practices.**

Therefore, in order to fully understand the implications of accelerating mass timber markets, or the value of climate smart forestry (CSF) and climate-smart forest products (CSFP), there is a need for additional cross-sector research, guidance and education.

Priority Solutions:

- Accessible and unbiased educational materials on existing LCA modeling practice for wood product EPDs and WBLCA. (i.e. what's included/excluded from a wood EPD?)
- Guidance on best-practice for the calculation of biogenic carbon for wood products in procurement and WBLCA.

Substantial Needs:

- Need for increased supply-chain transparency across the wood products where climate claims are being made

- Targeted research on appropriate allocation of landscape-level carbon flows (impacts from forest management decisions that accumulate over time and space) to specific wood products (generated at a specific place and point in time)
- Research and disclosure of variability of Global Warming Potential (GWP) of wood products according to regional supply chains and specific management practices, policies, certifications.
- Guidance on timescale of carbon consideration for forest management and harvest for both emissions and carbon storage/sequestration accounting
- Research and guidance on linking LCA measures (GWP) to other CSF goals and outcomes such as biodiversity, resilience, ecosystem services, and cultural value.
- Research on an effective spatial and temporal scales for forest carbon accounting and allocation to harvest and to conservation and restoration projects
- Research that connects management prescriptions of certification to forest carbon outcomes and other ecosystem benefits.
- Open source, publicly funded, international national LCA databases to support comparative assessments and the evaluation of nuanced design decisions.

See [this link](#) for the full output of challenges and solutions presented at the Summit by the Measuring Progress WG.

Forest Management & Incentives Working Group

Rachel Baker, Washington Environmental Council- Working Group Chair

Working Group Guiding Question: What forest management practices support carbon sequestration and storage, climate resilience, and ecosystem services *AND* how can we incentivize these practices?

At the forest and community level, we want to see:

- **Forest management practices** that align with ‘climate-smart forestry’ (support carbon sequestration, climate resilience, provision of ecosystem services, ecological integrity)
- **Natural climate solutions and interventions in the broader landscape** to support the values above, e.g. restoration, conservation, afforestation, avoided conversion
- **Incentives and market signals** to support the above, including carbon markets
- **Sustainable rural economy**

See summary of WG challenges and solutions [here](#), and the full output of challenges and solutions presented at the Summit [here](#)

Feedback from Summit Participants: What resonated or needs more focus?

- **Definition of climate-smart forestry (CSF)** including principles, goals, outcomes, and metrics for measuring progress and reporting. This definition must address and allow for regional variation.
 - Incorporate certification as *one* pathway within CSF
 - Develop an understanding of how current practice may differ from the goal
- **A tiered approach to CSF: a ladder of options for landowners to make progress towards climate-smart forestry:** facilitate continuous improvement by meeting landowners where they are and acknowledging incremental improvement (rather than a binary)
- **Landscape scale approaches** to ensure carbon sequestration and sustainable forest management across regions or wood baskets. Could be incorporated into the definition of CSF.
- **Creation and deployment of incentives for landowners** implementing climate-smart forestry: both small and large landowners; for both practices and outcomes.
- Better understanding and quantification of **carbon impacts of different forest management practices**, shared effectively across the supply chain (via EPDs or other tools)
- **End users need to drive demand** for climate-smart wood.
- **Valuing ecosystem services (ES):** compensating landowners for ES and trees *not* harvested.

Priority Solution: Defining CSF

Defining CSF is the clearest priority identified by both WG and Summit participants. A definition would provide a shared language and common goals across the supply chain, and enable further collective action.

A definition of CSF must be flexible enough to apply to diverse geographies and landowner types. This can be achieved by focusing on the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of CSF; not prescriptive guidance defining ‘how’ landowners should manage their land. A CSF definition could take the shape of a framework comprised of principles & goals, desired outcomes, and metrics. E.g. increased carbon storage, ecosystem resilience, biodiversity, landscape-level forest conservation. Metrics may need to be tailored to regional variability.

To ensure the definition motivates participation of all types of landowners with a broad range of current forest practices, the definition should establish a ‘ladder’ with tiers of CSF achievement, including various possible pathways, e.g. certification, restoration projects, salvaged/reused wood, wood from forests that can demonstrate achievement of CSF metrics.

Centering a CSF definition on desired *outcomes* rather than specific practices may alleviate some tension and resistance from the forest sector, though we should expect disagreement on research related to outcomes/metrics, and to what degree conventional forest practices achieve these outcomes. With a definition of CSF, we can better direct buyer demand, policy, and incentives to support CSF at the forest-level. A definition would also focus efforts to close data gaps and develop systems for information sharing.

Pathway Forward

Many of the topics above intersect with other working groups. Broadly, three areas of focus are needed:

1. **The What:** Developing a framework to articulate and define climate-smart forestry

2. **The How:** Systems and tools to support implementation of the framework (e.g. data on carbon impacts of forest management practices, refining appropriate levels of traceability, developing tools to communicate information across the supply chain)
 3. **Drive incentives through implementation:** development of policies to support CSF, supporting end user demand for CSF, driving incentives to landowners.
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Procurement Working Group

Paul Vanderford, Sustainable Northwest - Working Group Member (NOTE: Working Group Chair Lindsay Rasmussen has left Architecture 2030)

The primary solution identified by the Procurement Working Group is the **need for guidance resources to support project teams undertaking climate smart wood sourcing**. It was recommended that such guidance take the form of a visual flowchart and/or decision tree that includes:

- Value clarification for clients
- A variety of procurement pathways for supporting climate-smart forestry (CSF) through procurement
- A roadmap of supply chain engagement
- Procurement pathways
- Key guiding questions along the way

Building relationships between supply chain partners and collaboration among project teams is also critical, and this can be supported by:

- Facilitating peer interactions and information sharing
- Providing direct support to project teams
- Profiling projects that successfully procure climate smart wood
- Highlighting functional supply chains and motivated suppliers.

A number of **additional Solutions** were identified by the Working Group, including:

- Region-specific information about manufacturers, mills, forests, and practices/certifications
- An unbiased FAQ for both the AEC and forestry sectors
- Supporting the development and growth of traceability tools and technologies
- Supporting manufacturing and product research and innovation (e.g., species diversity in mass timber products)
- Supporting incentives other than direct procurement, such as tax credits and target markets.

However, procurement guidance, peer support, and collaboration between pilot projects will take immediate priority going forward.

For the full presentation of challenges and solutions presented at the Summit, see [here](#).

Collective Action Working Group

Jason Grant, World Wildlife Fund -- Working Group Co-Chair

The main Solution identified by the Collective Action Working Group was a professionally facilitated process to see if it's possible for a "big tent" group – one that includes the full diversity of stakeholders represented in the Summit – to reach consensus on a unifying and inspiring Vision statement.

The Working Group, whose members themselves represented a wide range values, interests and perspectives, spent a good deal of time struggling to identify common ground and debating elements of the existing Vision statement. Indeed, a subset of the Working Group members coalesced into two sub-groups that created two rather different revised versions of the Vision, [here](#) and [here](#). It was easier to identify areas of disagreement than consensus.

Therefore, the Group proposed that an effort to clarify key areas of agreement and disagreement should precede any attempt to create a consensus Vision statement, and should proceed through a number of steps:

- Establishing a set of ground rules to guide a productive process
- Creating common understanding of the terrain in which we are operating through the development of a "systems map"
- Working toward a common vocabulary and achievable goals

[Mentimeter input](#) provided during the Summit suggests that there is general support for this Solution. A clear majority of respondents indicated:

- a shared Vision statement is necessary for strengthening efforts at balancing forest conservation, restoration and management (slide 55)
- a well-designed, efficient and neutral process is important to garner their support (slide 69)
- interest in participating (slide 55)

This said, there are two key enabling conditions that must be met in order to move forward:

- firm commitments on the part of a critical mass of stakeholders to engage in a process that is certain to be time-consuming and whose prospects for success are frankly uncertain;
- adequate funding will be required to underwrite the cost of professional facilitation.

See [this link](#) for the full presentation of challenges, perspectives and solutions presented at the Summit.