



Promoting Aspen Ecosystems in the West

Quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) is known throughout western North America as an icon of mountain scenery. Aspen is revered for numerous resource values, including its contribution to regional biodiversity. Loss of aspen has been linked to decreases in cavity nesting birds, dependent epiphytes, and floral diversity and biomass. However, in many locations aspen communities have been degraded due to a variety of causes. Much is still unknown about aspen decline and the required management to reverse these trends. The Western Aspen Alliance (WAA – pronounced “way”) provides a network of technical expertise that uses past and current research, management practices, and policy to address aspen ecosystem concerns (<http://www.western-aspen-alliance.org/>).

The goal of the WAA is to improve management of aspen by linking ecological, social, and economic sciences through collaboration and information sharing. We believe in leveraging partnerships to preserve and restore healthy aspen ecosystems.

Utah State University’s College of Natural Resources and the USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station initiated an alliance to facilitate and coordinate research and management issues related to western aspen communities. Our list of partners continues to grow and includes the USDA National Forest System, Bureau of Land Management, National Forest Foundation, State agencies, and non-governmental organizations. The WAA, via Utah State University, is a 501(c)3 non-profit institution. We facilitate cooperative research and disseminate state-of-the-science aspen information to interested managers, researchers, the public, and other groups.

Current WAA objectives are:

1. **Knowledge sharing:** develop needs/expertise database, technology transfer, field workshops/conferences, and publications.
2. **Spatial Assessments:** document the geographic extent of aspen decline/expansion, aspen stand types, impacts of development, and historic aspen coverage.
3. **Collaborative Research:** integrate stand structure, community composition, genetics, herbivory (wild/domestic), water yield, biodiversity/trophic interactions, and human dimensions.
4. **Management/Monitoring:** implement sustainable approaches, develop aspen-specific monitoring and remote sensing protocols, and utilize existing monitoring databases toward management solutions.
5. **Social Science:** catalog aspen resources, evaluate economic contributions and potentials, and conduct surveys to assess cultural and societal values and uses.
6. **Partnerships:** the WAA acts as a clearinghouse among land managers, agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations, and the public through multiple mediums and programs.

We welcome your input and participation as the WAA expands and takes on new issues!

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