

FY 2020 TEMPLATE
Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR)¹
Policy Report to OMB-CEQ

On September 7, 2012, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) issued a revised policy memorandum on environmental collaboration and conflict resolution (ECCR). This joint memo builds on, reinforces, and replaces the memo on ECR issued in 2005.

The memorandum requires annual reporting by departments and agencies to OMB and CEQ on progress made each year in implementing the ECCR policy direction to increase the effective use and institutional capacity for ECCR.

ECCR is defined in Section 2 of the 2012 memorandum as:

“ . . . third-party assisted collaborative problem solving and conflict resolution in the context of environmental, public lands, or natural resources issues or conflicts, including matters related to energy, transportation, and water and land management.

The term Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution encompasses a range of assisted collaboration, negotiation, and facilitated dialogue processes and applications. These processes directly engage affected interests and Federal department and agency decision makers in collaborative problem solving and conflict resolution.

Multi-issue, multi-party environmental disputes or controversies often take place in high conflict and low trust settings, where the assistance of impartial facilitators or mediators can be instrumental to reaching agreement and resolution. Such disputes range broadly from policy and regulatory disputes to administrative adjudicatory disputes, civil judicial disputes, intra- and interagency disputes, and disputes with non-Federal persons and entities.

Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution can be applied during policy development or planning in the context of a rulemaking, administrative decision making, enforcement, or litigation with appropriate attention to the particular requirements of those processes. These contexts typically involve situations where a Federal department or agency has ultimate responsibility for decision making and there may be disagreement or conflict among Federal, Tribal, State and local governments and agencies, public interest organizations, citizens groups, and business and industry groups.

Although Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution refers specifically to collaborative and conflict resolution processes aided by third-party neutrals, there is a broad array of partnerships, cooperative arrangements, and unassisted negotiations that Federal agencies may pursue with non-Federal entities to plan, manage, and implement department and agency programs and activities. The Basic Principles for Agency Engagement in Environmental Conflict Resolution and Collaborative Problem Solving are presented in Attachment B. The Basic Principles provide guidance that applies to both Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution and unassisted collaborative problem solving and conflict resolution. This policy recognizes the importance and value of the appropriate use of all forms collaborative problem solving and conflict resolution.”

¹ The term ‘ECCR’ includes third-party neutral assistance in environmental collaboration and environmental conflict resolution

This annual reporting template is provided in accordance with the memo for activities in FY 2020.

The report deadline is February 26, 2021.

We understand that collecting this information may be challenging; however, the departments and agencies are requested to collect this data to the best of their abilities. The FY 2020 report, along with previous reports, will establish a useful baseline for your department or agency. Departments should submit a single report that includes ECCR information from the agencies and other entities within the department. The information in your report will become part of an analysis of all FY 2020 ECCR reports. You may be contacted for the purpose of clarifying information in your report.

For your reference, synthesis reports from past fiscal years are available at <https://www.udall.gov/OurPrograms/Institute/ECRReport.aspx>.

FY 2020 ECCR Report Template

Name of Department/Agency responding:	USDA Forest Service
Name and Title/Position of person responding:	Andrea Bedell-Loucks, Assistant Director for Planning and Public Engagement Brad Kinder, Public Engagement and Collaboration Specialist
Division/Office of person responding:	Ecosystem Management Coordination, Washington Office
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Date this report is being submitted:	February 26, 2021
Name of ECCR Forum Representative:	Brad Kinder

1. ECCR Capacity Building Progress:

- a) Describe any **NEW, CHANGED, or ACTIVELY ONGOING** steps taken by your department or agency to build programmatic and institutional capacity for environmental collaboration and conflict resolution in FY 2020, including progress made since FY 2019.

Please also include any efforts to establish routine procedures for considering ECCR in specific situations or categories of cases, including any efforts to provide institutional support for non-assisted collaboration efforts.

Please refer to the mechanisms and strategies presented in Section 5 and attachment C of the [OMB-CEQ ECCR Policy Memo](#) for additional guidance on what to include here.

Examples include but are not restricted to efforts to:

- Integrate ECCR objectives into agency mission statements, Government Performance and Results Act goals, and strategic planning;
- Assure that your agency's infrastructure supports ECCR;
- Invest in support, programs, or trainings; and d) focus on accountable performance and achievement.

Please refer to your agency's FY 2019 report to only include new, changed or actively ongoing ECCR capacity building progress. **if none, leave this section blank.**

- In FY20, the Forest Service launched an effort with the Participation Company to develop a public participation toolkit. We anticipate completion of this product in FY21. The toolkit will be an information and training resource for agency employees to improve their knowledge and capacity in how to undertake effective public participation and collaboration.
- The Forest Service continued to invest in its agency-wide membership with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). Membership in this organization provides agency employees with access to webinars, resources, and discounted trainings. Currently, 310 employees have registered under this membership. In FY20, 115 employees registered for webinars and 15 registered for the 2019 IAP2 virtual conference.
- The Forest Service continued to support the National Collaboration Cadre (Cadre), a group of employees, academics, and consultants who work with national forests, collaborative groups, and interested stakeholders to build capacity and help them engage in effective collaboration. In FY20, the Cadre supported the following two efforts:
 - Assisted the Kootenai Forest Stakeholder Coalition (KFSC) and the Kootenai National Forest (KNF) to improve the alignment of each organization's understanding, expectations, and opportunities for working with one another in the shared landscape of northwestern Montana. Two onsite visits were made working with both organizations individually and jointly. At the close of the joint KNF and KFSC joint work session each organization made 3-month and 12-month commitments. As a result of this work, relationships are stronger, collaborative processes are better defined, and they are jointly identifying projects to work on together.
 - Supported the Clearwater Basin Collaborative (CBC) and Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests (NPCNF) to: 1. Understand each other's expectations for collaborating with one another; 2. Assess area of alignment and non-alignment; and 3. Determine areas in which collaboration is needed and appropriate. Due to the pandemic the onsite work was transitioned to virtual. The Cadre designed three day-long interactive virtual sessions to work with both organizations individually and jointly. The main outcomes from the sessions were both organizations acknowledged the value of past collaborative work, agreed to work together to build relationships and improve communications with each other.

- b) Please describe the trainings given in your department/agency in FY 2020. Please include a list of the trainings, if possible. If known, please provide the course names and total number of people trained. Please refer to your agency's FY 2019 report to include ONLY trainings given in FY 2020. **If none, leave this section blank.**

- The Forest Service held three peer learning sessions in support of environmental collaboration and, specifically, the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. These sessions included:
 - Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLRP) All Hands Learning Session
 - First Ten Years of CFLRP Lessons Learned Session
 - CFLRP Monitoring Learning Session

2. ECCR Investments and Benefits

- c) Please describe any **NEW or CHANGED or INNOVATIVE** investments made in ECCR in FY 2020. Examples of investments may include (but are not limited to):
- ECCR programmatic FTEs
 - Dedicated ECCR budgets
 - Funds spent on contracts to support ECCR cases and programs

Please refer to your agency's FY 2019 report to only include new, changed, or innovative investments made in ECCR. **If none, leave this section blank.**

- The Forest Service made a new investment of approximately \$48,000 to develop the public participation training toolkit referenced above.
- In FY20, the Forest Service invested in and completed two internal studies to inform building, sustaining, and institutionalizing ECCR across the agency. The first study, entitled *Public Engagement Effectiveness Under Forest Plan Revision*, identified public engagement strengths, challenges, and opportunities for the Washington Office to support national forests through land management planning. The second study, entitled *Synthesis of Opportunities and Recommendation to improve or increase Collaboration Capacity in the USDA Forest Service*, reviewed 33 publications and reports on collaboration in land management, restoration, environmental planning, and implementation to identify actionable items that the agency can implement to improve and increase the use of environmental collaboration in the agency.
- The Forest Service also developed learning reports for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program to capture lessons from the program's 10 years of operation. This effort included an environmental collaboration learning section, which highlights key results and lessons learned from experiences in collaboration.

- d) Please describe any **NEW or CHANGED** benefits realized when using ECCR in FY 2020. Examples of benefits may include (but are not limited to):
- Cost savings
 - Environmental and natural resource results

- Furtherance of agency mission
- Improved working relationship with stakeholders
- Avoidance of litigation
- Timely project progression

Please refer to your agency's FY 2019 report to only include new or changed benefits of ECCR realized in FY 2020. If none, leave this section blank.

- The Forest Service does not currently systematically track benefits from realized when using ECCR; however, a recent study by Chelsea McIver at the University of Idaho on collaboration impacts on pace, scale, and complexity of decisions in Idaho may shed light on this issue from previous years: [*The Impact of Collaboration on the Pace and Scale of Restoration in Idaho*](#).
- The National Forest Foundation conducted a [survey](#) in 2020 of the agency's Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFLRP). The survey highlighted perceived reductions in conflict and litigation. For example, 60% of survey participants said the CFLRP decreased conflict over land management decisions and 45% said CFLRP decreased litigation.

3. ECCR Use

Describe the level of ECCR use within your department/agency in FY 2020 by completing the three tables below. [Please refer to the definition of ECCR from the OMB-CEQ memo as presented on page one of this template. An ECCR “case or project” is an instance of neutral third-party involvement to assist parties in a collaborative or conflict resolution process.]

To avoid double counting processes, please select one category per case for decision making forums and for ECCR applications.

	Total FY 2020 ECCR Cases ²	Decision making forum that was addressing the issues when ECCR was initiated:			
		Federal agency decision	Administrative proceedings /appeals	Judicial proceedings	Other** (specify below)
<i>Context for ECCR Applications:</i>					
Policy development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Planning	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Siting and construction	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Rulemaking	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
License and permit issuance	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Compliance and enforcement action	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Implementation/monitoring agreements	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other (specify): _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
TOTAL	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
		(the sum of the Decision Making Forums should equal Total FY 2020 ECCR Cases)			

****If you indicated above that any of your ECCR cases or projects were initiated in an “other” decision making forum, please elaborate here.**

² An “ECCR case” is a case in which a third-party neutral was active in a particular matter during FY 2020.

<i>Context for ECCR Applications:</i>	Interagency ECCR Cases and Projects	
	Included Other Federal Agencies Only	Included Non-Federal Participants (e.g., states, Tribes, and non governmental)
Policy development	_____	_____
Planning	_____	_____
Siting and construction	_____	_____
Rulemaking	_____	_____
License and permit issuance	_____	_____
Compliance and enforcement action	_____	_____
Implementation/monitoring agreements	_____	_____
Other (specify): _____	_____	_____
TOTAL	_____	_____

<i>Context for ECCR Applications:</i>	ECCR Cases or projects completed ³	ECCR Cases or Projects sponsored ⁴
Policy development	_____	_____
Planning	_____	_____
Siting and construction	_____	_____
Rulemaking	_____	_____
License and permit issuance	_____	_____
Compliance and enforcement action	_____	_____
Implementation/monitoring agreements	_____	_____
Other (specify): _____	_____	_____
TOTAL	_____	_____

³ A “completed case” means that neutral third-party involvement in a particular ECCR case ended during FY 2020. The end of neutral third-party involvement does not necessarily mean that the parties have concluded their collaboration/negotiation/dispute resolution process, that all issues are resolved, or that agreement has been reached.

⁴ Sponsored - to be a sponsor of an ECCR case means that an agency is contributing financial or in-kind resources (e.g., a staff mediator’s time) to provide the neutral third party’s services for that case. More than one sponsor is possible for a given ECCR case.

Note: If you subtract completed ECCR cases from Total FY 2020 cases it should equal total ongoing cases. If you subtract sponsored ECCR cases from Total FY 2020 ECCR cases it should equal total cases in which your agency or department participated but did not sponsor. If you subtract the combined interagency ECCR cases from Total FY 2020 cases it should equal total cases that involved only your agency or department with no other federal agency involvement.

4. ECCR Case Example

Using the template below, provide a description of an ECCR case (preferably **completed** in FY 2020). If possible, focus on an interagency ECCR case. Please limit the length to **no more than 1 page**.

Name/Identification of Problem/Conflict:
<i>[Please add case "title" here]</i>
Overview of problem/conflict and timeline, including reference to the nature and timing of the third-party assistance, and how the ECCR effort was funded.
Summary of how the problem or conflict was addressed using ECCR, including details of any innovative approaches to ECCR, and how the principles for engagement in ECCR outlined in the policy memo were used.
Identify the key beneficial outcomes of this case, including references to likely alternative decision-making forums and how the outcomes differed as a result of ECCR.
Please share any reflections on the lessons learned from the use of ECCR.

5. Other ECCR Notable Cases

Briefly describe any other notable ECCR cases in FY 2020. **(OPTIONAL)**

6. Priority Uses of ECCR

Please describe your agency’s **NEW or CHANGED** efforts to address priority or emerging areas of conflict and cross-cutting challenges either individually or in coordination with other agencies. For example, consider the following areas: NEPA, ESA, CERCLA, energy development, energy transmission, CWA 404 permitting, tribal consultation, environmental justice, management of ocean resources, infrastructure development, National Historic Preservation Act, other priority areas. Please refer to your agency’s FY 2019 report to only include new or increased priority uses. **If none, leave this section blank.**

- In FY20, Forest Service shifted its focus from in-person to virtual public participation, collaboration, and conflict resolution. To support our employees in their virtual engagement efforts, the Washington Office developed a tech guide to virtual engagement platforms. The agency also held Regional-level peer learning sessions on virtual public engagement and virtual tribal consultation and engagement.

7. Non-Third Party-Assisted Collaboration Processes (Optional)

Briefly describe other **significant** uses of environmental collaboration that your agency has undertaken in FY 2020 to anticipate, prevent, better manage, or resolve environmental issues and conflicts that do not include a third-party neutral. *Examples may include interagency MOUs, enhanced public engagement, and structural committees with the capacity to resolve disputes, etc.* **If none, leave this section blank.**

- The Forest Service continues to implement the special NEPA authority in Title VI of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. Title VI requires projects to be “developed and implemented through a collaborative process that includes multiple interested persons representing diverse interests; and is transparent and nonexclusive; or meets the requirements for a resource advisory committee.” In 2020, the Forest Service completed 95 CEs using this authority, 6 EAs, and 1 EIS.
- In FY20, the Forest Service undertook extensive public participation and collaboration efforts in land management planning and project-level planning and implementation without third party assistance. These engagement efforts included open houses, public meetings, workshops, webinars, meetings with collaborative groups, collaborative processes, and cooperating agency meetings. Although, the agency does not currently collect data on each effort by every national forest and grassland, our PALS (planning, appeals, and litigation system) database provides a small depiction of a subset of these engagements. A summary is included below:
 - 35 public participation and collaboration engagements for land management planning.
 - 3 objection-resolution meetings in relation to land management planning processes.
 - Public meetings and webinars on at least 2 rulemaking processes.
 - Public participation and collaboration engagements on at least 19 projects ranging from forest restoration, vegetation management, recreation, and watershed management.



8. Comments and Suggestions on Reporting

Please comment on any **NEW or CHANGED** difficulties you encountered in collecting these data and if and how you overcame them. Please provide suggestions for improving these questions in the future. Please reference your agency's FY 2019 report to identify new/increased difficulties. **If none, leave this section blank.**

Please attach any additional information as warranted.

Report due Friday, February 26, 2020.

Submit report electronically to: kavanaugh@udall.gov

**Basic Principles for Agency Engagement in
Environmental Conflict Resolution and Collaborative Problem Solving**

Informed Commitment	Confirm willingness and availability of appropriate agency leadership and staff at all levels to commit to principles of engagement; ensure commitment to participate in good faith with open mindset to new perspectives
Balanced, Voluntary Representation	Ensure balanced inclusion of affected/concerned interests; all parties should be willing and able to participate and select their own representatives
Group Autonomy	Engage with all participants in developing and governing process; including choice of consensus-based decision rules; seek assistance as needed from impartial facilitator/mediator selected by and accountable to all parties
Informed Process	Seek agreement on how to share, test and apply relevant information (scientific, cultural, technical, etc.) among participants; ensure relevant information is accessible and understandable by all participants
Accountability	Participate in the process directly, fully, and in good faith; be accountable to all participants, as well as agency representatives and the public
Openness	Ensure all participants and public are fully informed in a timely manner of the purpose and objectives of process; communicate agency authorities, requirements and constraints; uphold confidentiality rules and agreements as required for particular proceedings
Timeliness	Ensure timely decisions and outcomes
Implementation	Ensure decisions are implementable consistent with federal law and policy; parties should commit to identify roles and responsibilities necessary to implement agreement; parties should agree in advance on the consequences of a party being unable to provide necessary resources or implement agreement; ensure parties will take steps to implement and obtain resources necessary to agreement