



Promoting Sustainable Aspen Ecosystems in Western North America

Quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) is known throughout the West as an icon of mountain scenery, and among managers and scientists, aspen is revered for its resource value and important contribution to regional biodiversity. Recent documentation of cover loss and sudden decline of stands has raised concern about the future of aspen on the landscape and values associated with these communities. Management practices and recent drought are thought to have contributed to declines. However, much is still unknown about aspen systems and, in turn, appropriate management to sustain these communities.

Utah State University's College of Natural Resources and the USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station have formed an alliance to facilitate and coordinate research issues related to aspen communities of the West. The Western Aspen Alliance (WAA – pronounced "way") will facilitate cooperative research and disseminate state-of-the-science aspen information to interested managers, researchers, the public, and other entities.

The overall goal of the Western Aspen Alliance is to facilitate effective and appropriate management of aspen ecosystems in the Western US through coordinated scientific efforts and shared information. The following WAA objectives may be modified with greater participant input and as research progresses:

1. **Communication:** develop needs/expertise network, technology transfer, workshops/conferences, and publications.
2. **Spatial Assessments:** determine the geographic extent of Sudden Aspen Decline (SAD), seral/stable aspen stands, and historic aspen coverage.
3. **Basic Research:** stand structure, community composition, genetics, herbivory (wild/domestic), water yield, and biodiversity/trophic interactions issues.
4. **Management/Monitoring:** approaches to sustainability, developing aspen-specific monitoring protocols, and utilizing existing monitoring databases.
5. **Social:** catalog aspen resources, evaluate economic contributions and potentials, and assess value/use.

We will form working groups for these issues and pursue additional aspen topics that arise. WAA will seek external funding to support this coordinated research, management, and communication effort. We welcome your input and participation!

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