Sonoran Institute

BEYOND THE HUNDREDTH MEETING:

A Field Guide to Collaborative Conservation on the West's Public Lands

Barb Cestero

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barb Cestero is a Program Associate with the Sonoran Institute's Northwest office, working with communities and public land managers involved in community-based conservation projects. Prior to joining the Sonoran Institute, Barb was a member of the National Outdoor Leadership School's senior faculty, teaching wilderness education courses to college students, outdoor educators, and land managers throughout the Rocky Mountains and Alaska. She holds a Masters of Science in Environmental Studies from the University of Montana.

ABOUT THE SONORAN INSTITUTE

The Sonoran Institute (SI) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting community-based strategies that preserve the ecological integrity of protected lands, and at the same time meet the economic aspirations of adjoining landowners and communities. SI is committed to testing a wide range of approaches to community-based conservation, and adapting these approaches based on real experiences. The Institute is also dedicated to widely disseminating both its findings and the tools it develops. SI operates in western North America, and works primarily with communities adjacent to protected areas and public lands with significant natural values. The Sonoran Institute is headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, with a Northwest office in Bozeman, Montana.

To learn more about community-based conservation efforts in the North American West or the Sonoran Institute, please visit the Community Stewardship Exchange web site (www.sonoran.org).

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Barb Cestero
Sonoran Institute

Preface

A clear, shared vocabulary is essential to any successful enterprise, including conservation. The controversy and misunderstanding surrounding many attempts at collaborative approaches to public land management and community development often stem from the lack of a common language and consistent terminology. This report proposes a vocabulary and a framework to define the major types of collaborative approaches to public land management. Designed in response to growing interest in collaboration among public land managers, policy makers, conservation organizations, resource users, and community leaders, we hope this report will help foster more effective use of this conservation tool.

The Sonoran Institute is committed to community-based collaboration that protects the ecological integrity of public land while also heeding the economic needs and aspirations of adjacent communities. Collaboration provides at least two key advantages in public land management. First, as our understanding of ecosystems improves, we are recognizing the crucial need for more holistic approaches to the conservation of ecologically sensitive lands, wildlife habitat, and natural open spaces. This awareness illustrates the need for cross-jurisdictional collaborative approaches that consider the entire landscape, both public and private land, and involve the entire spectrum of stakeholders, from private landowners and citizens to interest groups and public land management agencies.

Second, meaningful involvement in decision making by diverse interests can produce more effective and more widely supported outcomes. Collaborative efforts that focus on a relatively small, specific landscape tend to break down ideological differences, mistrust, and other barriers to decisions while fostering plans that are based on a shared passion for a landscape.

Collaborative approaches, of course, will not work in all situations. This book outlines several criteria which can help determine whether a collaborative approach would be effective and appropriate in a given situation. Limitations to collaborative methods are also discussed. Organizations engaging in partnership building to manage public lands can use these criteria to assess whether a collaborative approach is appropriate or if a different approach better fits a specific situation.

Given the growing frustration with the status of public land management, collaborative initiatives are gaining both increased support and increased scrutiny. It is the Sonoran Institute's sincere hope that this "taxonomy" will aid in developing a common vocabulary, producing more effective decisions about when to engage in collaborative approaches, and more effective, lasting outcomes. Society urgently needs more inclusive and civil approaches for managing public lands, and our long suffering western landscapes equally need more effective management.

The Sonoran Institute hopes that this report will contribute to preserving the ecological integrity of our precious natural world while also respecting and enhancing humanity's social, economic, and spiritual well-being and our own sense of place in the web of life.

Luther Propst
Executive Director
Sonoran Institute

Sonoita Crossroads Community Forum public workshop

Sonoran Institute

"Collaboration complements traditional advocacy in public land decisions: it provides an additional tool to help land management agencies, community leaders, interest groups, and private citizens concerned about public land."

Executive Summary

Collaborative conservation

appears to be the latest fad in public land management and is generating considerable controversy. Yet, this approach to conservation requires new skills and understandings from everybody involved. The Sonoran Institute designed this report in response to the growing interest among public land managers, policy makers, conservation organizations, resource users, and community leaders in collaborative and community-based approaches to land management. The report serves a dual purpose. First, it proposes a common language for this emerging approach through a "field guide" that classifies initiatives' defining characteristics in order to help participants distinguish among various types of collaborative conservation efforts. Second, through a series of case studies, the report identifies some of the indicators and ingredients of constructive public land collaboration and explores its limitations and challenges in order to foster more effective use of this conservation tool.

Toward a Common Language

Based on this review of collaborative conservation in public land management, two fundamental types of initiatives emerged: **place/ community-based efforts** and **policy/ interest-based** initiatives. Place-based collaborations typically focus their work on specific geographic locales. They are driven by respected local leaders and volunteers who represent their own concerns rather than the interests of organized constituencies. In contrast, policy-based collaboratives focus on the precedents that may be established for broader land-use policy and usually are initiated by representatives of interest groups or government agencies serving in their official capacities. Both types of collaborative efforts, however, bring together people from across the spectrum of diverse, typically adversarial, perspectives in public land management to resolve problems. By engaging these diverse constituencies in the stewardship of public land, collaboration complements traditional approaches to conservation.

Important Lessons Learned

Using case studies, this report identifies several keys to constructive collaboration. The most effective efforts tend to foster an open, inclusive, and transparent process that encourages broad participation rather than interest group representation. Effective place-based collaborative efforts use consistent and proactive outreach to involve interested parties from beyond a specific geographic community. Through this outreach, place-based groups demonstrate their sincerity about integrating regional and national interests into local solutions to public land management issues and avoid the perception that they are seeking local control of national resources. Effective policy-based collaboratives are also proactive in their outreach and integrate the input of non-collaborators in a substantive way throughout the process of developing a plan or policy.

Another important lesson concerns scale. The most promising collaborative initiatives work on a relatively small scale that makes sense as a landscape with which local people can identify. By starting mall, a collaborative effort can capitalize on a shared "sense of place" to build trust and civil dialogue. Smaller scale efforts can also demonstrate the potential conservation benefits of collaboration in a low-risk fashion and avoid the complexity inherent in collaboration about large landscape management or broad policy issues. Collaboration is best viewed as a series of building blocks—small experiments that, place by place, create educated and diverse constituencies actively engaged in land-use decision making.

To be effective, public land collaborative initiatives must meet or exceed the resource protection standards set by existing environmental and public land management laws. In many cases, a strong legal and regulatory framework inspires collaboration by creating incentives for people to seek a new way of doing business. Existing environmental laws also ensure a system of checks and balances by providing a structured opportunity for public input and guaranteeing a process for review of proposals and decisions by those who did not participate in the collaboration.

Other essential ingredients of constructive collaboration include: ensuring an equal playing field among participants, building local leadership, and participation by land management agencies.

The Challenges that Remain

A collaborative approach is not appropriate in every situation, and we must understand what can reasonably be accomplished through this process, especially with regard to public land management. Several challenges or limitations emerge from the report's case studies. Timing is important, and there are clearly issues, as well as communi-

ties, that are not ready for a collaborative approach. Many of the groups profiled in this report either skirted or deliberately chose not to address issues that would prove too divisive for the collaborative effort. As a result, collaboration as currently practiced cannot replace environmental advocacy, traditional land management planning processes, or judicial review as mechanisms for resolving contentious public land issues.

The frequent volunteer nature of collaboration creates a significant obstacle to ensuring broad participation and the inclusion of many interests. Finally, the lack of an accepted system to evaluate collaboration, both in terms of process and outcomes, presents an important challenge for its proponents. To date, there have been few assessments of the on-the-ground outcomes of collaboration, especially those on public land. Thus, it is difficult to measure the ecological, economic, and social changes resulting from these experiments.

A Promising Tool to Further Conservation

A great deal of experimentation and innovation in public land management is occurring under the banner of collaboration. The case studies presented in this study illustrate the creativity, diversity, and range in approach of collaborative efforts. Collaboration, whether policy- or place-based, clearly is improving relationships among participants with diverse perspectives about public lands. Improved communication and greater understanding of differing outlooks and concerns is an essential first step toward achieving practical, innovative conservation and community development projects. If for no other reason than the fact that collaboration creates an opportunity to speak outside of one's interest group, these experiments warrant further exploration by everyone interested in public land issues. Through community-based collaborative initiatives, local people can forge partnerships to strengthen their communities and create opportunities to be among the beneficiaries and custodians of conservation.

For those involved with public land management, however, collaboration remains an experimental approach. Much is still unknown about the results of these initiatives and whether or not the on-the-ground projects will ultimately succeed at broad conservation goals such as preserving ecological integrity. Collaboration complements traditional advocacy in public land decisions: it provides an additional tool to help land management agencies, community leaders, interest groups, and private citizens concerned about public land.

SECTION 1

The Field Guide

Alan Benoit

"The now-familiar process mandated by federal law—in which an agency crafts a proposal, drafts the analysis, and presents it to the public for comment—is, in effect, an after-the-fact public review of decisions already made by "neutral" agency officials rather than by substantive public involvement in the decision-making process. This process seldom fosters any sense of public ownership in management decisions."

CHAPTER 1
Introduction

A shift is occurring in the ways decisions are made about public land use in the United States. Collaborative approaches that bring together diverse perspectives and multiple landowners in a shared decision-making process are becoming increasingly common in public land policy, as well as in developing specific on-the-ground conservation projects at the local level. Several of the West's rural communities are helping to drive this shift, seeking a cooperative and participatory approach to decision making in order to integrate conservation and community development. Public land management agencies, community leaders, interest groups, and private citizens are all experimenting with collaboration to address the myriad challenges associated with conservation, community development, and natural resource policy.

This report is a "field guide" to the wide variety of collaborative conservation initiatives currently emerging in the West, with particular emphasis on those initiatives working on public land management issues. The report was designed in response to growing interest in, and concern over, collaboration involving public land management. By identifying the different types of public land collaborative approaches and highlighting their defining characteristics, the Sonoran Institute hopes to create a common language from which to discuss this "collaborative movement." We also identify important lessons learned from specific case studies and suggest ways to build the capacity of groups and individuals concerned with public land to participate in collaborative efforts.

The Sonoran Institute believes that community-driven and inclusive approaches to conservation can produce long-lasting results; however, such approaches require new skills and understandings from all of those involved in public land decisions. Furthermore, this approach is not appropriate in every situation, and we must understand what can reasonably be accomplished through collaboration especially in regard to public land management. By establishing a common vocabulary and identifying some essential ingredients for constructive collaboration, this report provides an important step toward building these skills.

Purpose of this Report

The Sonoran Institute designed this project in response to the growing interest among public land managers, policy makers, conservation organizations, resource users, charitable foundations, and community leaders in collaborative and community-based approaches to land management. Thus, this review of collaborative conservation initiatives results in three principal products.

- First is a taxonomy that differentiates between two categories of collaborative efforts: those that are place/community-based and those that are policy/interest based. (Taxonomy is a term borrowed from the natural sciences that refers to a system of classifying similar things based on their shared characteristics.)
- Second is a series of case studies that illustrate the key characteristics of each type of public land collaboration as well as important lessons learned.
- And finally is a list of essential ingredients for constructive collaboration involving public land issues.

We conducted an extensive review of collaborative conservation initiatives and chose to profile seven initiatives as representative case studies in this report. This taxonomy does not, however, include the full range of collaborative efforts, particularly those addressing local land-use planning and private land-restoration efforts. We focused on public land initiatives because these are the efforts where collaboration seems to be the most confusing and the most contentious. One of the assumptions underlying a collaborative approach to public land management is that, by involving a broad range of interested parties, collaboration will effectively integrate local needs and the broader national interests in public land. As the case studies illustrate, however, this assumption may not always hold true: difficult questions remain concerning appropriate local involvement in decisions regarding nationally valued (and owned) public resources.

Not all of the efforts profiled here are success stories. Some have generated their share of controversy or have yet to achieve on-the-ground results. All of the profiled efforts are ongoing and evolving, making our case studies snapshots from particular moments in time rather than definitive evaluations. Still, each case study offers insight into the differences among collaborative initiatives, as well as lessons for those contemplating collaboration as an approach to public land management. Taken together, these case studies highlight some important ingredients to establishing constructive processes that can be evaluated over the long term.

Just as a field guide to birds or mammals helps the observer distinguish among different species based on an individual's appearance or behavior, this "field guide" to collaborative conservation illustrates

the key characteristics of the most common forms of public land collaborative initiatives. This report is not meant to be an exhaustive review of the academic literature on collaboration. Instead, the research is based on the practical experience of those trying this process in their communities and is intended to assist potential practitioners of collaboration—public land managers, conservationists, community leaders, interest groups, and private citizens.

The First Ninety Nine Meetings

Several forces are converging to encourage the rise in community-based and collaborative approaches to public land management. Federal land management has shifted in recent years from commodity production toward a broader ecosystem perspective to conserve biodiversity. This approach requires a new level of cooperation across multiple jurisdictions and with partners beyond the agencies.[1] The Keystone National Policy Dialogue on Ecosystem Management, which brought together individuals representing a diversity of local, regional, and national interests to examine ecosystem management, defined ecosystem management in its final report as "A collaborative process that strives to reconcile the promotion of economic opportunities and livable communities with the conservation of ecological integrity and biodiversity." This holistic, landscape-level approach to conservation and land management includes both public and private lands, requiring complex coordination of management activities among public land management agencies, community leaders, interest groups, and private citizens.

At the same time, many with an interest in public land are growing increasingly dissatisfied with, and critical of, traditional approaches to public participation in natural resource management. The now-familiar process mandated by federal law—in which an agency crafts a proposal, drafts the analysis, and presents it to the public for comment—is, in effect, an after-the-fact public review of decisions already made by "neutral" agency officials rather than by substantive public involvement in the decision-making process. This process seldom fosters any sense of public ownership in management decisions. Instead, it frequently leads to conflict among various interest groups, as expressed in contentious public hearings and significant detours to the courts and Congress. In short, public participation has evolved into an adversarial relationship in which distrustful interest groups and citizens monitor bureaucracies they believe are making poor decisions.[2]

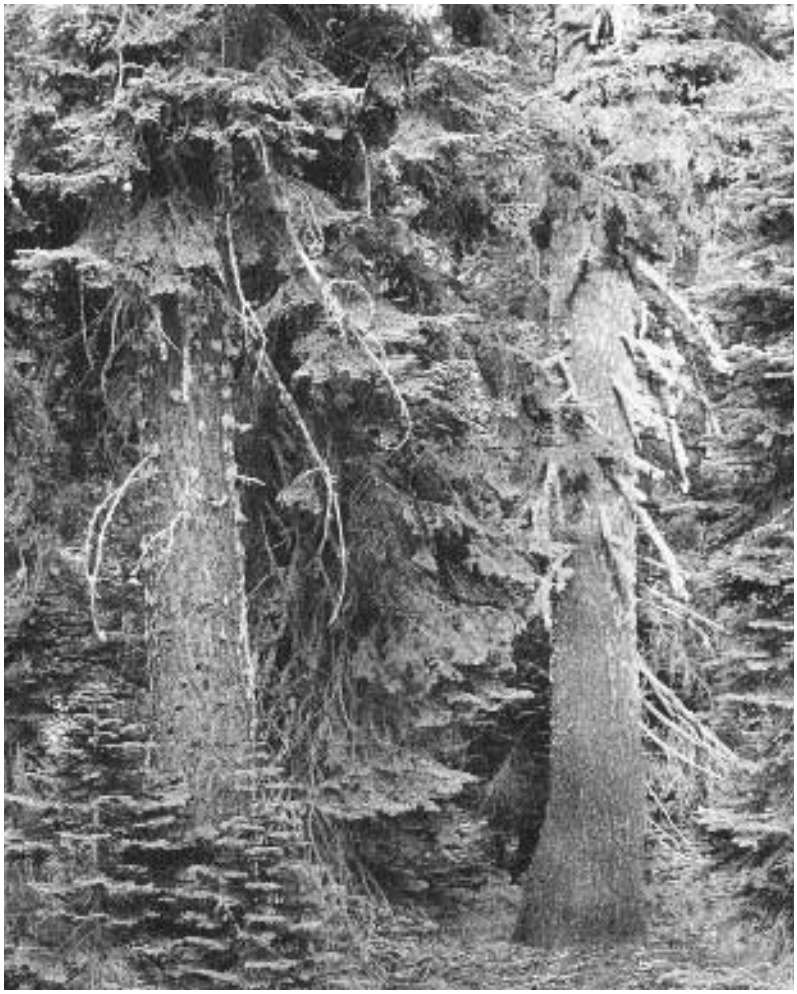
Many believe that we need an improved process to foster a constructive dialogue among the diverse stakeholders and create a sense of ownership in land management plans and activities among all participants. According to Don Snow, executive director of the Northern Lights Research and Education Institute, collaboration is "a deliberate effort to enhance the role of citizens in federal lands decisions, not merely to increase the advisory roles of community interests in decisions that will remain exclusively in federal agency hands."

Finally, there is a growing concern that traditional interest group advocacy may no longer be effective as the principal approach to conservation and environmental protection. In the current model, single-issue advocacy and user groups compete for influence over agency decisions. Critics contend this competition forces those concerned about public land management into polarized relationships, advocating their respective positions and allowing little room to integrate environmental, social, and economic concerns.[3] While traditional advocacy is appropriate in many instances and will continue to play an important role in shaping public land policy, there is growing interest in additional tools that will further local conservation.

Rural communities nestled among the public lands in the West are confronting rapid changes spurred by profound economic shifts, mounting evidence of ecological degradation, and rapid growth in recreation, tourism, and retirement sectors. Rural residents increasingly believe that decisions affecting their lives and homes are made far way, beyond their influence. These issues can only be addressed by integrating public and private land use decisions. For communities seeking a greater say in their future, interest group advocacy as currently practiced appears inadequate as a problem-solving approach. Thus, many are experimenting with collaboration as a tool to build the necessary relationships, both within their communities and beyond, to achieve both conservation of the surrounding landscape and sustainable community development.

Given these converging forces, collaboration is becoming the latest fad in land management. Public land agencies are being encouraged, and even directed, to use collaboration in their planning and decision-making processes. However, this approach to public land management is also generating its share of controversy. Skeptics see rural residents seeking to exercise disproportionate control over public resources without clear evidence that collaborative processes have produced long-term conservation benefits. Many within the environmental community are wary of any initiative that decentralizes decision-making authority, fearing local control that will sacrifice long-term environmental health for short-term economic gain. While this skepticism has merit, there is a need to move beyond wholesale dismissal of this tool and ask instead: Under

Lassen Volcanic National Park, California



Tom Bean

what circumstances can collaborative approaches achieve both healthy landscapes and healthy communities?

The language used to describe the variety of problem-solving approaches to public land issues is confusing, contributing significantly to the level of controversy. Terms such as "consensus group," "community-based," and "collaborative" are used interchangeably, with little effort to define what is meant by these terms. Important questions are being raised about the specific conservation outcomes as well as the process for integrating local and national interests in public land management. A brief look at a high-profile example of the controversy surrounding collaboration sets the stage for this project.

The Quincy Library Group

In 1997, approximately 30 residents of the forested region surrounding Quincy, California, in the northern Sierra Nevada mountains, ignited a national debate over the appropriate involvement of local citizens in public land management. The Quincy Library Group (QLG) evolved from discussions among a timber industry forester, a Plumas county supervisor, and an environmental attorney who together sought to resolve the "timber wars" racking the region in the early 1990s. Drawing on work done in the mid-1980s, this group of strange bedfellows designed and released a "Community Stability Proposal" in 1993 with recommendations for improving the management of 2.5 million acres of the region's national forests. Four years later, frustrated by the fact that the U.S. Forest Service was not implementing their locally crafted plan, members of the QLG took their proposal to Congress.

"While this skepticism has merit, there is a need to move beyond wholesale dismissal of this tool and ask instead: Under what circumstances can collaborative approaches achieve both healthy landscapes and healthy communities?"

Briefly, the proposed legislation mandated the implementation of QLG's "Community Stability Proposal," encompassing the entire Lassen and Plumas National Forests, as well as the Sierraville District of the Tahoe National Forest. The bill sought to ensure an adequate timber supply, institute an experimental system of fire and fuel management, and remove sensitive areas such as roadless lands and riparian areas from timber harvest. QLG's plan would be implemented as a five-year pilot project. Calling its recommendations a "community-driven consensus," QLG gained overwhelming support for the legislation from the House of Representatives, which passed the bill by a vote of 429 to 1. When the bill reached the Senate, however, it met staunch opposition from over 140 local, regional, and national environmental groups and failed to pass out of committee as a result. The QLG legislation finally passed in October of 1998, attached as a rider on the 1999 Omnibus Appropriations bill, the largest appropriations bill ever considered by Congress. Because the legislation passed as a rider, it was never debated on the Senate floor.

Introduction

"As a result of the QLG controversy, there is considerable disagreement over what constitutes a legitimate collaborative effort that could achieve both conservation and community development while remaining accountable to broader regional and national interests in public land."

The controversy over the QLG proposal illustrates the confused vocabulary used to describe public land collaborative efforts. While members of the QLG, such as environmentalist Linda Blum, call their proposal a "community-driven consensus" and an example of "community-based collaborative problem solving," critics describe something altogether different. In a joint letter of opposition to the QLG bill, a coalition of local, regional, and national environmental groups called the proposal "another sweetheart deal for California's largest timber company." Opponents of the QLG further criticized the group for leaving some interests out of the process, most notably the Forest Service itself and many environmental groups. In an article for the Ecology Law Quarterly entitled "Community Participation in Ecosystem Management," University of California at Berkeley professor Tim Duane argues that QLG's plan does not meet several important criteria for appropriate community participation in public land decisions because nonresident communities of interest "have not been equal participants in the negotiations." In testimony before Congress regarding the proposed legislation, Louis Blumberg of The Wilderness Society concluded that, "In this instance, the collaborative process has failed to produce a public consensus because the views of the full range of stakeholders have not been adequately represented at the library table." Finally, QLG's environmental critics opposed the legislation because of its ecological impacts, arguing, as Felice Pace, executive director of the Klamath Forest Alliance, stated in Congressional testimony, that the plan was based on outdated science and silvicultural practices.

While some point to QLG as a poster child of community-based collaboration, others see it as an attempt to establish local control over national forests. According to Louis Blumberg, "rather than resolve conflict, [QLG] only relocated it" by taking the proposal to Congress. As a result of the QLG controversy, there is considerable disagreement over what constitutes a legitimate collaborative effort that could achieve both conservation and community development while remaining accountable to broader regional and national interests in public land. As the electronic newsletter, A CLEAR View, observed in an article critical of the QLG, "Any 'spontaneous' gathering of 'concerned citizens' may be described as a collaborative effort and could impact public policy issues regardless of what guidelines … have been followed."

Environmental advocacy groups are particularly critical of the QLG, but many are also suspicious of other collaborative or community-driven management proposals. The controversy surrounding QLG has only increased this skepticism and mistrust. These critics assert that collaboration is dominated by industry or local development interests and produces management recommendations that are scientifically unsound or in violation of national environmental laws. Wary environmentalists, such as the Sierra Club's Michael McCloskey, argue that the West's rural communities have always had a powerful influence on natural resource decision making, often with ecologically destructive results.

There are examples, however, of collaborative efforts where local involvement has improved public land management without resulting in the level of controversy surrounding the Quincy Library Group. What sets these initiatives apart? What has enabled them to effectively integrate local values while meeting or exceeding national environmental standards? As a result of the QLG controversy, organizations and individuals with an interest in public land management are calling for guidance in assessing collaborative efforts. Distinguishing between the diverse efforts now collectively known as "collaboratives" will help the various stakeholders assess whether collaboration is an appropriate process to address a specific issue and whether this approach enables them to achieve their desired outcomes for public land management. Furthermore, many of the initiatives profiled in this report offer constructive lessons for avoiding the pitfalls of collaborative approaches to public land management.

Organization of the Report

This report is structured so that the reader can focus on the topics most relevant to his or her interest. The case studies form the building blocks for the conclusions that follow, but readers may decide not to read each and every one in order to glean the important lessons about collaboration as a tool in public land management. The report is organized as follows:

- **SECTION ONE** includes two chapters—the broad definitions of the taxonomy as well as some indicators of constructive collaboration derived from the case studies. This section proposes a framework from which to analyze the case studies that follow.

- **SECTION TWO** contains seven detailed case studies divided into two categories: place/ community-based initiatives and policy/ interest-based initiatives. Each case study includes the history and background of the effort, its defining characteristics, and the important lessons learned. The broad principles presented in Section One provide a framework for comparing and understanding the case studies.

- **SECTION THREE** summarizes the lessons learned from the case studies into a series of "Keys to Constructive Collaboration." These are some of the essential ingredients for effective public land collaboration. This final section also revisits the Quincy Library Group in light of the report's findings and identifies the challenges to more effective use of collaboration in public land management.

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FOOTNOTES

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Alan Benoit

"The inclusion of multiple, diverse, and opposing perspectives is fundamental to all collaborative conservation initiatives and is the baseline characteristic of all the efforts profiled in this report."

CHAPTER 2
The Field Guide Defined

Collaborative Conservation Initiatives

The term "collaborative conservation initiative," as the broadest category in our developing taxonomy, refers to a cooperative process in which interested parties work face-to-face to resolve a natural resource problem, create a new policy, or develop a management plan. Interested parties participate voluntarily rather than in response to a court or administrative mandate. Don Snow, director of Northern Lights Institute in Missoula, Montana, provides another defining feature of a "collaborative" as the term is currently used in natural resource management: "A collaborative is a coalition of the unalike that's agreed to try to solve a problem or create a policy. There's a delineated set of tasks they agree to work on." Thus, a "collaborative conservation initiative" brings together people from across the spectrum of diverse, typically adversarial, perspectives regarding conservation and natural resource issues. According to David Chrislip, author of *Collaborative Leadership,* this spectrum includes all those who can influence the outcome, who are affected by a decision, who want to participate, and who are needed to implement any agreement. The inclusion of multiple, diverse, and opposing perspectives is fundamental to all collaborative conservation initiatives and is the baseline characteristic of all the efforts profiled in this report. This characteristic cannot be overemphasized. Without this diversity, a group is not a collaborative in this taxonomy.

There are distinct differences among the collaborative conservation initiatives that we reviewed, with several types of initiatives emerging. After investigating many initiatives, we chose seven efforts that represent varied types of public land collaborative initiatives, and we profiled these as more detailed case studies. Based on our observations, collaborations fall into two fundamental categories.

Place/community-based initiatives *focus on a specific geographic locale with which residents identify, including public land and encompassing nearby human communities.*

Policy/interest-based initiatives, *in contrast, use a collaborative approach to tackle problems at a broader geographic scale or address policy and land management issues of regional and national significance.*

Within these two fundamental categories several different types of initiatives can then be identified. To discern the key differentiating characteristics among these types of collaborative approaches, we asked the following questions.

- **PURPOSE:** What is the focus of the group's work? What makes this effort community-based or policy-based?
- **INITIATION:** How did the effort get started? Why was it started? Who initiated it?
- **PARTICIPATION:** Who participates? How does someone participate or join?
- **PROCESS:** How do decisions get made? What are the roles of participants? Is the process open and transparent?
- **SCALE:** What is the scope of work or issues tackled by the group?
- **OUTCOMES:** What are the tangible, on-the-ground outcomes? What are the benefits for conservation? What are the benefits to community development? How are these monitored and evaluated?
- **AUTHORITY:** What happens to group decisions? Are they recommendations to be considered or plans/projects to be implemented?
- **AGENCY ROLE:** What is the role of federal agency personnel?
- **SCIENCE:** What is the role of science and scientists?
- **LEADERSHIP:** What roles do key individuals and local leadership play?

This report does not describe each of these characteristics in every case study. Instead, we highlight the most useful characteristics and lessons from each story. As seen in the case studies, these categories of initiatives are neither static nor mutually exclusive, but are offered as a way to begin distinguishing among the various public land collaborative efforts underway. These distinctions are necessary because comparing the results of different initiatives or trying to apply the lessons learned in one place somewhere else will not always work; this framework helps to illustrate why. When trying to replicate a collaborative's success or compare the results of different initiatives, it is best to do so within the same type of initiative. Knowing the identifying characteristics of the different forms of collaboration will help participants choose the most effective approach for a given issue or situation.

DEFINING COMMUNITY

The sense of community is such a fundamental part of human experience that it seems needlessly academic to quarrel over definitions. Community is, at its essence, a feeling of belonging. However, the manner in which we define our community determines who is in and who is out. As a result, the term "community" can be a troublesome one, particularly when used in regard to conservation and natural resource issues on public land. Two ways of defining community are relevant: the community of place and the community of interest.

A community of place is specific and local, tied to a particular geographic area. A community of place draws on geography as a key characteristic of membership. This geographic area can be thought of as the container that holds the human inhabitants. The physical place contributes to and fosters a shared identity, culture, and social system. Day-to-day human interactions and relationships fostered by shared physical space create a sense of community and mutual interdependence. The following definition, taken from the Northwest Policy Center's *Sustainable Community Checklist*, captures this complexity: A community of place is described as "the social, economic and environmental relationships that exist among people within a certain geographic area or place." A community of place is **not** a homogenous community because geography only partly describes the associations that many experience as community.

A community of interest offers another way of understanding what unites individuals. These communities are not rooted in geographic proximity, but instead are fostered through a shared identity derived from a common interest. Someone's primary occupation, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, recreational activities, environmental concern, or myriad other predominant interests can serve as a backdrop for building the complex set of relationships we call community. For example, loggers frequently are described as a community of interest based on the sense of identity they derive from their shared work and the values and lifestyle that derive from that work. Communities of interest often extend beyond a person's actual residence and thus contribute to the diversity of geographically defined communities. Residents connected to a community of place may also see themselves as part of any number of communities of interest as well.

With respect to public land management, the most relevant communities of interest include those people living far from a particular part of public land who share an interest in its management. These distant communities of interest may include recreationists, commodity producers, scientists, conservation groups, and others. Because public land is owned by all Americans, it is especially important to identify and attempt to involve regional and national communities of interest in collaborative efforts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON DEFINING COMMUNITY, SEE:

Dan Kemmis. 1990. *Community and the Politics of Place.* Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Sarah Bates. 1993. Public Lands Communities: In Search of a Community of Values. The Public Land Law Review. 14: 81-112.

Bev Brown. 1995. *In Timber Country: Working People's Stories of Environmental Conflict and Urban Flight.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Jonathan Kusel. 1996. Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project: Final report to Congress, vol. II, Assessments and scientific basis for management options. Davis: University of California, Center for Water and Wildland Resources.

Matthew Carroll. 1995. *Community and the Northwestern Logger: Continuities and Changes in the Era of the Spotted Owl.* Boulder: Westview Press.

Rebecca Bauen, Bryan Baker, and Kirk Johnson. 1996. *Sustainable Community Checklist.* Northwest Policy Center, School of Public Affairs, University of Washington.

Matthew Carroll and Robert Lee. 1990. Occupational Community and Identity among Pacific Northwestern Loggers: Implications for adapting to economic changes. In *Community and Forestry: Continuities in the Sociology of Natural Resources.* Robert G. Lee, ed. Boulder: Westview Press.

Place/Community-based Initiatives

Place or community-based collaborations (see figure 1) focus on a specific geographic locale that encompasses nearby human communities and public land. We use the terms "community-based" and "place-based" interchangeably to refer to the same type of collaborative conservation initiative. The connection to or identification with a shared place is the predominant organizing force uniting these collaborative efforts. Thus, in this report the term "community" refers to specific geographic place. However, the individuals involved with place-based efforts may also identify with various "communities of interest" in addition to their common geography. (See sidebar *Defining Community.)* Place- or community-based efforts may also tackle issues not directly related to public land management, such as local growth and sprawl or economic diversification; however, in this report, we only profile those that are addressing public land issues as at least a component of their work.

Based on our review of collaborative initiatives, place- or community-based initiatives typically share several key characteristics:

They are initiated by local, volunteer leaders who are respected by a spectrum of local residents. Participants frequently volunteer their time and energy to the collaborative effort.

Participants often are involved as individuals representing their own interests and concerns rather than serving as the designated representatives of specific constituencies or interest groups. The capacity in which participants serve (whether as a formal representative of a constituency/organization or as individuals representing multiple viewpoints) has been a source of confusion surrounding collabora-

tion; it is a question that enduring collaborative efforts spend time clarifying at the outset of their efforts.

These efforts often are crisis-driven, and many times represent a response to perceived polarization and conflict within the local community. The personal experience of deep divisions within their community motivates local leaders to initiate a new cooperative approach.

While place-based collaboratives draw on geography to define membership, usually they are not composed exclusively of residents of that particular locale. These groups focus their work on an easily demarcated place, but they are not focused solely on local interests. In fact, the most successful of these efforts recognize that their geographically defined community does not exist in isolation. Successful place-based collaboratives actively foster the involvement of nonresident stakeholders and network with other community-based efforts to build relationships beyond their geographic boundaries. Local knowledge is integrated with the "expert" knowledge of scientists, land managers, and other nongovernmental organizations.

Outside linkages are crucial to integrating regional and national interests into place-based collaboration about public land management issues. Skeptics of these efforts argue that, historically, local people with personal financial interests in public land management decisions sacrificed long-term environmental protection for short-term economic gain. Thus, to these observers, place-based collaboration represents a continuation of the status quo of environmentally destructive commodity extraction from public lands. Meaningful inclusion of the information, expertise, and values of nonresident stakeholders is vital to a good-faith demonstration that a place-based collaborative seeks to integrate conservation and community development.

Residents of a community of place often use collaboration as a means of increasing the voice of their community in public land management decisions because their livelihoods and lifestyles are so intertwined with these lands. Increasingly, many communities feel that decisions affecting their lives are being made far away from the place they live. The desire to regain influence over a community's destiny can be a fundamental driving force behind sustained place-based collaborations.

As a result, place-based collaboration can resemble efforts to establish local control over federal land because local leaders and rural residents are seeking greater involvement in, and influence over, public land decision making. True local control initiatives, however, seek to turn decision-making authority over to a specific community adjacent to public lands without ensuring the involvement of regional and national interests. As an example, the National Parks and Conservation Association points to a citizens' management council for the Niobrara River Wild and Scenic in Nebraska, which in agreement with the National Park Service, has assumed principal management authority for the river. While there are efforts to establish such local control over public land, they are not profiled in this taxonomy because they would not meet the most fundamental criterion of public land collaboration: the inclusion of the full range of stakeholders in public land management, including local, regional, and national interests.

Within the "place-based" type of collaborative conservation initiatives, we have identified three different forms in our case studies:

WATERSHED GROUPS: A specific watershed is the place around which these groups organize in order to engage in landscape-level planning or ecological restoration. According to a survey of watershed groups by the Natural Resources Law Center in Boulder, Colorado, these groups usually focus on management problems related to water allocation, use or quality. Watershed groups typically bring together a variety of landowners, land management agencies, conservation groups, user groups, and citizens interested in the watershed to achieve coordinated action. The story of the Henry's Fork Watershed Council (p. 21) describes this type of initiative.

DIALOGUE GROUPS provide a forum for a geographic community to address contentious land management issues. These groups often organize around a planning or community visioning process rather than a site-specific project, though on-the-ground projects may evolve from this process. There usually is no formal system of representation in a dialogue group; participants are involved as individuals representing their complex personal concerns rather than an organized constituency. Agency personnel participate as equal members of the group as well as technical advisors who help the group understand agency mandates, regulations, and legal responsibilities. Initially, dialogue groups focus on relationship and trust building among the polarized interests within their community. Both the Beaverhead County Community Forum (p. 35) and the Swan Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee (p. 29) illustrate the characteristics of these groups.

PARTNERSHIPS involve a formal relationship, typically between local residents, their elected officials, and/or various land management agencies from the local, regional, and federal levels. Partnerships usually include a system of representation, with participants speaking for and reporting to a larger constituency. They remain focused on a locally defined geographic area, such as a county, while involving regional

and federal agencies. The overarching goal of many partnerships is a holistic, landscape-level planning effort for the specific geographic region. Partners may also cooperate on specific restoration projects within their chosen landscape. For an example, see the profile of the Applegate Partnership in Southwestern Oregon on page 41.

Policy/Interest-based initiatives

Policy-based collaborative conservation initiatives (see Figure 2) seek to discuss or to resolve natural resource policy issues of regional or national significance. They typically involve organized interest groups with a stake in the outcome of the decisions. Thus, the terms "policy-based" and "interest-based" are used interchangeably.

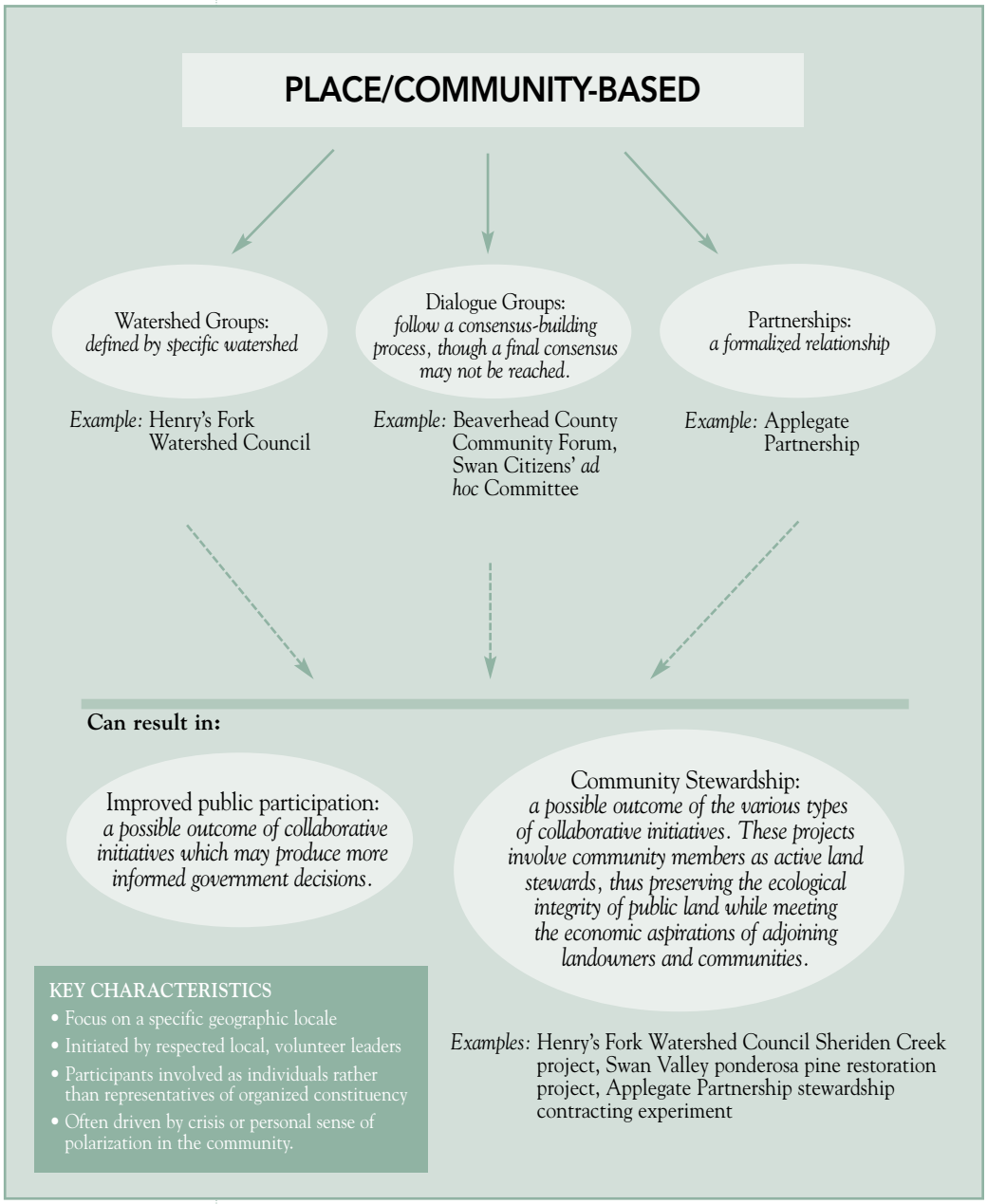


Figure 1. Place/Community-Based Collaborative Initiatives Involving Public Land

While these efforts may also be focused on a particular geographic area, they share several fundamental characteristics that distinguish them from place/ community-based conservation initiatives. These shared characteristics include:

Participants typically are paid representatives of larger organizations, government agencies, interest groups, or organized constituencies. They are responsible for articulating and advocating their groups' positions and often must seek approval or endorsement from their group as the process unfolds.

This type of collaborative usually is initiated by either interest group representatives or government agencies in conjunction with, or as part of, a formal governmental planning or decision-making process. While these initiatives may also be crisis driven, there tends to be less personal sense of polarization than in place-based initiatives.

If these initiatives are geographically bounded, these boundaries are of a regional scale that is larger than the surroundings of a specific geographic community.

Within policy-based collaborative conservation initiatives, we identified four different forms:

MEDIATION AND NEGOTIATION refer to formally facilitated processes intended to resolve a specific dispute under existing law or regulation. For example, Julia Wondolleck and Steven Yaffee of the University of Michigan authored a report looking at alternative dispute resolution within the U.S. Forest Service that presents several case studies in which negotiation and mediation resolved appeals of specific forest plans. Only the representatives of those groups involved in the dispute may participate. According to the well-known book on alternative dis-

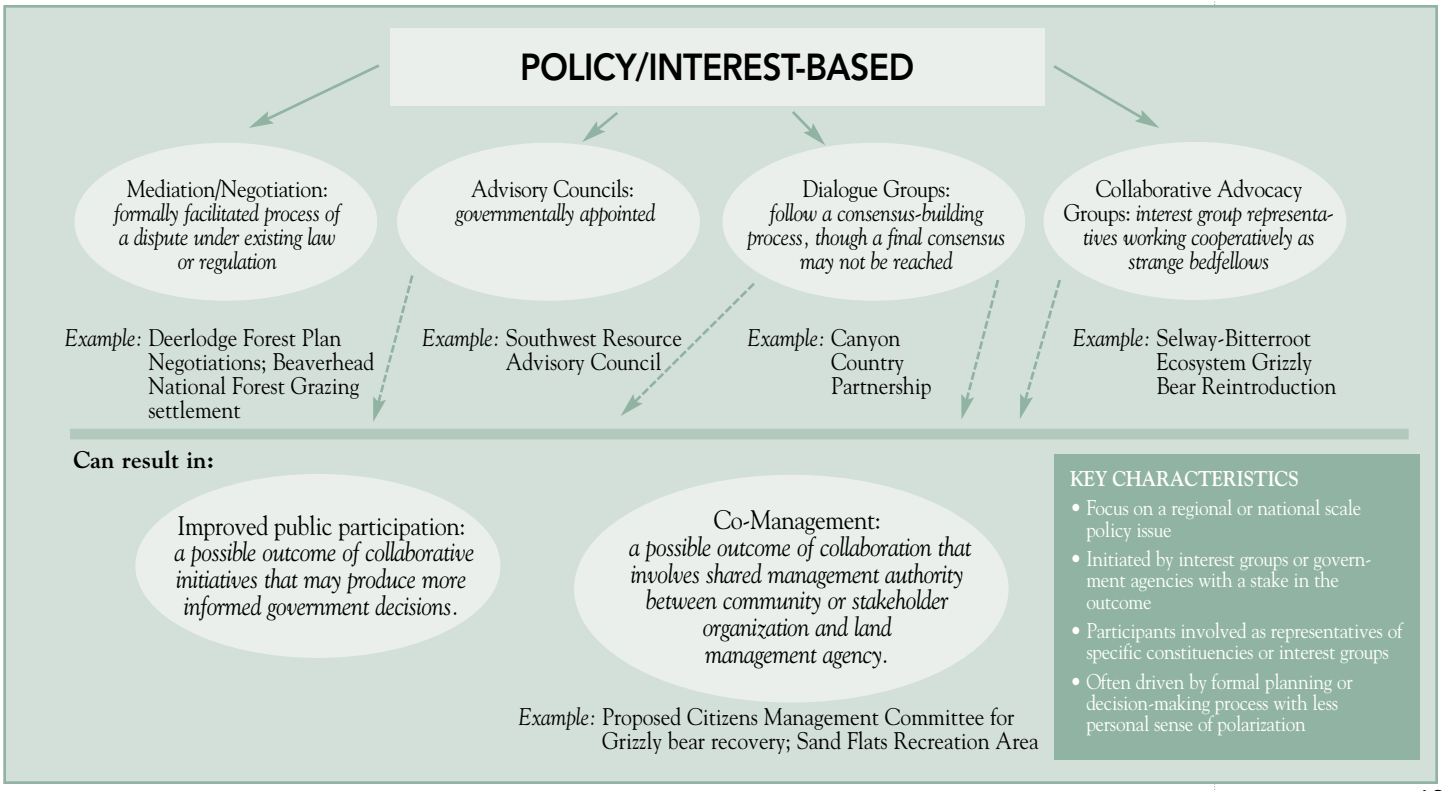
pute resolution, *Breaking the Impasse: Consensual Approaches to Resolving Public Disputes*, a neutral intermediary facilitates communication between the parties involved in the dispute and monitors the process to ensure fairness and efficiency. While other forms of collaborative efforts may use facilitators, in this form the mediator role is filled by someone outside of the dispute with formal training in dispute resolution, acting in an official capacity. Don Snow of the Northern Lights Institute believes this form of "alternative dispute resolution," which seeks to resolve environmental conflict outside of the courts, represents the roots of current efforts at collaboration. If the negotiation fails, of course, the dispute will fall back to the administrative appeal and judicial review processes provided by federal law.

ADVISORY COUNCILS are formally and legally appointed by federal agencies. They fall under the procedural requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). [See Appendix] These groups serve in an ongoing, long-term advisory, but nondecision-making, capacity to land management agencies. Participants are appointed to represent diverse interests and resource users. The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Resource Advisory Councils (p. 49) offer an example of this type of collaborative effort.

DIALOGUE GROUPS provide policy recommendations on issues of national or regional significance or on issues that have a broad geographic scope. Participants are usually representatives of local, state, or regional land management agencies or governments. They are not involved in implementing tangible, on-the-ground projects; instead, these groups more typically produce broad vision documents and draft plans or recommendations. Dialogue groups may only exist in the short term, with the group disbanding once their report with policy recommendations is produced (for example, the Keystone Policy Dialogue on Ecosystem Management referenced in the Introduction), or they may serve a more long-term function of interagency information sharing and networking (see the case study describing the Canyon Country Partnership at page 57).

COLLABORATIVE ADVOCACY GROUPS: Composed of strange bedfellows, these groups of traditional adversaries cooperatively develop a joint proposal or plan and then seek to build support for their proposal among stakeholders who may or may not have participated in its development. Participants typically are representatives of organized interest groups and act in that capacity. As a result, they have larger constituencies to whom they must respond and provide information as the collaboration progresses. The coalition that crafted the grizzly bear reintroduction proposal for the Selway-Bitterroot ecosystem (p. 63) illustrates this type of collaborative group.

Figure 2. Policy/Interest-based Collaborative Initiatives Involving Public Land



A NOTE ABOUT CONSENSUS

Collaborative conservation initiatives are commonly referred to as "consensus groups," and many use this process as a means to achieving their goals. However, there is considerable confusion as to what "consensus" means, as well as the role of consensus processes in collaborative conservation initiatives.

An important distinction can be made between a consensus-building *process* and a consensus *decision*. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, consensus is defined simply as: "collective opinion" or "general agreement or accord." This definition, however, does not tell us much about reaching a consensus decision in practice. Typically, when people say they "reached consensus," this means that **everybody** involved in a particular group agreed with the decision. Brett KenCairn, a practitioner of consensus-building, describes the process as "grinding away" until the group addresses all the issues that are uncomfortable for participants and resolves them to such a degree that everyone supports the outcome. Such unanimity among a diverse group is, needless to say, difficult.

Not all collaborative efforts require reaching consensus. For example, the goals of a dialogue group may be information sharing or trust and relationship building, in which case there is no need for a consensus decision. Similarly, an advisory group may not need to "speak as one" because the agency can take the group's diversity of views into account. However, these groups still frequently use a consensus-building process even though they may not be seeking a consensus decision.

Critics of consensus processes, such as the Sierra Club's Michael McCloskey, argue that "such processes tend to delegitimate conflict as a way of dealing with issues and of mobilizing support." They believe consensus gives a minority veto power over a group decision because of the requirement that everyone agree. As one Montana environmentalist observed, "the things everybody can agree on won't be the tough issues or the things that really benefit wildlife and fish." These critics believe that a consensus process will produce "lowest common denominator decisions" because of the compromise and co-optation that results from the goal of getting everyone to agree.

A large body of literature discusses consensus-building as a means to resolve a wide range of public disputes, not just environmental or natural resource conflicts. According to a number of practitioners, consensus-building means "informal, face-to-face interaction among … all 'stakeholder' groups." These are voluntary efforts that seek win-win solutions rather than compromise. Those involved directly with natural resource dispute resolution also describe the process of consensus-building. For example, according to the Northwest Policy Center, "In consensus decision making each member's concerns must be addressed and every member's support is required to make a decision. … Participants share decision making power equally and the group is not divided into 'winners' and 'losers.'" According to Matt McKinney, director of the Montana Consensus Council, several benchmarks can be used to evaluate whether a consensus-building process is being used effectively:

- Participants design and agree on a vision, purpose, and process.
- It is a voluntary, inclusive process.
- There is a period of joint fact-finding.
- Participants are accountable to their constituencies.
- The group develops an action plan with specific goals and timelines.
- Finally, an impartial facilitator guides the process.

These benchmarks prevent compromise and co-optation while ensuring that a group creates an innovative solution that the participants would not have been able to develop or implement on their own.

Many natural resource collaborative efforts that use a consensus-building process also include the option of resorting to a vote if consensus proves elusive. This fallback option is included to ensure that a single individual bent on obstructing progress cannot derail the group's efforts. It relieves collaborative groups of having every stakeholder "sign on" before moving forward while also recognizing that much can be accomplished through a consensus-building process even if consensus is not the final outcome. Some argue that the existence of this fallback vote option pollutes the consensus process because it relieves participants of addressing everyone's needs and concerns. This point must be clear: If the fallback to a vote is used, then the group **did not** reach a consensus decision despite using a consensus-building process.

Viewed in this way, consensus is a decision-making **process** that any type of collaborative group can use, but it is possible to use the process without reaching a consensus decision. A unanimous, consensus decision is a **possible outcome** of collaboration. Realizing consensus, however, is not necessarily the goal of a collaborative conservation effort, nor is the consensus-building process a prerequisite to achieving conservation through collaboration. For more information on the theory and practice of consensus, there is a list of references for further reading below.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CONSENSUS-BUILDING, SEE:

Lawrence Susskind and Jeffery Cruikshank. 1987. *Breaking the Impasse: Consensual Approaches to Resolving Public Disputes.* New York: Basic Books.

Kirk Johnson. 1993. *Beyond Polarization: Emerging Strategies for Reconciling Community and the Environment.* Northwest Policy Center, University of Washington.

Matthew McKinney. 1997. What Do We Mean by Consensus? Some Defining Principles. *The Chronicle of Community.* Volume 1 Number 3.

Rebecca Bauen, Bryan Baker and Kirk Johnson. 1996. *Sustainable Community Checklist.* Northwest Policy Center, School of Public Affairs, University of Washington.

The Limits of a Taxonomy

These various categories clearly overlap; for example, many of these groups use a consensus-building process for some or all of their decisions. Furthermore, an initiative may start as one type of collaborative but evolve into a different form as the group matures. Finally, there are varying levels of formal structure within each category. Thus, just as in the natural world, examples don't quite fit into neat boxes, and the borders between categories are generally fuzzy. While these categories are intended to clarify the language and provide some guidance to those involved in public land collaboration, they are not intended to be rigid nor to pigeonhole and constrain emerging efforts.

Outcomes of Collaboration

The outcomes of collaborative conservation initiatives are as varied as the types of initiatives themselves. The forms described so far capture the varied processes that those interested in public land management are taking to resolve conflict over management of these lands. Three types of outcomes also emerged from this review.

• **Civil dialogue and improved working relationships:** While several of the initiatives profiled in this report have yet to see substantial on-the-ground success, all of them have improved the working relationships between participants. Whether place-based or policy-based, greater trust and reduced polarization among collaborators in public land use issues are positive outcomes of this process, and their importance should not be underestimated. A civil dialogue may foster richer public participation in land management decisions and can lead to more informed government decisions. In many cases, establishing a civil dialogue, building trust, and improving working relationships are the essential first steps for any collaborative effort trying to further conservation. As a result, collaborative groups can fulfill an important social function in rural western communities. However, we cannot limit the discussion of outcomes to these process-oriented measures because improved relationships without substantive on-the-ground progress only perpetuate the status quo of public land management that collaboration promises to change.

• **Community stewardship** is an on-the-ground outcome of these collaborative efforts—a tangible project such as the Ponderosa Pine restoration project in the Swan Valley, Montana (p. 29), the Sheridan Creek restoration in the Henry's Fork Watershed, Idaho (p. 21), or the work at the Sand Flats Recreation Area, Utah (p. 60). The Sonoran Institute defines community stewardship as "initiatives that preserve the ecological integrity of public land while meeting the economic aspirations of adjoining landowners and communities." These initiatives will actively engage community members as land stewards.

• **Co-management** is usually defined as "power-sharing in the exercise of resource management between a government agency and a community or organization of stakeholders." Others broaden this definition somewhat to include shared power and responsibility between industrial landowners and "local resource users" as well. To date, such arrangements are rare as an approach to land management in this country; co-management programs are more common in developing nations. Regardless of the actual partners, co-management requires that a group other than a public land management agency or industrial landowner is empowered to **share** management authority in some form.[1] In the United States, land managers cannot legally delegate their ultimate authority and responsibility for management decisions, but there are experiments with power sharing within this legal context. The cooperative agreement for the management of Sand Flats (p. 60), in which Grand County, Utah, collects and allocates user fees for the recreation area, offers an example in the western U.S., as does the proposed Citizens' Management Committee contained in the Salmon-Selway Ecosystem Grizzly reintroduction proposal (p. 63).

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SUCCESS?

Indicators of Constructive Collaboration

Collaboration remains a fairly new approach to public land management, and in most cases, it is too early in a complicated, long-term process to declare collaborative initiatives successful. However, there are several indicators of constructive collaboration to look for while reading the case studies. These indicators, which emerged from the research for this report, can help identify important features that will enable participants to make the most effective use of this conservation tool.

Based on our research and experience, the following indicators must be present for collaborative conservation to work as a viable public land management option.

• **Get meaningful projects implemented** on the ground that hold potential for tangible conservation benefits. Even small-scale, symbolic efforts, such as the Beaverhead County Community Forum's weed pull, help build the foundation for larger efforts. These projects should include improved conservation as an integral goal and desired outcome.

" … collaborative approaches may be criticized for seeking consensus and thereby reaching lowest common denominator decisions that everyone can agree to because they are substantively meaningless. However, lowest common denominator decisions that support the status quo are not a hallmark of constructive collaboration."

• **Establish credible monitoring programs** to evaluate the long-term ecological impact of projects as well as the group's progress toward sustainable community development. All-party or third-party monitoring will help ensure credibility by avoiding having those with a substantial investment in success carry out the monitoring.

• **Develop an open, permeable process** that continually evolves, integrating new participants, new information, and new ideas.

• **Foster broad and inclusive participation** of multiple interests, persistently engaging the critics.

• **Seek local, regional, and national participation** in equal and empowering partnerships through sustained outreach. Constructive collaboration enhances the voice of local community members in public land decisions without compromising or excluding regional and national interests.

• **Engage the diversity of the group,** and the potential conflict inherent in that diversity, by focusing on points of agreement while acknowledging areas where disagreement remains. A constructive collaboration avoids degenerating into controversy that pits local, regional, or national interests against each other. When such conflict happens, the collaboration looks no different from the polarized debates that preceded the initiative.

• **Learn from each other.** Collaboration offers an opportunity to talk to, and learn from, people outside of one's own community of interest or community of place. Increased understanding of seemingly divergent interests and values can lead to greater ingenuity and creativity in problem solving.

• **Craft innovative projects** that have more long-term support than projects devised by one group alone. Frequently, these projects include both public and private lands because they are based on a holistic, ecosystem-based management approach.

As mentioned earlier, collaborative approaches may be criticized for seeking consensus and thereby reaching lowest common denominator decisions that everyone can agree to because they are substantively meaningless. However, lowest common denominator decisions that support the status quo are not a hallmark of constructive collaboration. Instead, constructive efforts represent an opportunity to "think outside the box," to develop innovative solutions to intractable problems that are stronger because of the diverse perspectives and broader knowledge base that contributed to their development. For example, at the Sand Flats Recreation Area outside of Moab, collaboration produced an agreement that improved the management of a fragile area being destroyed by excessive use and tourism while empowering and engaging Grand County in these management improvements. The bottom line is this: Constructive collaborations work toward improving conservation and finding creative ways to meet local economic and social goals.

SOURCES:

David Chrislip. 1995. Pulling Together: Creating a Constituency for Change. *National Civic Review*. Volume 84, Number 1: p. 21-30.

Michael McCloskey. 1996. The Skeptic: Collaboration has its limits. *High Country News*, Volume 28, Number 9.

National Parks and Conservation Association website information on the Niobrara Council management of the Niobrara National Scenic Riverway in Nebraska (http://www.npca.org).

Natural Resources Law Center. *The Watershed Source Book: Watershed-Based Solutions to Natural Resource Problems.* University of Colorado, Boulder.

Lawrence Susskind and Jeffery Cruikshank. 1987. *Breaking the Impasse: Consensual Approaches to Resolving Public Disputes*. Basic Books New York.

Don Snow. 1996. Coming Home: An Invitation to Citizens of the West. *The Chronicle of Community* Volume 1, Number 1.

Julia Wondolleck. 1988. *Public Lands Conflict and Resolution*. New York: Plenum Press.

Julia Wondolleck and Steven L. Yaffee. 1994. *Building Bridges Across Agency Boundaries: In Search of Excellence in the United States Forest Service*. (Ann Arbor, MI: School of Natural Resources and Environment, The University of Michigan.), a report to the USDA-Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS:

Brett KenCairn. June 1998. Director, Grand Canyon Forest Foundation.

Don Snow. March 13, 1998. Director, Northern Lights Research and Education Institute.

FOOTNOTES

[1]For discussions of co-management, see: Pinkerton, Evelyn W. 1992. Translating legal rights into management practice: overcoming barriers to the exercise of co-management. *Human Organization*. Volume 51, Number 4; Beckley, Thomas M. 1994. Alternative institutional mechanisms for forest management: a comparison of industrial, co-managed, community and private land forests. unpublished manuscript in possession of the author; Pimbert, Michael P., and Jules N. Pretty. 1995. Parks, People and Professionals: Putting 'participation" into protected area management. unpublished discussion paper. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. in possession of the author; Western, David, and R. Michael Wright, eds. *Natural Connections: Perspectives in Community-based Conservation*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

SECTION 2

Case Studies

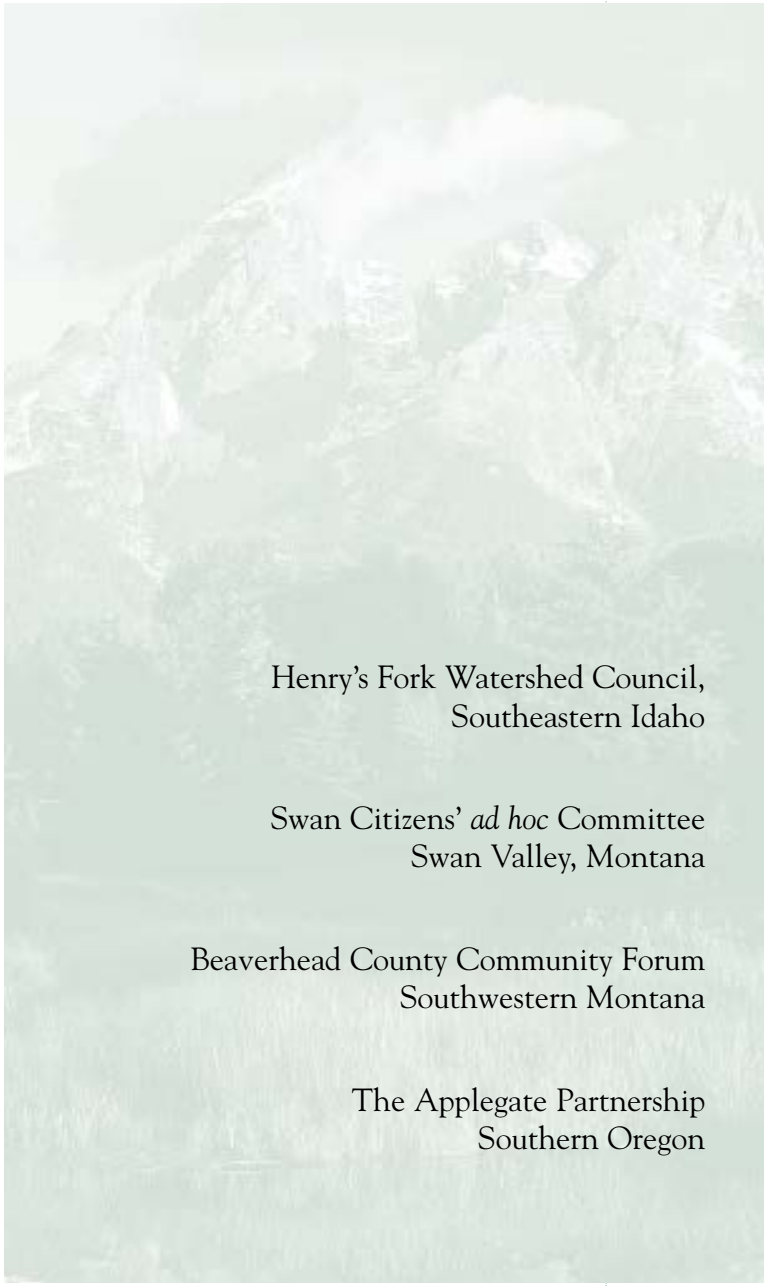
Livingston, Montana

Dennis Glick

"The bottom line is this: Constructive collaborations work toward improving conservation and finding creative ways to meet local economic and social goals."

CHAPTER 3

Place/Community-Based Collaborations



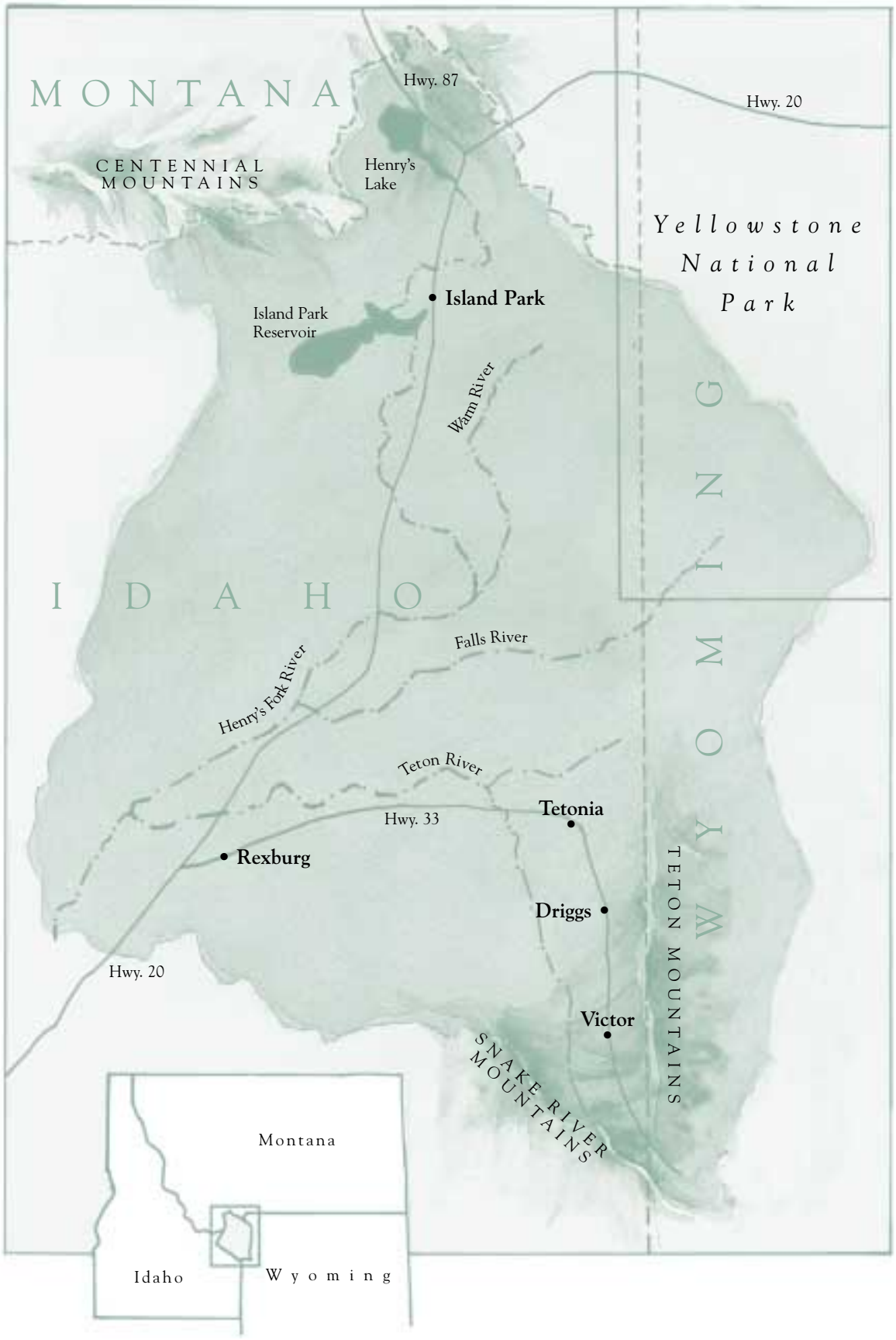
Henry's Fork Watershed Council,
Southeastern Idaho

Swan Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee
Swan Valley, Montana

Beaverhead County Community Forum
Southwestern Montana

The Applegate Partnership
Southern Oregon

Henry's Fork Watershed, Idaho



Henry's Fork Watershed Council

SOUTHEASTERN IDAHO

"We don't go into it as adversaries, we go in as a group of people trying to help the community and the rivers. … When I first got involved, I didn't realize that I'd have such a voice as a citizen."

In southeastern Idaho, irrigators, conservationists, and other water users organized the Henry's Fork Watershed Council to cooperatively address land management within the Henry's Fork River basin (see map). Using water as the organizing principle to unite diverse stakeholders and landowners, the Council is working to build community within the watershed, as well as to implement restoration projects and to support integrated scientific research. This story illustrates a place-based watershed group that has succeeded in implementing some on-the-ground community stewardship projects.

Joining Forces to Save a River

The Henry's Fork of the Snake River begins gathering its waters from spring-fed streams just west of Yellowstone National Park and from the park's southwest corner. Three main tributaries—the Fall, Teton, and Warm Rivers—cut through the rich agricultural land of the Upper Snake River Valley in eastern Idaho and converge just north of the town of Idaho Falls. The region is famous both for its potatoes and its trout fishing. This 1.7 million acre watershed is home to roughly 40,000 people, many of whom earn their livings in the tourism industry or in ranching and agriculture. The traditional conflict between these two mainstays of the watershed's economy is at the root of the Henry's Fork Watershed Council's formation: Anglers want a healthy river system for fish and recreation, while farmers and ranchers seek to protect their rights to divert water for irrigation. On top of these demands, the Henry's Fork area also supports a small wood products industry, and the river system includes several hydropower projects, putting pressure on the river that ties the watershed's communities together.

Competing water users battled each other over natural resource management in the watershed for years. Throughout the 1980s, concern grew over riparian degradation and the declining rainbow trout fishery, ultimately leading to the formation the Henry's Fork Foundation (HFF), to advocate and lobby for the protection of the river and its fishery. A series of successful campaigns by HFF, including more restrictive fishing regulations on certain stretches of the river and opposition to several hydroelectric and irrigation developments, pitted environmentalists against agriculture and other commodity interests. According to Mike Donahoo of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, environmentalists, irrigators, and anglers were "at each others' throats all the time," as demand for irrigation, instream flows, and hydropower all mounted. The Henry's Fork Watershed Council grew from this "history of conflict and some real strong adversarial feelings between irrigators and environmentalists," as Dale Swensen, one of the Council's co-facilitators, sees it.

In 1992, the conflict and ill feelings came to a head as two separate disasters significantly impacted the Henry's Fork. First, a construction accident during the development of a small hydroelectric plant dumped 17,000 tons of sediment into the Fall River, a large tributary of the Henry's Fork. Then, in the same summer, a draw-down of Island Park Reservoir in the upper Henry's Fork basin released over 50,000 tons of sediment from the bottom of the reservoir into the river. For two weeks, the Henry's Fork turned from a crystalline, blue-ribbon trout stream to mud brown according to a report in *High Country News*, a regional newspaper focused on environmental issues. This dramatic event so angered the already-frustrated watershed users and residents that it spawned an alternative approach to decision making and natural resource management. According to longtime Council participant Jim Long, "I think we realized we had to stop fighting. … There was a mutual desire to DO something." Many believed that the sediment release could have been avoided if there had been better communication among the myriad of government agencies with management authority in the watershed.

Idaho's Division of Environmental Quality initiated a series of meetings to discuss the incident at Island Park. Dale Swensen of the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District and Jan Brown of the Henry's Fork Foundation participated in several of these meetings as representatives of two conflicting user groups in the watershed. With a lack of communication and coordination among the agencies in the watershed clearly a problem, participants began to craft a cooperative way to approach management. From these meetings, an innovative proposal emerged: a single organization to oversee and coordinate management activities in the watershed. When Jan Brown and Dale Swensen offered their organizations as co-facilitators, everyone wondered if a coalition led by two traditional adversaries would work. All did agree, however, that the new organization would be more effective if it were led by citizens' groups instead of the agencies, given the level of distrust of management agencies that existed at that time.

In the winter of 1993-94, the Henry's Fork Watershed Council formed, drafting a charter through a consensus process that was then adopted by the Idaho legislature. Since then, the Council has met once per month, nine months out of the year. According to its mission statement, "The Henry's Fork Watershed Council is a grassroots, community forum that uses a non-adversarial, consensus-based approach to problem solving and conflict resolution among citizens, scientists and agencies of varied perspectives." The Council's primary duties include: cooperating in research and planning across multiple jurisdictions, reviewing and critiquing proposed projects within the watershed, coordinating funding sources for watershed projects, and serving as an educational resource for the public and the state legislature. In order to accomplish these responsibilities, the Council developed its Watershed Integrity Review and Evaluation (WIRE) process through which participants use ten criteria to evaluate projects brought to the Council for review (see sidebar). These criteria guide Council decisions and describe the group's desired outcomes for research and management activities in the Henry's Fork watershed: holistic and scientifically based management decisions, sustainable ecosystems, economic diversification, and improved cooperation among watershed groups or agencies.

Defining Characteristics

The flow of water defines the geographic scope of the Council's work and connects the participants' diverse interests. As such, this organization illustrates a community or place-based watershed council.

WATERSHED INTEGRITY REVIEW & EVALUATION (WIRE)

Watershed Perspective: Does the project employ or reflect a total watershed perspective?

Credibility: Is the project based upon credible research or scientific data?

Problem and Solution: Does the project clearly identify the resource problems and propose workable solutions that consider the relevant resources?

Water Supply: Does the project demonstrate an understanding of water supply?

Project Management: Does project management employ accepted or innovative practices, set realistic time frames for their implementation, and employ an effective monitoring plan?

Sustainability: Does the project emphasize sustainable ecosystems?

Social and Cultural: Does the project sufficiently address the watershed's social and cultural concerns?

Economy: Does the project promote economic diversity within the watershed and help sustain a healthy economic base?

Cooperation and Coordination: Does the project maximize cooperation among all parties and demonstrate sufficient coordination among appropriate groups or agencies?

Legality: Is the project lawful and respectful of agencies' legal responsibilities?

PARTICIPANTS: The Henry's Fork Watershed Council includes a diverse array of citizens, scientists, and government agency representatives connected to the watershed. According to a fact sheet describing the Council, participants "reside, recreate, make a living or have legal responsibilities" for managing the land and water within the Henry's Fork basin; in short, they share a concern for a common place. The group's mailing list includes approximately 200 names, with 40 to 60 people regularly attending meetings. Participants are encouraged to attend as individuals instead of representing a particular interest, organization, or position; as Dale Swensen describes the Council, "it's an open forum, and we encourage regular people to come and attend, participate." However, many participants do serve as representatives of various agencies, conservation groups, and organized irrigation groups. Perhaps the most essential characteristic of Council participants is that, whether serving as a representative of an organized interest or as a concerned citizen, each voice is legitimate and equal. According to Jim Long, an active citizen participant, "We don't go into it as adversaries, we go in as a group of people trying to help the community and the rivers. … When I first got involved, I didn't realize that I'd have such a voice as a citizen."

PURPOSE AND PROCESS: The Council uses a unusual process that explicitly emphasizes community building. With participants seated in a large circle, each meeting begins with several moments of silence followed by an open forum for individuals to speak about their issues of concern. Simple ground rules, such as using "I" statements, help participants to speak from their own experience and avoid personal attacks on others. While some are uncomfortable with this part of the meeting, many credit it with creating the safe, non-hostile and friendly atmosphere that ensures a civil dialogue about the issues confronting the watershed. The rest of the day-long meeting involves presentations of projects occurring within the watershed and small group discussions of proposals. If an agency or organization is seeking the Council's endorsement or funding for a project, the WIRE process is used to evaluate the project. Much of this evaluation work is done in the Council's three component groups: the Agency Roundtable, which includes representatives of the watershed's local, state, and federal management agencies; the Technical Team, made up of government, academic, and private sector scientists; and the Citizen's Group, involving members of the public from commodity, conservation, and development perspectives. Each group reports its recommendations to the whole Council, where final consensus is sought on projects submitted to the WIRE process.

As Jan Brown describes it, the Council "formed because we saw agencies making poor management decisions based on inadequate science and poor coordination. We are essentially a forum for discussion. We formed to improve communication." One active participant describes the value of the Council this way: "The importance of the Watershed Council is that it's a place to have a civil dialogue—it doesn't necessarily change anybody's mind on most issues." Relationship building among agency personnel, citizens, and other organizations is among the fundamental purposes of the Watershed Council.

The Watershed Council's facilitated process aims for consensus, which according to Jan Brown, does NOT mean unanimity, but rather "general agreement" in order to prevent a single individual out to block something from obstructing progress. Consensus is reached when all participants agree that the group has addressed all the substantive concerns. The Council doesn't vote, so there is little incentive for a single interest to fill the room with advocates for a particular position.

SCALE: Geographically, the Watershed Council encompasses a fairly large amount of land: the Henry's Fork basin is 1.7 million acres, including over 3,000 miles of streams and canals. However, the specific on-the-ground projects, like the Sheridan Creek restoration project described below, focus on one stretch of river at a time. Moreover, as an evaluation prepared by the Northwest Policy Center observes, "the issues [the Council] has confronted have not been 'nationalized.'" Jan Brown agrees with this observation, pointing out that the Council is "addressing in-watershed concerns rather than taking on federal policy or law. We narrowed the discussion to local, watershed boundaries or to those policies that directly affect us." Because of this local, geographic focus, Brown believes that "watershed councils aren't the place to seek national policy, or federal law changes; [they are] the place to work out on-the-ground conservation and assess the overall result."

OUTCOMES: The Henry's Fork Watershed Council is seeing results in terms of both process and on-the-ground conservation. Many of those involved, but especially agency personnel, see the relationships being forged through the Council's emphasis on community building as among the most important outcomes. The Watershed Council succeeds in creating a safe forum where participants can voice their opinions without fear of "being beat up" by angry opponents eager to shout down those they don't agree with. According to Targhee National Forest district ranger Adrienne Keller, the Council "breaks down the government barriers. … It makes us all human and not just a

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"Because ensuring broad participation is a consistent challenge, place-based collaborative efforts need to be proactive and creative in their outreach to nonparticipants."

bureaucracy, whether it's federal, state, or local resource agencies. It levels the playing field, brings us all on one plane." Participants believe that this helps the agencies be more successful and prevents the bad decisions, like the draw-down of the Island Park Reservoir. The Council, because of the relationships built between watershed users, citizens, and agency personnel, can provide insight into the effectiveness and relevance of the various policies, laws, and regulations affecting the watershed.

The Watershed Council, through its support of research and monitoring in the watershed, is helping improve the scientific foundation for management decisions in the region. The data collection and establishment of monitoring programs improve managers' tools for evaluating the effects of management actions on conservation and sustainable community development in the Henry's Fork basin.

On the ground, the Council is also seeing results. Its restoration project at Sheridan Creek is the most recent example that has been profiled in local papers, such as *The Fremont County Herald Chronicle*. Heavy irrigation demand impacts this hard-working creek, the second largest stream entering Island Park Reservoir at the northern end of the watershed. Water quality and the stream's fishery were both deteriorating. The Council devised a comprehensive plan that involves a riparian fencing project combined with a well on a BLM grazing allotment to ease cattle pressure along the stream. Ten diversion structures are being improved to direct the creek back to its original channel. Stream banks are being revegetated with willows and other native plants. Ongoing monitoring will gauge changes in the diversion structures, water quality, and other ecological indicators as the project progresses. The Council and its individual participants all contributed funding to pay for the improvements. A Council subcommittee also crafted a plan to reintroduce the native Yellowstone cutthroat trout into a stream section in Harriman State Park, which has been endorsed and is awaiting implementation.

According to Dale Swensen, the Sheridan Creek story illustrates the dramatic change in the way on-the-ground projects get implemented. With all of the various stakeholders' support, it is easier to get private landowners on board for restoration projects that directly affect their operations. Though small in scale relative to the entire watershed, the Sheridan Creek project illustrates collaboration's tangible conservation benefits, one stretch of river at a time. While these on-the-ground conservation outcomes may be small in scale, one participant points out that "the important thing is getting people to think about what is right and wrong in terms of conservation."

Lessons

The Henry's Fork Watershed Council offers several lessons for place-based collaboration:

STRONG CITIZEN-BASED LEADERSHIP: The Watershed Council succeeds with "local leadership, locally based." Dale Swensen and Jan Brown, along with the organizations that they represent, get a great deal of credit for the continuity and the achievements of the Watershed Council. Because the Henry's Fork Foundation and the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District were originally seen as archenemies, these organizations' shared leadership of the Council gives it greater credibility. Several people observed that nonparticipants may be more likely to trust that their interests are represented rather than feeling that the Council is dominated by one particular interest group over another. The Fremont-Madison district and HFF are also nongovernmental organizations dedicated to representing the public interests. According to one agency representative, "attitudes toward government in this area are not very good. So, I think citizens had a better chance of making it work, getting more public involvement, more water users' involvement."

THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY: The history of the Watershed Council illustrates the role that traditional environmental advocacy plays in fostering collaborative approaches. The Henry's Fork Foundation's success in advocating for more restrictive fishing regulations as well as opposing several hydroelectric and irrigation developments earned them greater power and influence in land management decisions. These successes forced traditional watershed users to take the organization seriously.

FOSTERING BROAD PARTICIPATION: As with most other collaborative efforts, fostering and ensuring broad-based participation over time is a challenge for the Henry's Fork Watershed Council. Several participants commented that the involvement of interested citizens not representing an organization has waned over time. The time-consuming nature of collaborative efforts can limit the participation of volunteers who are busy with jobs, families, and other interests. As Jim Long, an active citizen participant who is retired, observed, "In the winter it's easy to get a turnout; in the spring, it's not. Its been a problem to get people to give up a full day. I spent four days last week on Council stuff. If you're not retired or don't have a job with an agency you can't give up that kind of time." Dale Swensen says "The citizens have relaxed a lot. Some are really dedicated. The rest might be leaving it up to Fremont Madison,

the Foundation, and the other groups that are actively participating to represent them." Local government representatives are also not participating regularly, which may again be related to the time-consuming nature of collaboration.

Because ensuring broad participation is a consistent challenge, place-based collaborative efforts need to be proactive and creative in their outreach to nonparticipants. The Henry's Fork Watershed Council maintains a mailing list of approximately 200 people, the majority of whom do not regularly attend meetings. Local media covers the meetings routinely. Finally, once per year the facilitation team asks "who is missing?" The Council will write letters of invitation to specific people they believe should be participating, though this strategy is often unsuccessful.

One concern often leveled against place-based groups, such as the Watershed Council, is that national interests are excluded from the process by virtue of distance. As a result of this watershed's fame as a trout fishery, many of the organizations involved, though locally based, include national and international members. In fact, the vast majority of the Henry's Fork Foundation's membership does not live within the watershed, and board members live across the United States. Thus, HFF's staff, who are residents of the watershed, are also representing national and even international interests of the organization's members in the health of this particular watershed.

The benefits of reduced polarization and better relationships among members of the Watershed Council have not necessarily reached beyond to nonparticipants. A fair amount of animosity still exists over land management in the region. As an extreme example, a pipe bomb was recently planted in the Driggs ranger district office of the Targhee National Forest, apparently by individuals disgruntled over the Forest's road closures. Thus, while this incident is unrelated to the Council's work, it indicates that collaboration – even with the broadest participation – cannot cure all of the conflict regarding public land use.

ATTENTION TO PROCESS:

Despite the constant challenge of ensuring broad participation, Jan Brown believes that the Henry's Fork Watershed Council is successful because of its "attention to equity, to equal access, to having an equal voice. With consensus as a goal, we don't have 100 people showing up to try to roll the rest." The deliberate attention to "community building" in the Council's meeting process ensures that each participant has the opportunity to speak as an individual. Thus, the Council's process is not about representation so much as it is about participation. According to Jan Brown, "This is not representative democracy—it is dialogue and communication and increasing tolerance for a new way of doing things. This is a form of democracy that needs a role as well, side-by-side with representative democracy." Furthermore, the Council remains open and inclusive with no membership requirements. The Council welcomes all who wish to attend, including local watershed residents, as well as nonlocals who have an interest in the watershed considered legitimate voices. Again, by virtue of HFF's role within the Council and its nonlocal membership, the Council may be able to integrate local, regional, and national interests more easily than other place-based efforts.

The Watershed Council's WIRE process establishes a mechanism to ensure that projects endorsed by the Council further its goals and desired conservation outcomes. For example, the WIRE checklist specifically asks if a project demonstrates an understanding of the relationships among a number of physical, biological, social, climatic, and hydrologic parameters in the watershed. These criteria help participants evaluate the project in terms of its contribution toward managing the watershed in a holistic way. To meet the WIRE criteria, projects must also include

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Barb Cestero

Henry's Fork Watershed, Idaho

"One concern often leveled against place-based groups, such as the Watershed Council, is that national interests are excluded from the process by virtue of distance. As a result of this watershed's fame as a trout fishery, many of the organizations involved, though locally based, include national and international members."

Henry's Fork Watershed Council meets to review the Sheridan Creek restoration project

Barb Cestero

an effective monitoring plan for evaluation of progress. Much of the monitoring is carried out by agencies or participating organizations, such as the Henry's Fork Foundation.

TACKLING THE TOUGH ISSUES: Another criticism often leveled against collaborative efforts is that they never tackle the difficult issues, focusing instead on those areas where diverse interests can agree. The Henry's Fork Watershed Council does not escape this critique. One participant noted that "what comes out is usually pretty bland—we mostly tackle things that are easy to be resolved" and went on to say, "I don't think any of these organizations can tackle the big issues—those divide us by political party, religion, etc." For example, the Council knew it should not attempt to WIRE the proposed revision of the Targhee National Forest Plan because the process would prove too divisive for its membership. While broad reform of natural resource policy, even at the regional scale of a Forest Plan revision, may never come out of place-based efforts like the Henry's Fork Watershed Council, these efforts do accomplish small-scale, on-the-ground projects; as one participant describes it, "some good stuff has happened in particular sections of particular streams, doing restoration." And, as Jan Brown sees it, that's okay: "People who oppose the Watershed Council approach are seeking major policy changes at the state or national level. Watershed Councils aren't the place to seek policy or law change; it's the place to work out on-the-ground conservation."

Another criticism of collaboration is that participants in a place-based collaborative may feel a pressure to "go along to get along" because they are working with their neighbors to resolve contentious issues. This tendency, while understandably human, undermines a collaborative group's ability to achieve innovative solutions that are substantively different from an existing status quo as well as its credibility with outside observers. This desire to maintain relationships may underlie decisions not to tackle the most contentious issues such as the Targhee Forest Plan revision briefly discussed above.

FUNDING: The Henry's Fork Watershed Council found itself in a fortunate position often unavailable to other place-based collaborative efforts: money was immediately available to fund projects over a five-year period. The State of Idaho established the Henry's Fork Watershed Fund to finance projects in the basin and the Council's administrative expenses. The seed money for this fund was part of a settlement from one of the sediment disasters that triggered the formation of the Watershed Council. Participating organizations and agencies, such as the Henry's Fork Foundation or the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, will contribute funds to projects with which they are specifically involved.

At a Glance ...

LESSONS LEARNED

Strong local citizen-based leadership ensures credibility.

Maintaining broad participation is a challenge over time.

Deliberate attention to process creates an atmosphere of civil dialogue by ensuring a voice for all participants.

Watershed councils function best as a place to work out on-the-ground conservation.

"While broad reform of natural resource policy, even at the regional scale of a Forest Plan revision, may never come out of place-based efforts like the Henry's Fork Watershed Council, these efforts do accomplish small-scale, on-the-ground projects."

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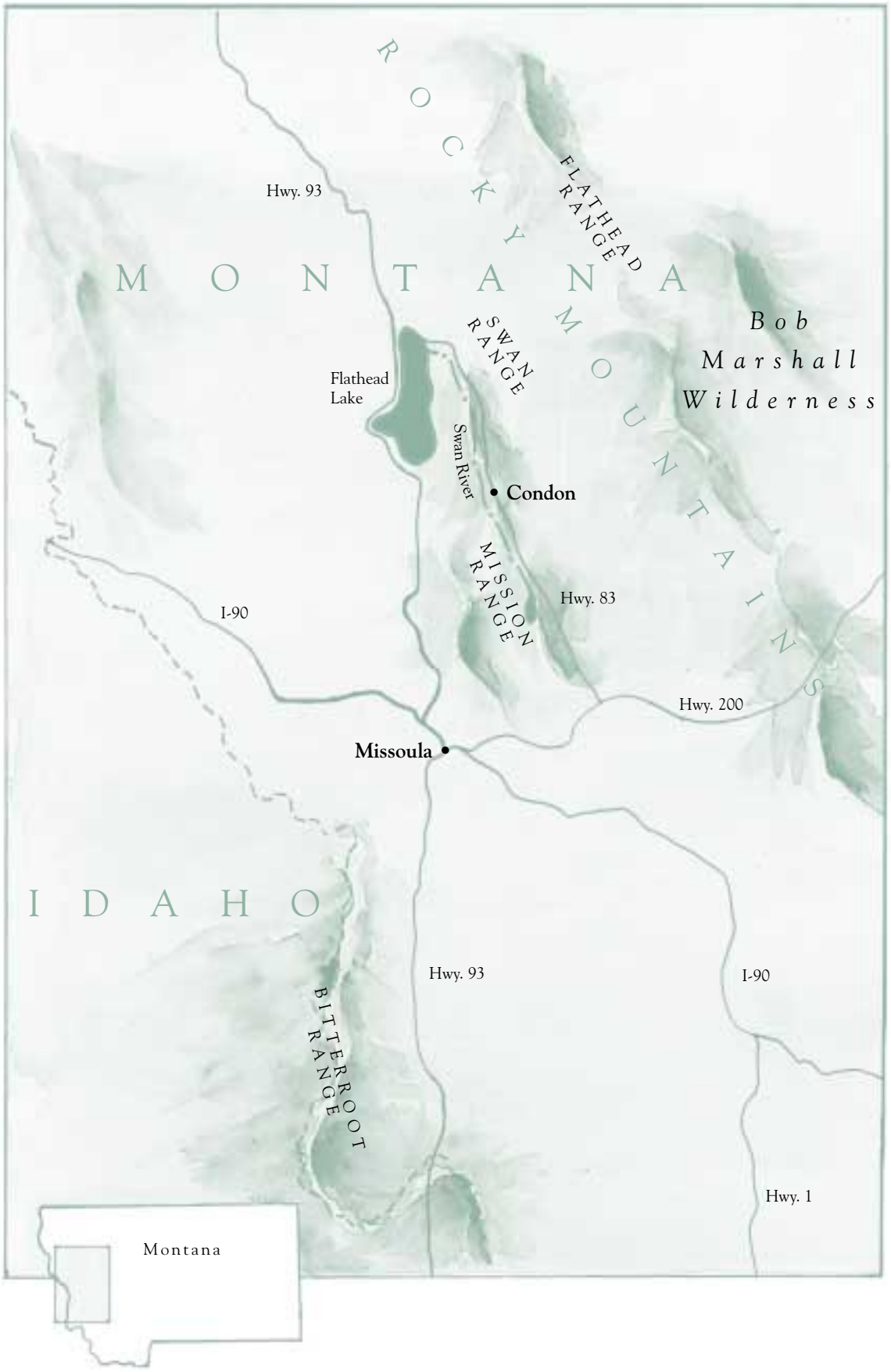

Swan Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee

SWAN VALLEY, MONTANA

In the Swan Valley of northwestern Montana (see map), residents are using a collaborative process to address ongoing conflicts over natural resource use and protection in the valley. The Swan Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee brings the valley's diverse stakeholders—from environmentalists to outfitters and loggers to retirees and business people—together to seek common solutions to local problems. Through the *ad hoc* committee, individuals with traditionally adversarial perspectives strive to create a balance between the protection of the valley's landscape and the livelihoods of its residents. This place-based dialogue group has succeeded in establishing several community stewardship initiatives.

Getting Beyond the Timber Wars

Nestled between two federally designated wilderness areas, the Swan Valley is a long, narrow corridor of sparse development through rugged and wild country. The integrity of the valley's aquatic and forest ecosystems remains high, supporting a diversity of wildlife, including wolves, grizzly bears, mountain lion, native bull trout, and lynx. As a result, interest in conservation of the valley's landscape is strong among both environmental advocacy groups and land management agencies. Land management decisions designed to maintain the Swan's remaining ecological integrity, such as road closures on Forest Service land, directly impact the livelihoods and lifestyles of valley residents.

According to a community profile, conducted by Mark Lambrecht and David Jackson of the University of Montana, approximately 550 permanent and seasonal residents make their home in the Swan Valley, with many of the valley's permanent residents stringing together several seasonal or part-time timber and recreation jobs. The valley always has been a difficult place to earn a living, made more so by declines in the timber industry during the late 1980s and early 1990s. An economic transition away from dependence on timber extraction and the in-migration of new residents seeking the valley's high quality of life are bringing rapid changes to the community. As with many rural communities adjacent to protected public land, economic and demographic changes are contributing to conflict and tension among Swan Valley residents.

The late 1980s were a contentious, volatile time in the valley. Forces seemingly beyond the control of local residents threatened to tear their community apart. Green wooden signs appeared at the end of driveways proclaiming "this family supported by timber dollars." Local papers reported that public meetings addressing any natural resource issue were packed, drawing 150-200 people to the Condon Community Hall. These meetings are legend, described now by Swan residents, such as Alan Taylor, as "disastrous ... with lots of screaming and yelling about logging, environmental issues, national forest decisions." Emotions ran high, and some residents feared violence as the conflict over environmental and natural resource issues escalated.

In 1990, the *ad hoc* committee emerged to tackle this polarization as well as the socio-economic and environmental changes confronting their community. According to Sue Cushman, a current leader in the *ad hoc* committee, the *ad hoc* committee "was an attempt to prevent division in the community." Led by a dedicated core of volunteers, the *ad hoc* committee strives to include the diverse perspectives and interests from throughout the valley in their meetings. Motivated by both economic and ecological concerns for their valley, this group of neighbors tackled what they saw as the most pressing issue—the declining timber economy. According to founding member Bud Moore, "We were afraid that, in desperation to keep the money flowing, we would damage what brought us here to live." They intended to be a temporary group that would exist only as long as there was a need. Eight years later, the group still holds meetings roughly once per month.

"To date, the ad hoc *committee has completed a variety of projects related to local conservation on both public and private land while continuing to foster dialogue and encourage greater education within the community about natural resource issues.*

"The collaborative process brings people with divergent perspectives together, reduces the tension and polarization in the community, and provides a forum for rational, civil discussion of the natural resources central to residents' lives."

In a one-page statement of its mission, mandate, and goals, the *ad hoc* committee states its ongoing purpose:

This ad hoc group of citizens has a self-imposed mandate to: address the economic, environmental, and cultural problems related to the decline (in the valley's natural resource base) [and to] suggest to the full community possible remedies that maintain or enhance economic livelihood and the quality of life in the Swan Valley.

To date, the *ad hoc* committee has completed a variety of tangible projects related to local conservation on both public and private land while continuing to foster dialogue and to encourage greater education within the community about natural resource issues. For example, the *ad hoc* committee worked closely with the Flathead National Forest on a 30-acre ponderosa pine restoration project that involved a small-scale commercial timber harvest. *Ad hoc* participants are leading the long-term monitoring of this restoration effort to gauge the ecological impacts of the project which was designed to return the stand to the open, park-like conditions characteristic of older ponderosa pine forests and to protect the old, large-diameter trees from forest fire.

Defining Characteristics

Several characteristics of the Swan Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee are instructive for our taxonomy of collaborative conservation initiatives. Specifically, the participants, process, scale of work, and outcomes characterize the *ad hoc* committee as a **place/community-based dialogue group.** Several of the committee's projects illustrate **community stewardship** as an outcome of the collaborative process.

PARTICIPANTS: The *ad hoc* committee is loosely structured with no by-laws, dues, or official membership. Anyone in the community, as well as any nonresident with an interest in Swan Valley land management, is welcome to participate in monthly meetings. A committed core of the valley's permanent residents initiated, and continues to drive, this collaborative effort. These volunteers change over time as new people become active, but the *ad hoc* committee continues to be guided by an entirely local leadership. Representatives of regional stakeholders, such as the U.S. Forest Service, Plum Creek Timber Company, various state agencies, the University of Montana, and a few conservation groups, also attend meetings with varying levels of frequency. Agency personnel and other outside experts participate in ongoing discussions and projects as partners or advisors. In this way, local knowledge is integrated with outside scientific and expert information into projects as they evolve from the community process.

PROCESS: Two simple ground rules guide the *ad hoc* committee's meetings: (1) participants must listen respectfully to each other; and (2) consensus is required for the *ad hoc* committee as a whole to advocate a specific position. A neutral facilitator serves as the "traffic cop," keeping meetings running smoothly and participants civil. Meetings are open to anyone who wishes to participate and are advertised in the valley newspaper. The *ad hoc* committee sends meeting minutes and announcements to a mailing list of approximately 100 people. More recently, the committee began mailing meeting announcements to every valley resident. The ideas, energy, and issues of participating residents shape the definitions of the particular problem as well as the solutions that emerge. Local knowledge of valley lands is integrated with scientific information and expert knowledge. When a project occurs on Forest Service land (such as the ponderosa pine restoration), the plan developed by collaboration is then subject to the environmental review process required by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Forest Management Act.

SCALE: The *ad hoc* committee defines the human community it serves and the scope of its work according to the valley's geography. The Upper Swan Valley begins at the subtle divide between the Clearwater River, which flows southward, and the Swan River, which meanders north around the Mission Mountains. Goat Creek, a tributary of the Swan River just south of Swan Lake, forms the northern boundary of the *ad hoc* committee's self-defined jurisdiction. Ignoring the various political boundaries drawn across the valley, the *ad hoc* committee defines the community it serves by residents' shared identification with their surroundings. This specific locale corresponds roughly with the southern portion of the Swan Lake Ranger District on the Flathead National Forest. In its work with the Forest Service, the *ad hoc* committee limits itself to this part of one ranger district—the lands immediately adjacent to the Upper Swan Valley community—because this is the landscape participating residents are the most connected to and concerned about.

OUTCOMES: The tangible, on-the-ground outcomes are all directly related to local conservation and local issues. In addition to the ponderosa pine project, completed work includes:

- **a partly implemented economic diversification plan** to guide the Swan community in its transition from timber dependence;
- **land management recommendations** for noncorporate private land owners in the valley's wildlife linkage zones to help prevent further habitat fragmentation in the valley bottom; these voluntary management guidelines were

Swan Valley citizens discuss land management issues

Swan Ecosystem Center

included as an appendix in the 1996 Swan Valley-Condon Comprehensive Plan amendment, but the extent to which individual landowners adhere to them is unknown.

- **the creation of the Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC),** a nonprofit "community stewardship" organization. SEC's bylaws state its purpose as to "encourage sustainable use and care of public and private lands" through partnerships with federal agencies, industrial landowners, and other valley stakeholders. One current SEC project involves "stewardship contracts" in the two wilderness areas for local nonagency rangers whose responsibilities include wilderness maintenance, visitor services, and ecological monitoring. SEC has also carried out several additional small-scale restoration projects on private land like the ponderosa pine project.

Beyond the tangible outcomes of the *ad hoc* committee's efforts, participating residents see building the community's capacity to deal with change as the single greatest benefit of this community-based collaborative effort. The collaborative process brings people with divergent perspectives together, reduces the tension and polarization in the community, and provides a forum for rational, civil discussion of the natural resource issues central to residents' lives. The *ad hoc* committee fosters important connections between the Swan community and decision makers in the Forest Service and Plum Creek Timber Company. As a result, participating residents are gaining greater influence in land management decisions that affect the valley. Civil dialogue and building relationships with distant decision makers may prove to be important first steps to ensuring that the Swan Valley's rural character and landscape remain intact.

Lessons

The story of the Swan Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee provides several lessons for successfully negotiating the quagmire of local participation in federal lands decision making. These points illustrate the ingredients that help a collaborative effort make substantive progress:

BROAD PARTICIPATION:

Because good collaborative decisions are predicated on having all the stakeholders involved, issues of participation are central to their success. This holds especially true when working on public land issues, where regional and national interests must be included. The *ad hoc* committee negotiates this tension in several ways. First, regional stakeholders are welcome to attend meetings and become involved even while the process remains locally driven; "outsiders" are welcomed as positive contributors. In the Swan, the "community" is not narrowly defined to exclude nonresidents, nor is it viewed in isolation from the broader region. In fact, the *ad hoc* committee actively fosters relationships beyond the local resident community by deliberately inviting others to meetings or on field trips in order to get their comments and input on specific projects. Secondly, any projects occurring on public land remain subject to existing federal and state laws including NEPA. Thus, projects emerging from the collaboration still go through the now-familiar process of scoping and environmental assessments or impact statements. This procedure ensures that stakeholders who chose not to participate in the collaboration still have standing in decisions about federal land.

"… any projects occurring on public land remain subject to existing federal and state laws including NEPA … This ensures that stakeholders who chose not to participate in the collaboration still have standing in decisions about federal land."

Ensuring broad participation over time presents significant challenges. The time-consuming and volunteer nature of collaboration means that many cannot participate due to the demands of jobs and family. Significantly, the leadership of the Swan Valley *ad hoc* Committee is either retired or self-employed; with flexible schedules, these residents are able to commit to participating in collaborative processes. A consequence of this common characteristic of *ad hoc* leaders is that some in the community criticize the committee as a "like-minded" group that does not include all of the valley's diverse interests. Recognizing that not everyone in the valley participates in the collaborative effort, the *ad hoc's* leadership is careful to point out that it does not speak for the Swan community

Swan Valley looking east toward the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area

Barb Cestero

"Recognizing that not everyone in the valley participates in the collaborative effort, the ad hoc's leadership is careful to point out that it does not speak for the Swan community as a whole and that it continues to work to include those who are not currently participating."

as a whole and that it continues to work to include those who are not currently participating.

Fostering broad, inclusive participation requires proactive, innovative efforts at involving those who sit on the sidelines; meetings alone will not suffice. To tackle this issue, the *ad hoc* committee, among other strategies, invites specific individuals to get involved in projects where their expertise would be an asset. The committee continues to invite critics, particularly a local environmental group which generally does not participate in collaborative efforts on field trips, on tours, and to meetings in an effort to gain their input. The Swan Ecosystem Center is expanding the opportunities for volunteers to be involved in specific projects, thus drawing new participants into the numerous collaborative and community stewardship initiatives in the valley.

IMPORTANCE OF TANGIBLE OUTCOMES: Slow progress and intangible results, such as increased trust, can be the frustrating early results of collaborative efforts, leading to the perception that these groups are "all talk and no action." Yet, in addition to the ponderosa pine project, *ad hoc* committee participants successfully prevented the closure of the Forest Service's Swan Valley facility by creating and jointly operating the Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC) at the Forest Service's Condon Work Center. The SEC offers a visitor center, educational programs, and an interpretive trail through the ponderosa pine site, and it implements the monitoring of the ponderosa pine project. The SEC also administers two stewardship contracts with local residents to provide wilderness ranger services and ecological monitoring for the Forest Service. By creating the SEC, the *ad hoc* committee greatly expanded its capacity to develop and monitor community stewardship projects in the valley. These projects offer on-the-ground evidence that collaboration can benefit residents of the local area despite its sometimes laborious process. However small in scale, tangible results provide the necessary incentive for continued participation. Mechanisms for monitoring the impacts of such projects are essential for future evaluations of the work.

MEET OR EXCEED EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW OR POLICY: Swan Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee projects, such as the ponderosa pine project, which occur on Forest Service lands, have also gone through the NEPA process, ensuring that nonlocal and nonparticipating interested parties have an opportunity to review and challenge decisions regarding public land. The group has not sought exemptions to existing laws or regulations in order to implement its work. Other efforts, such as the voluntary guidelines for noncorporate forest land, attempt to go beyond existing environmental policy by influencing management on private land.

AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: Representatives of the Swan Lake Ranger District participate in the *ad hoc* committee in a number of ways. The district ranger participates in *ad hoc* meetings, but also maintains the agency's decision-making authority. The district ranger has, at times, gone against the desires of individual *ad hoc* participants based on the professional judgment of his staff. The staff must let the community know what they as agency personnel can and cannot do; where confusion exists on this point, there has been occasional conflict between *ad hoc* participants and agency personnel. At times, agency personnel seek recommendations from *ad hoc* participants on projects the agency proposes, such as land exchanges in the valley; in this capacity, the *ad hoc* committee functions as a voice for the community among the many other interest groups involved in federal land management in the Swan.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP: The *ad hoc* committee was initiated, and continues to be led, by respected valley residents, whom neighbors believe are acting for the good of the community rather than in their own self-interest. These individuals are recognized as knowledgeable about the land, as well as the Swan's

rural lifestyle, which includes logging. Voluntary, local leadership, as a defining characteristic of a truly community-based effort, equalizes the balance of power within the group and limits the scope of a group's work to the place with which the community identifies. Furthermore, the leadership of the *ad hoc* committee has no direct economic stake in the projects that the committee undertakes—contributing greatly to the committee's credibility within the community.

At a Glance...

LESSONS LEARNED

Effective, broad participation includes both local residents and regional stakeholders.

Volunteer, local leadership is a characteristic of community-based collaboration.

Tangible outcomes, early on, provide incentive for continued participation.

Local collaboration must meet or exceed existing environmental laws, including the public participation process of NEPA.

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Sue Cushman. August 1996. Resident, Swan Valley, Montana.

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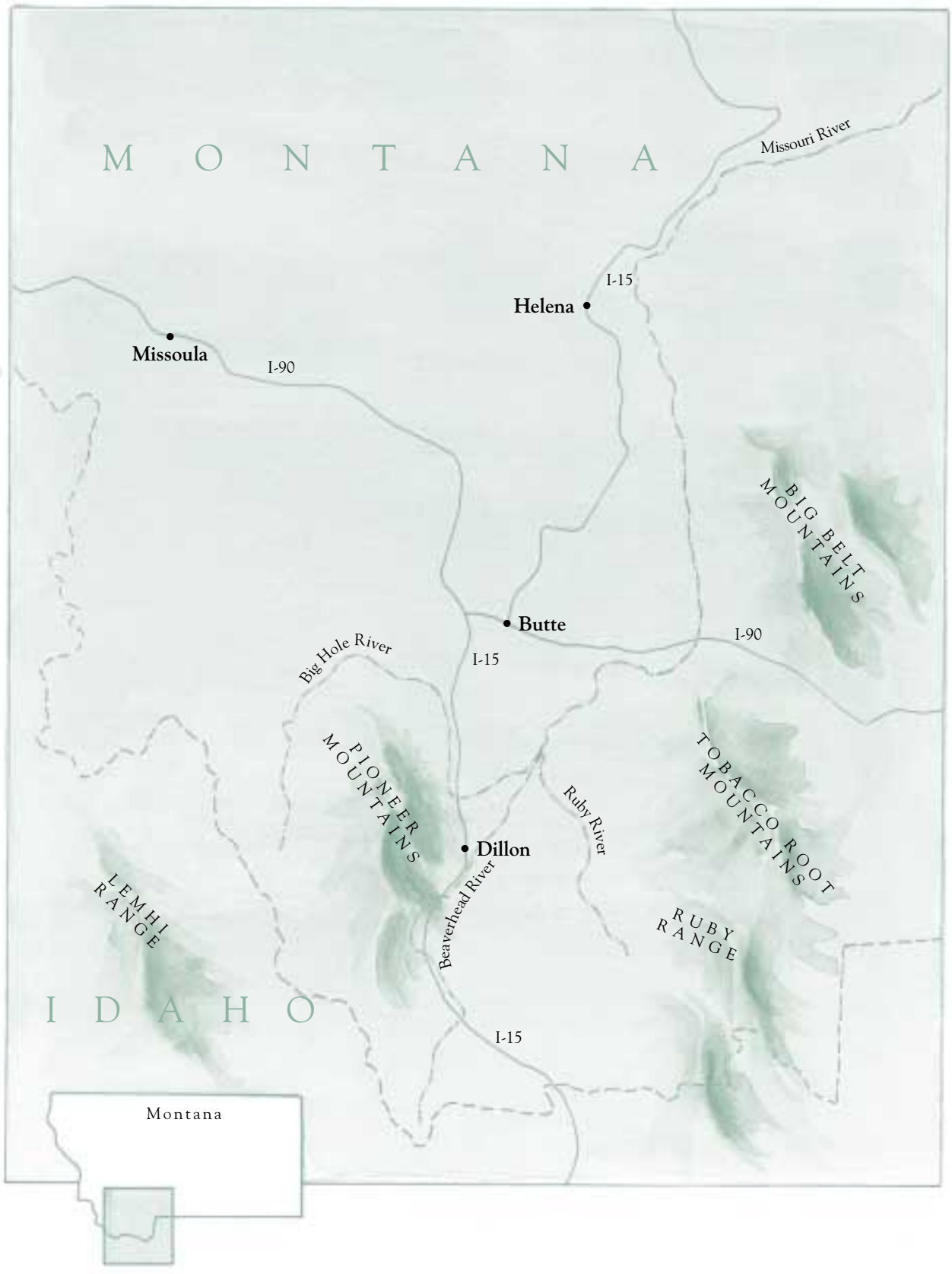
M O N T A N A
Missouri River
I-15
Helena
Missoula
I-90
BIG BELT MOUNTAINS
Butte
I-90
Big Hole River
I-15
PIONEER MOUNTAINS
TOBACCO ROOT MOUNTAINS
Ruby River
Dillon
Beaverhead River
LEMHI RANGE
RUBY RANGE
I D A H O
I-15
Montana

Beaverhead County Community Forum

SOUTHWESTERN MONTANA

Located in the southwestern corner of Montana, Beaverhead County (see map) is high, open, windswept country visually dominated by the rugged Pioneer Mountains. Rocky peaks drop to foothills covered in coniferous forest, finally giving way to the sweeping grassland valleys of the Beaverhead and Big Hole Rivers. Approximately 70% of the county's land base is publicly owned and managed by state and federal agencies. Several rural communities, including the towns of Dillon, Wisdom, and Wise River, are scattered throughout this landscape. Ranching, logging, mining, and tourism/recreation on public land all play a role in the economies of these communities.

Consequently, public land management greatly affects the livelihoods and lifestyles of Beaverhead County residents; land-use decisions can generate an enormous conflict between residents with diverse interests and values as well as between local folks and the various land management agencies. In fact, according to Dennis Havig, Wisdom District Ranger with the Forest Service, by the early 1990s, anti-federal sentiment was so strong in the county that the commissioners wrote a letter requesting the removal of the Beaverhead National Forest's leadership. With the county government ready to join Nye County, Nevada, in its fight to gain local control over federal land, Beaverhead County clearly needed to try something new to address the various land management issues confronting the region.

Searching for a Civil Dialogue

In the end, county residents chose collaboration in order to restore some civility to their local dialogue and debate about public land management, largely due to the leadership of one county commissioner. During the summer of 1994, representatives of Beaverhead County; the U.S. Forest Service; Bureau of Land Management; National Park Service; Fish and Wildlife Service; the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks; and the Montana Department of State Lands signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing to work together to address land-use issues in the county. The MOU created an Interagency Steering Committee charged with promoting "more and better citizen involvement in land-use decisions" at the county, state, and federal level. In order to accomplish this goal, the steering committee co-sponsored, with the Montana Consensus Council, a workshop on community planning, attended by over 50 residents and agency officials. Several of the individuals participating in this meeting created the Beaverhead County Community Forum (the Forum), **a place-based dialogue group.** Forum members then identified sectors of the community not represented within this early group. According to Rick Hartz, Beaverhead County planner and Forum member, the Forum "filled in those holes by inviting specific folks … who'd be able and willing to represent" the missing segments of the community.

The Forum, which consists of approximately 20 members, gathers one morning each month in the pink Search and Rescue building at the edge of Dillon. Several smaller "working groups" meet more frequently to tackle such specific issues as possible wilderness designations within the county, general public land management, communication, motorized recreation, economic action, financial/administrative issues, and river management. In these groups, Forum members attempt to hammer out specific recommendations for land managers on more contentious topics, including better management of recreational use on the Beaverhead River or allocations of motorized and nonmotorized recreation on public land. In trying to resolve these issues, the Forum is testing its ability to reach consensus on some of Beaverhead County's most divisive issues.

"According to Rick Hartz, when the original group invited people to participate in the Forum, 'We purposely stayed away from paid lobbyists [and] lawyers who we knew would take a party line. We were interested in John Q. Public.' By fostering the participation of ordinary county residents, the Forum strives toward its goal of improving citizen involvement in land management while ensuring that all sectors of the community are included."

Beaverhead County Community Forum

Beaverhead County, Montana

John Maki

Initially, the Montana Consensus Council provided facilitation and administrative services for the Forum as a whole and for working group meetings. Recently, the Consensus Council weaned the Forum from these services and is no longer facilitating meetings. As a result, the Forum is experiencing some growing pains and re-examining its work plan and ground rules. Today, Forum members share the monthly facilitation duty on a rotating basis. Several working groups handle the various administrative tasks, such as communication with the broader community and fundraising. These responsibilities have increased the work load significantly for the volunteers participating in the effort, creating new challenges for the group. For example, some participants are growing suspicious about the agencies' intentions in utilizing various recommendations. A few vocal participants are also concerned that much of the community is not adequately informed about the Forum's work and that this is a form of exclusion.

The Forum's work plan and ground rules define its purpose as "to build agreement among individuals and groups with diverse viewpoints on land-use and growth management activities" in the county. Furthermore, the Forum will advocate the needs and interests of county residents in land-use planning processes and help the various agencies (federal, state, and local) to coordinate their management activities. To date, specific accomplishments of the Forum include: the development of a database of social and economic trends, co-sponsorship of an annual weed pull, the publication of a newsletter to keep other residents informed of the Forum's activities, and publication of "The Code of the West" to educate new residents about rural living. Most recently, the public land working group (a subcommittee of the Forum) released draft recommendations to improve public land planning and management in the Pioneer Mountains and is seeking broader community comment on the document.

These accomplishments may contribute to conservation in Beaverhead County in a number of ways. The socio-economic database provides a factual foundation for future decisions about county land use and illustrates the transitions in Beaverhead County's economy over the years. The annual weed pull, while perhaps mostly symbolic, provides an opportunity for the Forum's diverse participants to work together on a conservation project—the eradication of exotic, invasive weeds which degrade wildlife habitat—that all can agree on. Through its newsletter, the Forum is trying to inform those who do not participate, as well as to generate interest among the broader community in its work. Finally, the public land working group's draft recommendations provide land management agencies with an organized voice from the local community that can be integrated into agency planning processes. To date, however, the agencies have not analyzed or implemented these recommendations.

Defining Characteristics

In contrast to the Swan Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee, the Forum focuses more on planning and policy recommendations at the local level rather than on-the-ground community stewardship projects. The Forum demonstrates the following characteristics of a **place-based dialogue group** within our taxonomy:

PARTICIPANTS are residents of Beaverhead County who hold a wide range of perspectives on land management issues in the county; those representing the various agencies are also county residents. The majority of Forum participants, with the exception of agency personnel, volunteer their time. According to Beaverhead County planner Rick Hartz, when the original group invited people to participate in the Forum, "We purposely stayed away from paid lobbyists [and] lawyers who we knew would take a party line. We were interested in John Q. Public." By fostering the participation of ordinary county residents, the Forum strives toward its goal of improving citizen involvement in land management while ensuring that all sectors of the community are included. Louise Bruce, a local conservationist and active participant in the Forum, observes that, "None of us are really hired guns. Nobody is advocating a single interest because we're not being paid. It levels the playing field a little more."

PROCESS: The Forum's written work plan and ground rules define its process. According to this document, the Forum is to include representatives from 10 identified sectors of the community. In theory, representatives are selected by their constituencies and are responsible for actively seeking input and advice from the sector they represent.[1] As we describe in the lessons section that follow, this structure is not always the way the Forum operates in reality. The Forum's ground rules include an explicit commitment to

using a consensus-building process that they define as "participants agree on a package of provisions that address the range of issues being discussed. The participants may not agree with all aspects of an agreement; but they do not disagree enough to warrant their opposition to the overall package." Meetings are open to the public, and an occasional community newsletter is used to keep others informed about the Forum's activities.

SCALE: The topics tackled by the Forum primarily involve land within Beaverhead County. Thus, land-use issues on federal, state, and private lands are all taken into consideration. One goal of the Forum is to analyze, and try to coordinate, land use in the county holistically across jurisdictions. As a result, Duke Gilbert, a Forum participant and property rights advocate, believes Forum members are seeking greater local involvement in public land decision making in order "to arrive at sensible, community-benefiting use of the federal lands" in the county. Citing the working groups formed around management of the Beaverhead River and the Pioneer Mountains, Rick Hartz notes that the Forum works "on issues of importance at the community level."

OUTCOMES: Much of the Forum's work results in recommendations to the various land management agencies in the county. For example, one of its most substantial products is the public land working group's draft of "Proposed Improvements for Land and Resource Management and Planning in the Pioneer Mountains Region." These recommendations are being used as part of agency planning processes. While the impact of these recommendations on conservation in Beaverhead County remains to be seen, there are potential conservation benefits. First, the public land working group considered the Pioneer Mountains as a whole region rather than focusing on agency jurisdictional boundaries in crafting their recommendations; thus, the document represents an initial step toward landscape-level management that is supported by citizens. The document also contains some clear agreements regarding specific conservation activities. For example, in the section on water and fish resources, the committee recommends agencies "Implement a cutthroat [trout] restoration (not conservation—we want action) program." A number of the most controversial issues, however, are mentioned in an appendix as issues where agreement could not be reached. Conflicts between motorized and nonmotorized recreation are the most notable example. These draft recommendations have also generated some controversy among residents who did not participate in their development and who are uncomfortable with the Forum speaking for the community.

There have been few on-the-ground conservation projects to emerge from the Forum to date. However, many members see providing recommendations as exactly the role that the Forum should be playing. According to Duke Gilbert, the Forum is "a policy body, not an operative body, not an individual analysis body; it can't be." Based on his experience participating in the Forum, Rick Hartz agrees, stating "I don't think ... these groups function best when they are dotting the i's and crossing the t's. They are better at looking at bigger, broader issues versus the stuff that's better left to resource specialists." However, some Forum participants are beginning to express concern that the group doesn't tackle the really difficult issues, such as motorized and nonmotorized recreation conflicts.

While this focus on policy recommendations may have produced few on-the-ground projects, it is important to view this in the context of one of the Forum's stated roles: "Advocate the needs and interests of Beaverhead County residents in county, state, and federal land-use planning processes." Seen in this light, one of the primary outcomes of Beaverhead County's collaborative effort is building political power for local residents in land management decision-making processes. For the federal agencies, the recommendations they receive from groups like the Forum help reshape their planning process. According to Rich Maggio of the BLM, "In the past, agencies decided what they were going to do and then went to the public with it. Now we're trying to get in the mode of 'what do you think we need to be doing?' Instead of top-down driven decisions, we're trying to get input up front." However, at this time it is unclear how the agencies will actually utilize or implement these recommendations.

" … one of its most substantial products is the public land working group's draft of 'Proposed Improvements for Land and Resource Management and Planning in the Pioneer Mountains Region.' These recommendations are being used as part of agency planning processes."

Lessons

A number of lessons can be drawn from the Forum's story and the current challenges facing the group. In many ways, these lessons can be attributed to the pragmatic realities of embarking on a long, largely volunteer effort at coordinating land-use decision making.

REPRESENTATIVE VS. PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY: Theoretically, the Beaverhead County Community Forum is representative of the broader community, with members speaking for and seeking input from their constituencies—the various sectors of the community identified in the work plan. Reality, however, works differently. The majority of participants volunteer their time, and preparing for and attending meetings adds a considerable work load on top of jobs, family, and other responsibilities. As is the case with the Swan

"A number of the most controversial issues, however, are mentioned in an appendix as issues where agreement could not be reached. Conflicts between motorized and nonmotorized recreation are the most notable example.

Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee, ensuring broad and sustained participation is a challenge for the Forum. Members are not always able to attend monthly meetings, leaving some sectors underrepresented at particular sessions. When members drop out of the Forum, they are responsible for finding a replacement who can continue representing their particular sector of the community. However, as Rick Hartz points out, "… it doesn't always happen that way. Holes remain; we do whatever we can to plug the hole."

For many members, keeping their constituencies informed and involved also proves difficult, and the time commitment is a factor. Furthermore, Forum members find their constituencies so diverse and diffuse that it is challenging for a single representative to speak for any given sector of the community. During a recent meeting addressing this challenge, one member observed, "All I can represent is a viewpoint … I can't say this is what **ALL** people in (my constituency) feel or think." According to Rick Hartz, this is a common problem. He says, "Many of our members are saying 'it's really hard, if not impossible, for me to say I represent the business community, or agriculture.'" Thus, more often then not, Forum members find themselves participating as individuals with their own concerns rather than as formal representatives of a larger constituency. To expect volunteers to invest the time to keep constituencies informed on top of attending regular Forum meetings may simply be unrealistic.

This is not necessarily a fault. In fact, encouraging citizens to participate as individuals with a complex set of concerns versus a representative of a specific and potentially more entrenched interest is one strength of place-based collaborative initiatives. When operating as "participatory" rather than "representative" democracy, local collaborations become an opportunity for communities to build political power by continually involving more members of the community. Thus, while the Forum does not have any legal decision-making authority, the community, through residents' participation, is clearly building the political power to influence agency decision making at the local level. At this point, the Forum is working through existing planning processes, albeit in an innovative way and at an earlier stage, before the agencies have a specific project proposed for review.

MEET OR EXCEED EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW OR POLICY: All of the Forum's work occurs within the existing framework of public land law, policy, and regulations. Any of the documents produced by the Forum regarding public land are advisory, presented to the agencies for consideration as part of their decision-making process. Agency officials maintain their legal decision-making authority; oftentimes, according to both Forest Service and BLM personnel, the role of agency representatives is to ensure that the Forum operates within the "sideboards" of existing laws and regulations. This does not keep the Forum from recommending policy changes (indeed that is what its public land draft does), but it does ensure that a local process still adheres to existing law and incorporates and responds to broader regional as well as national interests. As Dennis Havig describes it, "A local community group could come up with recommendations, but before making a decision, we have to talk to everyone. We can adopt a proposal, but then, we have to give everybody the opportunity to be involved, to review all of the alternatives." Most Forum members have no interest in imposing their recommendations for public land on either the land managers or on nonlocal stakeholders in public land management. Referring to the Forum's early discussions about potential wilderness designation for land in the county, Rick Hartz says, "We're going to try to put together a community consensus on what Beaverhead County could possibly agree to [regarding wilderness designation]. It could be used as a basis for legislation … but we're not going to try to 'Quincy' it." At this point in time, Forum members seem content with their purely advisory role: providing the agencies with recommendations that may or may not be implemented.

AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: Forest Service; BLM; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks; and Beaverhead County personnel all participate as regular members of the Forum. As participants, agency personnel are able to educate and be educated by other participants regarding the intricacies and consequences of any land-use planning. The Forum members are now well versed in many of the arcane details of forest planning, and that knowledge is shared among a broad spectrum of community members. As described above, personnel also participate as technical advisors regarding scientific issues and the various laws and regulations within which the group must operate.

The involvement of agency personnel does create challenges, however, especially in a county with a history of animosity toward federal land management agencies. Because agency officials are not volunteering their time to participate, and because they have staff to assist with administrative chores, they have assumed some of the facilitation and record-keeping responsibilities since the departure of the Montana Consensus Council. This contributes to the misperception among some segments of the community that the Forum is driven by the

BLM and Forest Service, and therefore, its work is suspect. Some participants in the Forum are deeply suspicious of where and how the agency will use the documents they produce. This mistrust was the cause of Beaverhead County's recent withdrawal from the Interagency Memorandum of Understanding.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP: According to Rick Hartz, the Forum keeps going despite the departure of the Montana Consensus Council because it's "a grassroots effort started by people; the individual folks continue to drive it even in light of the Consensus Council not coming down [from Helena]." Dennis Havig, the Wisdom District Ranger on the Beaverhead National Forest, echoes this observation. He says that the people who participate in the Forum are "community leaders, opinion leaders. … They're the people who, when an issue blows up, the community folks go to them to find out what's going on." These local leaders are generally well-liked and respected by the general community regardless of particular points of view. Many times they are from families with well-established reputations and historic ties in the community.

Forums such as the Beaverhead group also provide a venue for new local leaders to emerge. Dennis Havig believes that the Forum's process "shows who is a leader and who is well informed, who is effective in groups." He goes on to say that, "even if you don't agree with someone's point of view, you can see if they'll help solve problems or not." By creating an atmosphere of civil dialogue around issues of local importance, communities like Beaverhead County can engage their citizens in new ways that encourage clear-headed, thoughtful leaders to speak up.

CAPACITY BUILDING: The departure of the Montana Consensus Council and the Forum's subsequent reevaluation of its ground rules and purpose contain some important lessons about the role of outside groups in these local collaborations. If an outside group assists in convening a community-based collaboration, it is essential to build the necessary skills and institutional infrastructure within the community for the effort to carry on once the convenor departs. For example, the Forum is currently seeking funding to hire a new facilitator/administrative assistant to fill the former role of the Consensus Council. However, fundraising takes time, and in the interim, the Forum is struggling to carry on its work without this assistance.

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At a Glance..

LESSONS LEARNED

Volunteer, community-driven collaborations foster participation rather than representation. Members of collaborative groups often find it difficult to speak for their "constituencies."

All work must meet or exceed existing environmental law and policy.

Agency personnel participating as technical advisors and as equal members are essential, although outside observers can misinterpret agency participation as agency control of the process.

Attention to building local capacity ensures that collaboration will endure. This might include funding to pay for facilitation or for a part-time coordinator.

Some divisive issues, such as motorized versus nonmotorized recreation, will not be successfully addressed through collaboration because agreement simply cannot be reached.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Dennis Havig. May 6, 1998. Wisdom District Ranger, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.

Rick Hartz. May 4, 1998. Beaverhead County planner.

Duke Gilbert. May 13, 1998. Attorney and Forum participant.

Rich Maggio. May 20, 1998. Bureau of Land Management, Dillon Resource Area.

Louise Bruce. May 21, 1998. Environmentalist and Forum participant.

FOOTNOTES

[1] According to the Forum's Work Plan and Ground Rules, these sectors include: business and economic development; human services; agriculture; resource development; private property rights advocates; outdoor recreation; environmental protection; local, state and federal government.

Applegate River Watershed, Oregon

Applegate Partnership

SOUTHERN OREGON

by Brett KenCairn

Brett KenCairn served for four years as a board member of the Applegate Partnership and is the co-founder and former executive director of the Rogue Institute for Ecology and Economy in Oregon. He currently directs the Grand Canyon Forest Foundation in Flagstaff, Arizona, overseeing the implementation of a restoration forestry approach on 100,000 acres of forest land surrounding Flagstaff.

The Applegate River watershed (see map) of southern Oregon is home to one of the earliest and arguably best known community-based collaborations in the West: the Applegate Partnership. The story of the Partnership's growth and development over the last six years offers important insight into a place-based partnership that evolved from its more interest-based beginnings.

The Applegate River watershed encompasses approximately 500,000 acres in southern Oregon, part of the larger Rogue River Basin. This diverse landscape, sometimes referred to as the "Klamath Knot," occupies the convergence of three mountain ranges: the Coast Range, the Siskiyou Range, and the Cascades. The area is recognized as one of the most biologically diverse areas in the United States.

The Early Days of an Enduring Partnership

With a long history of social diversity, the Applegate Valley is home to residents earning their living off the land, as well as newer, middle-class urban refugees in search of an idyllic rural life. Immigrants to the valley were drawn by everything from fur trapping to the discovery of gold and, most recently, the Applegate's large percentage of federal land (over 70% of the land is managed by either the Forest Service or the BLM). Many of the valley's newcomers saw the federal lands as a form of insurance that the area would always retain its appealing forested appearance. By the late 1970s, however, the area's federal land managers adopted a strong timber production emphasis—including a shift to clearcutting regimes rather than the selective harvest systems more common in earlier forest use and to an increase in the broad-scale application of herbicides to control "competing" and nonmerchantable vegetation in the new clearcuts.

Aerial herbicide spraying incensed local residents and spawned a diverse collection of neighborhood-based groups opposing these practices. Resistance ranged from direct action to legal appeal. Gradually, this opposition to herbicides broadened to include direct challenges of timber sales. Over time, local groups joined with state and regional organizations to become increasingly successful in appealing federal timber sales. At the close of the 1980s, federal agencies found themselves constantly under appeal, frequently in court, and increasingly micromanaged by the Administration and Congress. The Applegate Valley was one of many battlefields in the "timber wars" fought throughout the Pacific Northwest.

In 1992, these embattled proceedings ground to a standstill when the listing of the northern spotted owl led to an injunction prohibiting logging on federal land throughout the Pacific Northwest. Bitter and sometimes violent protests ignited, with each side making dire predictions. On the surface, it appeared that the injunction would only worsen the already desperate, and often ugly, confrontations between environmental and industry interests.

Yet in the midst of the crisis, some saw opportunity. In the spring of 1992, environmentalist Jack Shipley and several others proposed a bold concept: the development of a comprehensive ecosystem management program for the entire 500,000-acre Applegate watershed. They circulated their idea to agency, industry, and environmental groups for comment. As conflicts continued to rage in other quarters, Shipley conducted shuttle diplomacy among leaders from all of the major interests. Paralyzed on most other fronts, many agreed to meet and discuss working together on this watershed-scale Applegate management plan.

An astute relationship builder, Shipley hosted the first meeting as a

"As people introduced themselves, they were asked not to disclose which interest they represented or which organization they worked for, but simply to say what was important to them about the watershed."

" … as the major interest groups shifted their focus away from the Partnership forum, local concerns began to displace discussion of regional and national concerns. "

potluck on the deck of his house rather than resorting to a formal public meeting room replete with flip-charts and facilitators. People from most of the major interests in the watershed attended: government agency staff, environmentalists, timber industry people, farmers, ranchers, and a variety of other local residents. Shipley structured the gathering to focus on the broader issues facing the watershed and the common values of those present. As people introduced themselves, they were asked not to disclose which interest they represented or which organization they worked for, but simply to say what was important to them about the watershed. As participants heard the common concerns shared by those thought to be arch-opponents, optimism animated the group. Most who attended left the meeting with a renewed hope that common ground was achievable—in fact, that much common ground already existed.

The Partnership rapidly took shape. Eighteen people—nine principal and nine alternate members—agreed to participate as board members. Among the board, bridge-building skills were considered essential prerequisites. The Partnership's founders considered not only which stakeholder groups were essential, but also which individuals within those groups were most respected and most likely to be able to work with people who have different values or views.

After several months of weekly meetings, the Partnership agreed on four basic objectives: (1) to conduct a comprehensive ecological assessment of the watershed, identifying key opportunities for restoration and sustainable use of resources; (2) to develop a comprehensive community assessment, identifying the major social and economic issues for local residents; (3) to initiate efforts leading to near-term harvest of forest products, compatible with an emphasis on forest integrity; and (4) to create a research and monitoring strategy capable of evaluating and improving activities in the watershed.

Early in its history, the Applegate Partnership was challenged by being thrust into the national spotlight. The Clinton-Gore administration came into office in 1992 promising to resolve the timber wars in the Pacific Northwest. Soon, collaboration and the Partnership were the centerpiece of President Clinton's "Option 9" plan for adaptive management in the region. The notoriety that followed caused the principal environmental group in the Partnership to withdraw because of internal conflict over its participation. When the timber industry used the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) (See Appendix) to challenge the whole Northwest Forest Plan, the federal agencies withdrew from the Partnership fearing that their participation was in conflict with the law. The Partnership withstood these setbacks because, despite the national attention, watershed residents saw the Partnership as a local effort "to create a model for a community living in harmony with its host landscape."

After over six years, the Partnership continues to meet weekly. In the course of these hundreds of meetings, it has initiated a wide variety of projects within the watershed and assumed a diverse set of roles within the Applegate community. These projects include: riparian restoration on private lands, stewardship forestry on public land, and ongoing water quality monitoring.

Defining Characteristics

Several of the Applegate Partnership's defining characteristics capture the fundamental aspects of **place-based** collaborations and illustrate the evolving and complex nature of these efforts:

PARTICIPANTS: Initially, the Partnership served as a forum for the major power brokers in the forestry struggle—the industry, environmental community and land management agencies—to engage constructively one another by discussing tangible issues in real places. Over time, as the federal injunction on timber harvests in the Northwest was lifted, the regional timber and environmental interests either formally withdrew or slowly drifted away. At the same time, emphasis on local concerns and issues grew, and participation among local residents expanded.

The Applegate Partnership actively encourages broad participation. Weekly meetings alternate between evening and day time, taking place at varied locations across the watershed. Although there are technically nine board members and nine alternates, everyone present is encouraged to participate in a meeting. No one is allowed to sit outside of the circle of chairs around the meeting tables. A core of 20-30 regulars attends these meetings. The Partnership's many projects and initiatives (usually five to ten at any time) directly involve another 30-40 people who may not attend weekly meetings. Periodic events bring the number of people directly involved in Partnership activities to well over one hundred. As an additional mechanism of participation, the Partnership also publishes a newsletter six times per year, which it sends to all 10,000 households in the watershed. The Partnership continues to maintain a series of formal organizational relationships through its board. Groups formally associated with the Partnership include: a farming organization, a timber organization, three local neighborhood environmental organizations, the local watershed council, and a regional sustainable development nonprofit group.

PROCESS: The Applegate Partnership functions well with a nonhierarchical leadership structure and process. From its inception, the

Applegate River, southern Oregon

Applegate River Watershed Council

"… the Partnership has had an impact on both the type of forestry being practiced and how the agencies have worked with community and interest groups on planning and implementation."

group consciously avoided designating any one individual or organization as the lead. Initially, provisional facilitators volunteered their services to run meetings. Eventually, the Partnership developed a consistent meeting process with the facilitation role rotating informally among a variety of meeting regulars.

Although it does not call itself a consensus group, the Partnership uses a largely consensus-based decision-making process. Participants avoid final decision making until every effort is made to reach a broad agreement among the concerned parties. Occasionally, the group will call an issue to a vote, but rarely is this sort of "majority rule" used to settle disagreements. The most common use of voting in the Partnership is to satisfy record-keeping requirements regarding group decision making.

SCALE: The scale of the Partnership's work has shifted over time as community concern became the dominant theme. At its outset, key stakeholder groups thrust the Partnership into the limelight at a regional and national level as an example of successful collaboration and a model relevant to all natural resource conflicts. During the Partnership's first two years, constant calls for presentations and appearances at events ranging from the International Conference of Facilitators and Mediators to the Western Governors' Association's Annual Meeting strained the Partnership's effectiveness. This notoriety produced substantial internal tension within the Partnership and conflict with outside interest groups afraid of the partnership model of resource decision making. However, as the major interest groups shifted their focus away from the Partnership forum, local concerns began to displace discussion of regional and national concerns. Forest Service issues, for example, remained important, but the Partnership spent less time on regional and national agency concerns and more effort on rethinking local Forest Service harvest targets and management strategies.

OUTCOMES: In federal forest land management, the Partnership has had an impact on both the type of forestry being practiced and how the agencies have worked with community and interest groups on planning and implementation. BLM management approaches, influenced by the Partnership, won national recognition as models of stewardship-oriented forestry. The BLM made substantial investments in non-timber related management aimed at restoring watershed's chaparral and oak savannah habitats to improve the forage for big game. Through thinning of overgrown bush and prescribed burns, these projects generated some small-diameter timber volume with the support of most participating environmental groups. Recent Partnership work with the Forest Service resulted in a groundbreaking project to experiment with non-timber related performance criteria as a replacement for Probable Sale Quantity targets (PSQs). Other efforts helped the Forest Service's Applegate District win designation as one of 23 sites nationwide for experimentation with stewardship contracting.[1] Finally, through the work of the watershed council, there have been numerous riparian restoration projects on private land in the Applegate. Ongoing water quality monitoring, by documenting the erosion of sediment into the river system, is helping identify the most egregious road problems in the watershed.

To most Partnership participants, however, the most important outcomes are the influence the Partnership has on the local community. With the expansion of local participation, the Partnership branched out into a wide variety of community issues—irrigation and water use; riparian improvements, such as tree planting and stream channel restoration; economic development, and cultural events.

"The Partnership now serves as a catalyst and forum for a wide variety of community problem solving and creativity. This may ultimately be the greatest legacy of the partnership experiment."

The Partnership has spawned a dozen complementary community groups and initiatives addressing everything from a local business directory and networking to the takeover of a county park slated for closing. The Partnership now serves as a catalyst and forum for a wide variety of community problem solving and creativity. This may ultimately be the greatest legacy of the partnership experiment.

Volunteers assist with restoration efforts on Hunter Creek, Applegate River tributary

Applegate River Watershed Council

Lessons

SHARED LEADERSHIP: In contrast with hierarchical leadership, shared leadership minimizes the use of formal titles or offices that confer special decision-making prerogatives on a few individuals. Groups like the Partnership consistently reject formal hierarchy for a more free-flowing, some would say chaotic, leadership approach. In the Partnership, things happen because someone becomes interested, excited, or agitated about something and takes the initiative to organize others around the issue. If that person is able to attract sufficient interest, he or she becomes the de facto leader of that initiative. In this way, no one group or interest in the collaboration gains more power or influence than another.

BALANCE OF POWER: The relative balance of power, both within a group itself as well as between the group and outside interests, is an important component of success. In order for there to be a balance of power, real concessions may be required at the outset. These may include: agreements to operate by consensus, efforts to find funding to support the participation of volunteers in regular meetings, understanding that each group remains free to pursue other—often combative—strategies outside the influence of the group, clear agreements regarding how and by whom the Partnership's views and efforts are represented, and comprehensive methods for monitoring and communicating the results of activities sponsored by the group.

PARTICIPATORY VERSUS REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY: No one elects Partnership participants, and typically, they are not empowered to represent others in a decision-making process. Partners come forward on their own initiative as volunteers, or they may be selected by a small group attempting to bring warring parties together. Applegate Partnership members were identified and approached to participate largely on the basis of their reputations as people capable of working with others of different views or backgrounds. Thus, the members hold the views and concerns of the interest they are a part of, but they aren't representatives in any formal sense as we have come to understand that term in our representative democracy. This is a seemingly subtle but important distinction: most often community-based collaborative efforts are about participatory rather than representative democracy. Gaining clarity early on as to the difference between representation and participation is essential to success.

LINKAGES: The Applegate Partnership's extensive linkages to outside information, technical expertise, and resources are essential aspects of its effectiveness. Through the participation of the federal agencies and two regional non-governmental organizations—the Aerial Forest Management Foundation and the Rogue Institute for Ecology and Economy—the Partnership garnered resources critical to the success of initiatives being considered or attempted. Funding was perhaps the most vital resource enabling the Partnership to publish its newspaper, as well as to implement on-the-ground projects. As the Partnership matured, it built its own linkages, such as sponsoring the formation of a watershed council. The council exists as a subcommittee of the Partnership; through its association with the State of Oregon's Watershed Health Program, it has been able to attract several million dollars in restoration and technical assistance.

TIME: The Applegate Partnership is famous for its remarkable schedule of well-attended weekly meetings over the past six years. Groups like the Partnership may not have

founded themselves had they known how much time would be required of participants. Nevertheless, for those considering an attempt at collaboration, it is important to see if potential participants are really willing to commit the time that will be needed to develop successful collaborative activities. Like the volunteer-driven initiatives described in previous case studies, the demands of the Partnership compete with participants' personal commitments to jobs, family, and other social involvement.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT: The early notoriety of the Partnership almost destroyed the fragile trust and working relationships developing among participants. The principal environmental group and the federal agencies were forced to withdraw from the effort at least partly because of the publicity. An emphasis on local community issues, of an inherently smaller scale, however, enabled the Partnership to build support and participation among residents, as well as to withstand the controversy that followed too much publicity at the regional and national levels.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] The term "stewardship contract" refers to innovative ways for federal land management agencies to set up contracts for the on-the-ground work necessary to implement ecosystem management. The contracts are driven by ecosystem objectives rather than the timber targets and revenue generation of the timber sale process. Stewardship contracts include landscape level planning, restoration activities, and performance based evaluation. They are being used experimentally as a tool to implement on-the-ground restoration and conservation on public land. Implementing stewardship contracting is challenging; in practice, these contracts have often involved trading goods (trees) for services (fuel reduction), which critics believe creates another incentive to cut more trees. (see Rogue Institute for Ecology and Economy, Spring-Summer 1997 newsletter for more information or contact: The Pinchot Institute for Conservation, 1616 P Street NW, Washington, DC 20036).

At a Glance...

LESSONS LEARNED

Clearly distinguish between functioning as a participatory or a representative democracy.

Ensure a relative balance of power among all participants.

Build linkages to outside information, technical assistance, and other resources.

Avoid early publicity before relationships and trust are fully developed. Early notoriety can cause damaging internal tension and conflict.

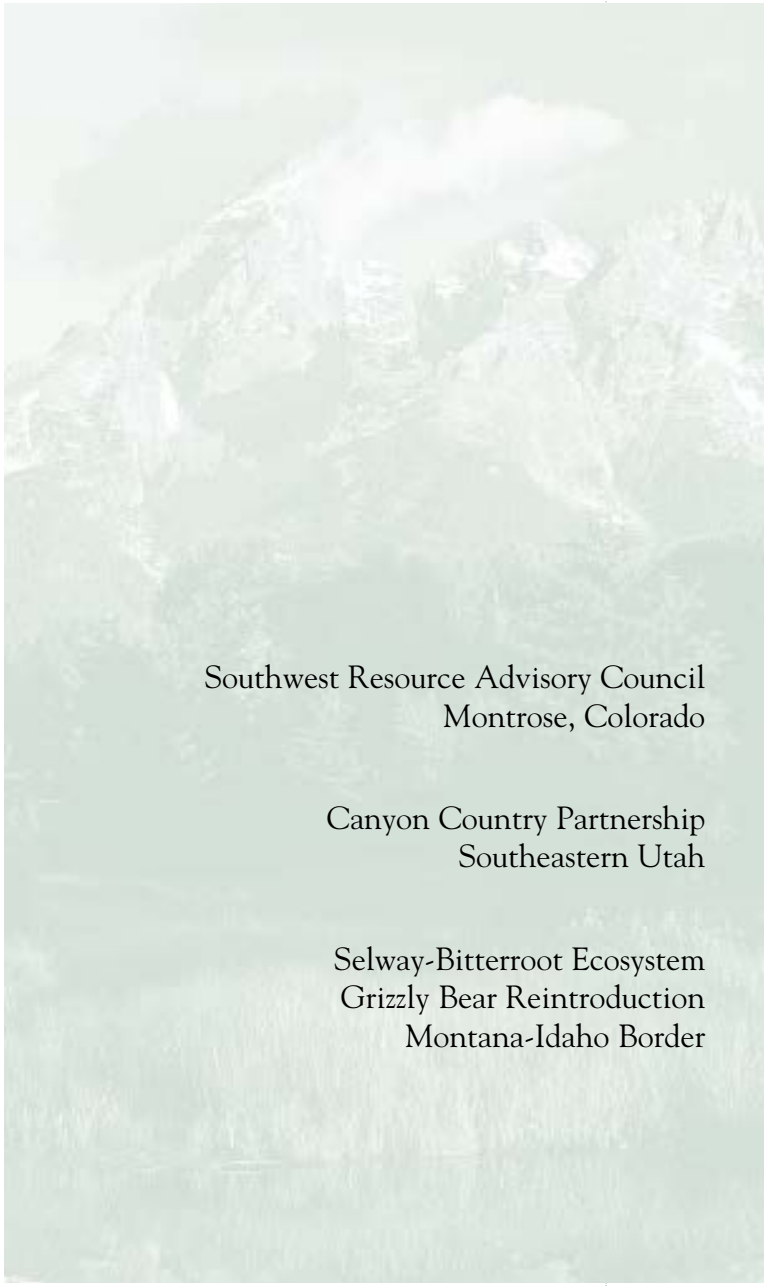
Yellowstone National Park

Merv Coleman

"Constructive collaboration enhances the voice of local community members in public land decisions without compromising or excluding regional and national interests."

CHAPTER 4

Policy/Interest-Based Collaborations



Southwest Resource Advisory Council
Montrose, Colorado

Canyon Country Partnership
Southeastern Utah

Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem
Grizzly Bear Reintroduction
Montana-Idaho Border

Montrose, Colorado

Southwest Resource Advisory Council

MONTROSE, COLORADO

The story of Colorado's Southwest Resource Advisory Council (RAC) begins in a very different place from the other collaborative initiatives we've profiled. It starts at the highest level of public land policy making, with Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt. In August 1993, the Department of Interior launched its Rangeland Reform '94 initiative, an effort to revise livestock grazing policy and regulations for public land.

The initial reform plan, released that August, included proposals to develop detailed national standards and guidelines for BLM rangeland ecosystems, to change BLM and Forest Service administrative regulations pertinent to grazing, and to alter the agencies' grazing fee formula to increase the amount ranchers paid for their permits. The original **Rangeland Reform** package sparked fierce debate over grazing throughout the West, as well as in the Senate, which defeated Babbitt's attempt to get the reforms implemented legislatively. **Rangeland Reform** ignited a mini-Sagebrush rebellion among some of the West's public land ranchers, who decried Babbitt's "War on the West."

A Top Down Approach meets the Grassroots

A delegation from Colorado, however, stepped forward to offer a solution to the gridlock. A group of ranchers and environmentalists from Gunnison, Colorado, had developed a proposal to decentralize range management by creating local citizens' advisory councils to assist land managers in developing specific grazing plans and improving rangeland health. Each national forest and BLM district would have its own council. This homegrown proposal provided a starting point for revision of Babbitt's reforms; for two months, the Secretary of the Interior met weekly with Colorado Governor Roy Romer and a roundtable of ranchers, environmentalists, and local officials to develop alternative proposals. The reforms emerging from this process became the government's proposed rule and preferred alternative in a draft Environmental Impact Statement. They included a proposal to replace the BLM's old grazing advisory boards, which had been dominated by the livestock industry, with "multiple use advisory councils" in each of the western public land states. These councils would consist of 15 members, representing the diverse spectrum of public land users and appointed by each governor and the Secretary of the Interior.

After continued heated debate regarding his overall grazing reform package, Babbitt appointed Colorado's RACs in August 1995, ignoring the opposition of Congress as well as some ranchers and environmentalists. The three Colorado RACs, including the Southwest RAC, were the first designated when the new implementing regulations went into effect. Today, there are 24 RACs, operating in every public land state except Wyoming.[1] They are formally chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), a law designed to reduce "closed-door" deals between federal agencies and special interest groups; under FACA, all RAC meetings are open to the public with opportunities for input, and meeting minutes are freely available. Each state structured its RACs according to three options: (1) the Colorado model, which appointed a RAC for each of the state's BLM districts; (2) one statewide RAC; or (3) RACs based on ecological regions.

The BLM regulations that authorized the RACs defined their mission and the scope of their responsibilities. Because of their origins in grazing reform, their first task was to help develop state standards for public land health and guidelines for livestock management on BLM land. The three Colorado RACs

"There are 24 RACs, operating in every public land state except Wyoming. They are formally chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), a law designed to reduce 'closed-door' deals between federal agencies and special interest groups."

"While the RAC is officially structured to ensure formal representation of diverse interest groups, Southwest RAC members do not necessarily see themselves as acting in this capacity."

began jointly discussing, drafting, and revising what would become carefully worded documents to guide management decisions. The "Standards" describe the indicators of healthy public land and apply to all uses of these lands, while "Guidelines" are management tools and techniques, which if implemented, will achieve the standards. Guidelines apply to specific public land uses. Secretary Babbitt approved Colorado's standards and grazing guidelines in 1997. Since that time, the Southwest RAC, in conjunction with the state's other RACs, has turned its attention to developing comprehensive guidelines for recreation. It also has provided the BLM with advice on more local issues, such as the potential siting of a motocross track on BLM land and on a conservation plan for protecting the sage grouse, developed near Gunnison, Colorado.

The Southwest RAC ranks among the most successful of these advisory councils. According to RAC member and environmentalist Steve Hinchman, the RAC "has created a culture of communication that didn't exist before" among the region's diverse interests. RAC members describe a group dynamic based on mutual respect that enables this RAC to discuss, debate, and disagree over contentious issues while building understanding of their divergent viewpoints. Furthermore, this RAC has developed a good working relationship with the BLM personnel involved in the process, and as a result, their recommendations carry a fair amount of weight.

These successes, however, are not necessarily typical of all RACs. For example, some RAC members in Nevada found themselves opposing changes that the BLM made in the language of their standards and guidelines. Carolyn Dufurrena in a recent *Range* magazine article concludes, based on her experience on the northwest Nevada RAC, that "The Standards and Guidelines were a political manipulation conceived of and executed by Bruce Babbitt." Wyoming's RAC has also proven controversial. According to a story in *High Country News*, Wyoming's RAC lost its federal charter due to a dispute between Governor Geringer and Bruce Babbitt over the RAC's composition, which Babbitt asserted was weighted heavily toward commodity interests. While Colorado's Southwest RAC may not be representative of all RACs, its story offers insight into this type of collaborative effort.

Defining Characteristics

Because of their genesis and their structure, RACs offer an excellent example of a **policy/interest-based advisory committee.** Formally chartered advisory committees are nothing new for federal land management agencies; what is new is today's increased emphasis on a diverse membership that represents the spectrum of public land interest groups.

PARTICIPANTS: Participation is structured identically for all of the RACs. They are composed of fifteen

Gary Sprung

Southwest RAC members and BLM staff visit Gunnison Gorge Wilderness Study Area, Colorado

members appointed to staggered three-year terms. Each council is divided into three categories with five members in each category. The categories are: commercial uses or users of the land (including livestock, energy, and mineral development, timber production, commercial recreation, rights-of-way interests, and off-highway vehicles); protection-oriented interests (including environmental/ conservation groups, dispersed recreation, wild horse and burro interests, and historic/cultural interests); and finally, a catch-all category (including local elected officials, academicians, tribal interests, other governmental agencies, and the public-at-large). Members must be residents of Colorado. The BLM solicits nominations for each category and requires a letter of reference from the group or interest an individual will be representing.

According to Roger Alexander, the Southwest RAC's facilitator and administrator from the BLM's Montrose district, the agency "wanted to get people who were willing to collaborate and reach consensus," so the ability to work well with people holding diverse views is emphasized in the nomination process. The composition of the RAC is designed to achieve balance within each category (for example, the commodity group is not just composed of representatives of the livestock industry), as well as within the group as a whole. As one member observed, "The RAC is made up of people who are leaders in their communities in one way or another."

While the RAC is officially structured to ensure formal representation of diverse interest groups, Southwest RAC members do not necessarily see themselves as acting in this capacity. According to Ross Allen, a sheep rancher and former member of the Southwest RAC, though he was nominated by the local wool growers and cattleman, he did not serve as an official representative. Instead, he saw himself as merely one of several permittees on the RAC. He did, however, "report back every few months on things that [were] pertinent to those organizations." Similarly, RAC members in the dispersed recreation category do not represent formal organizations. Jane McGarry, a Southwest RAC member in the dispersed recreation category, says, "I don't represent a constituency or at least not an organized one. I represent people like myself, maybe unorganized, but a voice that needs to be heard by the BLM … people who live in the West, who care about and use public lands." Regardless of whether members see themselves acting in a formal representative capacity or not, RAC members are nominated by specific interests. This contrasts with many of the other collaborative efforts profiled in which participants are almost wholly self-appointed.

PURPOSE & PROCESS: RACs are federally chartered advisory committees, which means that all meetings are open to the public with the opportunity for comment. Every meeting is posted in the federal register, and minutes are available. The RAC "operates on the principle of collaborative decision making and strives for consensus before making official recommendations." Within the Southwest RAC, consensus means that "it's a recommendation everybody can live with; there will be thumbs up and thumbs sideways, but there won't be any thumbs down." According to Bob Spears, one of this RAC's original members, the Southwest RAC chose to operate under a "true consensus," meaning that "everybody agreed, one hundred percent." Under the RAC's charter, however, members do not have to reach such a unanimous consensus. Instead, according to Vern Ebert, another representative of "dispersed recreation," the RAC operates this way: "we have to have consensus 100% of each group [referring to each 5 person category] to move. Within the group though, it's majority vote. So, you're not trying for consensus of the whole 15 members. It's balanced so a single person can't stop the show." This provision gives the RAC a way to move forward more easily.

RACs have no decision-making authority; they act in a strictly advisory capacity, which, at least in the view of the Southwest RAC, is the appropriate role of a RAC. According to Ross Allen, "Some try to rule the BLM or take over their responsibilities; we think we can guide or give suggestions. That's been a real strong point of our committee. … We want the BLM to do their job." For example, while the RACs helped to develop the standards for public land health and guidelines for grazing, it is up to the BLM to implement them on-the-ground as grazing permits come up for renewal. If a management decision requires a full analysis under NEPA, then the recommendations of the RAC either become the proposed action or the preferred alternative. RACs are solely focused on recommendations about BLM land management, in contrast to some of the other case studies that included state, local, and federal land use planning among the issues tackled.

"RACs have no decision-making authority; they act in a strictly advisory capacity. … For example, while the RACs helped to develop the standards for public land health and guidelines for grazing, it is up to the BLM to implement them on-the-ground as grazing permits come up for renewal."

SCALE: The scale and scope of a RAC's work is largely determined by its charter. During their first 18 months, every RACs' sole task was the development of the statewide standards and guidelines. Now, at least in the case of the Southwest RAC, the council's work is evolving. This particular RAC has become involved in providing advice on more local issues, such as the potential siting of a motocross track on BLM land and a user fee

"The BLM is constantly dealing with a disgruntled public; if they can say to the public, 'here's what our citizens advisory group recommends,' that authenticates their decisions.'"

demonstration project in the Gunnison Gorge Special Recreation Management Area.

OUTCOMES: Because the Southwest RAC's early work focused on developing the statewide standards for public land health and guidelines for livestock grazing, most of its outcomes thus far are in the policy and relationship building arenas versus on-the-ground outcomes. Steve Hinchman, who has been involved in other collaborative efforts, notes that, while those efforts have been "site specific and on-the-ground," the RAC is more focused on policy level issues and has "never been able to test, on-the-ground, what we've agreed to." The BLM is responsible for implementation of the grazing guidelines. As Roger Alexander observes, "It's one thing to have the recommendations approved; it's another to have them implemented. … We haven't convinced the RAC yet that we [BLM] are capable of implementing the Standards and Guidelines." As grazing permits come up for renewal, the BLM will have increasing opportunity to implement the standards and guidelines that RAC members worked so hard on. They will be watching to see how well the agency implements what is, for them, a new way of doing business.

RAC members have a similar wait-and-see attitude about the draft recreation guidelines recently forwarded to the BLM for review. According to Steve Hinchman, one of the RAC's recommendations will be that off-highway vehicles (OHVs) be permitted only on existing roads and trails, in contrast to current management where motorized recreation is permitted anywhere that is not designated wilderness. By limiting motorized recreation to existing trails and roads, Colorado's RACs hope to reduce impacts, such as soil erosion and compaction that are attributed to OHVs. As noted above, how these guidelines will be used by the agency remains unclear. Because implementation of the RAC recommendations is still limited, the conservation benefits of the RAC process remain to be seen.

This is not to say that the Southwest RAC has achieved nothing. According to Hinchman, it has "created a culture of communication that didn't exist before" among the diverse interests and public land decision makers in southwest Colorado. For the BLM, the RAC is providing important public input into its decision-making process and helping the agency rebuild a sometimes-tattered relationship with the public. According to Alexander, the RAC gives agency personnel "a snap shot of public opinion taken in the easiest manner possible. … RACs have opened our eyes to the greater public interest and in some cases its not been what we thought it was." As Jane McGarry sees it, "The BLM is constantly dealing with a disgruntled public; if they can say to the public, 'here's what our citizens advisory group recommends,' that authenticates their decisions."

The RAC is also benefiting the communities of southwest Colorado, according to its members. Roger Alexander hopes that the RAC is demonstrating to residents of southwest Colorado that "the BLM is willing to listen, that we're not just bureaucrats here to impose our will on the people." Jane McGarry believes "the RAC provides a forum" for residents, citing the example of their most recent meeting, in which a group of residents came to express their concerns over a nearby coal lease. The RAC was receptive and sympathetic to the concerns of these residents, and McGarry believes it was effective for BLM managers to hear this reaction from RAC members.

Lessons

The Southwest RAC, while not necessarily typical of all RACs, offers several lessons for success in this type of interest-based collaborative effort:

UNIQUE, PLACE-BASED QUALITIES INFLUENCE SUCCESS: The first lesson may be that, even with top-down, policy-driven collaboratives such as the RACs, success ultimately still depends on community/place-specific characteristics. According to Steve Hinchman, "Our success is a reflection of our community and ecology." He notes that, ecologically, western Colorado is probably more forgiving with regard to grazing impacts than other states. As a result, Hinchman observes that decisions aimed at restoring the health of public lands in his region can accommodate and allow for livestock grazing, in contrast to other ecosystems where restoration might mean no grazing at all. Thus, the development of livestock grazing guidelines that would meet the public land health standards also designed by the RAC may have been an easier environmental problem to solve because of the ecology of the place served by this RAC.

Another advantage enjoyed by the Southwest RAC is a history of cooperation and collaboration, particularly between ranchers and environmentalists in the region. Prior to the formation of the RAC, ranchers and environmentalists had been working together in the Gunnison Valley on a management plan for the West Elk Wilderness grazing allotment. In fact, some of the members of the Southwest RAC were among the original crafters of Colorado's proposal to end the gridlock over range reform. Bob Spears says this experience with collaboration meant the RAC enjoyed a fair amount of support in the region because "everybody knew about it (the previous collaboration), knew it was effective." Because residents

from this part of Colorado were so heavily involved in the shaping of this piece of *Rangeland Reform* there is a great deal of ownership in the RAC process and a commitment to its success that may be missing in other states.

CREDIBILITY: According to Roger Alexander, one key to the Southwest RAC's success is its credibility with the public. Alexander believes this RAC gained its credibility in two ways: (1) the individuals who are a part of the council are all respected leaders within their own communities of interest; and (2) the group has made recommendations that the BLM didn't necessarily agree with. As a result, Alexander says "people realize it's not a group of BLM puppets willing to rubber stamp whatever BLM wants to do." Other members echoed this observation, noting with pride that their recommendation against siting the motocross track on BLM land went against the local manager's own recommendation. The individual members of the RAC have been effective advocates for their interests in other forums; as Steve Hinchman observes, the region's environmentalists "have a seat at the table and are respected because [they] have handed out a few black eyes." As a result of the RAC's credibility, the general public has, at times, asked the council to help them with an issue or make a recommendation to the BLM about a specific concern.

SUPPORT WITHIN THE AGENCY: The Southwest RAC is blessed with a designated federal officer who believes wholeheartedly in the process and supports the work of the RAC. The BLM's Montrose district manager, Mark Stiles, receives high praise from RAC members because he "embraced the RAC as a valid way to do business from the start, knowing he'll have better, stronger decisions because of it." As a result, the Southwest RAC has been able to "push the boundaries of the charter" and tackle some issues that are somewhat beyond the scope of their original mandate, which included the specific charge of developing the standards for public land health and the grazing guidelines. The Colorado RACs initiated their current work on developing comprehensive recreation guidelines without the BLM's specific request for recommendations, and in the case of the OHV recommendations, the RAC may propose stricter guidelines than the BLM would implement.

"Southwest RAC members are careful to point out that the support they have had from the BLM is not necessarily consistent across all RACs."

OBSTACLES WITHIN THE AGENCY: Southwest RAC members are careful to point out that the support they have had from the BLM is not necessarily consistent across all RACs. Not all agency decision makers are supportive of and willing to accept RACs. Furthermore, the RAC process draws time and money from an agency already marginally staffed and funded; other duties

Tom Bean

Wilson Peak, Uncompahgre National Forest, southwest Colorado

"… consensus means that 'it's a recommendation everybody can live with; there will be thumbs up and thumbs sideways, but there won't be any thumbs down.'"

demand that BLM employees be elsewhere, preventing many from regularly attending RAC meetings. Another obstacle emerging within the agency stems from the RACs' original mandate. Now that the standards for public land health and guidelines for livestock management are complete, the RACs' ongoing mission and mandate is unclear, according to Roger Alexander. Southwest RAC members note that, while the agency is not opposed to the RAC's development of guidelines for recreation, staff haven't been as supportive or focused as they were during the process of developing the standards for public land health and the grazing guidelines. Colorado's RACs have tackled this issue because of their interest, not because the BLM asked them to, and agency personnel have said that they can't implement the draft OHV guidelines because, as written, this recommendation would require revising existing travel management plans. As a result, members are uncertain how the BLM will use this set of guidelines when finished.

ORGANIZATION: Each state structured its own RACs; some states, like New Mexico and Wyoming, opted for one statewide RAC of fifteen members. In contrast, Colorado chose to form three RACs at the district level, and Nevada organized its RACs around the state's ecological regions. Roger Alexander believes Colorado's choice of structure has been a key ingredient of its RACs' success. He notes that, because "we have RACs at the district level … our RACs are more locally oriented. We made a good move there." Vern Ebert also sees three RACs as an advantage because "We have 45 citizens across the entire state that are inputting, helping the process." Thus, despite the Southwest RACs "top down" origins, it can function as a more locally based group.

INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES CAN BE A KEY TO SUCCESS: The Southwest RAC enjoys an interpersonal dynamic that contributes to its success. As member Erin Johnson notes, "We have diverse opinions but we respect each other enough to not get into mudslinging or heated debates." Jane McGarry echoes this, saying, "We pay attention to each other; there aren't a lot of big egos that dominate the group. … There's a lot of friendly disputing that goes on. Nobody's too hasty about rushing to a decision." Fostering this kind of dynamic, in which people of diverse perspectives can honestly but civilly discuss difficult issues, is one of the true challenges of successful collaboration. It is also a challenge that can never be solved by any cookbook, how-to collaborate prescriptions because it is what makes these efforts so completely human.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management

Southwest RAC field tour south of Gunnison, Colorado

At a Glance...

LESSONS LEARNED

Agency belief in and support of the process, as well as prompt implementation of adopted recommendations, are critical to ensuring continued participation.

Even in a deliberately representative structure, participants do not speak for their constituents as a whole.

To be credible, a group has to make its own decisions, presenting recommendations that may be contrary to agency staff opinion.

Previous experience with and investment in collaboration earned this RAC local support.

"Because implementation of the RAC recommendations is still limited, the conservation benefits of the RAC process remain to be seen. This is not to say that the Southwest RAC has achieved nothing. According to Hinchman, it has 'created a culture of communication that didn't exist before' among the diverse interests."

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Ross Allen. July 29, 1998. Member, Colorado Southwest RAC, representing livestock grazing.

Jane McGarry. August 4, 1998. Member, Colorado Southwest RAC, representing dispersed recreation.

Bob Spears. August 3, 1998. Member, Colorado Southwest RAC, representing public-at-large.

Steve Hinchman. August 20, 1998. Member, Colorado Southwest RAC, representing environmental organizations.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Originally, Wyoming had one statewide RAC. However, in the fall of 1996, after a conflict between Babbitt and Wyoming governor Jim Geringer over the relative balance of interest groups on the RAC, Babbitt revoked the RAC's federal charter. It continued to operate as a state advisory council under the supervision of the governor. (See Krza, Paul. 1996. Cow Coup: Wyoming Governor Usurps Federal Grazing Group. *High Country News.* Volume 28, Number 24.).


I-191
Green River
I-70
I-70
Arches
National
Park
Sand Flats
National
Recreation
Area
Moab
U T A H
COLORADO
LA SAL
MOUNTAINS
Canyonlands
National Park
Colorado River
HENRY
MOUNTAINS
ABAJO
MOUNTAINS
I-191
San Juan River
Lake Powell
A R I Z O N A
Utah
Colorado
Arizona
New Mexico

Canyon Country Partnership

SOUTHEASTERN UTAH

In southeastern Utah, land managers and county are collaborating to manage a regional boom in recreation that is proving destructive to the fragile desert ecosystem and, at times, expensive for the region's small communities. The Canyon Country Partnership brings together representatives of three federal agencies (the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management); three counties (Grand, Carbon, and Emery); and seven state agencies to share information and coordinate management of the area. The partnership's story illustrates a policy/interest based dialogue group that resulted in an innovative example of co-management at the Sand Flats Recreation Area outside of Moab, Utah.

Over the last decade, the arid redrock canyon country of southeastern Utah has become a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts. The well-known home of Arches and Canyonlands National Parks, the region also includes 7 million acres of public land managed by either the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the state of Utah, or the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Narrow water-carved canyons, dramatic vistas across open mesas, and the unique sandstone geology referred to as "slickrock" draw hordes of hikers, mountain bikers, climbers, off-road vehicle users, and river rafters every year. The town of Moab is the region's largest community, with approximately 5,000 residents, and is the jumping-off point for many visitors to the area.

Recreation Boom Brings New Problems

After the region's economy—rooted in uranium, oil, coal, and potash extraction—busted in the early 1980s, Moab's promoters launched an aggressive marketing campaign to attract outdoor recreationists and tourists; the story of what happened next was told in a *Chronicle of Community* article about Sand Flats and the Canyon Country Partnership (CCP). This marketing of Southern Utah was an incredibly successful crusade; visitors now come from around the world to experience the technical challenges of famous destinations, such as the Slickrock Mountain Bike Trail. In fact, recreational use of all types in the area around Moab leapt 300 percent between 1991 and 1996, according to the *Chronicle*, with the spring break months of March and April quickly becoming the busiest time of year. According to Bill Hedden, former Grand County commissioner, "We went fishing for a little tourism and hooked a great white shark." The region clearly had another boom on its hands—one for which officials were completely unprepared and which brought its own set of ecologically destructive consequences. Visitors tromped, drove, and biked over the fragile desert landscape, destroying the soils and vegetation that conserve water and hold the canyon ecosystem together. The sheer numbers of people overwhelmed existing visitor services and law enforcement capabilities.

"According to Bill Hedden, former Grand County commissioner, "We went fishing for a little tourism and hooked a great white shark." The region clearly had another boom on its hands—one for which officials were completely unprepared and which brought its own set of ecologically destructive consequences."

The story of Easter Weekend, 1993, illustrates the crisis created by the recreation boom and provides the context that lent an urgency to the Canyon Country Partnership's initial work. That weekend swarms of spring break partiers, mountain bikers, and four-wheelers in town for their annual Easter Jeep Safari converged on the Sand Flats Recreation Area and its Slickrock Trail. Drunken crowds tore up the desert, uprooting gnarled old pinyon and juniper trees to feed their bonfires and throwing rocks and bottles at the officials who came to enforce existing regulations. Part of the problem at Sand Flats was a pattern of mixed land ownership and multiple jurisdictions that meant "no one agency could get a handle on the problem," as BLM planner Mike O'Donnell observed. The "riot" dramatically pointed out the need for cooperation among the numerous stakeholders in the region in order to prevent the recreation boom from destroying southeastern Utah's landscape and overwhelming its communities.

Spearheaded by Mike O'Donnell and Grand County commissioner Bill Hedden, the Canyon

"By slowly building trust and relationships among agency representatives and local elected officials, who barely knew each other, the Canyon Country Partnership began to work together to develop a regional recreation strategy."

Country Partnership brought together "all of the locally based county, state and federal land management authorities within Grand, San Juan, Emery, and Carbon counties" in the hope of addressing the region's complicated problems across jurisdictions.[1] According to its charter, CCP is currently structured in three tiers: the forum, a science committee, and a geographic data committee. Each committee, as well as the forum, includes representatives of all the participating agencies as described in its charter. Other *ad hoc* or working committees may be created as needed for specific issues and can include representatives of various sectors of the public. Bill Hedden says, "The original idea was that a core of people who had land management responsibility would form a forum and around that create a series of committees to work on particular issues. These would include business people, environmentalists, recreation folks, etc." By slowly building trust and relationships among agency representatives and local elected officials who barely knew each other, the Canyon Country Partnership began to work together to develop a regional recreation strategy.

CCP's most widely acclaimed accomplishment—an innovative cooperative agreement between the BLM and Grand County for managing the Sand Flats Recreation Area (see sidebar)—grew from the early discussions of recreation issues. While it did not involve all CCP members, the Sand Flats effort, as well as other on-the-ground projects, was facilitated by the relationships built in the group. As a result of the Sand Flats agreement, Grand County and the BLM established an entrance fee at Sand Flats that generates between $10,000 and $20,000 per month. All of the money goes into a county fund for restoration, visitor education, law enforcement, and other on-the-ground activities at Sand Flats. Initially launched with a grant from the national service organization AmeriCorps, the program is now self-supporting. The Community Sand Flats Team, composed of eleven Moab area residents, handles the bulk of the on-the-ground work—from staffing the fee booth and educating visitors to planting native vegetation in degraded areas and picking up litter. The locally based Citizens' Stewardship Committee helps make decisions about the allocation of funds. The BLM's recreation management plan for the area continues to guide the decisions that are made.

With the Sand Flats project successfully underway, CCP's emphasis is shifting. Today, the group focuses less on specific problem solving and more on building rapport, sharing information, and networking among the participants. According to members such as Emery County Commissioner Kent Petersen, CCP provides "a way to keep communication lines open with and between agencies." With the Canyon Country Partnership fulfilling this role, Max Jensen of Utah State Parks believes members know whom to contact about a specific problem rather than involving the entire group in an issue that only involves a few of its members. In an era of tight and shrinking budgets for many government agencies, the relationships built through forums like CCP are critical, enabling agencies to share limited resources to get work done on the ground. Miles Moretti, of Utah's Division of Wildlife Resources and the CCP's current vice-chair, sees projects happening every day as a result of the relationships built through CCP. He believes these are the "real successes" and should not be underestimated.

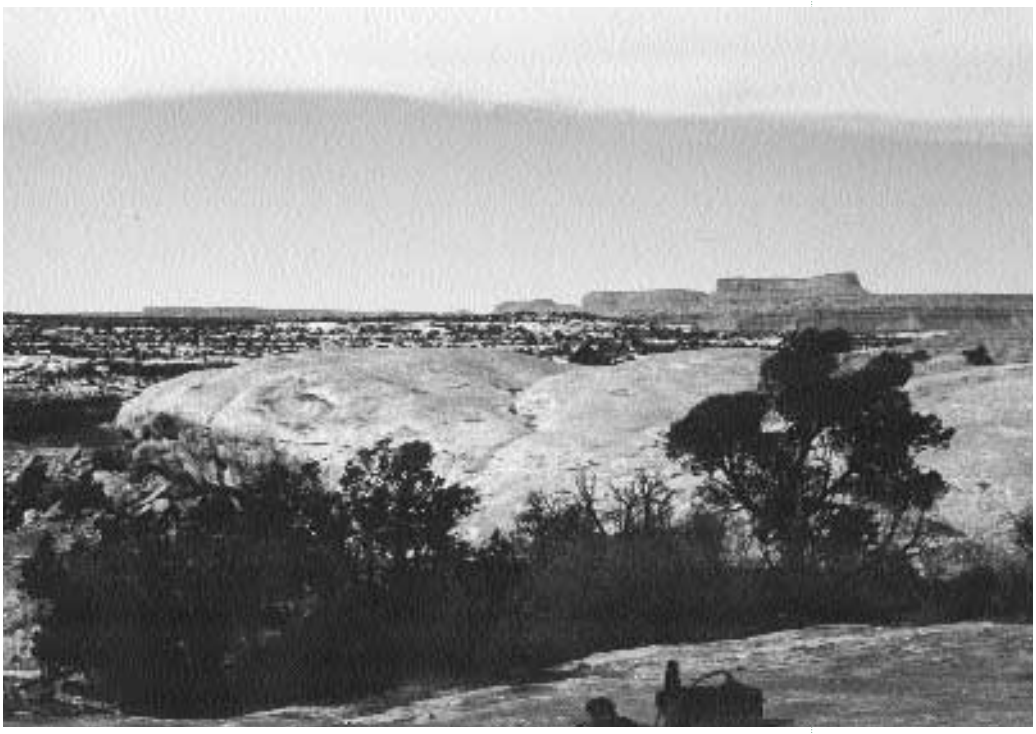
Defining Characteristics

The Canyon Country Partnership illustrates a policy/stakeholder-based **dialogue group** that resulted in a tangible **co-management project** and continues to foster ongoing relationships as well as information sharing among state, federal, and county government. (See Sand Flats sidebar for the defining characteristics of that effort.)

PARTICIPANTS: CCP consists of thirteen members representing each of the land management agencies and the county governments in the region. This group includes representatives of the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, three Utah county governments (Emery, Grand, and Carbon), and the seven state agencies involved in natural resource management. Early in its history, there was more community involvement in CCP. According to Bill Hedden, it has evolved to "mainly bureaucrats and elected officials getting together ... to share information" with a decline in community interest. Hedden attributes this shift in participation, at least partly, to a decreased sense of urgency among community members with regard to the recreation boom. As a result of this shift, all CCP members are acting in their official capacities as representatives of their respective agencies. Thus, in terms of the participants and their roles, this effort differs substantially from the previously described community-based efforts where local residents voluntarily participate as individuals representing their own concerns.

PURPOSE AND PROCESS: CCP's mission and goals are evolving over time. It is driven by the need for elected officials and agency managers to coordinate land use across jurisdictions. According to the CCP's charter, the group's primary purpose is to "exchange

information leading to better coordination of … planning and management actions …" However, CCP is not a decision-making entity with land management authority. Each agency maintains its autonomy and upholds its individual legal mandate. As a result, the charter states that "It is not the goal of the Partnership to reach consensus but to solicit information that agencies can individually evaluate and use … to make informed decisions." CCP and the charter evolved in this way because of the varied, and at times conflicting, mandates of the diverse agencies included in the group. According to Max Jensen, Utah Parks and Recreation's representative, the group "struggled with trying to be a decision making/policy setting group. But almost any decision or policy we tried to set would have one or two members who were uncomfortable with it." As a result, information sharing and networking became the most appropriate functions for CCP in the eyes of its current members. The importance of a dialogue group like this one, however, should not be underestimated because it is less tangible than on-the-ground successes, such as Sand Flats. As Janette Kaiser, Forest Supervisor of the Manti-La Sal National Forest and CCP participant, notes, "It's hard to put on paper how important relationships and trust building are but I find it's so important that I attend regularly."



Barb Cestero

Cedar Mesa, southeast Utah

SCALE: The Canyon Country Partnership's regional scale encompasses four counties in southeastern Utah: Carbon, Emery, Grand, and San Juan. Tackling a planning area of fifteen million acres creates some definite challenges. The initial focus on the Sand Flats area, which is in Grand County, left other counties unclear of their role in CCP; as a result, Kaaron Jorgen, the CCP's administrator, has spent a lot of time trying to make the effort valuable to all of the counties. Although among the original participants, San Juan later withdrew from the group. Logistically, such a large area makes it difficult for some participants to make it to meetings, especially those who may be volunteering their time to participate. Finally, the complexity of trying to coordinate management across layered jurisdictions presented a significant early challenge. Differences in agency mandates created the perception that CCP's members couldn't work together and according to Mike O'Donnel, meant that "identifying what we legally can and can't do" took some time and effort early on.

OUTCOMES: For many of those involved in CCP, improved communication is an important outcome of this collaboration, especially in a region with a long history of conflict and suspicion between local, state, and federal officials. According to Mike O'Donnell, a planner with the BLM in Moab, "We didn't know each other well enough in the past to pick up the phone and talk about concerns. That's the norm now." Kent Petersen from Emery County echoes this outcome. For him, "Its been a good way … to get to know the federal land managers. Now they are more than just a name that signs things I don't like." With so many issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries confronting the region, the CCP provides a forum for improving coordinated planning and information sharing. Other tangible outcomes listed in a summary of CCP accomplishments include: the Sand Flats recreation area project, promotion of minimum-impact recreation practices in the canyon country, and increased coordination with regard to constructions projects and law enforcement.

Lessons

Perhaps the biggest lesson to be learned from the Canyon Country Partnership's story is that a collaborative effort often begins with one intention and evolves over time as the participants, focus of work, and specific projects change. A collaborative group may even become less active for a time if there is not an immediate, compelling issue demanding action. As Bill Hedden, a former participant, observes "it's okay to have something like the Partnership that's out there waiting for a good issue ... to arise again." In the case of the CCP, what began as

IMPROVING LAND MANAGEMENT AT THE SAND FLATS RECREATION AREA, MOAB UTAH

Because the 7,240-acre Sand Flats Recreation Area offers such an innovative example of conservation benefits resulting from collaboration, the project warrants closer examination in its own right. While the Canyon Country Partnership helped catalyze the ongoing project at Sand Flats, CCP is no longer involved. Grand County, Utah, and the Bureau of Land Management signed a cooperative management agreement to develop a land stewardship and visitor education program for the recreation area. The overarching goal of the program is to stem the destructive impacts of what was widely perceived as uncontrolled tourism without resorting to heavy-handed regulation and restricted access. Here are some of the defining characteristics of the **Collaborative Land Stewardship Program** and its **Community Sand Flats Team:**

Participants: Members of the Community Sand Flats Team are Grand County residents and employees, responsible for helping the BLM maintain campsites and restore and revegetate damaged areas, as well as conducting extensive visitor education. According to a project description, a Citizens' Stewardship Committee guides the community team's work, as well as advises the county and the BLM on the recreation area's yearly management plan and budget expenditures.

Purpose and Process: The cooperative agreement between the BLM and Grand County authorized the county to establish and manage a fee collection program at Sand Flats. Currently, the fee is $5 per car, with the money used to fund the salaries and work of the Community Sand Flats Team. As mentioned above, an AmeriCorps grant provided the initial start-up funding; today, the program is self-sustaining.

Outcomes: The shift in management of Utah School Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) lands that are a part of the Sand Flats area is among the most significant conservation benefits of this collaborative effort. Legally mandated to maximize revenue from its lands, SITLA made its acreage in the Sand Flats available for private lease, which likely would have led to industrial or commercial development on the land, according to the *Chronicle of Community*. Because of the strong public support for managing Sand Flats as whole generated by the Collaborative Land Stewardship Program, Grand County was able to lease the trust land in return for a $24,000 contribution to a Utah schools fund. This money comes out of the fee revenues. As a result, Grand County manages the land as part of the Sand Flats Recreation Area. Other on-the-ground improvements in land management at Sand Flats include clearly delineated campsites and trails combined with restoration and rehabilitation of areas where use is inappropriate. The Community team built single-rail fences from juniper and aspen to block unauthorized motor vehicle trails and planted native plants to discourage camping in areas where campsites were proliferating.

Ensure an equal partnership: By authorizing Grand County to establish recreation fees at Sand Flats and keeping that revenue in local hands, the county enters into an empowering partnership with the BLM. While BLM explicitly maintains responsibility for the management of the recreation area, the county and community share in decisions about spending the revenues and, therefore, help shape on-the-ground management decisions, such as the type of visitor amenities that are developed.

a specific response to a crisis has developed into a long-term effort at networking and information sharing with, arguably, fewer tangible outcomes on the ground. Currently, CCP is revising its charter, as well as redefining its future activities and programs. Other specific lessons gleaned from this profile reflect the complexity of collaborative efforts that tackle a large planning region.

COLLECTIVE POLITICAL POWER: The Canyon Country Partnership provided an important catalyst for launching the on-the-ground community stewardship project at Sand Flats. By leveraging its collective political weight, CCP helped secure the AmeriCorps grant as seed money to fund the Sand Flats Community Team. The obvious lesson in this story is that the political power of a broader, regional group, connected further up the totem pole than one small community, can provide invaluable assistance to get local conservation work accomplished. CCP helped get the project off the ground and then let it go as an independent program run by Grand County and the local office of the BLM. In fact, Mike O'Donnell believes CCP's role as a catalyst for on-the-ground projects, rather than a legal decision-making entity, makes it successful because "no one gives up their mandate."

CRISIS LEADS TO ACTION: The crisis at Sand Flats provided the initial impetus for CCP and led to significant on-the-ground problem solving. With the Sand Flats project up and running, the sense of urgency that inspired action has diminished, and the CCP has yet to latch onto another similarly hot issue where it could so clearly have an immediate impact. As a result, public involvement has decreased. As Bill Hedden observes, "There has to be a pressing issue. Communities aren't very good at dealing with long-term, slow pace issues. If there's a crisis, you can get lots of people involved, but as soon

as they think its been dealt with and there are good people assigned to deal with it, they go back to their kids' baseball games. And that's probably just the way it should be." This is not to diminish the current function of CCP in maintaining relationships among agency personnel and government officials in the region. As a result of the time spent networking and building trust, CCP members believe they are well positioned to work together as new issues continually emerge.

LEADERSHIP: Changing leadership has had a substantial impact on the group in recent years. Neither Hedden nor O'Donnell are actively participating at this time, and as noted earlier, one of the four counties is no longer participating at all. Changes in the political winds and changes in leadership can alter the dynamics of what a collaborative group is able to accomplish. According to Max Jensen, a "fairly fast turnover of Partnership participants," particularly in the federal agency representatives, is a challenge because it "changes the personality of the group." This turnover is a familiar complaint about federal agencies, where relocation is required for employees to move up the career ladder.

THE PROBLEM OF SCALE: The size of the Canyon Country Partnership's planning region creates some challenges for the organization. Primarily, CCP has struggled with the question of making it beneficial to all of the partners. According to Max Jensen, "Some partners get a lot more out of it than others. For example, federal agencies because of their budget structure gain more tangible benefits than state agencies—there's federal money available for partnerships." As a result of Canyon Country Partnership's initial focus on the community stewardship project at Sand Flats, Kent Petersen believes "some members got frustrated spending so much time on those issues" that did not seem relevant to their specific community. This problem of scale certainly contributes to CCP's shift in emphasis from being a problem-solving group toward being primarily a dialogue group. According to Kent Petersen, "If we have a problem, it's in one county, it doesn't impact all members, so it's almost better to resolve the problems between ourselves and save the bigger partnership to discussion and information sharing."

At a Glance...

LESSONS LEARNED

Relationship building and information sharing among agency personnel facilitates multi-jurisdictional planning.

Large-scale regional efforts struggle at times to remain pertinent to all partners when trying to implement on-the-ground projects.

Crisis leads to action and fosters broad citizen participation in agency-driven efforts. Citizen participants in such large-scale efforts may drop away once the initial crisis is resolved.

Changing leadership can alter dynamics among participants, as well as the mission and interests of a collaborative effort.

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Max Jensen. June 16, 1998. Utah State Parks.

Kaaron Jorgen. May 8, 1998. Coordinator, Canyon Country Partnership.

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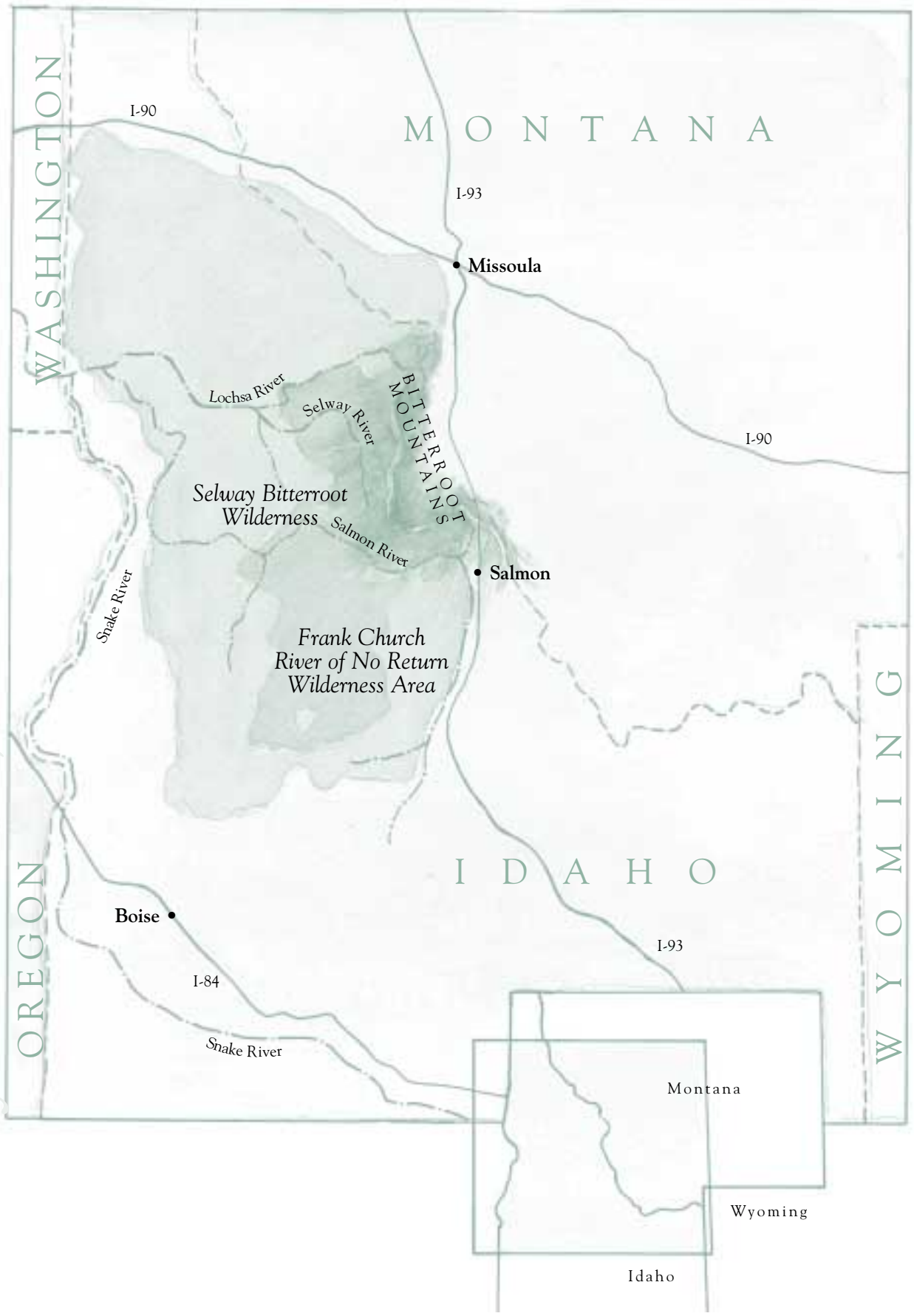
FOOTNOTE

[1] Though originally a participant in the Partnership, San Juan County recently resigned from the Partnership.

Selway-Bitterroot, Montana-Idaho Border



Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Reintroduction

MONTANA-IDAHO BORDER

"… while this collaborative effort was not agency driven, it aided USFWS' own plans for grizzly recovery in the Selway-Bitterroot ecosystem."

Along the Montana-Idaho border, conservationists and timber industry representatives used a collaborative process to craft a proposal for grizzly bear reintroduction into the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem. This ecosystem contains the largest amount of roadless country—the core of which is protected wilderness—in the lower 48 states. As a result of its size and remoteness, the Selway-Bitterroot is the focus of efforts to expand the numbers and range of the grizzly bear, which has been missing from the region since the 1940s.

In 1982, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) released its original recovery plan for the threatened grizzly bear, the Bitterroot was designated as a potential recovery area. Since that time, conservationists and the USFWS have been working to restore the bear to this wild country. This is the story of several conservationists and timber industry representatives working together as a coalition to achieve this goal, and the intense political heat their proposal has generated.

Commonly referred to as the "Citizens' Management Alternative," the USFWS adopted the joint proposal developed through this collaborative effort as its preferred alternative in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) released during the summer of 1997. The coalition, its process, and its proposal illustrate several characteristics of a **policy- or interest-based collaborative** conservation initiative that is not rooted in one identifiable, geographically defined community and that tackles a policy issue of national significance: the reintroduction of a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. While each participant in this collaboration is obviously a member of a community of place that influences their perspectives on natural resource issues, where they are from is not the primary affiliation guiding their work.

The Sonoran Institute coined the term **collaborative advocacy group** to describe this coalition that proposes a precedent-setting co-management arrangement for grizzly bear recovery in Idaho. This reintroduction proposal is also generating significant controversy about terms such as "collaboration" and "community-based" more generally as they are applied in land management issues. As a result, the story of this coalition illustrates several of the challenges encountered when using collaboration to resolve natural resource problems.

Strange Bedfellows Craft a Bold Plan

During its winter 1993 meeting in Denver, Colorado, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) decided to proceed with grizzly bear recovery in the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem. Hank Fischer of Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders), Tom France of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), and Dan Johnson of the Resource Organization on Timber Supply (ROOTS) all attended this meeting. Johnson, in particular, came to speak against plans to bring grizzlies back to the wild country that straddles the Montana-Idaho border. ROOTS is a coalition between management and labor in the timber industry that works to maintain a sustainable flow of timber to the sawmills of central and northern Idaho. In his comments, however, Johnson noted that if bears were going to be reintroduced anyway, ROOTS had ideas about how to do it. Tom France recalls that Johnson struck him "as being moderate in his rhetoric." France and Fischer initiated a series of meetings with Johnson and other ROOTS representatives, and this coalition of strange bedfellows was born.

A few new members joined the group, including the late Seth Diamond, representing the Intermountain Forest Industry Association (IFIA); Phil Church of the United Paperworkers International Union in Lewiston, Idaho; and Bill Mulligan, owner of Three Rivers Timber mill in Idaho.

Grizzly feeding

Greater Yellowstone Coalition

"The reintroduction proposal met with substantial opposition, particularly from local, regional, national, and even international, environmental groups, who argued that the proposal 'creates a committee of political appointees with authority to control recovery and make key management and biological decisions' at the expense of a biologically sound recovery plan."

In total, the coalition included representatives of five organizations and, at times, enlisted the help of several individuals based on their particular expertise. Other members of the conservation community were invited to coalition meetings but did not regularly participate or engage in the specific negotiations that resulted in the proposal.

Informal discussions grew into a set of general principles upon which coalition members could agree. According to the USFWS' Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the coalition's overarching goal includes achieving recovery of the grizzly bear while minimizing the social and economic impacts to the Selway-Bitterroot's communities. The group negotiated and drafted a "special rule" under the Endangered Species Act that laid out its plan for grizzly reintroduction. The rule proposes to reintroduce grizzlies into the Selway-Bitterroot ecosystem as a nonessential, experimental population to be managed by an authorized Citizens' Management Committee appointed by the Secretary of Interior.

In the summer of 1995, when the USFWS began its scoping period for the draft Environmental Impact Statement on reintroduction, the coalition publicly unveiled its proposal. Prior to scoping, the USFWS had been aware of, but uninvolved in, the crafting of the plan which would ultimately become the agency's preferred alternative. According to Tom France, the agency's role "was one of interest, not of commitment." The coalition soon received word that the USFWS was going to adopt its plan as the preferred alternative in the DEIS. Thus, while this collaborative effort was not agency driven, it aided USFWS' own plans for grizzly recovery in the Selway-Bitterroot ecosystem. In fact, according to Hank Fischer, the coalition played a crucial role in securing funding to initiate the EIS process for grizzly recovery in the Bitterroot.

While the USFWS wrote its draft EIS, coalition members set about building support for the proposal by meeting with their respective constituencies. Fisher and France circulated the proposal to other regional and national environmental groups, while all coalition members met with their governors and congressional delegations. The group conducted a series of "town hall meetings" throughout the Selway-Bitterroot region in which it presented the plan and listened to the concerns of those attending. Newspaper stories and journal articles described this new collaborative approach and the "community-based alternative" it produced. Rooted in the belief that "local publics will tolerate recovery program implementation more readily if local citizens participate in management," the coalition advanced its citizen management committee as a "bottom-up model" that "relies upon federal control only as a safeguard," as described in the University of Michigan's Endangered Species Bulletin. The reintroduction proposal met with substantial opposition, particularly from local, regional, national, and even international environmental groups, who argued that the proposal "creates a committee of political appointees with authority to control recovery and make key management and biological decisions" at the expense of a biologically sound recovery plan. From the first unveiling of the coalition's initial proposal to the release of the draft EIS, the plan was revised and modified in response to suggestions from the agency personnel, rural communities, and conservationists that coalition members met with during this time.

If adopted as written in the EIS, the Citizens' Management Alternative will institutionalize collaboration within the Selway-Bitterroot grizzly recovery process. The preferred alternative will create a 15 member Citizens' Management Committee (CMC) and authorize the committee with "management implementation responsibility" for the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem's grizzly bear population. The committee will be appointed by the Secretary of Interior based on recommendations from the governors of Montana and Idaho. According to the DEIS, the CMC will "consist of a cross-section of interests reflect-

ing a balance of view points, be selected for their diversity of knowledge and experience in natural resource issues, and for their commitment to collaborative decision-making."

The USFWS released its draft EIS in July of 1997 with the Citizens' Management Alternative as its preferred alternative, only to be greeted by angry controversy. The ensuing comment period and public meetings brought out opponents from across the political spectrum. Other environmental groups, including the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, The Wilderness Society, and the Idaho Conservation League, criticized the plan for putting too much power into the hands of local citizens who were poorly equipped to make scientific management decisions and less accountable to national interests than federal agencies. These groups concluded that the proposal was "bad for bears, bad for conservation, and [set] dangerous precedents for all future recovery plans." In the summary of the public comments received on the DEIS, the USFWS noted that seventy percent of the public comments regarding the preferred alternative were critical of it. Some residents of the rural communities adjacent to the recovery area voiced fears about living with grizzly bears, reiterating their stand that they didn't "want the damn bear." The USFWS is currently revising the DEIS, and as a result the plan continues to evolve based on public input. The 1999 Interior Appropriations bill included a rider prohibiting the federal government from spending any money on the project for the next year, although USFWS still anticipates issuing its final EIS during the winter.

Defining Characteristics

Several characteristics of the coalition help define it as an **interest-based collaborative advocacy group.** In this example, the participants, process, scale of work, and outcomes differ substantially from more locally rooted, place-based efforts. The coalition's product, the proposed Citizens' Management Committee, represents an attempt to establish co-management of the bears by citizens and agency personnel.[1]

PARTICIPANTS: This collaborative effort is composed of, and driven by, representatives of national and regional interest groups. Its membership consists of representatives of two national environmental groups (the National Wildlife Federation and Defenders of Wildlife), the Intermountain Forest Industry Association (IFIA), and the Resource Organization on Timber Supply (ROOTS). Defenders and NWF initiated the dialogue. According to Tom France, of the National Wildlife Federation, the proposal has "certainly been created by special interests, though they are interests who have a stake in, a long-term investment in, the Northern Rockies." Neither agency representatives nor residents of the rural communities adjacent to the recovery area were directly involved in the negotiations that produced the proposal though coalition members sought and incorporated the input and comment of these constituencies. The process remained largely expert driven. Members of the proposed Citizens' Management Committee will be appointed by the Secretary of the Interior based on recommendations from the governors of Montana and Idaho to six year terms. CMC members will be chosen from the communities within or adjacent to the recovery area and will include representatives of the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nez Perce tribe, and state fish and game agencies.

PROCESS: Each group participating in the coalition began with its own set of principles; through several iterations, coalition members drafted a set of common principles upon which they could all agree. Based on these principles, Wayne Phillips, an attorney with the Montana governor's office and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, drafted a special rule under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as a working document. Coalition members then set about hammering out the fine details of this special rule word by word. At this point, participants negotiated the proposal without the involvement of many other stakeholders in grizzly recovery. While the negotiations took place outside of any public involvement process, the proposal became part of the USFWS' EIS and is therefore subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process which requires broad public involvement. The alternative now will be revised based on the comments and input gathered during the public review process. As a result, the plan continues to be modified based on the comments received regarding the DEIS.

"Neither agency representatives nor residents of the rural communities adjacent to the recovery area were directly involved in the negotiations that produced the proposal though coalition members sought and incorporated the input and comment of these constituencies. The process remained largely expert driven."

SCALE: First, the recovery area proposed in the EIS encompasses 5,785 square miles of federally designated wilderness with an entire "experimental population area" of 25,140 sq. miles that includes all or portions of ten national forests. The human communities adjacent to, or included in, this geographic area range from the urban centers of Missoula, Montana, and Boise, Idaho, to rural communities, such as Darby, Montana; Salmon, Idaho; and Orofino, Idaho. Beyond the physical area encompassed by the coalition proposal, this effort is broad in its scope. Grizzly bears, symbolic for many of wild lands but frightening to others as

"… by authorizing the Citizens' Management Committee to 'develop management plans and policies,' this proposal would invest lay people with an unprecedented level of management authority for a federally threatened species."

a dangerous threat, are a species that garners attention on a regional, national, even international scale. Furthermore, by authorizing the Citizens' Management Committee to "develop management plans and policies," this proposal would invest lay people with an unprecedented level of management authority for a federally threatened species. While state fish and game commissions offered coalition members a model for their CMC idea, these appointed commissions manage for game species rather than threatened and endangered species. This proposed level of authority over bear management is the reason we call the CMC a co-management approach.

OUTCOMES: At this point in time, the major outcome of this collaborative effort is that the Citizens' Management Alternative is USFWS' preferred alternative in the DEIS. According to the proposal's proponents, the underlying goals of this recovery effort include "reducing economic costs and minimizing land use restrictions," as well as "giving local citizens a larger and more meaningful participatory role in bear management." Whether the Citizens' Management Alter-native will be implemented as proposed and, if it is, whether the plan will accomplish these goals is still uncertain.

This collaborative effort is driven by national and regional interest groups attempting to resolve a conservation issue of national significance. The plan did not evolve from a community-driven process, and it encompasses a vast geographic area. The CMC that the proposal would create will be composed of politically appointed representatives. As a result, the coalition, along with its proposed Citizens' Management Committee, falls into the policy/interest-based branch of our taxonomy as a collaborative advocacy group, with a possible co-management outcome. The coalition's collaborative effort may well succeed in restoring the grizzly bear to the Selway-Bitterroot ecosystem in a manner that addresses real political concerns. However, it is not a community-driven effort. The fact that it is referred to by some as community-based underscores the need for this taxonomy to differentiate between diverse collaborative efforts.

Lessons

There are several lessons to be drawn from the coalition experience. These lessons illustrate some of the challenges encountered by efforts to increase local participation in natural resource issues of national significance, such as grizzly bear reintroduction.

BROAD PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION: The heavy criticism levied against the Citizens' Management Alternative and the coalition that created it indicates that outside groups do not feel their interests were represented or included in the development of this proposal. For example, nonparticipating conservation groups, as well as many grizzly bear biologists, oppose the adoption of the preferred alternative, arguing that it does not provide adequate protection for the bear or its habitat. The exclusion of independent scientists from the Citizens' Management Committee is also of primary concern according to an article in the *Chronicle of Community,* a journal dedicated to covering the West's emerging collaborative efforts. While Tom France notes that many professional scientific organizations, including the Society of Mammologists, The Wildlife Society, the International Bear Association, and the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, have endorsed the CMC proposal, this criticism indicates that, at the time of the DEIS release, nonparticipants pointed to specific interests they felt were not included in the proposal. Residents of the rural communities within the Selway-Bitterroot ecosystem have also been vocal in their opposition. In fact, the vast majority of speakers at the public hearing at Salmon, Idaho, were vehemently opposed to reintroduction according to the *Chronicle*. While the coalition members did invite other conservation groups to join the process, and are understandably frustrated by their refusal to participate, this story illustrates how an attempt to be innovative can shift to another polarized

Grizzly in grass

Greater Yellowstone Coalition

debate if a collaborative group doesn't succeed in fostering ownership among a broad, diverse group of stakeholders. Requiring a collaborative effort to include or represent every stakeholder could quickly paralyze the process, but on the other hand, the more inclusive a group can be, the better. This principle holds especially true when the issue is one, such as grizzly bear recovery, that is already contentious, large in scale, and of national significance.

PROCESS: Interest group representatives rather than local leaders drove this process and negotiated, in effect, behind closed doors. And, while this group's composition may successfully reach the goal of bears in the Selway-Bitterroot, this process defines it as a policy/interest-based rather than a community-based, effort. Members of the collaborative extended invitations to Idaho conservationists and other commodity groups to join early in the process, but as Tom France points out, many individuals and organizations consciously chose not to participate. By the time the proposal reached the public eye, to all appearances, it was already fully developed. The public involvement processes of land management agencies are often criticized on just this point: by presenting what appears to be an already developed plan, public participation seems to become public review of decisions already made rather than meaningful public involvement in the actual decision making.

The coalition does, however, offer an important example of effectively integrating collaboration into existing NEPA processes. In this case, a group of non-agency people interested in grizzly bear recovery crafted the preferred alternative presented in the DEIS.[2] The USFWS retains management authority because once the EIS process is complete, the agency will make the decision regarding the proposed action.

While the Citizens' Management Committee is designed to address the critique of established public involvement processes by giving greater authority to those on the committee, skeptics do not believe this is appropriate when it involves the recovery of a threatened species. They also argue that the decision-making process of the CMC, or for that matter, of the coalition as a whole, will not be open and transparent enough for non-CMC members to evaluate its decisions. Again, the proposal continues to evolve as it winds its way through NEPA analysis, and it may ultimately address concerns about an open and transparent process.

MEET OR EXCEED EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW OR POLICY: While coalition members believe their proposed Citizens' Management Committee is legal, investing a group of lay people with such a high degree of authority over natural resource decisions is unprecedented in the management of threatened and endangered species. As Tom France sums it up, "I think it can be fairly concluded that the concept of delegated authority to local citizens does comply with law, but ... our critics think it is poor policy." The proposed Citizens' Management Committee, made up of appointed citizens from Idaho and Montana, is raising questions about local control over a threatened species of national concern. As a result, the effect of the Citizens' Management Alternative on current environmental policy is the subject of divisive debate.

LARGE SCALE: Geographically, the proposal encompasses a wide area, and grizzly bear recovery is clearly an issue of national significance. As a result, the number of stakeholders in the issue increases significantly (perhaps even exponentially) as does the complexity of involving these diverse interests in any potential collaboration. While it may be appropriate and effective to collaborate on large-scale issues, this characteristic increases the need for an open, transparent process that constantly strives to be as inclusive as possible.

ROLE OF SCIENCE: According to the DEIS, wildlife professionals will hold 5 seats on the CMC, and the committee is required to "develop a process for obtaining the best biological, social and economic data" to inform its decisions. However, critics question the ability of a committee composed mostly of lay people to make scientific decisions, such as bear mortality limits and viable population size, especially as these issues are the subject of debate within the scientific community. The lack of a clear role for independent grizzly bear biologists in the CMC raises significant questions about the extent to which this management committee will be informed by science. With regard to this issue, as well as the issue of a transparent decision-making process, proponents of the CMC foresee additional changes in the proposal as a result of public comment on the DEIS.

"… by presenting what appears to be an already developed plan, public participation seems to become public review of decisions already made rather than meaningful public involvement in the actual decision making."

At a Glance...

LESSONS LEARNED

An open, transparent, and inclusive process can help minimize controversy. This includes continued outreach to inform and engage nonparticipants.

Collaborations at this scale, involving issues of regional or national significance, are the most difficult because of the complexity and number of interests involved.

Science should be clearly integrated into any collaborative effort for it to succeed.

A proposal, appearing fully developed when presented to those outside the initial collaborators, can generate significant controversy and criticism from those who feel they were not included.

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PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Tom France. March 25, 1998 and September 23, 1998. National Wildlife Federation.

Dan Johnson. March 26, 1998. Resource Organization on Timber Supply (ROOTS).

Hank Fischer. April 6, 1998 and October 1998. Defenders of Wildlife.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Greg Schildwacter, who currently represents IFIA within the coalition, suggested changing the name of the CMC to the "shared management committee" to better "convey the sharing of responsibility between local interests who benefit and pay and national interests who share the costs but less so." (Personal interview with author, 1998). Based in part on this evaluation of what the CMC was really about, the Sonoran Institute categorized the proposed committee as a co-management group.

[2] Alternative 4, referred to as the Conservation Biology Alternative, was also crafted by a non-agency group, the Alliance for the Wild Rockies, a regional environmental advocacy group located in Missoula, Montana.

SECTION 3

The Lessons Learned

Sonoran Institute

"The seemingly simple act of people with adversarial perspectives working together to forge solutions to the complex natural resource issues that divide them is, to say the least, a challenging task."

CHAPTER 5
Conclusion:
Keys to Constructive Collaboration on Public Land

The examples described

in the preceding pages demonstrate the range of experimentation and innovation in public land management now occurring under the banner of collaboration. Some initiatives are place-based, while others are policy-based. Some result in on-the-ground projects intended to further conservation, with most resulting in improved dialogue among residents, land managers, and other interests. Many attempt to consider a particular landscape holistically and make land-use decisions based on a broad ecosystem perspective. The case studies illustrate the creativity, diversity, and range of collaborative efforts and suggest that experimentation will enable us to move beyond the contentious debates and piecemeal management that so often characterize public land decision making.

As with any experiment, some efforts are far along toward achieving their goals, while others are mired in controversy that looks no different from the conflict that the collaborators sought to resolve. The seemingly simple act of people with adversarial perspectives working together to forge solutions to the complex natural resource issues that divide them is, to say the least, a challenging task. Collaborative approaches to land management are still in their infancy, particularly place-based initiatives. As a result, it is difficult to declare definitive success because there are few examples with demonstrated on-the-ground conservation benefits on public land.

Proponents of collaborative conservation, including the Sonoran Institute, have lofty expectations for the process as a conservation tool. Yet, collaboration is only one tool in the toolbox. Still, we believe it offers a constructive approach to tackling complex landscape-level management problems. Effective ecosystem-based conservation requires collaboration across multiple boundaries, especially since threats to public land resources increasingly come from beyond the borders of public ownership. Collaboration offers an alternative to polarized conflict and may help identify and carry out local conservation or community development projects. In our experience, particularly with private land conservation and local growth management, place-based initiatives tend to produce more on-the-ground conservation benefits and foster civil dialogue in rural communities than policy-based collaborations. However, can successes on private land transfer to public land management? If local, small-scale efforts are the most fruitful, how can they contribute to large landscape-level goals involving public land, such as protecting the integrity of large ecosystems? Thus, the question becomes: Given the tentative results to date, what can we realistically expect from a collaborative approach to public land planning and management? And when is collaboration simply not an appropriate approach?

A Building Block Approach

From our experience and observations, the Sonoran Institute sees policy-based collaborations often becoming mired in controversy, not involving local leaders or residents in a meaningful way and, less frequently, producing on-the-ground conservation benefits. As a result, we have concluded that it is more effective to **start** with a place-based approach. This conclusion does not mean that collaboration is an inappropriate approach to resolve broad policy questions, but when a collaborative initiative tackles an issue of regional or national significance, the interests are more numerous and complex, making effective collaboration even more difficult. As the case study of Colorado's Southwest RAC illustrates, even the policy-based type of collaborative initiative may benefit from starting at the local level, at least early on, in order to build trust and demonstrate a track record of achievement. In the next section, we identify some of the keys to constructive collaboration that emerged from this report; many of these keys illustrate the value of beginning small.

Given the value of starting with a place-based approach when collaborating, it is reasonable to ask how this approach will help achieve broad conservation goals, such as protecting ecological integrity. Place-based collaborative initiatives can be viewed as build-

PRIVATE LAND AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT ISSUES AS THE FIRST BUILDING BLOCK:

The Sonoran Institute has experienced more success with collaborations involving **local** conservation advocates, public land managers, community leaders, and small user groups (loggers and ranchers) than with those involving national environmental groups, state trade associations, regional public agency officials, and large publicly held resource extraction corporations. These local initiatives have focused mostly on private land and growth management issues, often laying the groundwork for a trusting, constructive relationship and resulting in private land conservation benefits that help protect public land.

For example, in Estes Park, Colorado, private land development adjacent to Rocky Mountain National Park threatens the park's wildlife by eliminating crucial winter habitat and migration corridors. Local leaders and Park Service officials convened a 2-day community conference to begin discussing these issues; one outcome of this event was the subsequent passage of a 0.25 percent sales tax in Larimer County to finance open space acquisition. Community members and the Park Service continue to cooperate on a variety of land-use planning issues to protect the park's resources and community values, as well as to address some of the local economic challenges.

By tackling private land or growth management issues first, collaborative efforts can experiment with alternative land management strategies and demonstrate on-the-ground conservation benefits before applying similar strategies to public land. Thus, an emerging group can demonstrate tangible accomplishments before wading into the more complicated arena of public land management with its requirements for broader public participation and inclusion of national interests

FOR MORE EXAMPLES, SEE:

Jim Howe, Ed McMahon, and Luther Propst. 1997. *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

ing blocks that, place by place, create educated and diverse constituencies actively engaged in land-use decision making. These grassroots initiatives build coalitions, based on a shared sense of place, that are able to deal effectively with the environmental and natural resource issues affecting their communities. Place-based collaboration offers an avenue toward the goal of integrating conservation and community development in a way that places local people among the beneficiaries and custodians of on-the-ground conservation. Writing about community-based approaches overseas in the book *Natural Connections: Perspectives in Community-based Conservation*, David Western, former director of the Kenya Wildlife Service and a noted conservationist, says a community-based approach "reverses top-down, center-driven conservation by focusing on the people who bear the costs … In the broadest sense, … [it] includes natural resources or biodiversity protection by, for, and with the local community." Although rural communities in the American West historically have benefited economically from the exploitation of public land resources and thus differ from Kenya, collaboration may similarly encourage meaningful local participation and thus be an important tool with which to build broader support for conservation in the West.

We need to continue fostering this approach in order to build broad constituencies for conservation of our public lands and to provide meaningful local input into land-use decisions. Communities engaged in place-based collaborative initiatives—the building blocks—may someday contribute to resolving larger landscape-scale natural resource problems and public policy issues. Place-based collaboration can serve as a starting point for protecting functioning ecosystems from the ground up. These efforts build informed and dedicated constituencies one local place at a time. The complexity of public land collaboration necessitates a small-scale, experimental approach that enables participants to learn from experience and to move forward cautiously. As a result, at this early stage of our collective experiment with collaboration, we believe it is more effective to start with a place-based initiative rather than jumping into a policy-based collaboration.

Laying the Foundation for Constructive Collaboration

As the case studies illustrate, each setting or issue is unique and requires an individually tailored strategy; indeed this is one of the tenets of a collaborative approach. Thus, these "keys to constructive collaboration" are not intended as a "cookbook" since it would be impossible to develop a universal checklist for constructive collaboration. However, there are some general principles that, if applied, will help everyone involved in public land management carry out constructive collaboration that results in improved land management practices. These keys apply to both place-based and policy-based collaborative efforts though they tend to encourage beginning at the local level and building upward.

The ingredients of a constructive collaborative process that builds educated, responsible decision making include:

MAINTAIN AN OPEN AND INCLUSIVE PROCESS: This may be the most important ingredient. An open and inclusive process involves the full range of outlooks and values about public land. There is an open invitation to interested parties or people to join the process. In place-based collaborative efforts, membership is not defined exclusively by location of residence, though connection to place draws

participants into the effort. Thus, interested nonresidents are welcome to participate. Equally important, a community-based group strives to keep all interested people informed of the process. For example, the Swan Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee and the Applegate Partnership developed ways to involve people beyond meeting attendance and sent announcements or newsletters to all community members regardless of whether or not they attended meetings. Missing meetings does not exclude someone from participation. Obviously, local residence makes attending meetings easier. As a result, consistent, proactive, and frequent outreach is especially critical for place-based initiatives, including soliciting comments from nonresidents and substantively integrating them into projects. Through this outreach, effective place-based groups demonstrate their understanding that public land is a national resource and distinguish themselves from attempts to establish local control over public land.

ENCOURAGE BROAD PARTICIPATION RATHER THAN FORMAL REPRESENTATION: The distinction between participation and representation is subtle but important. In his book *Community and the Politics of Place*, author Dan Kemmis observes that for Americans, the term "representation" implies our republican governmental system in which elected representatives speak for those who elect them. Collaboratives usually do not operate as representative bodies in this way: participants are rarely elected or even appointed by a constituency to speak for that constituency. Instead, participants frequently act of their own initiative, out of their individual concern for the place they call home or the issue they care about. Participants may see themselves as representative of a community of interest in the sense of being typical of others with similar views and values, but they usually have not been formally chosen to speak for that interest. Brett KenCairn of the Applegate Partnership points out that ambiguity surrounding this question of representation can be divisive, particularly when individual participants alternate between claiming to speak for others or only for themselves. He urges new collaborative groups to clarify this point early in the process. Some of the current struggles of the Beaverhead County Community Forum, for example, stem from their ambiguity on this issue.

In the majority of the case studies, participants described themselves as individuals expressing their own concerns rather than participating as official representatives of organized constituencies. Collaborative groups are most effective when they foster the participation of as many people as possible; in effect, collaboratives are seeking to engage regular people in decision making rather than delegate that role solely to government officials and elected representatives.

Encouraging broad participation is one of the principal challenges of collaboration. Every case study illustrates this struggle. Without a deliberate attempt to include the full range of interests, some may feel left out and may block the collaborative's work. Collaboration is a time-consuming process and often dependent on volunteers, making it difficult for those with families and full-time jobs to participate in frequent meetings. Effective collaborations continue to develop new ways to inform those who are uninvolved and draw new, interested participants into their work. Several strategies found in the case studies for successfully engaging a broad range of people include:

- Vary the time and place of meetings.
- Circulate a newsletter to all residents and potentially interested people.

"… it is difficult to declare definitive success because there are few examples with demonstrated on-the-ground conservation benefits on public land."

- Involve key individuals in implementing specific, on-the-ground projects, even if they don't attend meetings.
- Actively seek people's input on a one-on-one basis outside of formal meetings.
- Actively seek out and engage critics.
- Visit other collaborative groups to learn about their work and share yours.

There will always be interests and individuals who remain uninvolved. However, a public land collaborative effort must constantly strive to ensure that all who can influence the outcome are involved in some way, whether through comment on particular proposals from afar or through active participation in ongoing meetings.

WORK AT A SCALE APPROPRIATE TO THE COMMUNITY OR PLACE: The initiatives that succeed in avoiding controversy and conflict tackle projects on a relatively small scale that is appropriate to their communities, that is, the scale makes sense as a landscape that local people identify with. In large landscapes, sense of place no longer holds people together. As the scale gets larger or the issue of broader significance, the number of stakeholders and level of complexity increases exponentially, requiring a sophistication in facilitating broad participation that so far seems to elude most interest groups. However, it is worth repeating that even in place/community-based

"Collaborative groups are most effective when they foster the participation of as many people as possible; in effect, collaboratives are seeking to engage regular people in decision making rather than delegate that role solely to government officials and elected representatives."

initiatives the participants are NOT exclusively local residents, especially when the discussions involve public land. Focus on a local place does not mean that regional and national interests can be dismissed or excluded.

ENSURE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD: Brett KenCairn observes that "Real collaboration is not possible if one group holds substantially more power than another. They (the more powerful group) can coerce the weaker group to support its 'cooperative' solution by threatening to return to its earlier behaviors if it doesn't get its way." Genuine collaboration is predicated on every voice having equal influence on the design of a project or the shaping of a decision. Often this "level playing field" is established because communities of interest emerge as powerful players through traditional advocacy approaches. Thus, collaboration complements, but does not replace, traditional advocacy. Collaborative groups that share leadership and facilitation responsibilities on a rotating basis ensure that no single interest or individual dominates the process.[1]

When a group's participants are a mix of paid representatives and volunteers, establishing this balance is a complicated task. Many of the case studies involved this mix with agency and interest groups being paid to attend meetings, while local citizens volunteer their time to the effort. In this situation, paid representatives may end up dominating meetings, creating an imbalance between the various stakeholders. Ensuring the continued participation of volunteers is an important part of maintaining a level playing field in a collaboration. Covering travel expenses, providing child care or covering the cost of related training are all strategies to help volunteers sustain their participation

BUILD LINKAGES BEYOND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY: The most promising place-based collaboratives build relationships with nonresident stakeholders and draw on the expert knowledge of land managers, nongovernmental organizations (such as conservation groups), scientists, and academics. Again, these place-based collaboratives do not define their membership exclusively by geography nor in isolation from outside interests. Linkages beyond a local community can garner important financial and technical assistance for collaborative efforts. These connections enable volunteer place-based efforts to draw on the expertise and time of paid staff members of interested organizations. Additionally, collaborative groups are beginning to network with other similar community-based groups through venues such as the Collaborative Learning Circle, a collection of fifteen organizations in the California-Oregon border region that meet to share experience and expertise from efforts to integrate sustainable land management and community development. The Colorado Plateau Forum in the Four Corners region provides another example.[2]

MEET OR EXCEED EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT STANDARDS: Constructive collaborative initiatives comply with or exceed the resource protection standards set by existing environmental laws. The issues do not involve revision of or exceptions to current law or policy. As Jan Brown of the Henry's Fork Watershed Council observes "Watershed Councils aren't the place to seek national policy or federal law change; it's the place to work out on-the-ground conservation and assess the overall result." In decisions affecting public land, collaborative efforts that sought to circumvent or weaken existing law and policy or which have offered an unprecedented interpretation of those laws met strong resistance from interest groups that were uninvolved and uninformed about the effort. The most promising collaboratives tackle public land decisions within the framework of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), using its public participation procedures as a mechanism to integrate broader interests and stakeholders who were not directly involved in the collaborative effort. Many constructive efforts, such as the Henry's Fork Watershed Council, include explicit criteria that their proposals must comply with current law (see sidebar, page 22, on their Watershed Integrity Review and Evaluation (WIRE) process). In this way, collaboration can be a tool to implement or adapt, but not circumvent, public land laws such as the National Forest Management Act, Endangered Species Act, or Federal Land Policy Management Act. A strong legal and regulatory framework enables collaborative initiatives to flourish. Indeed, as in the case of the Applegate Partnership, crises created by litigation (or the threat of litigation) often bring local people, land managers and interest groups to the table seeking a new way of doing business.

The existing system of public land laws and standards ensures a framework for accountability in public land management. For many skeptics of collaboration, accountability is a central issue. Their questions include: "What happens if a collaborative group thinks its plan is a good idea, but others don't? Who

decides? How do we evaluate the legitimacy of these processes?" The current system provides a structured opportunity for public input, ensures disclosure of the potential environmental consequences of an action, and guarantees a process for review of proposals and decisions. Lacking a better answer to the skeptics' questions, existing laws and standards provide the necessary system of checks and balances.

BUILD ON LOCAL LEADERSHIP: The most effective collaborations are initiated and led by local residents who are able to foster a shared sense of ownership and responsibility among all participants. Brett KenCairn, reflecting on his experience with the Applegate Partnership in the journal *Chronicle of Community*, notes that:

> *One sad but predictable consequence of early success in the pioneer partnerships was the attempt by public officials to institutionalize the partnership remedy. Inevitably this generated recipes, regulations, and rule books for collaboration. It also placed public agencies in the role of trying to direct second generation partnerships. Though well-intentioned, agency attempts to establish partnerships have generally failed. When an agency unilaterally convenes what is supposed to be a voluntary partnership, key stakeholders feel compelled to be present or risk having their position represented by a party of the convenor's choosing. This is participation by coercion: it leads to begrudging and dysfunctional partnerships.*

Our profile of the Southwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council (RAC) reinforces the importance of local investment, leadership, and experience in the collaborative process. These ingredients contribute to this RAC's effectiveness in contrast with RACs in other states. Local leadership lends increased credibility to an effort and can level the playing field because the initiative is driven largely by committed volunteers rather than paid representatives of an organization.

The personalities and reputations of individual participants have a large impact on how a group is perceived. These leaders must be well-respected among the different interests in a community. Many of the case studies identify specific individuals whose leadership and ability to get along with people holding widely divergent opinions were central to the effectiveness of the particular initiative. Collaborations led by people who are not widely respected can meet with resistance simply because of the personalities involved.

BUILD A COMMUNITY'S CAPACITY FOR COLLABORATION AND STEWARDSHIP: Sociologist Jonathan Kusel, in his work on the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, defines a community's "capacity" as "the collective ability of residents … to respond to external and internal stresses; to create and take advantage of opportunities; and to meet the needs of residents, diversely defined. It also refers to the ability of a community to adapt to and respond to a variety of different circumstances." Collaboration is a tool to build and strengthen this capacity by developing the skills, education, and experience among residents to grapple with change. One essential capacity-building strategy is to empower a collaborative group to collect, evaluate, and "own" the information critical to understanding the issues its members seek to address. This may include facilitating shared learning processes about ecologically critical local areas or current socioeconomic trends in the community. Collaboration also helps develop another aspect of Kusel's notion of capacity: the vital "networks of civic engagement" both within a community and between a community and regional or national stakeholders. This ranges from developing an institutional structure that guarantees funding and administrative help to training participants in skills like facilitation, communication, and ecological assessment. Deliberate attention to building community capacity ensures that a collaborative endures. This lesson is especially true if non-local organization or agency is involved in initiating the collaborative effort. Without deliberate attention to building capacity, efforts falter and even fail once the convenor moves on to other projects.

CAPITALIZE ON A CRISIS: A recurrent theme in the case studies is that crisis leads to action, motivating people to seek an alternative approach to problem solving. A very personal sense of polarization within their own community often motivates local leaders to bring people with diverse perspectives together. The obvious lesson is that not all communities or issues are ready for a collaborative conservation initiative. Timing is the key. A critical number of people with diverse perspectives must be ready to explore alternative approaches to problem solving on public lands. If the timing is not right and participants are not genuinely ready to work together, collaboration can become little more than talk or can get nowhere due to some parties' unwillingness to collaborate

ENGAGE AGENCY PERSONNEL: Agency participation—but not domination— is an essential ingredient of effective public land collaboration. Agency personnel can provide important technical assistance, such as Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping capability, as well as essential information on existing public land laws and regulations. While federal land managers must

legally retain final decision-making authority for public land, they can be involved in a collaborative effort as an equal participant in order to shape a plan or project that meets their legal mandates. However, the most constructive collaborations include agency staff as participants rather than as leaders, facilitators, or initiators. Oftentimes, as is the case in the Beaverhead County Community Forum, some community members or interest groups are suspicious of any effort that appears to be run by the agencies. This unfortunate mistrust on the part of many people with an interest in public land is a fact of life. Collaboration can help agency personnel build credibility and trust, but only if land managers are receptive to the process and genuinely willing to share power.

Agency employees participating in collaborative efforts face the same challenges as other participants finding themselves involved in endless, after-hours meetings. Oftentimes, taking part in the time-consuming collaborative process is not rewarded or considered part of a staff person's job responsibilities, creating substantial internal disincentives to participation.

The Quincy Library Group Revisited

Having reviewed seven case studies of collaborative initiatives that involve public land and distilling some of the important lessons learned, we revisit our introductory story of the most famous public land collaboration to date—the Quincy Library Group (QLG). The lessons offered in this conclusion, combined with the indicators of constructive collaboration presented earlier, offer possible guidance in answering the questions: Why did the QLG generate so much controversy? What, if anything, could this collaborative effort have done differently to build more broad-based support for its initiative? Is it a model of effective place-based collaboration?

Because of the polarization surrounding QLG, it is difficult for those not personally involved to sort through the contradictory stories regarding the legislation's origins and ramifications. What may have begun as a place-based attempt to resolve local forest management issues evolved into a "collaborative advocacy group" that lobbied Congress to pass its particular plan over widespread opposition. Along the way, the QLG hit many of the land mines inherent in local decision making over public land, and as a result, it is not a positive model for place-based collaboration. Below, we review some key characteristics of the QLG process:

Scale: QLG's proposal encompasses 2.5 million acres of national forest land as a pilot project. While the group advocated this acreage based on landscape-level management goals, such as fire management, beginning with such a large area left no opportunity to first demonstrate, in a low-risk fashion, the conservation benefits of an experimental fire management approach—the creation of "defensible fuel-break zones" by logging the small or dead trees that create fuels for forest fires. In terms of the taxonomy we have presented, this scale makes it difficult to characterize QLG as a place/community-based collaborative. It is questionable whether a "sense of place" unites participants when such a large area is being discussed. QLG's legislation affects three national forests, three counties, and numerous small towns, raising doubts about whether a group of approximately thirty people can adequately include or represent the interests of such a large, diverse region. The complexity of who should be involved in or at least informed about a collaborative public land initiative increases exponentially as the scale increases. The scale of QLG's proposal contributed to the perception that Sierra Pacific Industries timber company rather than the needs of the town of Quincy, drove the process.

Maintain an open and inclusive process: Key stakeholders were not involved, most notably the Forest Service and many environmental interests. The level of involvement from other communities within the region is also unclear; the very name, Quincy Library Group, implies that Quincy people made recommendations affecting distant communities. There appears to have been little consistent, proactive outreach to inform or involve many interests from within, as well as from beyond, the geographic area as the QLG proposal was negotiated. This created the appearance that the group's plan was a done deal, put together in a single town, once QLG sought to inform and gain support from a broader group of interests and individuals. As a result, QLG became a collaborative advocacy group promoting its specific plan for forest management. In the end, the way in which the QLG legislation ultimately passed, as a rider on the 1999 Omnibus Appropriations bill, is not a model of an open and transparent process at the national level. These riders are attached to unrelated pieces of legislation, thus escaping open debate in Congress, as well as a direct vote on the contents of the rider.

Meets or exceeds environmental law and policy: Proponents and adversaries of QLG repeatedly debate this point with no resolution as to whether the plan meets the legal requirements of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) or the California Spotted Owl policy. However, by taking its proposal to Congress, QLG sought unprecedented congressional intervention in public land management by mandating specific management direction for three national forests. Opponents argue that, despite the

legislation's requirement of an Environmental Impact Statement and public participation process, QLG circumvented the forest planning process required by the NFMA. Rather than amend the existing forest management plans pursuant to NFMA, QLG sought congressional direction on management. It is in this circumvention that Quincy fails to meet the lesson that constructive collaboration should occur within existing law and policy.

Engage agency personnel: Local Forest Service personnel were not participants at the table during the crafting of the QLG proposal. According to information on QLG's website, the Forest Service was not a direct participant because this was recognized as "improper and illegal." However, many other collaborative efforts have successfully negotiated the potential ethical and legal issues so as to include agency personnel as participants in collaborative efforts. Thus, while the absence of agency personnel may not be QLG's fault, it is a failure according to our criteria.

Broad participation versus representation: Whether the members of the QLG viewed themselves as representatives of specific interests or as speaking for their own individual concerns is unclear. This confusion raised difficult questions about participants' accountability. For example, many environmental activists involved in northern California forest management issues did not feel their interests were represented by QLG members nor included in the process, yet QLG counts environmentalists among its membership. This confusion, combined with little proactive outreach or substantive inclusion of the concerns of nonparticipants, created many vocal skeptics about QLG's collaboration

The participants of QLG, full of good intentions to help resolve their region's forest management conflicts, found themselves at the center of a fierce national debate over the appropriate role of local communities in the management of surrounding public land. While it may have started as a community-based collaboration, at some point QLG clearly became a collaborative advocacy group, committed to gaining congressional approval of its plan rather than continuing to try to include all interests. Much of the conflict stems from the large scale of the initiative. Because place-based collaboration is a new approach to environmental problem-solving, it makes sense to start small, especially when public land is involved. This can help reduce the anxiety of nonparticipants by building trust through demonstrating conservation benefits.

The Limitations of a Collaborative Approach

Several potential limitations to collaborative approaches in public land management emerge from the case studies. First, not all issues are appropriate or ripe for a collaborative approach. For example, the Henry's Fork Watershed Council chose not to put the revision of the Targhee National Forest Plan through its Watershed Integrity Review and Evaluation process because it would have proven too divisive for the Council. Thus, the Council did not take a position on the plan revision. Similarly, the Beaverhead County Community Forum tabled several controversial issues, most notably conflicts between motorized and nonmotorized recreation on public land in the county, because Forum members could not reach agreement on management recommendations. While these groups may simply not be ready to address these types of issues, it may also be that the most difficult issues cannot be resolved through a collaborative approach. As a result, collaboration should be seen as only one tool in the conservation toolbox, not the only instrument to be applied in every situation. Advocacy, traditional land management planning processes, and judicial review will continue to play important roles in resolving contentious environmental issues alongside collaborative conservation efforts.

The volunteer nature of collaboration can also be a limitation. The intensive and sustained outreach efforts so critical for public land collaborative initiatives require time and money. Tasks such as typing minutes and mailing newsletters frequently fall to committed participants already squeezing meeting attendance in between the demands of work and personal lives. The most enduring initiatives find a way to fund outreach activities, such as newsletters or other mailings; many eventually need to hire someone as a coordinator. A collaborative group's ability to secure funding can make or break its efforts to be inclusive and to maintain an open, transparent process. Garnering financial resources will help a group sustain the long-term participation of individuals and interest groups that may not be able to volunteer substantial amounts of time or who may live outside of a particular geographic area. Without funding, collaborative efforts may find themselves constrained in their ability to get projects implemented on-the-ground, as well as in their ability to engage a broad range of people in their efforts.

Skeptics of collaboration question the accountability of these groups. For example, if a collaborative group presents a proposal that it believes is a good idea, but others outside of the group disagree, who decides? Noting the *ad hoc*, self-selecting nature of many collaborative efforts, Louis Blumberg of The Wilderness Society, in his review of this report, wrote, "Our system of laws and regulations governing public lands [was] adopted … to create an accountable system—a

mechanism that would provide an opportunity for all who want to participate … to give voice to anyone, and to prevent the short term exploitation of our resources." Participants in community-based collaboration claim that they are accountable to each other due to their sense of community and neighborliness. They also claim that diverse participation at the local level adequately includes regional and national interests. However, collaborative efforts to date have not demonstrated that these assumptions always hold true. With no commonly accepted system to evaluate collaboration, it is difficult to decide if a process is legitimate or if all interests are adequately included. This difficulty of accountability is precisely why, at this point in time, collaboration regarding public land should occur within the framework of existing environmental laws and regulations. It also highlights the importance of agency participation: land managers remain the legally responsible authorities, and through their participation, they must keep the outcomes within the bounds of law.

A final limitation of collaboration may best be chalked up to human nature. When working in groups, especially groups of neighbors, there can be an undeniable tendency to "go along to get along." There is a danger in a collaborative process that maintaining the relationships rather than one's principles or interests can become the focus and the basis for measuring a group's success. As Jane McGarry, a participant in Colorado's Southwest RAC, observes, "it is really challenging to form a functioning group to work on an issue and still maintain diversity. It is human nature to blend together, to let the differences fade. We're uncomfortable with difference so we focus on the sameness, minimize the difference to get along, and get things done." Those embarking on a collaborative process should not underestimate the difficulty in fostering and maintaining diversity within a collaborative group nor in encouraging a process in which people can disagree vehemently without hard feelings.

A Remaining Challenge

Despite our growing experience with collaborative processes and better defined ingredients for constructive efforts, we still face a fundamental challenge in ensuring that collaborative conservation initiatives produce improved ecological health and sustainable community development. We need to develop commonly accepted criteria to measure the on-the-ground success or failure of collaboration's outcomes, including evaluations of the ecological, economic, and social changes resulting from these experiments. Without these assessments, we run the risk of pronouncing collaboration successful based on process rather than outcomes. In fact, many evaluations of collaborative efforts to date focus on who was or wasn't at the table rather than the substance of the projects or proposals that emerge from the process. Many of the initiatives profiled in this report that have implemented on-the-ground projects have monitoring programs in place to achieve this assessment. However, this monitoring must occur over a significant time-period in order to provide meaningful evidence of progress, especially when measuring outcomes, such as a project's contribution to maintaining functioning ecosystems. Using a system of "third-party" evaluation would add credibility by including the opinions of those not involved in the project's design and therefore less invested in the project's outcome.

Final Thoughts

Collaboration remains an experimental approach to public land management in the West. Much is still unknown about the results of these initiatives and whether the on-the-ground projects will ultimately succeed at broad conservation goals such as preserving ecological integrity. But collaboration, whether place- or policy-based, is at least improving relationships among participants with diverse perspectives about public land. Improved communication and a greater understanding of differing outlooks may lead toward practical, innovative conservation and community development. If for no other reason than collaboration presents an opportunity to speak outside of one's choir, these experiments warrant further exploration by everyone interested in public land issues. Done well, collaboration complements traditional advocacy in public land decisions: it provides an additional tool to help land management agencies, community leaders, interest groups, and private citizens concerned about public land.

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Quincy Library Group website: http://www.qlg.org.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Other strategies for ensuring an equal balance of power are included in each of the case studies.

[2] For more information about the Collaborative Learning Circle contact: Cate Hartzell at the Rogue Institute for Ecology and Economy, 762 A Street, Ashland, OR 97520, (541) 482-6031; to learn more about the Colorado Plateau Forum write Colorado Plateau Forum, Northern Arizona University, P.O. Box 15009, Flagstaff, AZ 86011.

APPENDIX

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) was passed in 1972 to reduce narrow special interest group influence on decision makers, to foster equal access for the public to the decision-making process, and to control costs by preventing the establishment of unnecessary advisory committees.[1] The Act addressed historic problems with backroom deals and closed-door advisory groups dominated by select interest groups by instituting "a set of open government procedures"[2] for these committees. Collaborative conservation initiatives addressing public land management issues can be affected, and even impeded, by FACA. As a result, participants in such efforts, whether place- or policy-based, should be aware of this law and its requirements.

Many observers of and participants in the "collaborative movement" criticize FACA, arguing that it imposes an outdated and burdensome process on agency use of advisory committees. The time-consuming and bureaucratic process of getting chartered constrains and hinders what often are innovative efforts to achieve on-the-ground action in federal land management.[3] As a result, collaborative groups are seeking guidance on ways to involve agency personnel without running afoul of FACA.

According to the statute, FACA applies to advisory committees that are "established by" a federal agency or those that are established by someone else but "utilized by" the agency for advice. The phrase "utilized by" has been interpreted to mean that a group is either organized by or under the management control of the agency. According to legal scholars, there are a number of questions, or tests, that can be helpful in determining whether or not a collaborative group would be subject to FACA. These include:

- Does the group include individuals who are **not** employees of federal, state, tribal, or local government?
- How was the group (or particular meeting) initiated or organized? Specifically, was the group established by a federal agency?
- What is the function of the group? Is it providing advice or recommendations to the agency?
- Is the group subject to strict agency control?

Figure 3 (on the next page) illustrates how these questions fit together in a decision tree. To determine whether a group is subject to agency control, consider whether the agency appoints group members; the group receives agency funding; the agency sets the group's agenda; or the group answers directly to the agency.[4]

FACA may not be the obstacle to collaboration that it has been perceived to be. Collaborative groups can avoid coming into conflict with FACA and can continue to engage agency representatives in the process by maintaining their independence and ensuring an open, participatory process.

However, this decision tree presents a theoretical interpretation of FACA by legal scholars. At this time, federal agencies are not making decisions regarding FACA according to this diagram. Guidance from the Interior Solicitors' Office has led some agency personnel not to participate in collaborative efforts for fear of violating FACA.

If a collaborative group is subject to FACA, there are a number of requirements which include:

- a charter describing a committee's function, duration, members, duties, frequency of meetings, and costs;
- a designated federal employee to attend all meetings and to approve the agendas;
- notice of meetings must be published in the Federal Register and other appropriate venues; and
- meetings must be open to the public, and detailed minutes kept which are available for public review.[5]

FOOTNOTES

[1] For more information see: Reike, Elizabeth Ann. 1997. The Federal Advisory Committee Act, Rules and Executive Orders: Judicial Interpretations and Suggested Revisions. Natural Resources Law Center, University of Colorado School o f Law, Boulder, CO. Croley, Stephen P. 1996. Practical Guidance on the Applicability of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 10 Admin. L.J. 111, 156. Merigliano, Linda, and Edwin Krumpe. 1996. The Federal Advisory Committee Act: Implications for US Wilderness Management. *International Journal of Wilderness* Volume 1, Number 4.; Wondolleck, Julia, and Steven L. Yaffee. 1994. *Building Bridges Across Agency Boundaries: In Search of Excellence in the United States Forest Service.* (Ann Arbor, MI: School of Natural Resources and Environment, The University of Michigan.), a report to the USDA-Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station.

[2] Reike, p. 1.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Croley, 1996.

[5] Reike, 1997. Wondolleck, Julia, and Steven L. Yaffee. 1994.

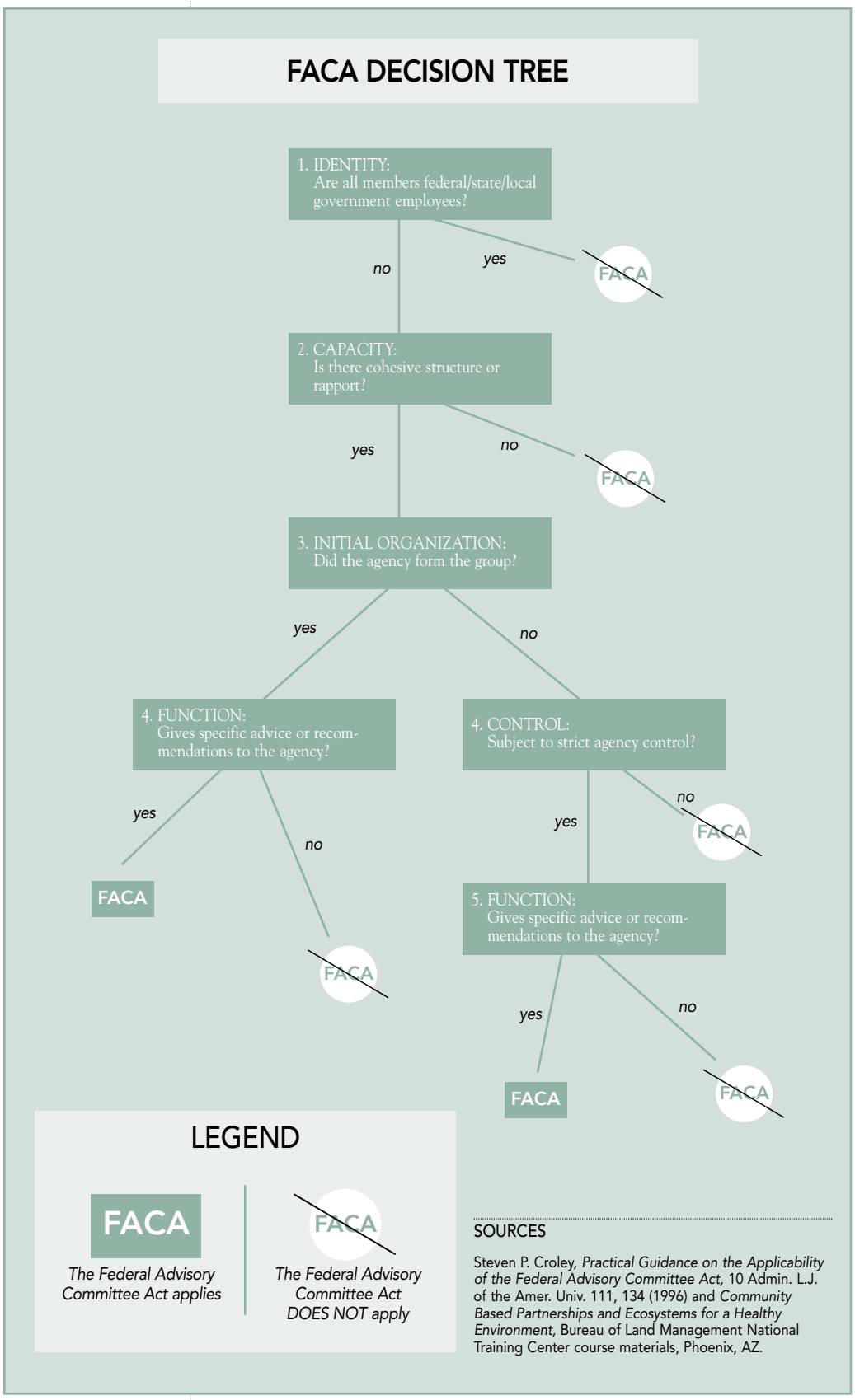

Figure 3. FACA Decision Tree

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