

Title: Objectives and Process for the Great Plains Grassland Summit

Presenter: Deborah M. Finch, USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station, Albuquerque NM

The Great Plains Grassland Summit addresses goals for understanding and restoring rangeland ecosystems of the Great Plains by delivering science syntheses, tools and a forum for dialogue on cross-boundary themes. The origin of the summit proposal was an interest in the history of human settlement and use of the Great Plains grasslands that resulted in the Dust Bowl of the 30s. This led to new regulations for land use, implementation of restoration goals and practices, and the creation of the National Grasslands. The National Grassland Council of the Forest Service approved the initial proposal, the Western Wildland Environmental Threats Center provided initial financial support to kick off the planning process for the summit, and an agreement was formed with the Western Forestry and Conservation Association to manage the logistics for the workshop. A summit steering committee was convened to create the agenda, comprised of members from US Department of Agriculture bureaus including Agricultural Research Service, Forest Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service, as well as Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Great Plains Fire Science Exchange, US Geological Survey, and Colorado State University. Six plenary speakers were invited to synthesize information on challenges, opportunities, management priorities, research needs and barriers pertaining to six themes: working lands, wildland and prescribed fire, energy development, invasive species, native species, and weather, water and climate. These contributions will be developed into manuscripts and published in the future. They serve to set the stage for breakout sessions on the same six themes that will form the remainder of the workshop. Breakout sessions were designed to seek input from a diversity of grassland organizations to build a set of recommendations that managers, stakeholders, and researchers can use to help guide future decisions. To achieve this, a series of questions described in this talk will be posed by leaders of each breakout session who will ask participants to provide ideas, needs, and actions. Results will be summarized and distributed back to participants and beyond.