

## CHAPTER 15: WHY COLLABORATION AND ALTERNATIVES

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### I. INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

There are a variety of ways an individual can deal with environmental and natural resource issues they are concerned about. Individuals interviewed in our case studies chose to use collaborative processes involving diverse stakeholders. For non-agency participants, involvement in a collaborative partnership is often a deviation from more typical advocacy actions such as attending public hearings, lobbying, appealing agency decisions and even litigation. For agency participants, collaborative partnerships are a new input channel to assist with resource management and coordination with other stakeholders.

In order to understand why the number of collaborative partnerships are increasing throughout the country our research attempted to clarify why each individual has chosen this form of resource management and what they felt would have occurred had the partnership not formed. Those interviewed were asked, given all the options available to participate in natural resource decision-making, why they chose the collaborative approach. Secondly, they were asked what they believe would have occurred with the resource issues or problems had the partnership not formed.

The reasons why individuals have chosen to participate and what they felt would have occurred without the partnerships vary according to numerous factors. By analyzing the reasons why individuals chose to participate as well as what would have likely occurred, we hope to provide insights into the individuals' motives for choosing an alternative path to deal with issues and problems.

#### Why Collaboration? Summary of Core Findings

There were various responses individuals gave when asked why they chose to participate in a collaborative partnership. The reasons given generally fall into the following categories:

- Empowerment of stakeholders: The collaborative approach allowed their perspective to be heard by others, was a way to take action and to stay aware of activity.
- New strategy: The partnership provided a break from traditional strategies that were not effective and a different approach was appealing.
- Direct stake or responsibility in management of resource: Individuals had either a financial, legal or strong personal stake in the way the resource was managed.
- Coordination: To avoid duplicate work, accomplish more, and gain pooled knowledge individuals chose collaboration.
- Community building: Individuals wanted to improve relations, diffuse tensions, and get to know other members of the community.
- Threat of government action and/or lawsuit: Possible or imminent government regulation or lawsuit triggered participation.

## **Alternatives, Summary of Core Findings**

When participants were asked what they felt would have occurred with the resource issues and problems had the collaborative partnership not formed, they gave a large range of responses that tended to overlap. Responses generally fell into the following categories:

- Continuation of current management strategies
- Loss of holistic thinking and awareness toward issue
- Continued contentious atmosphere in community
- Government intervention would occur
- Increased harm to resource would have occurred

## **II. SPECIFIC FINDINGS: WHY COLLABORATION?**

### ***Empowerment of stakeholders***

Members of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, Three-Quarter Circle Ranch, Clark County HCP, Scott River CRMP, Northwest Resource Advisory Council, and Animas River Stakeholders Group partnerships mentioned some form of empowerment as a reason why they chose a collaborative approach to managing the natural resource issues. Empowerment can be found in a variety of ways. To some it means having their interests expressed and heard while for others it is a way to build knowledge of what is going on or to take action.

Having influence over the outcome was a driving force behind many members' choice to participate in a collaborative partnership. Local gold miner Ann Schrieber said the Clark County HCP gave her, "a voice to fight the agencies." Members of the Animas River Stakeholders Group felt the collaborative partnership was a way to enable the community to participate in the decision-making process at both the state and federal levels. Similarly, hunting outfitter Jim Allen a member of Three-Quarter Circle Ranch partnership concerned with wildlife management said: "Getting involved might provide a chance to influence policy and management trends on public lands."

The desire to ensure their interests or expertise was heard by the partnership was another form of empowerment that drove individual members to participate in collaborative processes. Dennis Hall is the Executive Director of Operation Future Association, a farmer's stakeholders alliance. When asked why Operation Future chose to participate in Darby Partnership, Hall stated, "They had their agricultural interests...and did not see anyone at the table that was really doing that." Similarly, Mark Zankel, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance participant and TNC representative noted: "This way we could provide input based on our understanding and areas of expertise and to look for opportunities to work together with the Alliance on various projects."

Troy Rarick, co-owner of a mountain bike store and member of the NW RAC, said the reason he got involved was "The age old answer, if you don't get involved, you can't complain when things don't go your way." On a different note, T. Wright Dickinson, Chair of the NW RAC, thought that it was the partnership that empowered each interest, "When you

get a diverse group together and agree on something it is a very powerful force to be reckoned with."

### *New strategy*

Many participants were driven to collaborate out of frustration. In general, they felt the top down management approach of agencies was not working, wanted to avoid litigation and were drawn by a different process and the prospects for innovative solutions to old problems.

Several members of the McKenzie Watershed Council were drawn to the collaborative process out of concern that current management strategies were not sufficient to protect the McKenzie River's pristine conditions. According to Louise Solliday, a member of the McKenzie Watershed Council, "There was growing recognition that the regulatory framework was not going to bring about recovery...People realized that we could no longer manage river systems as segments or agency interests, but needed to begin to manage whole systems."

The belief that the collaborative partnership model provided a novel approach and prospects for innovative solutions to resource management also drove participation. Ron Cunningham, an agency representative for Three-Quarter Circle Ranch chose the collaborative process because he felt the resource was his responsibility, "as well as a desire to do something innovative." Similarly, Bob Lanka, also a member of Three-Quarter Circle Ranch, said that given historically bad communication with landowners he wanted to "try something new."

Greg Sherman an environmental engineer and member of the Owl Mountain Partnership chose to collaborate, "To avoid lawsuits and public hearings...that don't come to successful fruition." Sherman also noted that lawsuits and public hearings did not work effectively and tended to "polarize the community" therefore making the collaborative approach more appealing. Similarly, Lisa Jo Frech from the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance stated, "You can accomplish a lot through litigation, but at what cost?"

Several members of Blackfoot Challenge, Owl Mountain Partnership as well as the NW RAC have the belief that the "standard top down approach" cannot work to solve the resource problems in their region. A new strategy of localized input was appealing to several members. Don Peach, Mayor of Rangle Colorado and Co-Chair of the NW RAC chose to participate because, "I always believed much better work comes from the grassroots up than decisions from D.C. or the state level." Greg Neudecker of USFWS and member of Blackfoot Challenge stated, "It is the future of natural resource management. Unless you get local people involved, you may win your battles but ultimately lose your war."

### *Direct stake or responsibility in management of resource*

Although nearly every participant interviewed had some stake in the resource being managed, certain individuals chose to highlight those stakes as reasons for choosing to participate in a collaborative partnership. Individuals' stakes ranged from direct financial

interest in the resource, to legal responsibility, to feeling personally vested in the protection of the resource.

Farmer and rancher members of Scott River CRMP were concerned with how the potential Coho listing would affect their businesses. A realtor and representative from DuPont chose to participate in the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance due to their direct financial interests within the watershed. Mike Terry from DuPont spoke about his company's stake in saying, "We do not have a right to work in the community, it is just a privilege so unless we meet the requirements of the community, we lose that privilege." Similarly, Weyerhaeuser's Barb Blackmore, a member of the McKenzie Watershed Council, spoke about her company's incentive. "I think for a long time we've felt as a company that we need the public support as our license to operate...if you don't have the public supporting you as a company, it's just a matter of time before you're litigating."

Several ranching members of Owl Mountain partnership also spoke of the economic benefit from projects on their land and education that choosing to collaborate has produced. Verl Brown a member of Owl Mountain Partnership said the education has led him to "change my grazing practices over the last five years" which has led to "more grass for my cattle and more grass for wildlife." Jack Haworth added that, "Our allotment was one of the first to have a project done on it." Furthermore, several members of Owl Mountain Partnership, including Haworth, felt it would have been more difficult to renew their BLM grazing permits without the partnership. According to Stephen Porter, a member of Owl Mountain Partnership, "The ranchers on Owl Mountain Partnership are ten steps ahead when it comes to range reform ...those members working to alleviate problems on their land will be the first not to lose their permits."

Finally, several agency participants mentioned their legal responsibility for the resource or the fact that they were assigned to the partnership as reasons for their participation. When asked why she chose to participate in the Darby Partnership, Melissa Horton from NRCS stated: "I was assigned and that was fine." Agency representatives involved in Three-Quarter Circle Ranch also felt involvement was part of their public land management duties. Fremont County Extension Agent Ron Cunningham gave "responsibility in dealing with land management issues" as one of his reasons for choosing to participate in Three-Quarter Circle Ranch. Jerry Jack from the BLM noted that he was hired specifically to work with Owl Mountain Partnership because, "We [BLM] are the big gorilla up there (in North Park, Colorado)."

### ***Coordination***

Individuals also felt they could get more accomplished, gain a more complete understanding of issues, and would avoid duplication of efforts by collaborating in a partnership. In particular participants from the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, Blackfoot Challenge, McKenzie Watershed Council, Darby Partnership, Three-Quarter Circle Ranch, and Owl Mountain Partnership all mentioned the need for coordination as a key element in their choice to participate.

Members of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance felt that they would be able to accomplish a great deal more by convening as a group. In the McKenzie Watershed Council, Dorothy Anderson of Eugene Water and Electric Board noted, "The community has recognized that working together is the way things are done in Eugene." Similarly, several members of the Darby Partnership felt it would be impossible to get things done without collaborating with other stakeholders. Teri Devlin from The Nature Conservancy and member of Darby Partnership stated, "When you have 560-square miles of land drained by a system, it is ludicrous to think you can do anything by yourself." Mary Ann Core of NRCS and also a member of Darby Partnership similarly noted that the region was too large for any one individual to handle: "Because it is such a big monster, nobody wants to take it on alone."

Another driving force for choosing to collaborate was avoiding the possibility of duplicating agency efforts. Freemont County Agent Ron Cunningham stated as one reason for his participation in Three-Quarter Circle Ranch that, "I think we are also interested in preventing duplication of efforts when multiple agencies are working with the same piece of land." Owl Mountain Partnership, Darby Partnership and Blackfoot Challenge members had similar sentiments. Cary Lewis, a rancher and member of Owl Mountain Partnership, stated, "I could see a big benefit to seeing all the agencies agree and channel their energies toward one line, one way of doing something, put them all into one and we can get more done more effectively."

### ***Community Building***

Several individuals chose to collaborate in order to promote a sense of community, improve relations with other stakeholders or diffuse conflicts surrounding the resource. One important factor that participants considered part of building community was building trust among the diverse stakeholders and with agency personnel.

Several agency representatives from Owl Mountain Partnership, Three-Quarter Circle Ranch and Scott River CRMP mentioned the reason they chose to collaborate was to build trust and credibility within the community for their agency. Stephen Porter a wildlife biologist with the Colorado Division of Wildlife and member of Owl Mountain Partnership stated, "Government is not well liked in rural communities. We need to change the way we do business. The goal over time is to build credibility." Similarly, BLM range conservationist and member of Three-Quarter Circle Ranch partnership Troy Packer noted, "agency folks out here (in Wyoming) are often regarded with a bit of suspicion and generally distrusted because of the regulation and rules that are often seen a threat to business. Getting involved with the community at an eye-to-eye level helps to build those relationships."

Dennis Hall from Ohio State University Extension and Executive Director of Operation Future Association said he is a member of Darby Partnership because, "I am interested in citizenship and developing people in the community and am an advocate of win-win perspectives." Similarly, Lisa Jo Frech, Executive Director of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance stated her reason for becoming involved: "I think that what we were able to accomplish in the long run is far greater because we have trust. There is not anybody that I would not call at the drop of a hat...I would not want it to be any other way."

Several individuals also mentioned the desire to quell a contentious atmosphere within the community and put things on a more personal level as reasons why they chose a collaborative process. Geoff Blackeslee, member of the NW RAC representing The Nature Conservancy said, "I think it is a great idea to bring together a variety of backgrounds. Instead of dealing with issues, you are dealing with human beings. Issues remain important, but dealing with a person on a human level allows you to provide dignity and self respect to individuals' positions." Mary Higginbotham, a schoolteacher who recently moved to Lander, Wyoming from California, saw an opportunity in the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch partnership "to simply get to know the community better."

### ***Threat of government action***

The threat or perceived threat of a government regulation such as the designation of a Superfund site or endangered species listing was also a force driving participation. Hank Goetz of the Blackfoot Challenge did not believe the government should be making decisions on land in the watershed when he stated: "We were not happy just sitting back and having the federal government and developers make decisions about our land." Greg Parsons of the Animas River Stakeholders Group added: "In addition to being counterproductive, a massive regulatory sweep of the area would not be realistic given the fact that state regulatory agencies do not have the resources to handle these problems."

In the Animas River Stakeholders Group and the Scott River CRMP the potential Superfund listing and Coho Salmon endangered species listing respectively triggered participation. In the Scott River CRMP case, participants felt a well functioning CRMP could deter federal regulators from handing down an economically detrimental regulation.

## **III. SPECIFIC FINDINGS: ALTERNATIVES**

### ***A continuation of current management strategies***

Many participants felt that, barring a collaborative approach, management of natural resource issues would have remained largely the same; with agencies promulgating regulations, limited public input and public hearings and lawsuits that caused polarization. Greg Parsons, member of the Animas River Stakeholders Group, described the traditional approach that would have continued in the Animas Valley: "Water Quality Control Division would gather data, show up in front of the Water Quality Control Commission and argue with parties who had enough money to be represented by lawyers and had an interest in terms of being represented. We would have had a few fights with Sunnyside Gold and a few comments from the county, but it would have been a battle. The battle would have been between us and the mining company, not the people who live in the valley. They would have no say."

Similar to Parsons, members of Owl Mountain Partnership, Darby Partnership, NW RAC and Three-Quarter Circle Ranch also felt traditional management strategies would have continued without the partnership's formation. Teri Devlin, member of Darby Partnership representing The Nature Conservancy, believes that agency personnel would continue their normal duties

of managing the resource: "I think a lot of the agency personnel would have done their jobs and will always do their job." Most members of the NW RAC had similar sentiments best expressed by Don Peach: "We would go through the usual process. The BLM has some good people, they are very professional, and they would come up with plans. There then would be public hearings with a lot of arguments on both sides, and no doubt, suits filed." Peach continued to say, "I think we have avoided much of that."

### *Loss of holistic thinking and awareness toward issue*

Collaborative partnerships often provide a holistic framework to deal with natural resource issues that allow greater awareness as well as coordination among various stakeholders. The loss of this framework of coordination and awareness was mentioned frequently when participants were asked what would have occurred had their partnership not formed.

Several participants felt that without this approach, issues would have been dealt with in a smaller, more incomplete forum. Kathy Smith, member of Darby Partnership representing NRCS, stated clearly, "Without the partnership things would not have been addressed on such a large scale." If the partnership had not formed Steve Feran, mining representative member of the Animas River Stakeholders Group, felt, "...a great deal of these issues would not have been answered as thoroughly." Stephen Porter a member of Owl Mountain Partnership representing the Colorado Division of Wildlife iterates similarly: "We would not have had such a large scale look at things."

According to a number of participants, the holistic framework set up by the collaborative partnership not only allowed for a more complete way to deal with issues, but also brought a greater overall understanding to the community. Increased awareness within the community augmented knowledge of stresses upon the resource. Many participants felt that greater overall awareness provided by the partnership would have been lacking without the collaborative forum. Tim Fox from the McKenzie Watershed Council believes that without the council, "An avenue of getting information out to people with an interest would have been lost and also having a voice of influence on those involved more directly in the issue...you get a lot of different perspectives on things that I don't think you'd get without it."

Nancy Stewart, from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and member of Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, had similar thoughts regarding the ability of the community to receive more complete information. "The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance serves to bring things to people's attention that might not have gotten there as readily. Because it is so diverse, they are getting input and drawing many minds together. The public would have been less informed and involved. NWA has also provided a forum for issues that may not have been there otherwise." Melissa Horton who represents the NRCS on the Darby Partnership plainly stated that because of the partnership, "there has been an increased amount of public awareness of the resource, and its quality."

Increased coordination was an additional benefit of the holistic framework that may have been lost without collaboration. In the words of Jim Stone, local rancher and Chairman of the Blackfoot Challenge: "Without the Challenge we would just be out there all by ourselves

trying to make a living. We would never have utilized the resources available like agency expertise." George Grier also noted the frustration from lack of coordination felt prior to the McKenzie Watershed Council's formation: "We had all the stuff we needed to be making more informed decisions about the health of the river, but no one was talking about it or could even view it."

### ***Continued contentious atmosphere in community***

Several members of the Darby Partnership, Blackfoot Challenge and Nanticoke Watershed Alliance expressed that without their partnerships, the contentious atmosphere within their community would have continued or degraded. Participants highlighted current or possible litigation to exemplify the contentious atmosphere within the community. Lisa Jo Frech, Executive Director of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance demonstrated the point: "We would have gone through litigation. Some people would have stepped up to the plate and accomplished a thing or two and then would have burnt out. They would have been bitter and resentful but would still be in the watershed. It would be hard to find replacements for them. We would win a couple battles and lose a couple of battles but overall it would just be bloody."

Other collaborative partnership members thought that, without the partnership, there would have been the potential for more stakeholder frustration and unrest. Richard Clough of Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and member of the Blackfoot Challenge noted: "Without a formal organization to handle these natural resource issues, there would have been more potential for issues to blow up whereas the Challenge attempted to handle these issues on an ongoing basis before they become contentious." Melissa Horton a member of Darby Partnership added similarly, "...a lot of people would have been frustrated in and around the stream. Many landowners were frustrated with all the loops with rules and regulations that they needed to jump through. I think [the partnership] simplified it for them."

### ***Government intervention would occur***

Individuals within the Owl Mountain Partnership, Animas River Stakeholders Group and Clark County HCP highlighted the fact that they felt there would have been some sort of government intervention had the partnership not formed. In each of these three cases, the participants felt government intervention would have been negative and these partnerships presented an improved alternative for their interests.

The most obvious alternative that came to the mind of several members of the Animas River Stakeholders Group was Superfund designation. Several of the landowners referred to Superfund designation as the "monster." The Upper Animas Basin was very high on the EPA's list of potential sites and the possibility of designation still remains. According to participant, Peter Butler, also former representative of the Friends of the Animas River and current member of the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission: "There would have been more impetus for the EPA to designate the site as a Superfund site using Superfund money and I think it would have been disastrous. There is already a great deal of antagonism

in the area towards government agencies and to be honest, I am not sure that they know what ought to be done."

Members in the Clark County HCP expressed similar opinions. As ORV representative Mark Trinko states, "any federally imposed decision [that did not include all of us] would have been unenforceable...any law handed down would have been ludicrous."

***Increased harm to the resource would have occurred***

Participants in the McKenzie Watershed Council and the Owl Mountain Partnership believed the natural resource would not have been as well off had the partnership not formed. McKenzie Watershed Council members agreed that, if it were not for the formation of the watershed council, development would have continued in a way that was harmful to the watershed. Local resident Pat Thompson, highlighted this point: "Without [the partnership], encroachment of the development on the watershed would have had a detrimental effect. I don't think that water quality would have been maintained." Without the Owl Mountain Partnership, Verl Brown thought the benefits the projects had for the resource would have been lost. Brown mentioned one particular case, Hebron Sloughs, as an example: "We would not have done some good projects, such as the Hebron Sloughs, which have been very good for the land health."

## CHAPTER 16: OUTCOMES

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### I. INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

Outcomes of collaborative partnerships are often difficult to measure, and our ten collaborative partnerships were no different. Individuals interviewed for the case studies had various responses when asked about outcomes and achievements that resulted from their partnership.

In order to understand what participants felt were some of the most important outcomes of their partnership, we began by asking what they thought was their greatest achievement of their collaborative partnership. Other questions, such as what kind of projects the partnership accomplished were also asked to several members to gauge the nature of outcomes. For several cases we also used other sources such as videos and written documentation to learn about various outcomes. There are a wide variety of achievements possible from collaborative partnerships, many of which are not tangible using traditional measures. By analyzing these achievements, we hope to provide insight into the range and variation of outcomes that can result from a collaborative approach to resource management.

#### Outcomes: Summary of Core Findings

Outcomes from the ten collaborative partnerships analyzed in this report fell into four general categories:

- Ability to build relationships and community
- Capacity for increased education, awareness and information gathering and exchange
- Implementation of on-the-ground conservation achievements
- Development of policy-based advice and resource management plans

### II. SPECIFIC FINDINGS: OUTCOMES

#### *Ability to build relationships and community*

Relationship and community building was mentioned in each of the case studies. This entails a variety of aspects including individuals coming together from diverse often adversarial positions to work together, being good neighbors, building trust, to coordination among stakeholders and sticking together as a group.

Individuals coming together from adversarial positions and competing interests to a point where they are working together to find common ground was mentioned as an outcome in the NW RAC, Owl Mountain Partnership, Scott River CRMP and Clark County HCP. Local gold miner Ann Schrieber, a member of Clark County HCP spoke about how competing interests have begun to work together: "This is going to sound crazy to you, but the most

important achievement I saw was that a group of people walked into a room hating each other's guts and ready to slit each other's throats...and now if you were to come visit those meetings and say something against the plan we've come up with, you're apt to get eaten up by both sides." Don Peach, Mayor of Rangle Colorado and member of the NW RAC, said the greatest achievement was, "Getting disparate groups together and appreciate other people's points of view." Similarly, Greg Sherman an environmental engineer and member of the Owl Mountain Partnership stated the most important achievement was, "that all members of the group can talk amongst one another openly. BLM can talk to USFS which is almost never heard of. Ranchers can talk to their BLM representative. It's trust."

Several partnerships spoke about the building of trust among members as an outcome. Darrell Sall, former participant in the Blackfoot Challenge, summarized the feelings of many participants when he stated, "[The group] has built a lot of trust with the people of the valley. It has taught us to work together and collaborate for the improvement of the land."

Members of the Blackfoot Challenge and Three-Quarter Circle Ranch spoke about the partnership and its connection to the immediate community. Roger Marshall, a Plum Creek Timber Company representative on the Blackfoot Challenge, stated, "The Blackfoot Challenge is an opportunity for Plum Creek to remain in contact with its neighbors...to work with them on projects that protect the environment, wildlife, and water resource." Tony Malmberg, landowner and participant in Three-Quarter Circle Ranch said similarly, "We've tried to align our management efforts with the forces of nature, and we reach out to our community to help us achieve those objectives. We also believe the best way we can be a good neighbor and practice sound environmental management is to maintain a profitable business."

Part of the relationship and community building that a member of Blackfoot Challenge highlighted was coordination amongst stakeholders. Rich Clough of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks stated, "The Challenge has provided the opportunity to meet and keep in touch with lots of people and to coordinate with other agencies about some of the efforts necessary to maintain what we have in the valley."

Another form of relationship and community building mentioned by a participant as an outcome was the fact that the group has stuck together for so long. Marc Smith, of the Ohio EPA, a member of Darby Partnership since its inception in 1991, said the greatest achievement was, "sticking together and continuing to work at getting everybody at the table and the process."

### ***Capacity for increased education, awareness and information gathering and exchange***

Members of Owl Mountain Partnership, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, Three-Quarter Circle Ranch, Blackfoot Challenge, Darby Partnership, McKenzie Watershed Council and Scott River CRMP all spoke of increased education, awareness of resource issues and information gathering as an outcome of their partnership.

Verl Brown, a ranching member of Owl Mountain Partnership, spoke in detail about how educational opportunities of the partnership allowed him to improve habitat on his land. "The main value to me which did not cost anything at all," Brown said, "was the education on grazing practices. I have changed my grazing practices over the last five years and it has worked so well. I have more grass for my cattle, more grass for the elk. That has been the biggest asset to me, the education." Kathy Smith, a NRCS representative on the Darby Partnership noted similarly, "The education of those in the watershed and even myself [has been a great benefit]. I have learned a lot going through the process."

The various techniques used by groups to educate members of the partnership and the community at large were mentioned by members as substantial outcomes themselves. Newsletters, brochures, booklets, field trips and workshops were some of the techniques mentioned by participants. McKenzie Watershed Council used a newspaper insert, a forum on water quality, and information booth at a county fair, while Darby Partnership produced *The Darby Book* and other brochures to educate the public in its watershed.

Participants in Blackfoot Challenge, Three-Quarter Circle Ranch and Darby Partnership spoke about three unique educational opportunities that resulted from the partnership. According to Greg Neudecker of USFWS, "Last year we [Blackfoot Challenge] put together a week long water education workshop for teachers. It has changed their lives in the way that they look at the valley and how they will teach their children about the valley's watershed." In Three-Quarter Circle Ranch a program was developed that brings 'city folk' to the property to ride the range and live the ways of the West. Furthermore, a grade school science class also uses the ranch as a laboratory for environmental experiments.

Members of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance spoke of several educational events the group has implemented. In 1998, the Alliance conducted a series of public meetings to disseminate the highlights of a boat traffic study they helped assist with. They have also developed a web-site, *Conservation Directory*, lawn care educational pamphlets and a quarterly newsletter in order to educate the public within the watershed. In addition to those educational techniques and events, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance members host a two-week educational program called *Diary of a River* for gifted students that covers the issues that pertain to the watershed.

The Darby Partnership has used canoe trips in the Darby Creek as an educational opportunity. Canoe trips often paired a farmer or non-agency individual with an agency representative in order to build mutual understanding. Teri Devlin, The Nature Conservancy representative on Darby Partnership, spoke about the canoe trips: "At a very personal level to get a farmer in a canoe with a regional planner, normal relationships that would not normally occur happen on the canoe trip and it is happening in the habitat...it is very powerful."

### ***Implementation of on-the-ground conservation achievements***

There was a wide-ranging list of on-the-ground achievements realized by partnerships. Participants in Three-Quarter Circle Ranch, Animas River Stakeholders Group, McKenzie

Watershed Council, Blackfoot Challenge, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, Scott River CRMP, Darby Partnership and Owl Mountain Partnership offer excellent examples.

Projects undertaken by several collaborative partnerships included: fencing of sensitive areas, planting to improve stream bank stabilization, clean-up days on the stream, bird inventories and other restoration and conservation events. Owl Mountain Partnership is an example of a partnership that has spent a good deal of time and effort on projects. Examples include: high tensile hay stacks, realigning fences, irrigation projects, soil studies, various bird inventories, reseeding projects and sagebrush treatment. Stephen Porter, member of Owl Mountain Partnership said, "We have done more projects in that community in the last five years of the partnership than in all the twenty years I've been there combined."

The Blackfoot Challenge has also been involved with a variety of projects. Projects undertaken by Blackfoot Challenge include: fencing stream banks to reduce erosion, cutting and planting willow shoots for bank stabilization, removal of fish passage barriers and protecting irrigation structures from erosion. One project highlighted by Land Linbergh was weed control: "Weed control got the group into the minds and hearts of landowners because it was easy for landowners to see the critical importance of a coordinated approach to taking on the problem." The McKenzie Watershed Council also implemented various projects including compiling a GIS database, establishing a water quality monitoring network in the valley as well as a fish and wildlife habitat evaluation. Furthermore, bank stabilization, joint data collection and water monitoring projects were all outcomes discussed by members of Scott River CRMP.

Similar to the McKenzie Watershed Council, the Animas River Stakeholders Group and Nanticoke Watershed Alliance have developed water quality monitoring programs. The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance has also assisted with a boat traffic study and several clean-up days that help to bring partnership members and the community at-large together. In addition to the water quality monitoring program, the Animas River Stakeholders Group has been involved with implementing and assisting with remediation activities.

The health of the ecosystem and/or economy were mentioned by participants in Darby Partnership and Three-Quarter Circle Ranch as outcomes of their partnership. In Three-Quarter Circle Ranch the economic benefits include an increased beef production and lowered cost of production while the ecological benefits have been an increase in biodiversity and protection of riparian habitat. Teri Devlin, member of Darby Partnership said, "The Darby is still very healthy, that is our greatest accomplishment. Now how you tie that to the partnership work becomes ephemeral in some areas because some of the things that keeps the Darby healthy would have occurred anyway. Although, I guarantee having that amount of resource expertise and focus going on helped to keep the Darby healthy."

### ***Development of policy-based advice and resource management plans***

Members of NW RAC, Clark County HCP and McKenzie Watershed Council mentioned policy-based advice and plans as outcomes from their partnership. The NW RAC only deals with policy-based advice in its capacity as an advisory board to the BLM. They have worked

on BLM Recreation and Fire Management Guidelines as well as providing input into wilderness reviews.

Comparatively, McKenzie Watershed Council has provided advice urging agency restoration projects and recommending specific testimony and comments for draft environmental impact statements. Another policy-based plan was the Clark County Multi-species HCP, currently in the final stages of approval.

## CHAPTER 17: ENSURING REPRESENTATION

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### I. INTRODUCTION

#### **Overview**

The issue of representation---or who is at the table---is one of the first consequential issues that a collaborative group must address. It is the question of who comprises a collaborative partnership and the factors that a group must consider and weigh when developing representative structure. Indeed, there are inevitable trade-offs that groups must make: such as whether to involve more versus less stakeholders; at what level (individuals or organizations); or if the process will be open or limited. In turn, these choices affect the group's reach, credibility and ability to work in a productive and efficient manner.

Given wide variation in objective, issue focus, geographic location, community culture, and organizational structure among collaborative partnerships there is, not surprisingly, no magical formula for achieving perfect representation nor a single representation template that can be applied to all groups. As environmentalist Felice Pace of the Scott River Coordinated Resource Management plan states, "You just have to muddle though [the representation issue]. You can never guarantee it will be perfect. I only suggest that the bottom line be that the door be left open for democracy to function. And that should be both ways --- if someone wants to walk out, they should be allowed to do so as well." Indeed, we found that the groups we studied recognized and struggled with the issue of representation, asking similar questions of themselves and weighing the advantages and the disadvantages of different approaches to their objective. Ron Cunningham of the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch Coordinated Resource Management Group notes, "We need to remember that dealing with representation is different in every situation. There is no cookbook for it. There are no two ranches alike, no two families alike, and no two communities alike. You kind of have to feel your way as you go." Additionally, the representative composition of groups tended to vary over time as the groups learned, gained credibility, and their issues and objectives evolved. John Allen of the McKenzie Watershed Council observes, "Over time there's been continual concern over [having] the right people at the table. But you have to remember that representation is an evolutionary thing...over time, as issues mature and change, you realize that somebody should be there that is not. Some partners have dropped out completely because they realized their stakes weren't that large. It should be an expected and dynamic process that representation will change over time, and we've got to work with that."

#### **Summary of Core Findings**

The following is a summary of the core issues and strategies case study groups encountered when developing their own representational structure, as well as advice they offered to others considering similar issues.

## *Core Issues and Strategies*

### **1. Identifying stakeholders**

Groups struggled with how to identify stakeholders among multiple groups of similar interest, dual roles, and variation in commitment and ability to work together.

#### **Strategies**

- Sought out community leaders
- Had groups choose among themselves
- Held public workshops to explain and disseminate information, consequently attracting participants

### **2. Balancing strength of representation**

Groups worked to determine sufficient levels of representation for all interests, so that one group or interest did not dominate the process.

#### **Strategies**

- Active recruitment
- Targeted and defined goals to narrow stakeholder concerns
- Formal representation

### **3. Improving access to the process**

Groups grappled with altering the structure, timing and form of partnerships to help participants engage more fully in the collaborative process.

#### **Strategies**

- Developed flexible meeting structures
- Used working groups
- Paid attention to convenience (meals, meeting locations)

### **4. Overcoming distrust**

Groups strove to overcome distrust among agencies, environmental groups, landowners and citizens. This distrust affected the willingness of some individuals to participate in collaborative processes.

#### **Strategies**

- Used a facilitator
- Adjusted the agency role
- Engaged in relationship-building activities

#### **Advice**

- **Maintain an open process**  
*Keeping partnerships open to all interested parties is imperative to the integrity of the collaborative process.*

- **Realize that perfect representation is ideal but not always possible**  
*Groups should aim to maximize sufficient representation but also realize that cultural and resource restriction can limit representation goals.*
- **Involve capable and committed individuals**  
*Involving those individuals with the necessary skills and capability to participate in collaborative processes is imperative to the functionality of a group.*
- **Realize that representation is a dynamic and evolutionary process**  
*Understand that the issue of representation in collaborative groups is not static, but rather will change in accordance with evolving group objectives and stakeholder concerns.*

## I. CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

### 1. Identifying stakeholders

#### *Challenges*

All groups struggled with the process of identifying stakeholders when confronted with challenges of:

- Choosing among multiple representatives of a single interest;
- Separating dual roles and responsibilities of participants; and
- Finding capable and committed people to work together

#### **Choosing among multiple interests**

Choosing a representative among multiple interests was a challenge among most groups. In the case of McKenzie Watershed Council, for example, former member and landowner George Grier describes the challenge of having too many groups representing one interest: "It's hard to find someone who has enough support from all the local organizations that also have different missions. There are over 100 resident associations and many factional interests, so it's impossible for the council to provide seats for all of them." Coordinator John Runyon adds, "[Getting one person to represent a constituency] sounds good in theory, but doesn't always work in practice. It's a fine line between working on a representation basis and opening it up to a broader range of folks and bringing them in."

Similarly, the Clark County Habitat Conservation Planning process (HCP) initially grappled with choosing among multiple off-road vehicle user groups to be on its Steering Committee. Mark Trinko comments that it was at times "impossible" to make fine distinctions between more radical albeit similar recreational interest groups. Indeed, the same held true for environmental organizations, such as the Sierra Club, who have resisted joining collaborative processes for fear of losing their identity through association with other environmental organizations.

### **Separating dual roles**

Separating dual roles was also a challenge to identifying stakeholders. This was particularly evident in the Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council (NW CO RAC). As representative of The Nature Conservancy Geoff Blakeslee states, "I am in the environmental category in terms of my job but I am also involved in the cattle industry." National Wildlife Federation representative Cathie Zarlingo voices similar concern: "If there is anything I would look into changing, it's making environmental and conservation concerns more separate. In fact, I think they can be very different. An environmental group may look at me and say, 'well, she is not really representing our constituents,' and that is probably true." Sierra Club member Clee Sealing, who attends RAC meetings complains that this confusion further jades the representative selection process: "Our coordinator is choosing representatives for the RAC who are elected officials and also own ranches. In fact, he owns a cattle operation and BLM decisions impact his land tremendously." In the same vein, several participants in the McKenzie Watershed Council mentioned 'wearing more than one hat,' with both organizational and personal interests fundamentally intertwined. Tony Cheng, a doctoral student studying the McKenzie, captures the strain involved in separating categories of stakeholders or interests: "It eats up so much of people's energy to discuss who you represent, what hat you wear, what you are and are not allowed to say and do, as if your interests are divisible."

### **Finding capable and committed individuals**

Finally, finding the few individuals with the right skills for working in collaborative environments made identifying stakeholders challenging. Ann Schrieber, a local miner participating in the Clark County HCP process remarks, "It's really the people on this thing that have made it work. It could be a totally different ball game if we didn't have the folks we have that are able to work with each other." Sari Sommarstrom, former coordinator of the Scott River CRMP agrees: "You have to have people on these groups willing to work in the consensus process...and it's not always easy to find them." George Grier of the McKenzie Watershed Council adds: "It's tough to find someone who's militant enough to not take any guff but still centered enough to keep their cool. [Participants] need to be able to establish a trusting relationship with the farmers---in other words, those people who see your organization as trying to undermine six generations of [their way of life]."

### ***Strategies***

Strategies used among groups to help identify stakeholders were:

- Representative self-selection; and
- Considering individuals, not just interest groups

### **Representative self-selection**

Self-selection refers to multiple groups of similar interests choosing an individual to voice their concerns as a whole. In the case of the Clark County Habitat Conservation Planning process, representative self-selection was used to help identify a representative for many off-road vehicle stakeholder groups. Bureau of Land Management representative Sid Sloan recalls Clark County officials going directly to interest group leaders and requesting them to

identify suitable representatives: "Given western culture here, folks operate better over a cup of coffee and a personal invitation than they do with a formal letter...so we went out there, met with the groups, and had them make the decision on their own." Jim Moore, The Nature Conservancy representative of the same group further elaborates: "It's imperative that you contact folks with standing in those communities and really pick their brains like we did. Then get them to choose among themselves in terms of who they would like to participate. Otherwise, you get too many bodies at the table."

### **Considering individuals, not just interests**

Many groups also directly sought participation of community leaders. In the case of The McKenzie Watershed Council, the group requested participation of individual community leaders who they felt could work effectively and collaboratively in the group. According to former environmental representative Louise Solliday, "There was a real effort to find individuals who were respected in the broader stakeholder arena and who represent a broader community than just their own organization."

## **2. Balancing Strength of Representation**

Nine case studies cited balancing strength of representation of stakeholder groups as a challenge to ensuring representation. In particular, participants noted the importance of greater involvement on the part of citizens, landowners, and environmentalists while others felt it was important to clearly define and, in some cases, limit the role of agencies. It should be mentioned that the role of agencies was of particular concern among participants in our research in part because of the strong government role in three cases: namely, the Clark County Habitat Conservation Planning process, Three-Quarter Coordinated Resource Management Group, and the NW CO RAC.

### ***Challenges***

#### **Involving Environmentalists**

The presence of environmentalists at the table was considered vitally important yet not as strong as most participants would have liked. This was attributed in part to the limited time and financial resources available to environmental organizations to be part of the growing number of collaborative efforts across the country. Indeed, some participants felt that environmental groups were, in general, focused more on crisis issues and could not afford to be a part of time-consuming collaborative groups. In the case of Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, for example, ranch owner Tony Malmberg has been unable to bring environmental organizations to the table despite consistent effort: "I've asked environmental groups to participate many times," Malmberg recalls "but they always say no thanks, pat me on the back, and tell me I'm doing a great job." Similarly, Jack Terry of the Owl Mountain Partnership states, "We tried to get [environmentalists] to come that should be there. We had no problems with livestock and business interests, but we sure had one hell of a time getting anyone to step forward from the environmental community." Greg Sherman an environmental representative in the Owl Mountain Partnership believes large environmental organizations perceive the cost of participation as "an unwise use of funds when objectives

may be compromised [in a collaborative process]." Finally, George Grier, formerly a member of the McKenzie Watershed describes the absence of environmental representation in collaborative groups: "There is a general perception, right or wrong, that if you're an environmental organization, collaboration is a dirty word and you need to be out there being more of an activist, putting out fires and taking no prisoners."

### **Increasing Citizen and Landowner Participation**

Participants also noted the need to maximize citizen and landowner participation in their collaborative processes. In the Darby Partnership, for example, coordinator Teri Devlin recognized the trade-offs involved in giving participation a backseat to accomplishing group objectives: "[The group's] greatest need now is to become more citizen-based. The landowners kind of got put over on the side [of the process] because we were just steam-rolling our way to getting things done. Now as soon as you have funding or resources removed from those involved agencies, what have we got? What I think Darby [Partnership] can show is that if you don't start with citizen-based involvement, down the road you may end up with nothing [after agencies leave the process]." Similarly, the McKenzie Watershed Council is concerned with balancing representation of landowners in its process. As landowner George Grier of the McKenzie Watershed Council notes, "If the mix [of our participants] is deficient in any way, it's deficient by not having enough private landowners or folks who aren't agency reps or elected officials. For now, we are perceived as a Eugene group coming [up river] to dominate the lives of landowners, [and that could really limit our effectiveness]."

Finally, the Owl Mountain Partnership exemplifies the need to increase participation of citizen and city government officials in its process. Dennis Hall, a representative from the Ohio State Extension Office notes, "Increasingly, [these individuals] are important [to our collaborative process] and I do not think we have done the job there in terms of bringing that perspective in. Only in hindsight do our participants recognize the fact that the partnership has not worked as hard as it should to get [these] missing factions involved."

### **Managing agency roles**

The need to manage agency involvement was prevalent in a number of studies. While agency openness to collaboration brought useful technical input to a number of collaborative partnerships, participants expressed concern that their role could become dominant. Group issue focus and amount of public land involved and were key factors determining the level of agency participation. In the case of Three-Quarters Ranch CRM---located on a 33,000 acres mix of public and private property---Jim Wiles notes "the large size and cattle-grazing focus of [the CRM] lends itself to a high level of agency participation." Moreover," he adds, "agency interests tend to dovetail in terms of goals and interests, which can augment their presence on particular issues like wildlife protection or grazing rights." Similarly, off-highway vehicle representative Mark Trinko in the Clark County HCP process felt "heavily outnumbered" by the number of agencies involved in tortoise protection on public lands. "Sometimes I'd look around the round the room and see forty of them and only one or two of us [ORV user group representatives]," Trinko recounts. "That can be damn intimidating."

Finally, economic concerns on public land played a role in bringing agencies to the table. In Scott River Valley CRMP, for example, farmers and local land conservation agencies combined to maximize the number of participants they could bring to the process when they sensed the possibility of influencing outcomes. As Sari Sommarstrom remarks, "they thought that by loading the process with representatives, they could somehow alter [the process]."

### **Evolution of membership**

Lastly, dealing with changing membership was a factor two groups dealt with. In contrast to the common view of membership as static in some of the literature on collaboration, coordinator John Runyon of the McKenzie Watershed Council describes the process of maintaining group participation as an evolving factor: "Over time there's been continual concern over [having] the right people at the table. I think [participation] is an evolutionary thing...over time as issues mature and change, you realize that somebody should be there that's not. Some partners have dropped out completely because they realized their stakes weren't that large. It should be expected that representation is a dynamic process and will change over time."

Likewise, analysis of the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM showed how the structure of public land agency representation can influence turnover in the collaborative process. Because resource agency personnel undergo regional rotations, a representative may form a working relationship with a group, only to be assigned to another area some months later. As Tony Malmberg of the CRM remarks, this factor is a "representation wildcard that can make or break a group, particularly in a small community where there are few folks to work with and tight relationships."

Finally, keeping part-time summer residents up to date and involved in collaborative partnerships, particularly in rural areas, is a mounting task that a number of groups felt was important. As Animas Stakeholder Group member and EPA representative Carol Russell summarizes, "These members go away for six months, come back, and are anxiety ridden over the sweeping changes that the group has made without knowing the full context of those decisions." "Moreover, she adds, "when they are away, they do not keep up with the group."

## ***Strategies***

### **Active recruitment**

In order to balance representation, a number of groups used active recruitment to bring needed skills and interests to the table. This strategy is best illustrated by the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, the Clark County HCP process, and the Nanticoke Partnership. In the case of Nanticoke, Executive Director Lisa Jo Frech describes the basis of this approach. "I never let myself think for one minute that absolutely everyone is at the table because there are always new organizations and businesses sprouting up---There is always someone who should be there who is not on your list." Similarly, in the Clark County HCP process, a specific effort was made by the Clark County government to hold rural community public information sessions to solicit community interest. In addition, meetings were kept open to all interests to encourage representation. Facilitator Paul Seltzer notes "our meetings have

always been public and advertised and anyone who bellied up to the bar can say whatever they wanted."

Perhaps most effective among interviewees was the one-on-one effort of coordinators. Tony Malmberg, coordinator of the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM exemplifies this best by identifying needed expertise or constituent interests and continually seeking to broaden involvement through personal invitations to potential participants over a cup of coffee.

### **Targeting goals / defining expectations**

Targeting group goals and defining the expectations and parameters of concern for groups also helped bring the right stakeholders to the table. Mark Zankel of Nanticoke notes that by building his group's efforts on tangible projects, people were attracted to the group by its success. He states, "Having a clear agenda that defines what kind of commitment you want from people is helpful. Everyone [in the resource management field] is so busy that, if you're asked to get involved in something, it's important to know what you are going to get out of it. [Also], success really sells. So accomplish things and show people what you have done. People are often initially hesitant to get involved but once they see something up and running they do not want to miss the boat or be out of the loop." Jim Wiles, a partner and ranch owner in the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch also felt focusing the group's activities on specific goals helped tremendously: "We spent the first year of meetings on our goals without taking any action. [That's] particularly important with landowner initiated processes like CRM, in which you need to map out where you're going from the beginning. Otherwise, these [collaborative efforts] end up all over the show with everyone under the sun involved." The Scott River CRMP took similar action. According to former-coordinator Sari Sommarstrom, "it took three years to formulate our first steps and get everyone up to speed," time she feels helped strengthen awareness and involvement that were also critical to broadening representation.

### **Formal representation**

Formal representation was used by two groups to manage multiple stakeholders and improve their opportunity to be heard in the process. In the case of McKenzie Watershed Council, a "representational strategy" was used such that each member represented a larger constituency. According to former environmental representative Louise Solliday, "There was a recognition that the table would otherwise get so big that you can't get anything done." In the words of George Grier, this also "prevented over-representation of a particular interest at the table."

In the Clark County HCP process, a formal legal representative was hired to represent rural concerns. According to participants, this decision helped tremendously to alleviate fears on the part of rural constituents. As local miner Ann Schrieber recalls, "we felt we would have otherwise been taken advantage of because we didn't always understand the technical language [used on the Steering Committee]. Having a legal representative changed all that."

### **3. Access to Process**

Access to partnerships in our cases was influenced by how the process was organized. In particular, frequency, timing, and location of meetings posed specific challenges to participants facing limited time and financial resources.

#### ***Challenges***

##### **Meeting structure**

Meeting times and length were key factors that many groups struggled with to make participation more convenient for participants. In the Clark County HCP process, nine-hour meetings made ensuring representation a constant challenge. Rural participants, in particular, drove 140 miles round-trip to attend meetings. Rural representative Ann Schrieber noted that this inconvenience resulted in low representation in the process from surrounding rural communities.

##### **Financial resources**

Whether or not participants were paid to take part in collaborative processes also created a challenge to participation. For example, Mark Trinko of the Clark County HCP process commented that he had to give up a full day's work to attend meetings. Likewise, in the Animas Stakeholder Group, environmentalist Mike Black vented that "it really ticked [him] off" that he was "one of the only people not getting paid." Outfitter Jim Allen of the Three-Quarter Ranch CRM explains that agencies encourage being part of CRM processes but attributes this in part to the fact that they are receiving salaries to participate: "I look around the room and all I see are paychecks....Paycheck, paycheck, paycheck! And when it comes to the rest of us there are none. Not only is that discouraging, I think it also limits whether agencies are willing to take the risks needed to explore innovative strategies since they don't have to put as much on the line. Commitment of time and energy required for these things is not going to work out in the long run without providing those resources."

##### **Cultural barriers**

Finally, the culture of a community can limit access. As Bob Lanka, a former Wyoming Department of Fish and Wildlife representative on the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM remarks, "while the CRMs I've been involved in have been useful, in the setting of ranch life there has to be some careful calculation between idealizing the [collaborative] process and the realities of time required to make a living as a rancher."

#### ***Strategies***

In response to issues of access to collaborative partnerships, efforts were made by a number of groups to make meetings more convenient for the general public by:

- Keeping the process flexible;
- Alternating meeting structure; and
- Improving convenience

### **Flexible structure**

Adjusting the structure of meetings was used by a number of groups to increase participation. In the case of Animas River Stakeholder Group, coordinator Bill Simon claims their "loose structure" has fostered a higher and more consistent level of involvement because [participants] feel that [they] can jump in at anytime. Mining representative Larry Perino further points out that "This has resulted in a slower process, but it has been well worth it." Similarly, the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch has shaped its bi-annual meeting structure around the calving and wintering season of local ranchers in order to ensure convenience for ranchers.

### **Use of working groups**

Breaking larger collaborative groups into smaller units in order to improve access to citizens is another strategy used to improve access. In the Animas River Valley, for example, a Library Series was developed in an effort to form a friendly and non-intimidating forum to educate locals, out-of-town lay people and part-time residents coming and going from the process about the latest activities of the group. Discussion centers on current issues of the collaborative group and served to clarify information without having to be present at the more formal and sometimes contentious regular meetings. As facilitator Bill Simon points out, "The thought was and still is that people may be very interested but not want to participate in the political debate that stakeholder meetings encourage." For convenience, meetings are also scheduled during the summer and right before regular meetings so participants could stay or go if they as they wished. Similarly, the Clark County HCP process and Scott River CRMP also use less formal working groups to address specific issues.

### **Meal provision**

In a number of groups, providing meals at either regular meetings or social events was considered critical to improving access and participation in the process. In the Clark County HCP for example, ample funding allowed Clark County government to provide meals at meetings. According to Mark Trinko, "not having to leave the table for a meal or pay for them made huge difference in our attitudes towards the amount of time discussions required, and it gave us a crucial social experience as well."

### **Taking turns**

Finally, creating rules for allowing all to speak at meetings was a basic strategy that enhanced access. In the case of McKenzie Watershed Group, a 'round-robin' approach was used at meetings to go around the room giving everyone equal designated time and opportunity to speak their mind about the issue at hand. Similarly, with the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, the group chairperson is rotated on a regular basis depending on the knowledge of the individual and the current focus of the group. Coordinator Tony Malmberg notes that this allows everyone equal opportunity to take on leadership as well as understand the requirements of what it takes to make the CRM process work.

#### **4. Building Trust**

Groups struggled with distrust of government involvement as well as internal trust issues among partnership members in the Owl Mountain Partnership, The Animas Stakeholder Group, NW Colorado RAC, Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, and the Scott River CRMP.

##### ***Challenges***

##### **Relationship between agencies and rural participants**

Groups dealt with a cultural divide between agencies and rural communities when trying to build trust. In the Owl Mountain Partnership, Stephen Porter comments that "county officials have extreme distrust for federal and state governments" whom they see as "promoters" of collaborative processes. Greg Parson, the Water Quality Control Division representative on the Animas Stakeholder Group adds that members of his group fear government entities will control the process: "[Landowners] saw a bunch of bureaucrats getting together to decide our future [in the Animas Group] so they did not see their place. The idea of a collaborative approach was distant to them. They did not feel any empowerment and, if they did show up, they felt technically overwhelmed." Jim Allen, a hunting outfitter on the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM in Wyoming feels similarly: "[Agencies] just don't have the same stakes involved as the rest of us. Moreover, I don't trust their information. It never matches up with what I see out in the field, so why should I work with them? Finally, Peter Butler, participant in the Animas elaborates that in his group "Landowners are afraid of potential liability. Many people feel that the government has come along and created a problem."

##### **Local / National tension**

Another factor affecting trust is the tension which sometimes arose between stakeholder groups that avoided involvement in collaborative efforts for fear of compromising control of their interests. In the case of the Northwest Colorado RAC, BLM Associate Director Rich Whitley explains, " Because the governor politically appoints representatives, the composition of statewide RACs have greater potential to be influenced by politics." Indeed, RAC critic Dick Loper, notes that "Most Wyoming residents have reacted in fear that national interests will override local [concerns]...It's the main reason many [Wyoming residents] shun the RAC process. Regulations from Washington scare the hell out of us. I was involved in the Wyoming RAC until the governor stepped in and would not let us run with our decisions." He added, "I have a baseball cap with the letters *R-A-C* printed on the cap but I crossed the *Resource Advisory Council* wording out and wrote in *Ranchers Against Collaboration*."

Similarly, outfitter Jim Allen, member of the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, sees the federal government as a "900-pound gorilla that just doesn't fit in its cage back in Washington D.C." In contrast, Marty Higgenbothan, an environmental representative notes concern that "what's happening with public grazing land does not always reflect broader national concerns."

### **Managing strong personalities**

Finally, the presence of strong personalities in groups had an acute affect on trust *between* members. In the case of Scott River CRMP, for example, an environmental representative filed an Endangered Species listing unannounced to the group. Members reacted with feelings of angst and betrayal, interpreting the behavior of the individual as 'going outside the group's process' to address personal concerns. In turn, the group cites the loss of membership including two coordinators who mentioned extreme difficulty working with this particular member. Coordinator Jeffy Marx recounts, "Trust is now at an all time low. Even the Resource Conservation District, the major link to the involvement of landowners, is threatening to pull out and start their own CRMP."

### **Strategies**

Strategies employed to build trust within groups include:

- Use of facilitator
- Limiting agency role
- Taking time to build relationships

### **Facilitation**

In nearly all cases, a designated facilitator or group member was used to guide the dialogue and focus of the group. In Clark County, for example, the facilitator was considered key to preventing one interest from becoming dominant in the process as well as helping solicit the involvement of stakeholders. Comparatively, in the Scott River CRMP, a facilitator was hired to help manage internal conflict *between* group members that was causing angst and loss of participants. Though successful for two years, the Scott River group has since experienced more problems and is now considering establishing a rule to vote to remove some individuals from the group who do not abide by discussion ground rules.

### **Defining the agency role**

Some groups limited agencies to a technical advisory role in order to quell concern that government interests would dominate the process. In the case of Scott River CRMP, for example, agencies were given a *non voting member status* in which they could be consulted for technical information but could not vote on critical issues. Likewise, in the McKenzie Watershed Council, agencies are allowed to recuse themselves, or refrain from voting, when issues arise over which they are legally responsible (It should be noted here that this measure, while useful in some cases, is not appropriate when public resources or other public interests are at stake, thereby necessitating the direct involvement of agencies in collaborative decision-making processes).

### **Taking time to build relationships**

Finally, in the Three Quarter Circle Ranch CRM and the Scott River CRMP cases, a specific effort was made to allow time to simultaneously build trust and the flow of information that came with it. In both cases, nearly three years went by before plans were established to address their respective resource issues. Many participants regarded this purposeful time as

critical to relationship building, attracting more stakeholders to the decision-making process, and building a better information base.

### **III. ADVICE AND REFLECTIONS**

Interviewees offered five categories of advice and reflection for others about how to ensure representation. They are:

- *Maintain an open process;*
- *Realize that perfect representation is ideal but seldom reached;*
- *Involve capable and committed individuals; and*
- *Understand the dynamic and evolutionary nature of representation*

#### **Maintain an open process**

Participants in nearly all cases made specific mention of the importance of keeping the collaborative process open, both in terms of initiating a partnership as well as managing collaborative processes over the long term.

Clark County representative Chris Robinson summarized the feelings of many participants: "No matter how frustrating, you must include all stakeholders. Limiting the group because you are worried about it being too big or having the wrong people is never good. On the other hand, controlling the way it happens [adjusting meeting structure or using a facilitator, for example] is something you can do."

In contrast, Sari Sommarstrom, former chair of the Scott River CRMP commented to the contrary of other interviewees based on her difficulty with working with particular members. "I'm not sure if [collaborative processes] can run fairly and allow adequate representation if just anyone is allowed to participate. In my experience, the difficulty of working with one obstinate member can nearly destroy an entire group."

#### **Understand that representation is seldom perfect**

Participants also felt that achieving perfect representation in collaborative processes was ideal, but difficult to do. Indeed, environmentalist Felice Pace of Scott River CRMP, saw a the issue as a process of "muddling through" with no guarantees.

Paul Selzer, facilitator of the Clark County HCP process reflected similarly that achieving [adequate and fair] representation should be the goal but acknowledged that it is seldom reached. "I liken folks participating in collaborative processes are voices in a chorus, and that chorus may never be perfect."

Ron Cunningham of the Three-Quarter Ranch CRM adds, "We need to remember that dealing with representation is different in every situation. There is no cookbook for it. There

are no two ranches alike, no two families alike, and no two communities alike. You kind of have to feel your way as you go."

### **Involve capable and committed individuals**

Involving those people in collaborative processes who have the skills and perspective to work in consensus was considered key to ensuring representation. According to Jeffy Marx, current coordinator of the Scott River CRMP, "Adequate representation in collaborative processes has everything to do with choosing the people who know how to operate in a consensus process. This means good listeners, containing violent anger, and someone who can remember what they learned in kindergarten during a heated argument."

Chris Robinson, a local government representative in the Clark County HCP process adds that, "The functionality of the group is as much a matter of having the right chemistry of individuals at the table as it was having the right rules."

Personality also makes a vital difference to the representation issue. As Mike Black, environmentalist formerly of Animas Stakeholder Group, states: "Players are important, not only in terms of who they represent but their personalities. When you're putting together a group you should stress that you want people who are willing to work towards solutions. Obviously, you want people with opinions, strong opinions, but you want people who are willing to listen and be flexible."

Finally, Bill Simon, a former facilitator also in the Animas Stakeholder Group emphasizes that the coordinator should know both their constituency and community well: "[The coordinator] needs to know who to go to when they need to maintain that balance. I brought people into this process that made people shudder. But that is what I wanted. I did not want them to think they were operating in a vacuum."

### **Realize that representation is a dynamic and evolutionary process**

Finally, and most critical, is understanding that ensuring representation is a dynamic and changing factor in collaborative efforts. As John Allen of the McKenzie Watershed Council notes, "Over time there's been continual concern over [having] the right people at the table. But you have to remember that representation is an evolutionary thing...over time, as issues mature and change, you realize that somebody should be there that is not. Some partners have dropped out completely because they realized their stakes weren't that large. It should be an expected and dynamic process that representation will change over time, and we've got to work with that."

## CHAPTER 18: ACCOMMODATING DIVERSE INTERESTS

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### I. INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

Collaborative groups that tackle natural resource issues often include participants with a broad range of perspectives. Accommodating these diverse interests poses inevitable challenges and opportunities. While having a greater number of heads at the table may cultivate creativity and insight toward reaching innovative solutions and lead to more broad-based understanding of the issues at stake, it may also require compromise that some fear leads to “lowest common denominator” solutions.

Part of our research explored the challenges faced by collaborative groups in accommodating diverse interests. We asked members and outside observers to describe how their group managed the diversity at the table. Interviewees were asked to reflect on the strategies that they had used and to offer suggestions, now having the benefit of hindsight, on how they might have accommodated diverse interests differently. Participants offered advice on how to deal with issues in a way that would ensure proper accommodation of all interests within a manageable process.

Both the challenges groups encountered and strategies they used reveal significant similarities as well as differences. By analyzing the way that partnerships accommodated diverse interests, we hope to provide insight regarding common barriers to credible processes and suggestions for maximizing the positive aspects of diverse representation while minimizing the shortcomings.

#### Summary of Core Findings

There are two main challenges associated with accommodating diverse interests. The first challenge is that of establishing a new form of interaction in the face of diverse interests. The second is that of decision-making given divergent interests combined with an undercurrent need to sustain this new relationship. Indeed, most of the obstacles confronted by these groups are challenges inherent in establishing a new type of relationship and a new type of approach when people come to the table with different understandings of the issues and each other and different expectations about how decisions should (or could) be made. At the same time, the presence of diverse interests at the table can increase the likelihood of addressing resource issues in a timely manner and gaining wider acceptance of approaches to managing the resource at hand.

## *Core Issues and Strategies*

### **1. Establishing a New Form of Interaction**

*Partnerships learned to work together in this new process by building trust and developing relationships outside of the collaborative process.*

#### **Strategies**

- Field trips
- After-hours interaction
- Small-scale projects
- Forums for information-sharing, education and addressing concerns

### **2. Decision-making given Diverse Interests**

*Partnerships grappled with how to make effective and fair decisions by adapting decisions to reflect the goals, perceptions, and limitations of the group.*

#### **Strategies**

- Seeking middle ground
- Avoiding controversial issues
- Forcing action
- Holistic approaches to management

#### ***Advice and Reflections***

- Establish the working relationship
- Enhancing this relationship
- Develop effective leadership
- Create a group process
- Other insights

## **II. SPECIFIC CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES**

### **1. Establishing a New Form of Interaction**

#### ***Challenges***

With diverse participation in collaborative processes comes the challenge of establishing a new form of interaction. Groups mentioned three main aspects of this challenge:

- Developing and maintaining trust
- Handling differing approaches to management
- Dealing with group logistics

### **Developing and maintaining trust**

The challenge of developing and maintaining trust that allows communication and problem-solving to occur is something that all groups in our study grappled with given the distrustful attitudes brought to the table. Two aspects of distrust: anti-government sentiment and distrust between group participants are evidence of this challenge.

In the Animas River Stakeholders Group, distrust of agency motives and anti-government sentiment run rampant. Many feel the creation of the Stakeholders group as an alternative to Superfund designation is merely a way for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to justify budgets. This local perception is compounded by the fact that meetings are very agency dominated. Although Greg Parsons, of the Colorado Water Quality Control Division and group participant, intended for the initiation of the group as an alternative to simply collecting data and “dumping it somewhere,” some participants feel that initial data revealed no water quality problem in the basin. There is also the additional challenge of overcoming the local perception that government agencies are wasteful and that cleaning up the water is coming at an enormous financial cost.

In the Darby Partnership, government distrust became an inhibitor to establishing a new form of interaction well after the initiation of the collaborative group when The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposed a refuge. Perceived as a major threat to the agriculture-based economy of the region, the proposal broke down trust and left participants feeling that the agency was less dedicated to the collaborative process than they initially lead everyone to believe. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) also felt the negative effect of this proposed refuge and one TNC representative commented that TNC's strong support of the refuge put her ‘neutral’ position at risk within the group. In the words of participant Dennis Hall of the Ohio State University Extension “Their (USFWS) process is not open and collaborative. In the end that has resulted in a lot of mistrust from the local people...Now they [local farmers] have taken up a competing perspective and are working diligently to oppose the refuge.”

Groups also experienced distrust among participants. Although collaborative partnerships can improve or provide a forum for trust-building, in the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, some participants represent large companies like DuPont and Chesapeake Forest Products, companies that carry the stigma of being environmentally unfriendly. For this reason, particularly in the initial stages, others in the group questioned their motives. In fact, Farm Bureau representative Ralph Harcum feels little trust for anyone who threatens his traditional way of farming his land. In his words: “I am a watchdog and make sure that things are not done that would be a detriment to the farming community...They have no concept of farming yet they dispute me.”

### **Differing approaches to management**

Groups also dealt with how to manage the collaborative process when participants come to the table with different ideas of natural resource management, perceive other management practices as incompatible to their own, and differ culturally. Related to the previous issue of trust and primarily based on perception, some ranchers, miners, and farmers view their resource management practices as incompatible with those of the agencies. Seen in the Animas River Stakeholders Group and the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, this can result

in a lack of understanding between participants and creates a communication gap. Moreover, the rules and regulations of agencies are often looked upon as threatening to the local way of doing business although this would be a reality outside of the collaborative process as well.

For the Animas River Stakeholders Group, some participants tend to look at agency representatives, particularly the EPA, as “the people from Washington” who are not in tune with local traditional natural resource management practices. One EPA representative even received a death threat. Participant Greg Parsons states: “A lot of us feel that they [Federal agencies] have wasted a lot of money to do their little projects and that the projects do not even wind up telling you anything.”

Cultural differences are also a factor when addressing the issues of natural resource management. In the Scott River CRMP the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM and again, the Animas River Stakeholders Group, independent Western culture and difficulty matching traditional ways of rancher or miner business with collaborative decision-making underscores cultural differences. As Jim Allen of the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM explains, “I think for the most part that agencies are outside of the comfort zone of their rules and regulations when dealing with collaborative processes. I know that we need them when dealing with public lands, but they have a tendency to fall back on their bullshit rules when the situation demands that they try something new.”

Similarly, in the Scott River Valley and Siskiyou region of California in general, a Jeffersonian mind-set has resulted in multiple secession attempts. Recently, property rights activism has made reaction to lawsuits even more adversarial. With regard to the Scott River CRMP, controversy has arisen with the dual role of the Resource Conservation District (RCD) as a CRMP member and landowner representative. One participant captures the effect of this dual role: “RCD has been afraid to seek watershed restoration management changes too quickly for fear that they will lose their constituency.” Another participant states, “The RCD is effectively seeking to sanitize every CRMP decision so as not to scare ranchers off.”

### **Group logistics**

Group logistics is yet another aspect of the challenge of establishing a new form of interaction. Three factors loosely fall under group logistics: watershed size, participant commitment, and participant impatience. These factors put additional stress on partnership efforts of ensuring that all interests at the table are adequately accommodated.

### **Watershed size**

For the Darby Partnership, the challenge has not focused on group size but rather the size of the watershed. With six counties and numerous townships and municipalities within the watershed boundary, each with their own zoning ordinances and regulations, it has been difficult to for the group to address land use issues, to manage the multi-jurisdictional efforts, and to find its own voice. Participant, Marc Smith, addresses this challenge: “Zoning and consistency in regulations is the biggest challenge. There are so many different government entities that have responsibility over the watershed...They each have different ideas of what should be done.”

### ***Impatience***

Impatience of group members can also inhibit a collaborative group's ability to establish a new form of interaction. For instance, people joining collaborative groups often view collaboration as an expedient alternative, when in reality, collaboration is not a one-step process and can take a great deal of time. Some individuals, like participants in the Animas River Stakeholders Group and Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, became frustrated by this unanticipated reality and demanded action at a point where a decision made would have been premature and even detrimental to the resource.

Bill Simon, coordinator of the Animas River Stakeholders Group states: "Our biggest challenge is time. Everybody expects action. In our case, we have 120 years of mining related damages and people want action right away. The challenge is in keeping the greater community patient and letting this process run its course." Similarly, in the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, some participants claim that the group has lost its identity and that although it throws around ideas, nothing of substance really ever gets accomplished. Consequently, due to impatience, a few participants have decreased involvement in the group or have terminated their membership altogether. This reduced or terminated involvement has not shattered the diversity of the group but has increased group awareness of the importance of diversity at the table because the group noticed that it was losing players that brought a lot of ideas to the table. Lisa Jo Frech, Executive Director of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, pointed out that although diverse interests remain, when one interest drops out, it is felt as a loss.

### ***Participant commitment***

Different levels of commitment have caused tension in some of the groups studied. In the Blackfoot Challenge, for example, a specific private timber interest which is also the largest private land owner in the Valley, has clearly not exhibited the same level of commitment as others in the partnership. The need to increase their commitment is viewed by participants as necessary because so much of valley's lands remain in their hands. This disproportionate level of commitment on their part has become taxing on participants who are dedicated to the process. The group, for instance, will make progress on weed control only to be delayed by an entity that sees little value in the collaborative process. This entity, while peripherally at the table, hangs onto the reality that ultimately, it is their land and they can do with it whatever they please and that profits are their bottom line. Greg Neudecker points out: "Every meeting we deal with some issue related to their property cuts or the selling off of subdivisions. Everyone comes to the table and says, 'let's work together.' Plum Creek, when they come, make it quite clear that they would rather be somewhere else."

## **Strategies**

Groups adopted the following strategies in establishing a new form of interaction given diverse interests at the table. Strategies adopted were to:

- Implement small-scale projects
- Encourage after hours interaction
- Develop forums for information sharing, education, and addressing concerns
- Conduct field trips

### **Implement small-scale projects**

Small-scale projects with local landowners were a key strategy used to build up trust of the agency representatives. In the Blackfoot Challenge, some of these projects were even taking place before the initiation of the group. These included activities such as installation of nesting structures on local landowner private property to help enhance avian habitat areas on private lands. Greg Neudecker of the USFWS illustrates: “When the Challenge started, people already knew who I was. To them, I was not just a USFWS representative, I was also Greg Neudecker.” He now feels that this initial increase in agency trust has helped to accommodate diverse interests. In the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, meeting after meeting was taking place with very little being accomplished. Not only was trust diminishing, participants were becoming both weary and wary of the process. At the request of Executive Director, the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance organized a clean-up. They recruited volunteers both inside and outside of the group, located an area that needed a face-lift, and got the job done. As a result, people had the opportunity to truly get to know one another. Lisa Jo Frech mentioned that the effects of the clean up were reverberated in following meetings and that it positively changed the entire dynamic of the group.

### **Encourage after hours interaction**

Relationship building was key for all groups, however three groups specifically encouraged after hours interaction. In the Blackfoot Challenge, Trixi’s Restaurant and Bar is the local breakfast spot where participants often meet during times of the day when the Blackfoot Challenge was not discussed as the central issue. Viewed as a neutral territory, Trixi’s Restaurant and Bar is one place where people are not looked upon as representing one point of view or another. Likewise, in the Animas River Stakeholders Group, whose meetings run up to twelve hours, participants spend time together after hours and often grab a pizza or a beer. Finally in the NW RAC, T. Wright Dickinson at one point invited Bill Shapley a former member representing Sierra Club, up to his ranch and said: "Bill why don't you like me?" Bill looked at him and said, "T. I do like you, I just don't like your damn cows."

### **Develop forums for information sharing, education, and addressing concerns**

In addition to groups such as the Blackfoot Challenge and the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, which were created as forums for information exchange and education, other partnerships such as The Darby Creek Partnership, Animas River Stakeholders Group, the Owl Mountain Partnership, and the McKenzie Watershed Council have developed similar forums. These open forums are a way for people to have the opportunity to state their feelings and to get the facts. The Owl Mountain Partnership, for example, provided a forum for the group to sit

down with the water quality commission and the county commissioners to clarify an error in a proposal. This proposal was part of a grant to secure section 319 money from the EPA to design a water quality-monitoring program. In addition, The Darby Partnership tackled the issue of the proposed USFWS refuge by “providing a forum where all sides can be heard” (Hall, 1999). The type of forum utilized by the Animas River Stakeholders Group is what they call a library series that serves as a friendly non-intimidating forum to educate locals and out-of-town lay-people about the issues in the Animas Basin as well as the activities of the Animas River Stakeholders Group. Although these are also used in part to get more people on board, they have also proven useful in assuaging participant fears that certain issues are not being brushed under the rug but rather are being explained to the community as a whole.

### **Conduct field trips**

Also used as a strategy of ensuring scientific understanding, field trips forge interpersonal relationships and increase understanding of other participants. The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, McKenzie Watershed Council, the Blackfoot Challenge, Animas River Stakeholder Group, Darby Partnership, and the Scott River CRMP all encouraged field trips to share information and to build group understanding. In the Darby Partnership, for instance, canoe trips were a way for landowners to pair up in the same canoe with agency representatives and to build a relationship outside of a person’s interest. In the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance field trips often take the form of clean-ups (also small-scale projects) where NWA members and the community at large offer their time to clean a pre-determined site within the watershed. With reference to one of the first clean-ups in the watershed, Lisa Jo Frech, the Executive Director, pointed out: “We got to know people personally and I realized that it was important to find out what made someone really tick and to find out where their passion for issues really lived. One of the people who came happened to be someone we were fighting...I got to know him personally...when he came to meetings from then on and looked across the table, he saw a different person.”

## **2. Decision-making Given Diverse Interests**

### ***Challenges***

For a collaborative group to succeed they must not only establish a new form of interaction and build relationships, they must confront the challenge of decision-making given diverse interests at the table. Evidence of these challenges exists in the following forms:

- Dealing with contentious and complex issues,
- Defining the role of the group,
- Working toward win-win solutions

### **Dealing with contentious and complex issues**

One aspect of the challenge of decision-making given diverse interests is dealing with contentious and complex issues when participants exhibit divergent views of the importance, source, and solutions to the problem. These complex issues can be felt both internally and by the community at large. For the McKenzie Watershed Council, this has resulted in macro

policy recommendations rather than addressing micro land use issues. Moreover, social relations tend to take precedence over voicing concerns. Tony Cheng, outside observer and Ph.D. student studying watershed councils in Oregon, captures the fact that the group will not move forward without consensus. In his words: “Time and time again with controversial issues, they failed to get to the point where they took action.” He also adds: “There seems to be a desire not to hurt people’s feelings too much. There is too much emphasis on relationships. Someone might not step up to the plate if she’s going to piss off some of the people she really gets along with.” For example, the council does not address individual timber harvest plans but will provide general recommendations for important factors to consider when harvesting. In the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, one participant pointed out a similar concern: “There are some issues that we have not hit hard enough for fear of losing constituent members” (Corbitt, The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance). And although later resolved, The Owl Mountain Partnership experienced the challenge of dealing with contentious issues but the effect of this challenge was felt in the community at large. Here, the issue centered on a 319 EPA grant to design a water quality-monitoring program. Clearly a turf issue, one community became upset with the community who designed the grant and the ranchers tried to shoot it down because it referenced grazing in the grant proposal as a potential source of water quality degradation.

### **Defining the role of the group**

Another aspect of the challenge of decision-making given diverse interests is defining the role of the group. In the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, the issue of Pfiesteria was brought to a head. The group was unwilling to take a position on something for fear of it tarnishing their reputation as an information sharing group. Although other groups in the region, such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, blame Pfiesteria’s effect on water quality on current farming practices, the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance has been unwilling to take a strong stance on the issue because the effect of Pfiesteria on the environment as a result of farming practices has not been proven beyond a shadow of doubt. Moreover, the group fears losing key players at the table and altering its image as a benign entity fostering information sharing and education. Judith Stribling highlights this concern: “Pfiesteria was something that was talked about a lot but we never came up with a policy position for how we stood on waste... We were able to agree on some things but we did not agree on the overriding idea of whether nutrient management needed to be changed.”

### **Working toward win-win solutions**

Several groups mentioned their desire to work towards solutions that served everyone at the table. While challenging, none of the groups we studied felt like their decisions were diluted and took steps to ensure that this did not happen. In fact, participants outside of the collaborative process were the primary voices of concern. In the McKenzie Watershed Council, for instance, the group did not make decisions on things where they did not reach consensus as will be discussed below. In the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, however, some participants are concerned that some issues are watered down. Larry Walton, NWA participant and President of Chesapeake Forest Products exclaims: “I have seen them really compromise on principles in some cases to reach consensus on some things.”

## **Strategies**

Most partnerships employed a series of strategies for handling decision-making given diverse interests. Three strategies groups adopted were to:

- Seek middle ground
- Force action
- Adopt holistic approaches to management

### **Seek middle ground**

To seek middle ground, groups tackled those issues on which they felt they could have an impact thereby improving their ability to tackle issues at a later date.

The Scott River CRMP provides an example of this approach. Participants clearly recognized what falls outside of the acceptable parameters for resource management such as logging off the land without permission or allowing cattle to damage the river. Another tactic adopted by the McKenzie Watershed Council, the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, and the Blackfoot Challenge has been to recognize and table controversial issues. As John Runyon of the McKenzie Watershed Council explains, “There are times when we can’t tackle a really controversial issue and in fact we table them because we know we can’t deal with it in a consensus format, and we say, well we are going wait until the time is ripe or the organization is ready to deal with that issue.”

The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance tables controversial issues in order to keep participants at the table and to avoid the risk of being labeled as an organization that takes strong stances on issues where there is still scientific uncertainty. Comparatively, for the Blackfoot Challenge the strategy of avoiding controversial issues manifested itself in focusing its efforts of noxious weed control. Although the Blackfoot Challenge has taken a leadership role on an issue landowners can relate to, some feel that this has been at the expense of tackling more controversial issues in the valley.

### **Force action**

Acting outside of the group, one strategy that has brought participants together to make decisions given their diverse interests, was the use of species listings and Superfund designation as a way to force action by getting everyone to the table. In the case of Scott River, the species that was listed was the steelhead as a means of bringing attention to the politically sensitive issue of water flow. Felice Pace, the individual who advocated the listing of the species, states: “Lawsuits act as the fire under the feet that force all concerns onto the table. While some participants feel this is painfully necessary, others have threatened to leave the group.” In the Blackfoot Valley, the bull trout was the listed species. Although this listing was highly controversial among valley residents, it perhaps served the same purpose of bringing the issue to the forefront and to create creative ways such as the formation of collaborative groups to handle these realities. With regard to the Animas River Stakeholders Group, the threat of Superfund designation has brought people together in a collaborative forum to find alternatives.

### **Adopt holistic approaches to management**

Resource management that takes a more ecosystem management approach is another strategy used by the Blackfoot Challenge and Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM. In the Blackfoot Valley, for example, the USFWS representatives have been commended for adopting holistic management practices. In the Three Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, ranch owner Tony Malmberg is commended by others for incorporating innovative ideas into the CRM as a means of combining new strategies for management with older strategies through a holistic approach. Jim Allen describes Malmberg and what he has done for his ranch: “Tony is bold enough to put his whole ranch into this CRM thing. A lot of folks are afraid to do that because you really have to open up your dirty laundry for everyone to look at.” Malmberg himself sees what benefits the strategy of adopting a holistic approach has to offer: “Bringing people face to face with what the CRM is doing out here allows me to establish a connection.”

## **IV. REFLECTIONS AND ADVICE**

Participants provided the following advice and reflections for how to best assist participants in collaborative processes in creating partnerships that not only convene diverse interests and encourage equitable participation, but also encourage relationship building, promote effective leadership, and set group direction. District Ranger, John Allen of the McKenzie Watershed Council specifically refers to the benefit of forming relationships and the effect they have on accommodating diverse interests in a collaborative process: “When you have a good relationship with people of diverse interests, they’ll pose ideas to you that will put you outside of your own box and get you thinking about ideas that you hadn’t thought of or hadn’t been exposed to before. ... You’re more willing to accept ideas outside of the box.”

### **1. Establish the working relationship**

- **Go slow at the beginning**
- **Build up trust before (and during) the formal formation of the group**
- **Take time to get to know other participants**
- **Start off in the context of learning**
- **Identify workload up front**
- **Realize people’s limitations**
- **Look to people for ideas**

“You really need to go slow in the beginning...take time to develop relationships, develop an understanding of shared interests and expectations. If you are not able to do that, you’re not going to be able to productively take on the issues you might have conflict on” (Allen, McKenzie Watershed Council).

“Build up trust before the formal formation of the group. If you structure it right and build trust at the beginning it will go a long way. In our case, too many people had no idea what was going on” (Russell, Animas River Stakeholders Group).

“If you don’t have trust and understanding and communication then the more the diversity you have, the quicker things are going to fall apart” (Grier, McKenzie Watershed Council).

“Keep your eye on the ball. Look at ideas that people can truly handle. Don’t get hung up on issues over which you really do not have any control” (Goetz, Blackfoot Challenge).

“Pay attention to the people you have at the table. Identify the workload up front. Promote energy needed to get along” (Porter, Owl Mountain Partnership).

## **2. Enhancing these relationships**

- **Go out in the field as much as possible**
- **Voice all opinions**
- **Use various communication techniques.**
- **Understand and respect each others perspectives**
- **Be open and flexible**

“I recommend some kind of hiking or getting out into the habitat on a one on one basis” (Devlin, Darby Creek Partnership).

“Encourage membership to vocalize averting positive and negative that they can about the ongoing process...but there is a right way and a wrong way of doing this. If you can't play nice then get out of the sandbox. You have to know how to talk to people and to give them the basic respect as a human being. See what about them makes them tick.” (Corbitt, The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance).

“It may not work just to post a sign in one spot announcing a meeting because some individuals may not be able to get to town to see those signs. Other options should be utilized as well such as announcements over the radio and word of mouth” (Garland, Blackfoot Challenge).

“It takes the right kind of people and on the ground stuff-not just sitting in on a meeting but going out and looking at something. If they have an impression that something is not right, well then let’s go out and take a look at it. Let’s go walk a mile in that person’s shoes before you make that decision. We all seem too busy to take the time but it is very important that all of our people take the time to do it” (Walton, The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance).

“Try hard to work together. Be able to look at both sides. You might need to give a little at times” (Haworth, Owl Mountain Partnership).

“People are people and if they think different, you need to look underneath what they are thinking about and see who they really are. Then, even if you don’t believe in the way they are thinking, at least you can be their friend...that way you can fight them without the bitterness and the hate that existed before this whole thing got started”(Schrieber, Clark County HCP).

### **3. Develop effective leadership**

- **Engage people and structure things to tap into people's strengths**
- **Have a paid facilitator who can handle tasks and ask hard questions**
- **Have good leaders who are patient and can keep the process going**
- **Seek a well rounded leader who looks beyond participants to the community at large**
- **Ensure participants representing an organization are the most appropriate people to speak for that organization**
- **Identify leaders and spokespeople in the community and figure out who will need a greater amount of persuasion to come to meetings**

“Make sure that everybody is engaged all of the time. If you do not watch everyone, you can get into trouble. Thinking things out on the front end can help with this. You must structure it so that people out there who have a strong knowledge base of a specific aspect of the watershed are tapped into ” (Hirshenberger, Blackfoot Challenge).

“Seek representatives with patience, good communication skills, and willingness to work with others” (Kramer, Scott River CRMP).

“Like Tony, you need to reach out to the community to bring people into the process” (Trebelcock, Three-Quarter Circle Ranch).

“Make sure that the leadership of the organization has a degree of political sophistication and understanding of the larger issues. Planting trees is a wonderful thing but that alone is not going to cut it” (Cipolla, The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance).

### **4. Create a group process**

- **Incorporate “check back in” goals**
- **Keep meetings open-create an open environment**
- **Permit everyone at the table an equal say**
- **Simplify**
- **Ensure diversity at the table**
- **Get rid of hidden agendas**
- **Be prepared for the future-cover all bases**
- **Don't push issues**
- **Keep on looking for people who should be at the table**
- **Learn to pick your important battles**
- **Recognize that the group can't do everything**

“Re-plowing that ground (check back-in goals) is often necessary, particularly for new members coming on board who don't understand as clearly where the group has been and where it is headed. If you don't do that, you don't have a group marriage. You may even end up with a divorce in your hands” (Cunningham, Three-Quarter Circle Ranch).

“Keep the meetings open. Do not turn anyone away. Make sure that all groups are represented, but limit the control and input of any one group” (L. Perino, Animas River Stakeholders Group).

“I think that when you form a group one piece of advice is not to get caught up in the issues that are hot that have brought you together...The groups that I have seen fail are the groups that get on an issue that everyone is energized around changing. They go directly to that issue and solving that rather than looking long term” (Devlin, Darby Partnership).

## 5. Other

- **New folks need to understand the norms of the group**
- **Accept that it is a long process**
- **Be dedicated**
- **Incorporate consensus training**

“New folks need to understand norms are always evolving. New people are afraid to change those norms. It’s like marrying into a new family or moving to a new town, you don’t want to be the one that disrupts norms that could be really deep seated” (Cheng, McKenzie Watershed Council).

“...You see you have to remember that it’s a slow step by step process...there is no way to evaluate your group except to ask if we are still working on the process” (Marx, Scott River CRMP).

“Consensus training is imperative. Base the whole collaborative process on the premise that everyone who’s there is entitled to be there and they have a part of the answer and if you all just listen carefully enough, you come up with a solution you would never have before” (Grier, McKenzie Watershed Council).

# CHAPTER 19: ACCOMMODATING DIVERSE CAPABILITIES

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### Overview

The diverse perspectives, insights, skills, energy, creativity and influence that participants bring to the table comprise the basis of a collaborative partnership's ability to solve problems. At the same time, this diverse amalgam of capabilities can create challenges for the group. In reality these differences are not unique to collaborative groups, but hold true for the public policy arena in general. As Ken Mauer of the Scott River CRMP commented, "Unequal power is a problem of the world in general, and what we have in our CRMP is just a little slice of the same thing." Similarly, Allen Kramer of the same group noted, "[Diverse capabilities] are not just an Achilles' heel of collaboration, it's an Achilles' heel of the world." The partnerships we studied recognized the challenge of accommodating diverse capabilities, and dealt with it in a variety of ways in order to enhance their communication and problem-solving abilities.

### Summary of Core Findings

#### *Core Issues and Strategies*

#### **1. Balancing influence in the process**

Partnerships grappled with how to temper the influence of traditionally high power interests so that all were better able to contribute to the process and voice their concerns in an equitable way.

#### **Strategies**

- Retained autonomy to act outside the group
- Increased diversity at the table
- Used a consensus decision-making rule
- Hired a lawyer to represent less powerful interests

#### **2. Managing different communication styles and abilities**

Partnerships dealt with how to organize themselves so that no single interest or individual dominated the process.

#### **Strategies**

- Built trust through opportunities for social interaction
- Hired a facilitator / provided internal facilitation
- Practiced one-on-one interventions

### **3. Building capacity for equitable participation**

Partnerships struggled with how to organize themselves so that everyone is on the same page at the same time and everyone has the ability (or at least the opportunity) to articulate their concerns.

#### **Strategies**

- Made meetings accessible in terms of timing and location
- Provided orientation and training
- Broke down the larger group into working groups

#### ***Advice and Reflections***

- Improve communication
- Practice constructive behavior
- Provide training
- Think about individuals as well as interests
- Utilize leadership
- Build trust
- Other insights

## **II. SPECIFIC CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES**

### **1. Balancing Influence in the Process**

Collaborative partnerships by nature bring together diverse interests with differing abilities to exert influence either inside or outside the process. The variance in levels of influence reflects the way U.S. society is organized, and is therefore a reality of most decision-making arenas. The groups we interviewed recognized the need to temper the influence of traditionally high power interests so that all were better able to contribute to the process and voice their concerns in an equitable way.

The majority of the people we interviewed felt that, although varying levels of power were apparent in their groups, more powerful interests did not dominate the process. In fact, some groups mentioned that having powerful interests at the table was an advantage for the partnership. In the case of the McKenzie Watershed Council, most of the members are high-power individuals who have great influence in their own organizations and the community. By including those people on the council, members conclude that recommendations made by the council are more likely to be implemented.

#### ***Defining roles and authority***

A few groups confronted power struggles resulting from a desire to retain a status quo authority over the decision-making process. In the Scott River CRMP, agencies were observed attempting to control the process. Sari Sommarstrom, former coordinator of Scott River described what happened with the local Resource Conservation District (RCD), a champion of farming interests: “At the beginning, it seems the RCD thought the consensus

process was just another name for majority rule. Because they already had the trust of the landowners, they attempted to load the CRMP by putting multiple representatives of the agriculture interest groups on board. In other words, they wanted to make sure that, no matter what, they had a majority.” Some participants expressed a fear that agencies would “run away with the process” by controlling access to technical information (Marx, 1999).

In the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, landowner Tony Malmberg speaks to the same desire to maintain authority. The CRM process he initiated to collaboratively manage his ranching operation in Wyoming reserves a status quo mechanism that provides the necessary incentive for landowners to try alternative management methods: “We operate on a consensus basis but with a quasi-veto power for landowners. In other words, if I don’t like the decisions that will affect my lands, I am not going to do it.” When compared to the alternative of private ranching decisions that do not incorporate the perspectives of other stakeholders, this was seen as a necessary mechanism.

Often the issues surrounding jurisdictions and influence result from ambiguous decision-making roles. Verl Brown of Owl Mountain Partnership described this tension: “Everyone wants power... the power struggle between people and agencies...that is a real drawback on getting things done. Right now were talking about getting more into the area of issues rather than projects and it is going to be tough because agencies do not like to give up their authority.”

### *Mitigating the influence of dominant interests*

In the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance and Clark County HCP, dominant interests attempted to use their influence to force agendas through the collaborative process. In the Nanticoke, for example, environmentalist and former University professor Charlie Cipolla believes that, “The interests that have come to the table and who have really set the agenda have been the large economic interests. The timber people made darn sure that they got in there and defined the situation.” He described a situation where the NWA, upon learning of a member timber company’s violation of a buffer zone along the river corridor, reported the incident to the local authorities. The industry was furious and according to Cipolla, “There were some not so thinly veiled threats leveled that if that were ever to happen again, the person involved might find himself at great risk.”

In Clark County, representatives of multiple-use interests like miners and off-road vehicle enthusiasts felt at a disadvantage because of their lack of resources and knowledge of the issues. They believed that both developers and scientists have attempted to use money and information to shift the process in their favor. Ann Schrieber, a local miner in Clark County recalled, “they told me at the first meeting to shut up because I was not putting up the money.”

## *Strategies*

While the reality of different levels of influence cannot be eliminated, partnerships did employ a variety of strategies to temper the influence of traditionally high power interests so that all interests were better able to contribute to the process and voice their concerns in an equitable way. The partnerships we interviewed mentioned the following strategies. They:

- Used a consensus decision-making rule
- Increased diversity at the table
- Retained autonomy to act outside the group

One of the primary strategies used by the majority of our cases was a consensus decision-making rule. On the McKenzie Watershed Council, consensus was seen as a way to give “people from those potentially less powerful groups a voice with these bigger groups” (Fox, 1999). In the words of McKenzie Watershed Council coordinator John Runyon: “The final sort of equalizer is our consensus process. One individual has the power to block anything moving forward even if that individual doesn’t have big institutions behind him. Everyone around the table is aware of that and that’s a big equalizer.”

In the Clark County case, rural interests felt shut out of a process that required intense time investments, familiarity with science, and negotiation savvy. In order to provide those interests with an opportunity to successfully negotiate with more powerful participants, the HCP group hired a lawyer to represent them. In the words of off-road vehicle user Mark Trinko: “Karen Budd-Fallon’s role as a legal representative of rural interests and the grazing community has been essential. I’m not sure we could have done it without her.... She served an invaluable liaison role.”

A third strategy employed by the Darby Partnership, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, and McKenzie Watershed Council, was to create an information-sharing atmosphere where each individual retains his / her own independent decision-making authority. Partnerships that structured themselves as primarily information-sharing or coordinating bodies retained decision-making autonomy for their members. Lisa Jo Frech, director of the Nanticoke, explained: “Let’s say...we decide we are not going to fight a particular issue. That does not mean that one of our member groups can’t go out and fight. They still have autonomy.” This autonomy, while it can compromise the partnership’s integrity, exists for all participants. Of hundreds of collaborative groups reviewed for this study, none had regulatory authority. Participants, regardless of their influence in the group, always have the option to pursue other paths to meet their goals.

## **2. Managing different communication styles and abilities**

In all of the partnerships, individual personalities were raised as an issue groups had to be aware of and work with. As in the outside world, the participants in collaborative groups bring with them vastly different communication styles and abilities. Much of the ability to work productively with others depends on personality. Some groups struggled with how to deal with one individual with a strong personality who tended to dominate the process,

limiting opportunities for more reticent individuals to participate, or toppling the group's fragile trust. Although stronger personalities often made it difficult to manage the process fairly, groups employed a variety of strategies to curb the dominance of any single individual or interest

In the Scott River CRMP, environmentalist Felice Pace's "irascible personality" has caused members to drop out: "He broke the rules many times but people were afraid because of his ability to get the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund and others with big money to sue landowners. Frankly I don't think the group will ever have trust as long as he's involved. That doesn't mean his interests can't be represented. It's the personality that represents those interests that's the problem" (Roehrich, 1999). Dick Loper of the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM comments that strong personalities are "an exploitation of a custom and culture" because "ranchers in the West don't have the professional skills and negotiation training that you find among professionals."

On the other hand, interviewees stressed that the group dynamic itself is often adequate to curb extreme voices and to ensure that all voices are heard. Greg Sherman of Owl Mountain Partnership describes this process: "You have some people who are louder, more aggressive than others. It could theoretically control where the group is going. What really happens though is it puts a lot of weight on the private landowner's side. They are typically very quiet about it, but when they do say something about it, everybody listens...and the ones that yap most kind of get shut off."

Speaking about a strong personality on the NW Colorado RAC, Cathie Zarlingo adds, "I think they understand that if they try to overwhelm it, that would torpedo the process and we could be back where we were before, with nothing."

### *Strategies*

In order to manage diverse communication styles and capabilities, groups employed several strategies. A subtle way of dealing with diverse personalities was to ensure diversity at the table. In the words of Tony Malmberg of the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, "I guess I see diversity at the table as an insulator against being controlled by one group or interest." The group, by the strength of its coalition of diverse individuals, often outweighed a particular individual.

In the Scott River CRMP, the group had to hire a facilitator for a period of two years in order to manage contentious meetings productively. Groups without neutral facilitation, like the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, stressed the importance of using a group leader or chairperson to bring out and define the interests of group members.

Also, in the McKenzie Watershed Council, although interviewees mentioned the "stronger voices" on the council, they felt the group dynamic tempered what might have been more dominating interactions. One-on-one interactions also helped integrate those people into the process. As Pat Thompson, a resident and landowner, recalled, "We're fortunate to have a group of people who know when to call bologna. There's not a single person in this group

who's going to be bullied...we've had some very very strong personalities who try to guide the process. (After) two or three meetings, they realize if there's ever going to be a decision made I'm going to have to give as well. And there's not a person on this group who isn't willing to pull that individual aside and talk turkey with them and say look, you're not getting anywhere with this" (Thompson).

### **3. Building capacity for equitable participation**

Given the reality that participants come to collaborative processes with differing levels of knowledge, skills and resources, partnerships grappled with how to facilitate meaningful and productive participation for everyone involved. Specifically, groups faced the challenge of organizing themselves so that everyone is on the same page at the same time and everyone has the ability (or at least the opportunity) to articulate their concerns.

The issue of knowledge and skills was a concern to several of the participants that we interviewed. In the Clark County HCP, Jim Moore remarked that "User groups simply felt they didn't have the legal or scientific skills to fight the battle on even ground." In fact, Sid Sloane from the same group described the "constant fear from outlying communities that they'd get blind sided by something they didn't understand." Outside observer Doug Heiken of the Oregon Natural Resources Council, commenting on the "meek" environmental representation on the McKenzie Watershed Council, said, "It's hard to stand up and disagree with your peers when you don't have totally solid information."

Judith Stribling, a professor at Salisbury State College and member of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, described the effect that unequal knowledge base can have on group process: "There have been situations where the group will have a sense that there is a consensus when there are people there who do not really agree and find it difficult to express that because they are feeling somewhat overwhelmed." Tony Cheng, a doctoral student who has closely observed interactions on the McKenzie Watershed Council, describes a similar situation of "dialogue where some people have more knowledge than others make categorical comments and everybody takes them as truth."

Disparate levels of resources were another reality that hampered equitable participation. In Clark County, this was especially evident because of the long meetings and driving distances required for participation. Private citizens often had to forfeit a day's wages to attend meetings. Jim Moore stated, "The resources, skills and access to the process was an issue from day one. Especially with smaller land users and mom and pop miners. They felt that their livelihoods were on the line, yet they were not getting paid by anybody to participate, whereas the agency folks and others like me were all getting salaries to engage in this process."

## *Strategies*

Groups dealt with these issues by implementing concrete changes to group process or organizational structure. Specifically, they:

- Made meetings accessible in terms of timing and location
- Provided orientation and training
- Created working groups

Both in the beginning stages and throughout the collaborative process, orientation and training was considered an essential strategy to keep everybody on the same page and facilitate equitable participation. The NW Colorado RAC, for example, provided a pre-RAC weekend training workshop on both substantive issues and process. The workshop, described as “imperative to working in these types of groups” (Zarlingo, RAC), was recently repeated as new members joined the group. The McKenzie Watershed Council also provides orientation for new members, in addition to on-going educational presentations to the group as a whole. John Runyon explained: “We’re very careful up front in providing very thorough orientation to everybody who comes in on how the council works and let them know that there are resources available if they don’t have them personally.”

Altering the timing and location of meetings was important to providing adequate opportunity for everyone to participate. When the McKenzie Council hired John Runyon as coordinator two years ago, the meeting structure was one of the first things he changed. He recalled: “When I came on board that was one of the first things I tried to do, change the structure to streamline the meetings, because they would often go on into the wee hours of the morning. They would last for six hours...Start at 5 and run until 12.” Now most meetings last about three hours. Runyon explained, “The way we did that was to transfer a lot of council business and a lot of the up front framing of the issues to the executive committee. So we have an executive committee that meets once a month before the council meeting, sets the agenda, and frames the issues, actually makes recommendations on what the council should act upon.” The location of meetings was also important, to facilitate access for rural residents. Although most council meetings are held in Eugene, the closest town for most members, sometimes meetings are held in different locations throughout the watershed. According to Runyon, “When we have a meeting where we think there’s something of interest to watershed residents, we try to move up river, especially in the summer.”

Organizational structure was also altered to create more opportunities for participation. In the Darby Partnership, meetings were often very large and dealt with a wide range of issues. Participants without expertise in a particular issue were not able to contribute or engage in the process. The creation of teams to deal with separate issues, like soil erosion or urban sprawl, helped to focus participants in a comfortable setting where their knowledge and skills were most useful.

Interviewees saw building trust among participants as a way to make the most of the diverse capabilities at the table, while minimizing any drawbacks. In the words of Walid Bou-Matar of the NW Colorado RAC, “We don’t expect one guy who knows oil and gas, to know

everything about ranching, farming and the environment. There is room to listen and build trust to know that someone is not giving you a snow job.”

### **III. ADVICE AND REFLECTIONS**

When asked what they might have done differently in hindsight, or what advice they might offer others now undertaking collaborative initiatives, participants offered a wealth of advice and reflections on how to temper the influence of traditionally high power interests so that all are better able to contribute to the process and voice their concerns in an equitable way. Steve Corbitt of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance provided a guide: “Take it slow. Be respectful. Encourage people to speak up. Don’t be judgmental. Put a positive spin on everything that is said and try to see everything in the best light as possible. Keep hammering away on making progress. Get to know each other. Do meetings in different places once in a while. Share a pizza.”

The advice of other participants fell generally in the following categories:

- Improve communication
- Practice constructive behavior
- Provide training
- Think about individuals as well as interests
- Utilize leadership
- Build trust
- Other

#### **Improve communication**

- “Before you even form, before you have the board sitting down together, you need to have a process where you listen to all of the stakeholders in the watershed and actively listen to residents and actively try to pull them into the process.... Put on a series of community picnics and barbecues and have an open forum for listening. If people feel they are being listened to they are more likely to want to be involved in the process” (Runyon, McKenzie Watershed Council).
- “Listen and communicate back to other members your feelings. Be alert. Know what is going on. If answers are not at the table, find out where they are and make sure they get introduced. If there is a major question not getting answered, make sure it does” (Porter, Owl Mountain Partnership).
- “Listen to everyone on the committee with equal amounts of interest and effort and not allow personalities to be a part of it, even though they will be at times (Sherman, Owl Mountain Partnership).
- “Get to the crux of what someone is trying to say. Speak up and assist the person if the person is struggling. That takes expertise. You need to have an individual who knows how to draw that out of someone. If someone does have a particular issue, it has to be

thoroughly discussed. Nothing can be scrapped because the group has not come to consensus” (Stewart, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance).

- “Any time you can increase the informal aspect of the process and make opportunities to just talk, that’s good. Having lunch together and fieldtrips to conservation sites meant more opportunity for personal communication and the building of mutual respect –and I thought that was key to eventually dealing on an honest level” (Robinson, Clark County HCP).

### **Practice constructive behavior**

- “Treat people fairly. Approach meetings from a positive perspective. Give people an opportunity to voice opinions and respect each other” (Parsons, Animas River Stakeholders Group).
- “Another word of advice is to participate! If you do not you will definitely not get heard. Your ideas will be ignored if nobody is aware of them” (Perino, Animas River Stakeholders Group).

### **Provide training**

- “Bring all members along. If someone because of their background, education or training doesn’t understand then you have to take the time to sit them down and explain it to them. Go sit down and drink some coffee with them and explain things” (Jack, Owl Mountain Partnership)
- “State and federal agencies need lots of training with these groups because they often come in with too much arrogance. They need to learn how to talk to rural folks and explain the issues” (Pace, Scott River CRMP).
- “It’s crucial that everyone really have a common definition of what consensus means when they first begin the process” (Sommarstrom, Scott River CRMP).
- “(Ranchers should) get training in labor negotiations before they even think about coming to the table. Otherwise they just get creamed” (Loper, ¾ Circle Ranch CRM).

### **Think about individuals, not just interests**

- “It helps to have strong personality traits in this process. Only boisterous extroverts succeed and survive. It’s basically a pool of sharks and the ones with biggest teeth win” (Shreiber, Clark County HCP).
- “The lesson I learned is that you pick your people carefully as to who is going to be at the table. Not just the interest groups but whom from those groups you work with. Maybe there needs to be a ground rule so you can kick people off you need to” (Sommarstrom, Scott River CRMP).

- “Everyone has to come into this process willing to give something. When there are people seeking their way or the highway, it won’t work” (Fowle, Scott River CRMP).
- “You really have to find the right individual to match the culture of the communication needed. You can’t just send a person in a three-piece business suit into a community where the culture is ranching and mining. That just doesn’t work” (Moore, Clark County HCP).

### **Utilize leadership**

- “As long as your leadership is strong and the group has a good set of bylaws it seems like to me you can cope with differentials such as power and wealth (Cipolla, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance).
- “Agendas will always be there, so the key is to skillfully facilitate through them, which is damn difficult to do” (Budd-Fallon, Clark County HCP).
- Forums must be run well. Everyone there has to feel that they will be listened to and are going to be taken as seriously as everyone else. It is also incumbent upon the group to have a good facilitator...someone who can move the discussion around to people who are raising their hands or whatever. Keep things on track and make people feel like their points are worthwhile” (Zankel, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance).
- “It is important to set ground rules and to document them” (Terry, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance).

### **Build Trust**

- “It boils down to developing a bit of trust in the other guy that he will reason with you fairly. There’s definitely a leap of faith involved” (Cunningham, ¾ Circle Ranch CRM).
- “You’ve got to have time. It’s that simple. Without the relationships between stakeholders that the passage of time allows, you get people holding back what they are willing to do because they fear they’ll be giving too much’ (Wiles, ¾ Circle Ranch CRM).

### **Other Insights**

- “It is important for everyone to be aware of that potential (co-optation). I also think it is important to always question your assumptions stopping and considering the alternatives whether or not someone brings it up or not.” (Stribling, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance).
- “When you are frustrated but feel that you need to collect your thoughts and think about what you are going to say, I suggest writing a letter. If there is something in which I do not agree with the EPA, then I write them a letter so that they have a record of it and so

do I. That way they can respond at the next meeting” (Clark, Animas River Stakeholders Group).

- Ideas should come from the locals and agencies should be prepared to take more of a backseat role, “That way you create local ownership and commitment to the process. In our case, you would not be able to draw upon and tap into that capability into the solution if you did not use them as an integral part of the solution” (Broetzman, Animas River Stakeholders Group).
- “People getting started need to think about what their recognition needs are” (Hall, Darby Partnership).
- “We all have alternates. You have to be attuned to burnout. Volunteer burnout is a very

## CHAPTER 20: DEALING WITH THE SCIENTIFIC DIMENSIONS OF ISSUES

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### I. INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

Many environmental or resource management issues can be both scientifically complex and involve high degrees of risk or uncertainty. In some cases, the issue may be purely scientific, such as deciding which species of riparian vegetation is best for a stream bank restoration project. Many issues however, involve a mix of social, economic and scientific concerns. A policy decision, like prioritizing actions for endangered species habitat protection, also relies on an understanding of the scientific dimensions of the issue.

Involving citizens, who may have insufficient scientific or technical expertise, in deliberation or decision-making on these issues also raises a number of concerns. Indeed, critics argue that collaborative partnerships may result in recommendations or decisions that are not scientifically sound, and may signify devolution from scientifically based management or protection strategies.

Part of our research explored the challenges faced by collaborative partnerships in dealing with science. We asked members and outside observers to describe how the group dealt with the scientific dimensions of the issues addressed by the partnership. In inquiring about those challenges, we learned what strategies groups had employed to confront challenges. Those interviewed were asked to reflect on those strategies and offer suggestions for how they would have improved the partnership's approach. Finally, participants had the opportunity to offer advice on how to deal with issues in a way that would result in credible and sound decisions.

Both the challenges groups encounter and the strategies they use vary according to many other factors affecting the partnership. By analyzing the way partnerships dealt with technical and scientific issues, we hope to provide insight on some common barriers and approaches to creating a credible collaborative process that results in scientifically sound solutions.

#### *Issues*

The partnerships chosen for case studies dealt with a wide range of scientific issues. Some of those issues include: impacts of industrial processes, development, forestry, and grazing on water quality, protection or restoration of fish and wildlife habitat, riparian area management, maintenance of rangeland health, and elimination of noxious weeds.

## **Summary of Core Findings**

Most of the challenges associated with the scientific and technical side of natural resource management are not unique to collaborative processes. In fact, uncertainty, lack of information, complex issues, divergent public perceptions, and the blending of science and politics are common barriers to environmental decision-making. Whether agencies are exclusively managing the resource, or a group uses collaborative problem-solving to provide solutions or advice, the path is not simple. Although some of the challenges encountered by collaborative partnerships are unique to multi-stakeholder processes, in some cases the nature of the process can shed light on issues that might otherwise remain unexplored. Having different perspectives at the table can force participants, and ultimately the decision-makers, to confront the problems associated with natural resource planning, monitoring and restoration.

Since our research focused on the challenges faced by partnerships and the strategies they used to address those challenges, this analysis is heavily weighted towards describing the “boulders in the road,” rather than the opportunities incurred by collaborative approaches. These findings are not meant to represent an all-inclusive picture of collaborative partnerships, nor do they attempt to evaluate the success of strategies used. They are merely a report of some of the challenges, strategies and advice encountered in our exploration of ten cases.

Most partnerships employed a series of strategies to address the scientific dimensions of issues. Science was a dominant concern of some groups, while others dealt more with social, economic or political matters. Groups varied according to their inclusion or access to scientific and technical expertise. One of the top approaches employed by all of the groups was to involve scientific or technical experts in the process, either as members of the partnership or related task forces, or as invited speakers. Some strategies influenced partnerships’ abilities to deal with a range of stumbling blocks, yet specifically addressed a set of challenges.

### ***Core Issues and Strategies***

#### **1. Ensuring understanding**

Partnerships dealt with how to accommodate limited expertise by educating participants and balancing the level of discussion around technical topics. They also worked on how to clarify public perceptions about the nature of the problem.

#### **Strategies**

- Provided presentations and workshops
- Went on field trips
- Avoided acronyms / jargon
- Conducted community outreach

## **2. Uncertainty**

Partnerships grappled with how to make scientifically sound decisions given unclear impacts incomplete information and new methods.

### **Strategies**

- Practiced adaptive management
- Avoided premature conclusions from data
- Compared most likely outcomes

## **3. Obtaining information**

Partnerships in some cases grappled with how to obtain information given lack of baseline data, limited access to expertise, and resistance to data collection on private land.

### **Strategies**

- Enlisted expert members and staff
- Created technical task forces
- Brought in outside experts
- Accessed outside resources

## **4. Managing information**

Partnerships had to learn how to manage information given the need for agency coordination in assimilating and verifying data.

### **Strategies**

- Obtained a well-matched coordinator
- Utilized GIS technology to present data

## **5. Legitimizing information**

Partnerships grappled with how to legitimize information given the often-inextricable nature of science and politics. Issues included: lack of trust, agency integrity and consistency, defining "good science," and interpreting data.

### **Strategies**

- Developed public outreach and education strategies
- Engaged in joint fact finding

## *Advice*

- ***Tap into resources***
  - ♦ Establish network of technical experts
  - ♦ Include experts in the group
  - ♦ Access resources in the community
  - ♦ Maximize information sharing
  - ♦ Choose a coordinator versed in science
  
- **Be inclusive**
  - ♦ Include all stakeholders in discussion of scientific issues including question development, data collection, and inference
  - ♦ Ensure understanding of research / monitoring
  - ♦ Keep the language at a simple level
  - ♦ Use broad variety of expertise, not just one field
  - ♦ Use diverse sources
  
- **Separate Tasks**
  - ♦ Start with small projects
  - ♦ Develop subcommittees
  - ♦ Focus on adaptive management
  
- ***Other Insights***
  - ♦ Focus scientific questions
  - ♦ Find experts with holistic perspectives
  - ♦ Consider alternatives and act, despite lack of complete information
  - ♦ Have reliable data to support your assumptions

## **II. SPECIFIC CHALLENGES**

### **1. Ensuring Understanding**

#### *Challenges*

With diverse representation comes the challenge of managing varying levels of knowledge and understanding of the scientific and technical dimensions of the issues on the table. Groups mentioned three main aspects of this challenge: educating participants, balancing the level of discussion around scientific or technical issues, and dealing with differing perceptions of the issue within the community.

#### **Educating participants**

Participants in both the McKenzie Watershed Council (MWC) and the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance (NWA) mentioned the need to address the fact that some members do not have the education or experience to keep up with the science involved. A landowner from the MWC noted, “Nobody knows everything” (Grier, 1999). Educating participants and keeping them up to speed was a challenge, especially for those groups that had member turnover.

Education is vital, participants say, but it takes time. Groups sometimes feel pressure to jump into projects without asking all the necessary questions or ensuring understanding. In the Nanticoke River watershed, biology professor Judith Stribling found that some members did not recognize their need for more knowledge about science: “They [the farmers] are nutrient experts in one respect but in another respect, they are not getting the good science so they do not know what they need to know. They know enough of what they are doing but they often do not know what are the implications. There are too many people in our group to be in a situation where they are feeding off each other’s ignorance” (1999).

### **Balancing the discussion**

A second aspect of this challenge is how to manage the process and the language used in order to create an accessible environment for participants with less scientific background without detracting from a commitment to sound science. On the MWC for example, some members were described as “out of it” (Anderson, 1999) during presentations or discussion that dealt with complex science, because of the high number of knowledgeable members. The Clark County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) process had to deal with the intricacies of habitat protection for multiple endangered species in a way that did not alienate rural participants with “confusing technical language” (Schreiber, 1999). Both the Darby Partnership and Animas River Stakeholders Group are aware of the impact of jargon on limiting open dialogue around the issues of water quality. Yetty Alley, a former member of the Darby Partners from the Ohio Natural Resources Department, noted that “Most of the folks at least from the government side had more of a scientific or technical background, so it was not very difficult for most people to pick up. But when you start to include members of the general public it becomes more of an issue.” Some non-agency members felt intimidated by the level of scientific analysis discussed at meetings. Mary Ann Core, of the Natural Resource Conservation Service, stated, “I sat through several meetings where I did not understand one half of what the researchers were saying.”

### **Perceptions about the nature of the problem**

In some cases, due to conflicting information, the community at large either did not recognize the problem the collaborative group was attempting to address, or had a different understanding of the nature of the problem. In the Animas River Valley, some residents refused to believe a water quality problem existed. Carol Russell of the EPA remarked, “I find it difficult to argue with those at the table who simply say, ‘there are fish there and you people from Washington can’t tell me there aren’t.’ In this case, no matter what the data say, they are not going to believe you.” In the McKenzie River basin, the watershed council has had to deal with conflict between public perception and scientific data. Coordinator John Runyon explained, “There’s a public perception that most of sedimentation and turbidity in the water comes from forestry operations. We have scientific evidence that shows that it does not, it actually comes from agriculture and growing urban areas.”

### ***Strategies***

#### **Internal education**

Particularly in dealing with the challenge of ensuring participant understanding of the technical issues, interviewees emphasized the importance of presentations and workshops.

For example, the McKenzie Watershed Council held a series of "primers" on watershed management issues when the council first formed, with invited guest experts. They also continue to dedicate a substantial amount of the monthly meeting time to educational presentations. The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance is very active in bringing in outside experts as needed to make presentations or critique other presentations.

The BLM set up a weekend training workshop for members of the NW Colorado RAC. Participants spent a weekend at a local college where they attended sessions on basic ecology, ecosystem management, rangeland science as well as discussions about their role in the RAC. Visiting professors from throughout the state taught the workshop, which was well received by all who attended. One member commented, "We needed an educational course to begin with to kind of try to bring everyone up to the same level of knowledge. At least the basics so they could talk to each other" (Dickinson).

### **Field trips**

Many groups find that field trips help people understand the scientific issues by talking about problems in the landscape context. In both Scott River and McKenzie, workshops and fieldtrips facilitated information sharing by bringing landowners, agencies and other representatives shoulder to shoulder.

### **Avoidance of jargon or acronyms**

Partnerships with substantial expert representation also avoided the use of jargon or acronyms in order not to alienate the non-experts. On the McKenzie, one member joked about the group's internal acronym police that enforces the "no acronyms" policy. The Animas River Stakeholders Group is making steps in to decreasing the use of technical language and acronyms although some frustrated participants feel that jargon and acronyms are still widely used in meetings.

### **Outreach**

To address the need for more community education, the McKenzie Council recently hired an education coordinator to work in schools and communities within the watershed. Both the McKenzie, and the Scott River CRMP groups have used educational workshops and forums as a way to bring information to the public.

## **2. Uncertainty**

Environmental science and natural resource management are fields that involve inherently uncertain, and difficult to predict relationships between human actions and tangible outcomes on the ground. Management decisions may be based on incomplete information or may involve untested methods. Cutting edge management or restoration methods, while they may promise better resource protection in the long run, also involve a high level of uncertainty. While agencies also deal with the issue of uncertainty in their management decisions by bringing diverse perspectives to bear, collaborative partnerships shed light on different angles of the problem and force recognition of the uncertainty surrounding many decisions. They may in fact provide a better forum for addressing these challenges.

## *Challenges*

### **Uncertainty of causal relationships**

In the case of the desert tortoise in the Clark County HCP case, exact impacts of development, ranching and ORV use on loss of tortoise habitat are unknown. Nevada Division of Wildlife representative Brad Hardenbrook summarized Clark County's scientific dilemma: "Going out and actually proving a negative relationship would take years and probably millions of dollars. Moreover the nature of the Mojave Desert, long life of the tortoise and climatic variation year to year all make it difficult to produce reliable studies" (1999). With Multi-Species HCPs, complexity increases, requiring more information and further complicating understanding of the causal relationships.

In the Animas River basin, the relationship between mining and water contamination is uncertain despite years of research. Likewise, in the McKenzie River basin in Oregon, watershed council members encountered a similar challenge. Previous water quality data did not pinpoint the sources of sedimentation and turbidity in streams after storm events. Popular

## *Strategies*

Dealing with the uncertain nature of natural resource management is not a challenge limited to collaborative partnerships. Agencies also have to make decisions without complete information, a stumbling block they may or may not recognize and/or address. Yet the uncertainty of either data or management methods can compound the difficulty of reaching a decision in a group with diverse perspectives on the problem and its severity. Partnerships used three primary approaches to confront the problem of uncertainty: adaptive management, avoidance of premature conclusions from data, and comparison of likely alternatives.

### **Practiced adaptive management**

Adaptive management refers to the process of implementing small-scale experimental projects combined with research and monitoring to assess results and provide information on how to adapt management strategies to the current state of the resource. Of the cases included in the in-depth survey, only the McKenzie has the structure in place to provide ongoing monitoring for an adaptive management approach. Participants in the Clark County HCP consider it an appropriate strategy, yet lament the high costs involved. In the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM, experimentation and monitoring are the primary strategies for handling issues of biodiversity and endangered species.

### **Avoided Premature Conclusions**

The McKenzie Council, which collects its own water quality data through a coordinated monitoring project, is extremely cautious about making premature conclusions from preliminary data. John Runyon stated, “We made that very clear to the public. Five or six years into data, from a scientific standpoint, we have much more confidence in our data and we can speak more clearly about what this data means and about what kinds of questions it raises.”

### **Compared likely alternatives**

When no data was available, as in the Clark County HCP case, participants made decisions for tortoise habitat protection by comparing the management strategies proposed by the group to what would likely have happened otherwise. Moving forward despite incomplete knowledge is a strategy employed by partnerships, as it is by agencies.

## **3. Obtaining information and expertise**

### *Challenges*

Several partnerships included in the case study interviews reported difficulty with availability of and access to scientific information and technical expertise. In some cases relevant data was non-existent or inaccessible. Neither partnerships nor agencies had the necessary information on which to base management recommendations or decisions. Particular to partnerships, however, was a challenge linked to the small community size and rural location of some groups. Community isolation limited partnerships’ access to external information and expertise. Small communities often had few local resources on which to rely.

### **Lack of information**

Participants from Darby Creek, Clark County, and Scott River remarked that a lack of data made dealing with scientific issues much more challenging. Melissa Horton, a Natural Resource Conservation Service representative from the Darby Partnership stated, “We always wish we had more baseline data to begin with.” Often, the issues of concern have not been studied, least of all on an ecosystem or watershed scale. In Clark County, even nine years after the initiation of the HCP, an exact population count of the desert tortoise is still unknown.

### **Few sources of information**

In one case, even when data were available, the partnership had to rely heavily on one source of information. In Clark County, The Nature Conservancy’s representative Jim Moore noted “We relied heavily on the USFWS as a source of expertise.” Some participants considered the lack of a peer review mechanism a weakness of the process.

### **Limited access to expertise**

The Three Quarter Circle Ranch CRM group, and the Scott River CRMP recognized that their location in small, remote places restricted access to external expertise. Unlike the McKenzie River Valley, which is near both the University of Oregon and Oregon State, the Scott River Valley is four hours from the nearest university. In rural Wyoming, Three Quarter Circle Ranch CRM members noted that the cost in time and money required to access new knowledge prohibits a regimented pursuit of hard science. Furthermore, a cultural breach between residents of rural communities and academics who lack the ability to empathize with rural concerns sometimes makes bringing in outside experts difficult. This challenge was especially evident in the Scott River CRMP.

## ***Strategies***

### **Experts at the table**

In order to obtain credible information and expertise, partnerships enlisted members with expertise on the issues of concern. Many relied heavily on agency experts, industry scientists, private consultants and research professionals. All of the cases studied included agency representatives as group members. The Owl Mountain Partnership, for example, relies on the expertise of the BLM project manager to deal with scientific issues. The Darby Partnership and the McKenzie Watershed Council also include many experts at the table. The composition of the group, while it has raised other problems, has provided a ready source of information, as well as access to further data and expertise.

### **Task forces**

Some groups also pull in other agency expertise by forming task forces to concentrate on specific or short-term issues. Task forces often included other outside expertise, such as local consultants or university researchers. For example, the McKenzie council convenes technical teams and working groups for specific issues. Different task forces worked on developing action plans for the council's primary program areas: fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, recreation and human habitat.

### **Guest speakers and outside resources**

When groups didn't feel that the need for information warranted the formation of a task group, outside experts were invited to speak to the group on a particular issue. Executive Director Lisa Jo Frech of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance described this process of identifying and accessing expertise as "a spider web that is always growing, we are always evolving, we are always looking to catch someone else in our net." Outside resources that partnerships tapped into also included data and research done by agencies or university researchers.

## **4. Managing information**

### *Challenges*

Even when information and expertise was available, partnerships experienced problems managing that information. With multiple agencies and organizations involved, information coordination, and verification challenged participants in the Scott River CRMP, the Blackfoot Challenge and the Animas River Stakeholders Group.

### **Utility of existing data**

The McKenzie Watershed Council found that baseline data were based on different parameters making it difficult for the groups to compare information across a watershed scale. George Grier described the situation. "The State of Oregon had been maintaining water quality data for almost 100 years, but it was in 16 different formats, no one could access it and no one knew what was going on. [Data] was all scattered around, there was absolutely zero communication and it was ludicrous. There was data that someone was spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to collect and it was just sitting gathering dust someplace. We had all the stuff we needed to be making more informed decisions about the health of the river, but no one was talking about it or could even view it." This was a challenge not even recognized by the agencies that had been collecting the data. The creation of the watershed council brought the problem to light, opening doors to possible solutions.

### **Verification of information**

Verifying scientific information can be another challenge for collaborative partnerships. In the Blackfoot Challenge, data conflicts arose over the listing of the bull trout when wildlife biologists from the Plum Creek Timber Company disagreed with some of the data of federal and state biologists. Participants in the McKenzie Watershed Council observed the need to recognize that even scientists have opinions. Industrial timberlands representative Barb Blackmore commented, "You can get two scientists together and they can tell you two different things...they have opinions, they also come at it with a bias." Collaborative groups must deal with the challenge of balancing different perspectives, even among the "neutral" technical experts. In the Animas River Valley, for example, some residents believe that the EPA will not acknowledge initial water quality studies done by the USGS. Data conflicts among technical experts are certainly a common pattern in litigation processes. Partnerships, while not immune to this challenge, can provide opportunities for bringing differing views and sets of information into a common forum.

## *Strategies*

### **Coordination**

In order to adequately manage an increased flow of information from different sources, and ensure efficient processing of data, partnerships stressed the importance of having a coordinator. Particularly, coordinators who not only had strong people skills, but were also proficient in the relevant science, helped partnerships progress. The NW Colorado RAC BLM district manager Mark Morse not only knows the ins and outs of rangeland science, but also is personally dedicated to the success of the RAC. In the McKenzie basin, coordinator John Runyon has a technical background in water quality. Conversely, Jeffy Marx, coordinator of the Scott River CRMP said, "I came to this process as an ex-schoolteacher with little understanding of the science involved. I've learned my way, but I think these processes could benefit from coordinators who have both the time and expertise to manage the scientific information." Although the scientific background of the coordinator was stressed, one member of the MWC also mentioned the value of having a coordinator skilled in conflict management. Before Runyon was hired by the MWC, the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) acted as coordinator. LCOG's strength lay in a strong background in group process, skills some technical experts may lack.

### **GIS**

Geographic Information Systems have changed the possibilities for organization and presentation of natural resource data. In order to improve the compatibility and accessibility of data on water quality, the MWC is compiling a GIS database for the basin. Before the council, "everyone had their own data layer and they were different" (Runyon). Mapping information helps scientists and non-scientists alike understand the resource problems and their relationships.

## **5. Legitimization of Science**

Since collaborative partnerships as we define them inherently include diverse interests, most groups deal with a mix of scientific, economic, social and political concerns. It is often difficult if not impossible to extricate science from other interests. Proving the legitimacy of the information is often a part of any management decision, whether by agencies or by a partnership. By laying all of those issues on the table, collaborative groups may actually depoliticize the insular "scientific" decision-making of agencies. As in the case of uncertainty, partnerships illuminate the inextricability of science and politics. In the Scott River CRMP, the McKenzie Watershed Council, and the Animas River Stakeholders Group two main obstacles emerged in dealing with this challenge: forging new relationships between agencies and landowners, and dealing with questionable motives and integrity on the part of agencies.

## *Challenges*

### **Forging relationships**

Landowner distrust of agencies' regulatory authority can pose challenges to collaborative groups. For instance, landowners in the McKenzie basin are often afraid to collaborate with

the DEQ on water quality monitoring projects. Barb Blackmore of the Weyerhaeuser Corporation explained, “Even if people may want to get some help from them, they would never ask them, because they're just begging for a water quality listing.” An outside observer and critic of the McKenzie Watershed Council recounted one meeting where members discussed how to keep water quality data collected on private land from the state DEQ in order to protect cooperative landowners (Heiken, 1999). The Scott River CRMP encountered similar barriers to data collection on private land. Landowners interested in maintaining property rights have impeded agencies from conducting scientific tests on their property. The Natural Resource Conservation District’s pro-farming bias has also slowed the transfer of information essential to watershed conservation (Sommarstrom, 1999).

### **Agency motives and integrity**

In the Animas River Stakeholders Group, participants voiced concerns about the motives and integrity of the involved agencies with regards to research on the effects of mining on water quality. One concerned citizen commented, “We have found that when some of the studies done have not been politically correct, we just do not hear from them and we find someone else has taken their job. It is obvious that the agencies feel that they have to find something that is wrong in order to justify their work.” Agencies have cut budgets for researchers who find data that contradict other studies, and invalidated or refused to recognize the findings of other agencies. Chris George, another participant, observed, “ I do not see anything sinister, but I have seen a certain unwillingness of people at certain levels to not be happy with data.”

Agencies often have a difficult time learning to collaborate with each other. In the Scott River Valley, agency members exhibited proprietary behavior over information or data they had collected (Marx, 1999). Each agency needs to justify its existence by providing concrete measurements of their impacts, and that can be difficult if credit goes to the collaborative group.

### ***Strategies***

Both from a scientific as well as a political perspective, partnerships must work to legitimize the collaborative process. Strategies to deal with the inextricability of science and politics include public outreach and education and joint fact finding.

### **Public Outreach and Education**

Public outreach and education can take several forms depending on the issues and needs of the community. When information is in question or the motives of the group are unclear, partnerships have convened public forums or workshops to shed light on particular concerns. For example, in the McKenzie basin, severe flooding in 1996 led to conflict over the cause of sedimentation in Eugene’s drinking water. The MWC held a public water quality forum with guest experts. Over 200 people attended and many misconceptions were cleared up. Other forms of outreach include agencies working one on one with landowners as in the Blackfoot Challenge case.

### **Joint Fact Finding**

In the Scott River CRMP, the group used a process of joint fact finding to ensure the credibility of the information obtained for all involved. For instance, ranchers, agencies and university experts visited sites in the watershed to jointly assess the conditions of streambanks or salmon habitat.

## **IV. REFLECTIONS AND ADVICE**

Reflecting on their own experiences dealing with the scientific dimensions of issues, participants offered a range of advice for others using collaborative approaches for natural resource management.

### **1. Tap into resources**

- *Establish network of technical experts*
- *Include experts in the group*
- *Access resources in the community*
- *Maximize information sharing*
- *Choose a coordinator versed in science*

“Identify expertise in your watershed. Foster relationships with those experts. Create a list of folks that you can call upon when issues come up” (Runyon, McKenzie Watershed Council, 1999)

“Use agency expertise so that sideboards are created as to what is and is not feasible” (Neudecker, Blackfoot Challenge, 1999).

“You need to instill as much information sharing as possible to sift out the facts...it’s not just that people need to be educated. They need mutual education to take place” (Sommarstrom, Scott River CRMP, 1999).

### **2. Be inclusive**

- *Include all stakeholders in discussion of scientific issues including question development, data collection, and inference*

“Get that good mix of people in there that are working for different agencies and make sure that they are there. But also make sure the end group is there. Farmers for example. They are talking about their own concerns and bringing their own expertise on scientific issues to the table” (Stribling, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, 1999)

“Make a conscious effort to get everyone involved when obtaining scientific information. Get everyone in on the ground floor as terms of how you are going to conduct the study, collect the data, and what it is going to represent” (Butler, Animas River Stakeholders Group, 1999).

“Some parts of science are just straight math but most of the stuff in the natural resources area can’t be quantified very easily and it’s important to listen to the people who are involved locally because they might have an important role to play either by helping to design the thing properly or in making sure that’s it s implemented appropriately” (Grier, McKenzie Watershed Council, 1999).

- *Use broad variety of expertise, not just one field or source*

“You go out and get as many sources of information as you can” (Core, Darby Partnership, 1999).

“Be willing to present all sides of whatever science you are trying to present” (Smith, Darby Partnership, 1999).

Commenting on the CRM’s dependence on rangeland specialists to focus the scientific approaches on the ranch, Ron Cunningham said, “We need to diversify our expertise by bringing on a botany or a wildlife specialist” (Cunningham, Three-Quarter Circle Ranch, 1999).

- *Make sure entire group understands the basis of research / monitoring*

“Make sure that the entire group understands what the studies are about so that actions taken can be justified” (Clark, Animas River Stakeholders Group, 1999).

“Try to keep everything at like a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level, so everyone can understand (Thompson, McKenzie Watershed Council, 1999).

### **3. Separate Tasks**

- *Start with small projects*
- *Develop sub-committees*
- *Focus on adaptive management*

### **4. Other**

- *Focus scientific questions*

“It’s so critical that you know before you start exactly what question you want to answer, or you may be buried in data and not have a clue what to do with it” (Blackmore, McKenzie Watershed Council, 1999).

- *Find experts with holistic perspectives*

“Look for the holistic guys...people who understand watershed functions such as 1.4 million acre lands...some of the landscape ecologists who are thinking of the big picture and they

can probably help you with the decision-making element” (Hirschenberger, Blackfoot Challenge, 1999).

- ***Consider alternatives and act, despite lack of complete information***

“Sometimes you’re just going to have to make do. There’s a lot of uncertainty in our scientific approach, but what are our options? The most we can do is bring in as many voices on the issues and trust the agencies to work with the best information we can find” (Trebelcock, Three-Quarter Circle Ranch, 1999).

- ***Have reliable data to support your assumptions***

## CHAPTER 21: CONCLUSIONS

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Collaborative partnerships convening to address natural resource issues are growing at a dramatic rate across the nation. While these groups are more widespread in some regions of the U.S. than in others, all regions play host to this new form of natural resource decision-making that boasts increased citizen participation. Increasingly, these groups are influencing traditional top-down natural resource decision-making structures. Yet there is still widespread confusion about what collaborative partnerships are and how they work.

This project offers the insights of a thorough exploration of the landscape of natural resource collaborative initiatives across the United States. From a birds-eye view we began to recognize patterns amidst the seemingly endless range and variation. When we looked closer, focusing on the experiences of real people, we began to understand the kinds of challenges that groups face on the ground, and how they deal with issues of concern to the larger communities of interest.

Based on this research we made four significant findings about collaborative groups that we hope will help clarify present confusion. Collaborative partnerships:

- Vary substantially with regards to origins, issues addressed, organizational structure, process and outcomes
- Recognize and confront inherent challenges in unique ways
- Reach out to the broader community in search of greater participation, expertise and knowledge
- Adapt and evolve in response to changing issues and the needs of both the resource and the community

### **The Variable Landscape**

In developing a partnership database of more than 400 examples of collaborative natural resource management, our research unequivocally showed immense variation in the many forms collaboration is taking across the country. Partnerships vary in terms of their origins, the issues they address, their organizational structure, process, and outcomes. Some are entirely new creations, springing up out of conflict, community need, or the vision of a single leader. Others are subtle transmutations in traditional processes. There are numerous groups that lie somewhere on the continuum from traditional public participation processes to this “new” phenomenon we call collaborative resource management.

Partnerships do share common characteristics: they bring together diverse stakeholders to develop a shared vision for the management of natural resources. However, individual groups are extremely variable. Previous studies have attempted to describe the landscape of collaborative partnerships through the development of case studies that fit into categories like ecosystem management or watershed councils. While these “boxes” may be useful as a way to define pieces of the landscape, they do not capture the range of collaborative activity across the country. Both the number of groups arising and their rate of change make it impossible, therefore, to fit groups into neatly divisible boxes. Indeed, by stereotyping these

groups, we run the risk of either misrepresenting a group's intent or overseeing important and unique characteristics that set them apart from other groups.

For instance, although both Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Resource Advisory Councils (RACs) and Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP) groups are formally linked to the BLM, they vary considerably in terms of their origins and structure. RACs, which are linked to the BLM as a mandatory part of the agency's decision-making concerning the management of western rangeland, use a formalized process for appointing members and making advisory decisions. On the other end of the spectrum, however, are ad-hoc community based partnerships like the Three-Quarter Circle Ranch Coordinated Resource Management Planning Group. The Three-Quarter Circle Ranch CRM was initiated by a lone rancher with a vision for including diverse perspectives to improve management of a large public-private tract of land in Wyoming. Membership is loose, and meetings happen as needed.

Even within a seemingly simple category like the Resource Advisory Councils, each of the 24 RACs has characteristics that set it apart from the others. These differences are a result of the types of issues addressed, community history, or simply the personalities involved. Personalities, in fact, often play a defining role in the direction, vision, and decision-making of collaborative initiatives. Because the people involved are never exactly the same, even the eighty-five watershed councils in Oregon, all modeled after the same set of state standards, cannot be lumped into a single category.

Nor can collaborative partnerships be defined as something completely new. There is a continuum from traditional public participation processes to processes where citizens are actively involved in working together and with agency representatives to jointly make decisions. For non-agency participants, involvement in a collaborative partnership is often a deviation from more typical advocacy actions such as attending public hearings, lobbying, appealing agency decisions and even litigation. For agency participants, collaborative partnerships are a new input channel to assist with resource management and coordination with other stakeholders.

### **The Challenging Nature of Collaboration**

Collaborative initiatives, not surprisingly, are challenging processes. Partnerships use innovative strategies to solve natural resource issues -- strategies that are currently being tested in the field. The publicity surrounding select collaborative groups like the Quincy Library Group, Malpai Borderlands Group, or Henry's Fork Watershed Council sparked many well thought out critiques of the use of collaborative partnerships to manage natural resource issues. In exploring those critiques we better understood the questions being asked of partnerships, policy-makers, and the environmental community. Do partnerships adequately represent all stakeholders? How do partnerships manage decision-making, given the diversity of knowledge, skills and influence at the table? What role do collaborative groups play with

regard to government agencies and national laws to protect the environment? Do they usurp legitimate decision-making authorities and give control of national resources to local communities?

These concerns elicit valid and vital questions. Although we did not set out to respond to those concerns on a landscape level, we did look closely at the experiences of groups in confronting these inevitable challenges. In examining the principal critiques of collaboration as challenges that groups might face, we explored to what extent and in what manner partnerships dealt with issues like representation, accommodating diverse interests and capabilities, and scientific soundness. We found that participants in the ten in-depth case studies dealt with all of these challenges to varying degrees. They recognized and struggled to address both internal and external concerns to insure the success of their endeavors.

Partnerships by definition bring together people with diverse perspectives, each of them with different backgrounds, education, experiences, and levels of influence in the community. Groups strive to bring the right people to the table and once there, to accommodate their diverse interests and capabilities. This is no small task. Groups were aware of these challenges and constantly evaluated levels of participation and process structures used to provide opportunities for all stakeholders to have a voice. None are perfect, nor do they profess to be perfect. Rather, they are involved in a constant effort to assess themselves and adapt.

The challenge of dealing with science depended largely on the group's location and access to technical expertise and resources. Groups with heavy participation of agency personal and technical experts felt the main challenge was keeping everyone on the same page and balancing discussions so that everyone could understand. Groups without many technical experts used resources outside the community. Few groups were so isolated that accessing necessary scientific resources was a challenge. Dealing with the scientific aspects of natural resource management is an inherently challenging task, given high levels of uncertainty and incomplete information. In this respect the challenges facing collaborative groups are no more than for a single natural resource management agency. In fact, in most cases the partnership was able to coordinate information and data that would not have otherwise been used to inform agency decisions.

The question that must constantly be asked is "as compared to what?" Many of the community based efforts we examined did not replace a former government structure, but rather filled a role that had been previously empty, or in some cases, not even recognized as a possible role. In no case had a collaborative group usurped the authority of the agency responsible for managing the natural resource at stake. In most cases the group served as a coordinating, information, sharing advisory body that supported agency goals by augmenting community buy-in and in some cases garnering extra funds to support projects.

Collaborative partnerships are a fairly recent phenomenon in the field of natural resource management. As such they are caught in the throes of self-definition. They struggle to define participants, appropriate limits and the interface between communities, agencies and the resources that ultimately are in the hands of both.

## **Links to the Broader Community**

Collaborative groups have been criticized as elitist organizations that through careful selection of group members, fail to reflect the wider community's views, needs and priorities. We found, however, that these partnerships, due primarily to their interactive nature, work symbiotically with their communities to improve decision-making and the use of natural resources. Although some groups are bound by limiting factors such as political membership (Resource Advisory Councils are one such example) there is overwhelming evidence that these same groups reach out to the wider community in search of the expertise and knowledge needed to improve their decisions. In fact, we found these groups actively strive to be as diverse as possible. Participants know when particular interests are not adequately represented, and they are aware of the potential consequences of their absence.

In the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, for example, (See chapter 10) Executive Director, Lisa Jo Frech works diligently to recruit new members because she feels their perspectives are invaluable yet missing at the table. All Nanticoke Watershed Alliance members interviewed feel there could be greater involvement from the poultry and farming sectors. But Frech is also concerned that the Native American perspective is absent and that key knowledge and expertise is lacking. She adds: "I do know that without their participation, our view of the watershed and its needs, issues, and resources, are not a total vision." In the case of the Blackfoot Challenge in South Central Montana members do not see eye to eye with the regional timber company. However, they take great pains to try to bring them into the collaborative process. Plum Creek Timber is the largest private landowner in the Blackfoot Valley and without their involvement and expertise, the Blackfoot Challenge, similar to the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, is concerned by an incomplete vision.

These cases are representative of the efforts many collaborative groups are making to develop and to sustain community involvement. Collaborative groups, after all, often arise because of the need for a local citizen voice. Collaborative groups are also aware that without encompassing involvement from the community at large (including national communities of interest) they will not withstand the test of time. Long-term community commitment is necessary to insure that current efforts eventually bear fruit. Because many collaborative groups work toward long term goals, conduct regular open meetings, workshops and field trips, there is ample opportunity to draw in the wider community.

The roles of state and federal agency representatives also help collaborative groups to avoid insularity. Collaborative initiatives surpass rather than circumvent the fulfillment of existing requirements under National Environmental Protection Act. Of the groups we analyzed with agency involvement, agency representatives were dedicated to these partnerships and felt collaboration "to be the future of natural resource management" (Neudecker, 1999). Agency representatives like U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Greg Neudecker, welcome the communities' expertise and realize that residents in these communities often possess a knowledge base that complements that of agency expertise. In Silverton, Colorado, Greg Parsons of the Colorado Water Quality Control District was astounded by the amount of local expertise on biological and chemical components of water quality as a result of historic

mining practices. The expertise from the mining community has been fundamental to the success of the Animas River Stakeholder Group.

Maintaining an open-door policy was another common and instrumental strategy that facilitated greater involvement. The words of environmental representative, Felice Pace of the Scott River Coordinated Resource Management plan (See chapter 17) are shared by an overwhelming majority of participants with whom we spoke: "You just have to muddle though [the representation issue]. You can never guarantee it will be perfect. I only suggest that the bottom line be that the door be left open for democracy to function. And that should be both ways --- if someone wants to walk out, they should be allowed to do so as well."

It would be incorrect to say that all collaborative groups succeed in effectively tapping into the community at large. For many, it may take years before enough trust is developed for community members to willingly share their knowledge and expertise. Indeed the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance still struggles to overcome its image as an elitist environmental organization. For that reason, it has been a challenge to get key players involved and some influential participants have left partially because they feel the group has lost its identity. Overall, however, groups take significant strides to reach out to the wider community in search of expertise so as to make more knowledgeable decisions about the natural resources at hand.

### **Dynamic and Evolving Processes**

Contrary to perceptions in the literature that view collaboration as a static process, numerous cases exhibited that groups are, by in large, constantly changing and adapting to the nature of their problems, participants, and community resources. Similar to the notion that no two partnerships are alike, no two partnerships adapt to these changes in a similar manner. Nothing is set in stone. Whether it be the introduction of new people to the group, change in partnership size, or a decrease or increase in member involvement, the partnership adapts accordingly. The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance (see Chapter 10) for instance, functions very differently today than at the time of its inception a few years ago primarily because new members have joined, other members have left, and the priorities of both the general membership and the Board of Directors has changed.

Adapting to change does not come easily. Evolution takes time and a great number of these groups, because so many are relatively new, clearly have not had time to become established organizations. Indeed, if they have evolved, it may be in the form of incremental steps. Nonetheless, new partnerships are not created in a vacuum. They benefit and learn from the experience of other groups, and often model their processes and organizational structures after older more established groups.

It was the overwhelming consensus of all participants with whom we spoke, that to succeed, their partnerships must listen to their participants and the community at large. Keeping the process open ensures that all concerns are being addressed and that the group's priorities fall in line with not only the existing regulations, but with the needs and priorities of the wider community.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Although time constraints necessarily limited the scope of our research, our findings raised other questions worth examining. The most important of these is the need for a quantitative study that illuminates the issues brought out by our qualitative work and that would involve more cases. We do advise, however, that any effort of this nature clearly recognize the inherent variation between groups and the methodological difficulties this would entail.

Second, it is important to keep in mind that the case studies we developed represent only a snapshot view of collaborative activity on the ground. Given the dynamic nature of collaboration, it would be interesting to follow groups over the course of many years to understand in more detail how they evolve. To look at a collaborative partnership at a particular moment in time without the benefit of historical perspective is to see it as a single still shot. In reality, one must follow a partnership through numerous stages of growth and change in order to develop a context for understanding these initiatives.

As Charter member of the McKenzie Watershed Council George Grier explains: "You need to have an incredibly long-term view of things if you're going to gauge success by collaborative processes. This is kind of like the analogy of filling the pipe line: You know you don't get anything out the other end until the pipeline's completely full, and in this case filling the pipeline takes a really long time because it's relationship building, and it's building a knowledge base, and it's networking, and there's a lot of complicated stuff that goes on that has to do with human dynamics and has absolutely nothing to do with natural resources. So if you judge how well you're doing by looking at projects completed it's going to be tough to evaluate a collaborative process as being a functional one in a short period of time. The test really will be to see what it looks like in 10 years after the relationships have been maintained. There's a lot of symbiosis that goes on and you got to give that time to get itself established."

Finally, though the scope of this research is not intended to provide specific policy recommendations, we believe our review of collaborative activity serves as a definitive signal that collaboration is indeed gaining momentum in growth and complexity, and shows no signs of ebbing. If state and federal agencies are truly interested in supporting collaborative resource management, they will have to revisit current policies and operating procedures. In this regard, we sincerely hope this document aids policy makers, participants and observers alike in attaining a better understanding of the landscape of collaborative resource management.