BUILDING TRUST IN A DISTRUSTFUL WORLD:

SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY AND THE NORTHWEST FOREST PLAN
Overview of presentation

- Definition and assumptions
- Trust and social acceptability
- Trust and governance
- Factors that diminish trust
- Challenges to revitalizing trust
“No universally accepted scholarly definition of trust”

- Two necessary conditions:
  - Condition of **risk**
  - Condition of **interdependence**
“Trust... is... the expectation... that another’s future actions will be beneficial, favorable, or at least not detrimental to one’s interests”
Assumptions

• Dynamic and can co-exist with distrust
• Occurs at different scales:
  – Interpersonal
    • Honesty
    • Benevolence
    • Reciprocity
  – Institutional
    • Fairness
Assumptions

- Derives from group membership, repeated exchanges, credentials or rules
- Trust is hard to build, easy to lose
Functions of trust

• Enables cooperative behavior
• Promotes adaptive endeavors
• Reduces harmful conflict
• Decreases transaction costs
• Facilitates responses to crises
Social acceptability and trust

Effective, sustainable policies must be:

– Biophysically possible
– Economically feasible
– Socially acceptable
Factors affecting social judgments:

- Context
- Knowledge
- Visual impacts
- Planning and decisionmaking processes and...
- Inter-personal and institutional trust
When social acceptability cannot be achieved, legal and political remedies often are the only means of resolution.
Trust, governance, and the NFP

- System of governance founded in distrust
- Public trust in institutions low
- Forest Conference prompted by low trust
- FEMAT and NFP steeped in distrust
How is trust lost?

- Over-reliance on contracts
- Role expectations in flux
- Abuse/misuse of power
- Incompetence, complacency
What challenges face us?

• Organization theory...relatively devoid of references to (how) organizations can build trust
Challenges?

- Fostering trust takes time
- Trust is important, but it’s not the only factor
- Leadership and institutions matter
Challenges?

- Augment rule-based trust (laws, S&Gs) with building interpersonal trust
- Promote organizational stability and clear role expectations
Challenges?

- Seek opportunities for self-criticism
- Promote inter- and intra-organizational trust
Challenges?

- Promote norms of care within agencies and schools
- Distrust, like conflict, will always be with us
- Do what we say we’ll do