

A Community of Practice Platform to Support Landscape-Scale Partnerships for Ecosystem Restoration

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Natural resource managers and restoration practitioners have voiced a need to increase coordination around key conservation challenges and to more effectively communicate lessons learned from on-the-ground experiences. This is particularly important when addressing landscape-scale challenges such as climate change or invasive species management. The Conservation and Adaptation Resources Toolbox (CART) is a multi-organizational partnership directed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and the University of Arizona that supports peer-to-peer communication through Communities of Practice (CoPs) focused on issue-based conservation and management challenges that span geographies and jurisdictions. CART currently supports four CoPs on introduced aquatic species, aquatic restoration, grassland restoration, and drought and climate adaptation. In support of these CoPs, CART develops decision-support tools and Case Studies that communicate lessons learned from on-the-ground activities and applied research. Furthermore, CoP partners co-develop research and management priorities as well as help direct additional CART activities including structured webinars and workshops for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. To date, CART has published 111 Case Studies related to ecosystem restoration. Topics range from floodplain restoration for salmonid habitat in Washington to collaboratively improving seed-based restoration success on the Colorado Plateau. The model CART has developed to share Case Studies helps overcome common barriers to communication, including the lack of time, capacity, and technology to share project information. In addition, CART provides significant mentorship opportunities for students and emerging professionals. Working with CART staff and conservation professionals, student interns author the majority of Case Studies, allowing them to build their networks while gaining technical writing skills and learning from those doing work in the field. CART's modular and scalable platform and templates have enabled it to grow into an expanding partnership network that supports hundreds of active participants from federal, state, Tribal, and local governments, NGOs, research institutions, and private land managers.

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