

A Systematic Assessment of  
Collaborative Resource Management Partnerships

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Collaborative Resource Management Partnerships are initiatives in which diverse stakeholders work together to address natural resource management issues. An increasing number of communities are looking toward collaboration as an alternative to traditional resource management problem solving. Yet, the range and variation of these initiatives is inadequately understood. This study describes the landscape of collaborative partnerships in the United States, highlighting ten in-depth case studies. Over one and a half years, a database of over 450 collaborative resource partnerships was established. Through the creation of a mapping framework, the range and variation of collaborative activity was then documented with regard to groups' origin, issues, organization, process and outcomes. By selecting a subset of ten partnerships, we also conducted interviews to assess the common challenges facing collaborative initiatives and the strategies adopted to manage them. Contrary to assumptions in the literature, we found that collaborative partnerships are variable, dynamic and evolving. Groups consistently access the wider community in search of feedback, advice and expertise, addressing a variety of challenges through innovative strategies.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

## **Part 1: Background and Literature Review**

Chapter 1: Introduction: The Growth of Collaborative Resource Partnerships in the U.S. 1-1

Chapter 2: Methodology 2-1

Chapter 3: Critiques of Collaboration: The Issues behind the Controversy 3-1

Chapter 4: Dimensions of Variation: Mapping the Terrain 4-1

## **Part 2: Case Studies**

Chapter 5: Animas River Stakeholders Group 5-1

Chapter 6: Blackfoot Challenge 6-1

Chapter 7: Clark County Habitat Conservation Planning Process 7-1

Chapter 8: Darby Partnership 8-1

Chapter 9: McKenzie Watershed Council 9-1

Chapter 10: Nanticoke Watershed Alliance 10-1

Chapter 11: Northwest Resource Advisory Council 11-1

Chapter 12: Owl Mountain Partnership 12-1

Chapter 13: Scott River Coordinated Resource Management Council 13-1

Chapter 14: Three-Quarter Circle Ranch Coordinated Resource Management Group 14-1

## **Part 3: Analysis and Conclusions**

Chapter 15: Why Collaboration and Alternatives 15-1

Chapter 16: Outcomes 16-1

Chapter 17: Ensuring Representation 17-1

Chapter 18: Accommodating Diverse Interests 18-1

Chapter 19: Accommodating Diverse Capabilities 19-1

Chapter 20: Dealing with the Scientific Dimensions of Issues 20-1

Chapter 21: Conclusions 21-1

## **Figures**

Figure 2-1: Flow Diagram of Tasks and Products 2-10

## **Appendices**

Appendix 2-1: Collaborative Partnership Brief 2-11

Appendix 2-2: Interview Questions 2-13

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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### A New Phenomenon?

Out of the progressive field of environmental conflict management, a new genre of collaboration is currently breeding controversy in the environmental arena. Collaborative resource management partnerships (collaborative partnerships) are initiatives in which diverse stakeholders work together to address the management of natural resources. These groups, which include watershed councils, Coordinated Resource Management processes (CRMs), and sustainable community initiatives, among others, have stimulated a lively, if not contentious debate about the role of direct citizen involvement in environmental planning and management. Using processes that promote problem-solving and focus on individual interests and shared concerns, collaborative partnerships are taking root across the United States addressing issues as varied as watershed management, riparian restoration, forest management, endangered species recovery, and grazing management (Jones 1996, McClellan 1996).

In the West, collaborative partnerships have proliferated in the last ten years. Oregon alone now has 88 watershed councils recognized by the Governor's Watershed Enhancement Board (GWEB, 1999). CRM, a little known landowner cooperation process born in the early 1950s has exploded in recent years to become a popular consensus based resource problem-solving tool, with hundreds of efforts and variations nation-wide (Kruse, 1998). In Gunnison, Colorado a model for collaboration between ranchers, agencies and environmentalists expanded into the Bureau of Land Management's Resource Advisory Council (RAC) program---with RACs in each of the 24 western states. The growth and success of a few local partnerships are influencing national policies. Responding to grassroots models, the Clinton administration has advocated collaboration as the key to the reinvention of government decision-making, in turn generating more partnership activity.

While the increase of collaborative approaches to environmental decision-making seems to mark new territory for public and private land management, some argue that collaborative problem solving and decision-making is in fact nothing new. In Principles of Political Economy, John Stewart Mills wrote, "It is hardly possible to overrate the value...of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar...Such communication has always been, and is peculiarly in this present age, one of the primary sources of progress" (Mills, 1848). Modern day partnerships are indeed reminiscent of the New England Town Meetings---with people of different backgrounds, values and views gathering to work through community decisions.

For some federal agencies like the Bureau of Land Management, the collaborative groups that are springing up throughout the West might be seen as an expansion of the way landowners and agency officials have always dealt with each other (Bryan, 1999). T. Wright Dickinson, County Commissioner and rancher from Moffat County, Colorado, speaking about the

Resource Advisory Council model, states, “These ideas of getting diverse stakeholders together to deal with natural resource issues go back to 1934 when the BLM was created” (Dickinson, 1999).

Although the process may be familiar, the nature of the settings, origins, issues, organization, participants and outcomes in which collaboration is being applied have changed in many ways. The sheer number and diversity of these groups and their possible impacts on local communities, the environment and environmental policy warrants closer investigation.

### **Origins of Collaboration**

As with any social movement or paradigm shift, it is difficult to establish a single source or reason for the growth of partnerships. The impetus for collaborative problem solving derives from many realms, including national and international policies, resource scarcity and environmental crises, and demographic shifts. People are beginning to frame environmental issues differently, blurring the battle lines as industry attempts to “green” its practices and environmentalists consider social and economic issues.

Certainly the increasing global interest in “sustainability” has influenced domestic support for initiatives that integrate environmental, social and economic concerns. Internationally, a sense of crisis and the realization that countries could no longer keep or solve environmental problems solely within their borders led to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The Agenda 21 commitments focus on sustainable development which “requires us to conceptualize problems and solutions differently . . . to think more creatively and collaboratively about solutions. Instead of thinking about an environmental problem strictly in terms of environmental solutions, sustainable development forces us to design and implement a solution that also furthers economic and social goals” (Dernbach, 1997:10507). These concepts are also the essence of most collaborative partnerships.

Stakeholder negotiation is increasingly used as a way to resolve environmental conflict. In the 1960s and 1970s, the modern day environmental movement was born out of conflict between diverse interests, including environmentalists, industry, policy-makers and managers. In the 1980s, however, the field of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) grew with the objective of resolving disputes with less cost and time than courtroom processes (Susskind 1980). Grant-making foundations like the Ford Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation began supporting the promotion of ADR shortly after (Bingham and Haygood, 1984). In 1990, with the passage of the Administrative Dispute Resolution Act (P.L. 101-552) and the Negotiated Rulemaking Act (P.L. 101-648) (Plater et al 1992), many government agencies also began to look to ADR as a means of handling internal and external conflicts (Susskind et al 1993). Several organizations like RESOLVE, the Keystone Center, and the Center for Dispute Resolution now provide professional mediation assistance in support of environmental dispute resolution. In 1998, Congress created and appropriated funds for the Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, an extension of the Morris K. Udall Foundation to promote mediation as an alternative to litigation (H.R 3042) (New York Times, 1998). In the 1990s the principles of ADR have transmuted into an on-going adaptive

process, applying the experience gained in one-time negotiations to community-based problem solving.

The increase of collaborative groups in the west can certainly be attributed to the rapidly changing demography of rural communities. Many western communities historically dependent on resource extraction are watching urban dwellers relocate to rural towns in search of a different lifestyle and access to recreational opportunities. Computers and the Internet have changed the way we work, dissolving the economy's geographical bounds. These newcomers see the land in a vastly different way. Comparing the West as recently as 40 years ago, rancher T. Wright Dickenson remarks, "Diversity at that time was cattle and sheepmen, not the broad diverse interests using the public lands today" (Dickenson, 1999).

Most participants and proponents of collaborative partnership models also cite the failure of traditional decision-making processes as a primary motivation for the collaboration movement (Erickson, 1998; Wondolleck et al, 1994). Many see the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) model for citizen participation as adversarial in nature, instigating litigation and protracted court battles without "mobilizing the understanding, trust, and capabilities needed for effective action" (Wondolleck et al, 1994). Former environmental advocate and now mediator Todd Bryan, commenting on the traditional adversarial path to environmental protection, says, "I fought a lot of battles and I won many of them, but I don't ever remember changing anyone's mind" (Bryan, 1999). Review and comment procedures are not creative processes and may fail "to deal with the full set of issues that contribute to the ...problem at hand" (Wondolleck et al, 1994). Frustration with the NEPA participation model has influenced both agency and citizen initiatives to change the definition of participation in environmental decision-making. Along with the shortcomings of the process, some feel that "almost all of the "easy" gains [for the environment] have been made. What's left are small and costly gains" (Mohin, 1997). Gridlock often characterizes the initiation of a collaborative approach to dealing with issues formerly dealt with in administrative hearings and the courts.

Frustration also stems from existing state and federal agencies originally designed for single interest management strategies. Increasingly, scientists and managers are realizing that few environmental problems fit neatly within agencies' jurisdictional boundaries. Although solving those problems requires coordination, as former *EPA* Administrator William Ruckelhaus pointed out, environmental laws were written "to stand alone, instead of directing agencies to search for the best combination of policies to benefit the environment" (1993 in Mohin).

The Clinton Administration has advocated collaborative approaches to environmental problem solving in a variety of ways. The emphasis on innovative public – private partnerships highlighted in Reinventing Government (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992) forms the basis of many current policies. The Council on Environmental Quality, the President's chief advising body on environmental policy, based the Reinventing NEPA program on "the belief that collaboration, information sharing, and flexibility are the key to effective and responsive government" (McGinty, 1997). President Clinton himself lauded former CEQ chairwoman

Kathleen McGinty's efforts to "promote collaboration over conflict, and to demonstrate that a healthy economy and a healthy environment not only are compatible, but are inextricably linked" (Clinton, 1998). Behind the oratory lies a fundamental shift in political values regarding the use of public lands. Increasingly, the value of recreation, wildlife habitat, and clean water surpass the value of traditional extractive uses for the land (Pendery, 1997). Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt's celebration of success stories around the country have brought several unique initiatives into the public eye.

Traditional resource management jurisdictions are also beginning to evolve into landscape, ecosystem, or watershed boundaries, encouraging multi-stakeholder collaboration. In 1997 on the 25<sup>th</sup>

At the "Environmental Summit on the West" in late 1998, the Western Governor's Association espoused a new doctrine called "Enlibra", meaning "moving toward balance" (Greenwire, 1998). The doctrine, developed by Governors Kitzhaber of Oregon and Leavitt of Utah, promotes "collaboration [and] local decision-making" (Brinckman in Greenwire, 1998).

Some of these policies have trickled down to the federal land management agencies responsible for how natural resources are managed across the country. It is important to note, however, that paper policies may not reflect support for collaborative efforts in the field. In fact, as Don Snow of the Northern Lights Institute points out, "A century of law, policy, and custom has insulated federal land managers from sharing much power with local citizens. It may take a substantial shift in policy to change this fundamental power relationship between federal decision makers and local, or collaborative, conservationists" (1998). Agencies like the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the USDA-Forest Service (USDA-FS), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are, however, initiating some programs that support collaborative partnerships. Some of those initiatives are summarized below.

### ***Bureau of Land Management***

The BLM's Coordinated Resource Management Planning process (CRM or CRMP) was developed in the 1940's and has been adopted by many newer collaborative groups, particularly to address grazing or watershed issues. In 1994, the agency's Rangeland Reform initiative was based on ecosystem management principles, which promote a holistic approach that incorporates both ecological as well as socio-economic concerns. With reform, Ecosystem Management became a BLM agency commitment (Pendery, 1997). In the agency's 1997 Annual Report, collaborative management is stated as a Blueprint Goal. The BLM is "dedicated to understanding socio-economic and environmental trends, being more inclusive in its decision-making and implementing appropriate on the ground activities (BLM, 1997). The goals also state: "The BLM is committed to building effective partnerships that will accomplish three interrelated goals: (1) Improve understanding of environmental, social and economic conditions and trends (2) Promote community-based planning and (3) Expand partnerships to implement on the ground activities "(BLM, 1997).

Strategies include the development of a network of natural resource ADR consultants in all BLM states (BLM, 1998) and a new training focus. Regional offices are beginning to provide training in ADR and collaboration for their field staff (Bryan, 1999). The BLM Partnership Series workshops are a series of classes designed to help BLM employees learn to identify and work with human and cultural resources within a community. The goal is for staff to apply this knowledge to planning and collaborative-decision making in order to enhance the landscape and promote healthy communities (BLM National Training Center).

A primary effort of the agency to support collaborative processes is the creation of formal Resource Advisory Councils (RACs) in 24 western states. In each state, the governor appoints diverse stakeholders to the council, which uses consensus decision-making to address issues related to rangeland management (BLM, 1998).

### *USDA-Forest Service*

In 1992 the Forest Service began a dialogue which focused on the understanding that "decisions made through collaboration with local communities are built with broader knowledge and experience and are more likely to be implemented" (USDA FS, 1999). As part of this dialogue, Chief Dombeck stated, "Our goal is to increase the Forest Service's capacity and desire to collaborate with all forest users, owners and interests as a way to improve relationships and resource stewardship" (Dombeck in USDA FS, 1997). In 1997, a collaborative stewardship team was appointed to look at the capacity of the Forest Service to implement collaborative approaches.

One example of the Forest Service's initiative to support collaboration is the Sustainable Forests Roundtable, a multi-stakeholder forum for sharing information and perspectives that enable better decision-making regarding sustainable forest practices. The Forest Service has also published brochures and web pages describing the agency's intent to sponsor resource stewardship and conservation partnerships on an area-wide or watershed basis. (USDA FS (2), 1999). Regional offices have developed internal documents framing a commitment to "collaborative planning" and "agency/stakeholder partnerships" (Northern Region USDA-FS, 1997).

### *Environmental Protection Agency*

Although the EPA is primarily a regulatory agency rather than a management agency, there are several programs that reflect the agency's support of collaborative initiatives. One of the most expansive and somewhat nebulous programs is community-based environmental protection (CBEP). Community-based environmental protection is "a framework for identifying and solving environmental problems by setting priorities and forging solutions through an open inclusive process driven by places and the people who live in them" (EPA (1), 1999). Through this program, regional offices work to recognize, highlight and support community efforts to protect the environment.

The National Estuaries Program also includes multi-stakeholder committees for each of the estuaries in the program. These committees, which involve landowners, interest groups, and others, work collaboratively with the EPA to oversee restoration and management efforts (EPA(2), 1999).

A third example of an EPA direct program is Brownfields Redevelopment. Starting in 1993 the Clinton Administration provided seed money and recognized model communities working to redevelop inner city brownfields. Model Brownfields projects are collaborative in nature, involving residents, businesses, community leaders, investors, lenders and developers (The White House, 1997).

## **Categories of Collaborative Initiatives**

Collaborative partnerships often fall into several familiar categories. Although our research showed that partnerships neither fit easily into these categories, nor do familiar labels capture the range of partnerships that exist, it is useful to briefly summarize the categories of natural resource management that include collaboration among diverse stakeholders as a part of their process.

### ***Sustainable Communities***

More a movement than a definable program, sustainable communities initiatives are example of communities both small and large that attempt to define and procure a sustainable future, in terms of economic, social and environmental health. The Sustainable Communities Network serves to link these initiatives across the country ([www.sustainable.org](http://www.sustainable.org)). The National Town Meeting Program, which focuses on sustainable communities efforts, intends “to engage all Americans in charting a course for prosperity in the years ahead” to “maintain good communities, protect the environment, spend public resources wisely and achieve growth efficiently” being developed at the local community and business level (Sustainable America, 1999).

### ***Ecosystem Management***

Ecosystem Management (EM) is a label that has been applied to many different kinds of landscape scale management projects that emphasize a holistic perspective on ecosystem relations, long term planning, establishment of collaborative relationships among stakeholders, the need to protect the environment while providing for the sustainability of local economies (Yaffee et al, 1996; Keystone Center, 1996). Some EM initiatives are primarily large-scale agency managed projects while others involve citizens (Burchfield 1998, Yaffee et al, 1996). Collaboration in ecosystem management often means collaboration between agencies, not necessarily between all stakeholders, nor on a community level. There are over 500 EM projects in the country (Yaffee et al, 1996).

### ***Watershed Initiatives***

Many collaborative efforts organize around watershed boundaries or focus on water issues. While managing natural resources within natural drainage basins is not a new idea for either the U.S. or Europe, the sudden interest in the U.S. in the "watershed ideal" is new (Getches, 1998). The interest in watershed management in part relates to the changing demography of the West, which is no longer predominantly rural. Although 90% of people in Pacific states live in urban areas and 65% of Rocky Mountain states' population is urban, irrigated agriculture still uses the most water. Increasing support for instream values is forcing a change in the way federal water institutions manage western water (Bell, 1997). In a report to the Western Water Policy Review Advisory Commission, Craig Bell notes that "Legal and political gridlock is forcing varied interests to come together and work out their differences and find grounds for mutually beneficially relationships" (1997). Watershed boundaries are

increasingly used as way to integrate management and protection, and to coordinate water policies.

Several states support watershed based approaches to natural resource management. For example, the Oregon legislature passed the Oregon Plan to address endangered fish habitat restoration throughout the state by the formation of local watershed councils. In Massachusetts, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs is reorganizing the state's resource management plans to conform to watershed boundaries (Armstrong, 1999). In North Carolina, the legislature recently approved a statewide river assessment project that is focused on the state's major river basins.

### ***Coordinated Resource Management***

Coordinated Resource Management is a process that originated in the early 1950's in the Soil Conservation Service. It has evolved over the last five decades to become a popular tool that allows for direct participation of all stakeholders concerned with natural resource management in a given planning area (Society for Range Management, 1997). Sanctioned by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Soil Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service, and Cooperative Extension Service, the CRM concept has been widely adopted and modified beyond its initial agency initiated sphere. CRM serves as a general yet adaptable set of guidelines for inter-agency cooperation and consensus based decision-making among stakeholders (Philippi, 1998). Although no one knows the exact number, there are hundreds of CRM initiatives across the country.

### ***Habitat Conservation Planning Processes***

Habitat Conservation Planning processes (HCPs) arose from the amended section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act, which allows for incidental take of an endangered species given the approval of a conservation plan (USFWS, 1999). The HCP process is described as "a program that, at its best, can integrate development activities with endangered species conservation, provide a framework for broad-based conservation planning, and foster a climate of cooperation between the public and private sectors" (USFWS, 1999). Although most HCPs are the result of negotiations between a single landowner and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, some involve multi-party collaborative efforts. The process is accelerating rapidly, with over 225 HCPs throughout the country (Anderson et al, 1998).

### **Why this project?**

Given the range and diversity of collaborative programs and initiatives that include multi-party collaborative processes to manage natural resources, it is difficult to understand the landscape. There are no clear maps to help people understand what is happening across the U.S. Familiar categories like ecosystem management and watershed councils include great variation within the kinds of groups falling under each label. Also, the lines are blurred, and many groups that do not fit neatly merely fall through the cracks. It is no wonder people are confused and that a few groups that make it into the news become models of both what to

expect, as well as what to criticize or to support. There is a need to describe the landscape of collaborative partnerships, clearly defining the differences and similarities between the many groups that exist in order to better inform the current debate about these processes. Exploring how individual partnerships work together on the ground to manage natural resources can illuminate the real challenges and opportunities that these "nascent experiments at civility" (Ken Cairn, 1997) confront.

### **Goals and Objectives**

From this project, we expect to gain an understanding of the range and variation in structure, objectives, and outcomes of collaborative resource partnerships in the U.S.; positive and negative critiques of these partnerships, and the opportunities and challenges facing collaborative initiatives. Through interviews and case analyses, we will discern how these partnerships capitalize on opportunities and overcome barriers to meeting the standards and criteria of concerned observers.

We will review the literature and interview a broad range of key participating and non-participating stakeholders in collaborative partnerships in order to:

1) Describe the range and variation of Collaborative Partnership initiatives

In order to visually represent the range, variation and scope of collaborative partnerships we will create a map to describe collaborative partnerships according to characteristics such as:

- Location
- Issues
- Participants
- Outcomes
- Decision authority
- Connection to existing procedures
- Elements of process structure
- Scientific basis for planning, decision-making, implementation, and monitoring
- Level of support / opposition
- Level of experience / knowledge
- Funding
- Time frame (when initiated / meeting frequency)
- Scale of projects
- Land ownership

2) Examine the issues raised in both positive and negative critiques of collaborative partnerships.

We will identify and describe the positive and negative critiques surrounding collaborative partnerships. This information will be used to generate hypotheses regarding the criteria used by stakeholders to determine acceptable versus unacceptable collaborative partnership processes.

3) Illustrate and analyze what role these varied perceptions of the collaborative partnership process play in select case studies.

Within the range of collaborative partnerships, we will select and develop 10 in-depth case studies that exemplify the findings of our research.

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## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

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### Overview

This chapter describes the research path we used to conduct a systematic analysis of collaborative resource partnerships in the United States. As described in Chapter 1, our core objectives were to:

- **Review** supportive and critical perspectives of collaborative approaches to natural resource management;
- **Describe** the current range and variation of collaborative activity in the United States; and
- **Explore** how participants in specific cases respond to challenges and opportunities present in collaborative resource management efforts.

To achieve these objectives, six research phases, diagrammed in *Figure 2-1*, were followed. Each phase correlates with development of one or more chapters of this project (see diagram page 2-9):

- 1) Reviewing current literature about collaboration;
- 2) Identifying and developing a collaborative partnership database;
- 3) Developing a framework for analysis;
- 4) Selecting cases for in-depth study;
- 5) Conducting interviews; and
- 6) Performing cross-case analysis.

Progress with each phase was supplemented by:

- *Website development* to disseminate and to gather information <[www.umich.edu/~crpgroup](http://www.umich.edu/~crpgroup)> and;
- *Presentations* at the following conferences to further develop and acquire case-study information:
  - ♦ *Building Capacity in Environmental Community-based Watershed Projects -- Peer to Peer Learning*, Skamania, Washington, February 7-10, 1999;
  - ♦ *The Society for Range Management Annual Conference*, Omaha, Nebraska - Report on Coordinated Resource Management activity, February 23-24, 1999; and
  - ♦ *The Society for Public Policy and Dispute Resolution (SPIDR) Mid-year Conference for the Environmental and Public Policy Sector*, Keystone, Colorado, May 13-15, 1999.

## **RESEARCH PHASES**

### ***Introduction***

The following description of research phases details what became a one and half year evolving effort to understand and describe collaborative activity. Therefore, it is important to note that our objectives necessitated overlap in nearly all research steps. This description serves to explain why we took the steps we did, the thought processes behind it, and final products.

### **Phase 1: Reviewing Current Literature About Collaborative Activity**

Reviewing the literature on collaborative activity was the first step in determining how those involved in the natural resource management field currently think about collaboration and why. In addition, we knew that, to credibly assess the range of collaborative activity, it was essential to understand the driving forces behind the growing number of collaborative partnerships. Indeed, this phase guided our thinking, providing a clear view of where gaps in knowledge about collaborative activity existed. Consequently, information gathered from the literature also helped frame the need for a broader systematic assessment of collaboration.

During the initial six months of research (6/98 - 12/98), over 600 different sources of

#### *Chapter 4: Mapping the Terrain*

Finally, viewing the literature enriched our understanding of the many and varied *Dimensions* of collaborative activity. Consequently, we developed over thirty continuums to represent the variation we observed in collaborative initiatives across the country. We then used this chapter to describe the dimensions of collaboration in resource management, highlighting how groups differ along a single continuum as well as between different categories.

#### **Phase 2: Identifying and Developing a Collaborative Partnership Database**

Once we had defined what was being said about collaboration, our next step was to determine what was actually being done on the ground. We did this by building a large database of case information including groups from all parts of the spectrum; whether formal or informal; ad hoc or institutionalized; large or small; time limited or ongoing. To avoid overlooking parts of this landscape, it was necessary to initially frame collaboration in a purposefully broad manner. Therefore, for research purposes, *we defined collaborative partnerships as:*

*Groups of people from varied organizations or interests working together on natural resource management issues.*

With this definition in hand, we set out to:

- 1) Review compilations of collaborative initiatives; and
- 2) Contact individuals and organizations in the field to learn about additional cases.

Reports tapped for cases included, but were not limited to:

- *Balancing Public Trust and Private Interest: An Investigation of Public Participation in Habitat Conservation Planning.* Masters Project, University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment. Dr. Steven L. Yaffee et. al. May 1998.
- *Building Bridges Across Agency Boundaries: In Search of Excellence in the United States Forest Service.* Dr. Julia M. Wondolleck and Dr. Steven L. Yaffee, July 15, 1994.
- *Coordinated Resource Management: Guidelines for All Who Participate.* Rex Cleary and Dennis Phillippi, Society of Range Management, 1st Edition, 1993.
- *Ecosystem Management in the United States: An Assessment of Current Experience.* Dr. Steven L. Yaffee et. al. Island Press and The Wilderness Society, 1996.
- *The Keystone National Policy Dialogue on Ecosystem Management, Final Report.* The Keystone Center, Colorado, October 1996.
- *The Watershed Source Book: Watershed-Based Solutions to Natural Resource Problem.* University of Colorado Natural Resources Law Center.

The World Wide Web was also useful for examining the state of upcoming groups, many of which posted descriptions of their work. We contacted hundreds of organizations this way and accessed a variety of list servers. In total, approximately 1,000 individuals were reached, including federal and state land agencies, countless professional dispute resolution organizations, and every office of The Nature Conservancy in the United States. Indeed, maximizing the level of personal communication with individuals in the natural resource management field was key to capturing groups previously unstudied.

In total, this process allowed us to build a database of over 450 collaborative partnerships. For each, an information form was developed (called a Collaborative Partnership Brief or CP Brief --see *Appendix 2-2*). These forms---highlighting information such as the initiator of the partnership, funding source, outcomes, and contacts---illuminated the broad variation of collaborative partnerships that was appearing. The database also formed the pool we later used to illustrate the dimensions of collaboration (see Chapter 4 - Mapping the Terrain) and to select cases for in-depth study described in Phase 4.

### **Phase 3: Developing a Framework for Analysis**

After establishing this database, a framework was needed to make sense of the broad range of collaborative efforts that are occurring. Though we initially attempted to neatly divide groups into the descriptive boxes often found in the literature---such as Ecosystem Management groups, Watershed Initiatives, Sustainable Community initiatives and Collaborative Resource Management Partnerships---it soon became evident that there were many distinguishing as well as unifying characteristics among groups, suggesting a more complex relationship. In response to this confusion, we developed a conceptual framework that captures and make sense of the many dimensions along which collaborative groups vary. More than 30 descriptive continuums were identified describing the range and variation we observed among hundreds of collaborative groups found in both the literature and our partnership database.

#### *Development of interview questions for in-depth cases*

The second stage of the analysis framework was development of interview questions for case studies. Interviews allowed us to empirically assess how groups managed the common challenges and opportunities present in collaborative partnerships. Because of our interest in the controversial aspects of collaboration, interview questions were based on the critical perspectives of collaborative partnerships identified in the Critiques Chapter.

These challenges, described in Appendix 2-2 and detailed in Analysis Chapters 15-20, include:

- Ensuring stakeholder representation;
- Accommodating diverse interests;
- Dealing with scientific dimensions of natural resource management; and
- Accommodating diverse capabilities

#### *Interview process*

Interview questions were divided into two parts. Questions in Part 1 further probed background knowledge on each group, such as the *origin* of the group and its *organizational structure* (See Appendix 2-2 for full text) to give a sense of a group's evolution and outcomes. In Part 2, participants were asked describe how their group dealt with the common challenges to collaborative processes and what specific strategies they used to manage them. The result was 10 in-depth case studies describing the evolutionary nature of particular collaborative processes, the challenges they face and the strategies they use to address these challenges (Chapters 5-14).

#### **Phase 4: Selecting Cases for In-depth Study**

Along with establishing a framework with which to examine variation of partnerships, we also faced the daunting task of choosing a subset of cases (10) that exemplified the variation we were observing among groups as well as the acute challenges they face. To narrow the selection pool, a second definition of collaborative partnerships was applied involving four criteria:

- *Diverse representation and citizen involvement*
- *Consistent management activity*
- *Focus on problem-solving*
- *Minimum three -year existence*

#### ***Diverse representation and citizen involvement***

Qualifying cases needed to involve stakeholders representing diverse perspectives on the resource issue at hand. For this criteria, we considered both the number and type of perspectives present in the decision making process, prioritizing groups whose participants identified themselves as representatives of three or more of the following interests:

- ♦ *Environmentalists*
- ♦ *Business representatives*
- ♦ *Agency personnel*
- ♦ *Citizens*
- ♦ *Landowners*

In particular, we wanted cases to have direct citizen involvement, not consisting only of agencies, government, and formal organization representatives. This helped focus case

studies away from more formalized processes toward the phenomena of increasing public participation in resource management.

***Consistent management activity***

Consistent management activity meant considering only those partnerships deliberating on and proposing changes to resource conditions (e.g. watershed management or rangeland improvement). Comparatively, advisory councils, typically engaged only in information exchange, did not qualify.

***Focus on problem-solving***

Selecting groups with a long-term on *focus problem-solving* eliminated partnerships that did not go beyond one-time dispute resolution. Specifically, we were interested in examining initiatives with long-term investment in resolving resource management issues.

***Minimum three-year existence***

Finally, a minimum of three years experience for groups improved the possibility that case study partnerships had significant experience working in collaborative processes. This time period was based on empirical evidence and personal communication from case participants indicating the establishment of goals, objectives, and organizational framework typically required 1-2 years.

Combining these four criteria, our case-study definition of collaborative partnerships read as follows:

*Groups composed of diverse stakeholders and unlike perspectives that involve citizens at a community level, actively addressing natural resource issues and focused on problem-solving.*

This case selection parameter reduced our database pool by 75%, from over 450 collaborative partnerships to 112. Within this new subset, we identified groups reflecting the range and variation we had mapped in the 'Dimensions' section. Further background interviews were then conducted to verify information and availability of group members for interview. Finally, selected cases were compared between research team members, with short descriptions of each case scrutinized during meetings against the four criteria.

Given time limitations for case development, the 10 cases chosen were:

- *Animas River Stakeholder Group, Colorado*
- *Blackfoot Challenge, Montana*
- *The Clark County Habitat Conservation Planning Process, Nevada*
- *Darby Partnership, Darby Creek Watershed, Ohio*
- *The McKenzie Watershed Council, McKenzie Watershed, Oregon*
- *Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, Maryland and Delaware*
- *Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council, Colorado*
- *Owl Mountain Partnership, Colorado*

- *Three-Quarter Circle Ranch Coordinated Resource Management Group, Wyoming*
- *Scott River Coordinated Resource Management Planning Council, Scott River, California*

These cases comprise Chapters 5-14 of our report.

### **Phase 5: Conducting Phone Interviews**

With partnerships selected, phone interviewing comprised the information-gathering phase of each case. Our purpose was to give a "spotlight" look at the nature of collaborative activity across the country, providing descriptions of what collaborative activity looks like, how it functions, and the challenges it faces under specific circumstances.

The first step in this process was to develop additional background knowledge about each case partnership to tailor questions to specific cases and more rapidly cover the background questions in Part 1 of the interview. We then contacted group participants matching the range of perspectives we wanted to capture in each group. When possible, this included an environmentalist, small business or industry representative, agency personnel, and citizen and / or landowner. The interviewer also spoke to at least one individual *outside* of the partnership to obtain external opinion on the partnership and determine why, if relevant, they had abstained from participation.

In all, between seven and twelve interviews, each lasting approximately one hour, were conducted and transcribed for each case. Conversations generally followed an open dialogue guided by interview questions in which participants described challenges and strategies of their partnership in detail. On several occasions, second calls were necessary to clarify points.

### **Phase 6: Cross-case Analysis**

The cross-case analysis represented the final phase of research. Given the wide variation among collaborative processes, prescriptive advice for collaborative efforts was deemed inappropriate. Rather, analysis of partnerships identified cross-case themes in regard to challenges, strategies and opportunities existing in each group. Analysis also paralleled four main challenges to collaboration imbedded in the Critiques. It also compares the range of outcomes found in the ten in-depth cases and reason participants chose to be involved in collaborative processes. The focus of each analysis section is as follows:

- *Chapter 15: Why Collaboration and Alternatives*

There are always a variety of different ways to try and solve a problem or encourage action or decisions by others. Participating in public hearings, appealing agency decisions, and filing lawsuits are certainly some options that have been frequently used. Multi-party collaboration is another option. Why did the participants in the case study groups choose to collaborate rather than pursuing other avenues for addressing their interests? What do they believe would have happened with the issues of concern had the collaborative group not formed?

- ***Chapter 16: Outcomes***

The dimensions highlighted in Chapter 4 illustrate that there are wide-ranging objectives and goals evidenced across collaborative groups. What specifically has been accomplished by the case study groups? What do participants believe to be the most important achievement of their effort?

- ***Chapter 17: Ensuring Stakeholder Representation***

One challenge that collaborative groups encounter is achieving sufficient representation of those individuals and groups who will likely be affected by the group's decisions. This is a two-edged sword. The more interests that are represented, the more complete the information and knowledge about the issues at stake; at the same time, the more people that are involved, the more difficult it can be to manage discussions and reach decisions. What specific challenges did the case study groups face in ensuring representation? How did they deal with these challenges?

- ***Chapter 18: Accommodating Diverse Interests***

The diverse representation that makes collaborative groups unique presents both opportunities as well as challenges. On one hand, "two heads are better than one" and having diverse perspectives at the table can lead to more innovative solutions that are better tuned to the specifics of the problems being addressed. This diverse representation can also lead to a more broad-based and thorough understanding of the issues at stake. At the same time, to accommodate many different stakeholders requires that compromises must be made. What specific challenges did the case study groups face in accommodating the diverse interests in their partnerships? How did they deal with these challenges?

- ***Chapter 19: Accommodating Diverse Capabilities***

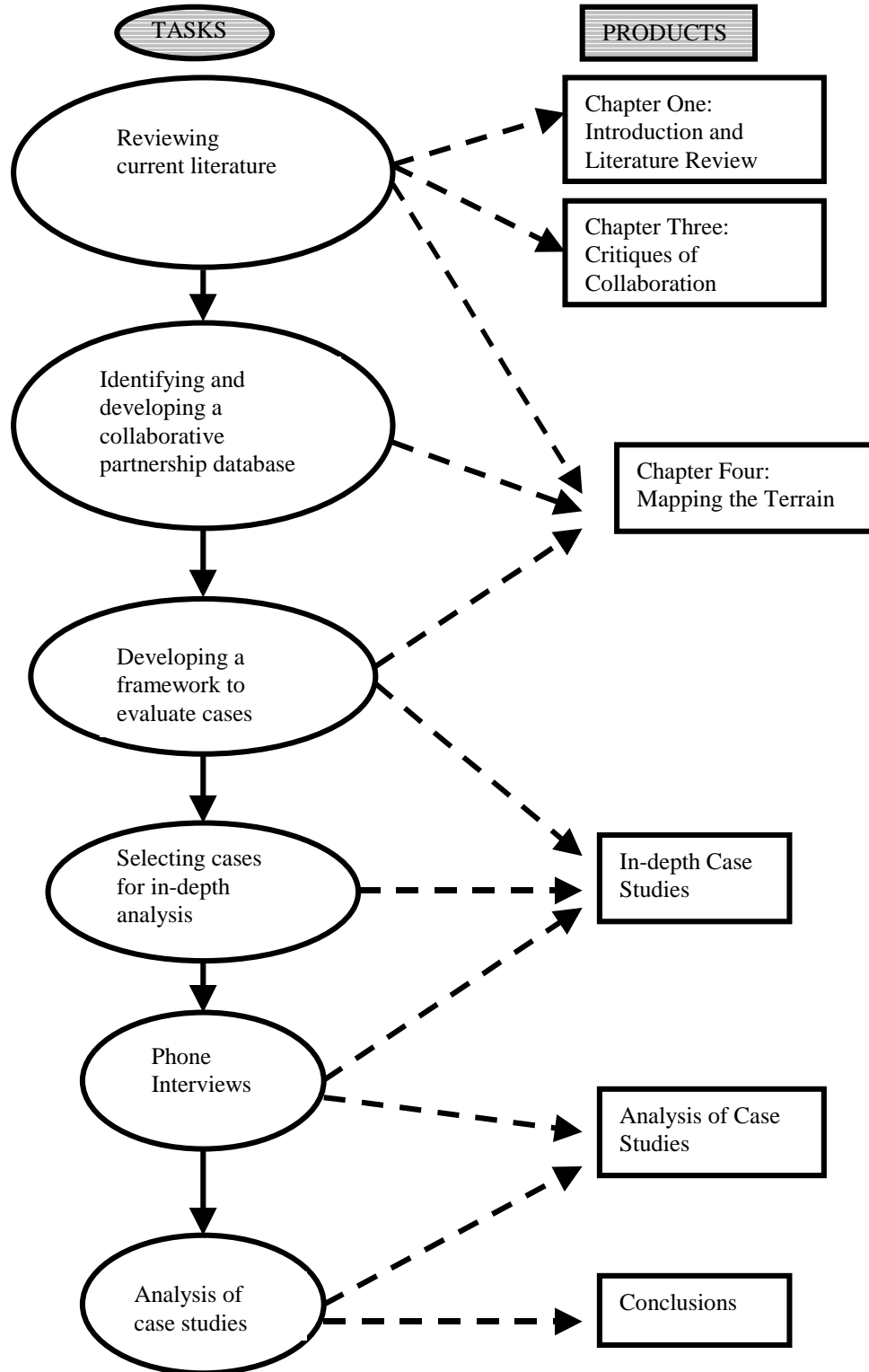
Another inherent challenge to collaborative initiatives is that people bring varying levels of knowledge, skills, power and resources to the table. What specific challenges did the case study groups face in accommodating the inevitable differences in influence, resources and skills between the involved parties? How did they deal with these challenges?

- ***Chapter 20: Dealing with Scientific Issues***

Many environmental problems and natural resource management issues are both scientifically complex and involve elements of risk and uncertainty. An additional challenge for collaborative groups is to meet the diverse needs and concerns of those involved but, at the same time, to do so in a way that is scientifically sound and credible. What specific challenges did the case study groups face in dealing with the scientific dimensions of the issues of concern to them? How did they deal with these challenges?

Finally, our **Conclusions** (Chapter 21) provide a summary of major findings from each analysis chapter. We also recount the core lessons about the nature of collaborative activity in the United States gleaned from the research phases of this document.

Figure 2-1. Flow diagram of tasks and products



## Appendix 2-1: CP Brief

Location:	
Environmental issues:	
Scale:	
Land ownership	
Initiator	
Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number</li> <li>• representation,</li> <li>• paid / volunteer</li> <li>• likes / unlikes</li> </ul>	
Process structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• open / closed</li> <li>• facilitation</li> <li>• decision rule</li> <li>• connection to existing procedures</li> <li>• formality</li> <li>• other</li> </ul>	
Time Frame: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when initiated</li> <li>• ongoing?</li> <li>• meeting schedule</li> </ul>	
Funding Source:	
Scientific basis for planning, implementing and monitoring:	
Decision authority:	

**Appendix 2-1 CP Brief (continued)**

Outcomes:	
Level of support / opposition:	
Other comments (include characteristics not mentioned above)	
Sources	
Contacts	

## **Appendix 2-2. Interview questions**

### **PART I. BACKGROUND**

#### ***Introduction***

- What is the full name of your partnership, and can you spell it for me?
- How would you describe your position in this partnership?

#### ***Origin of Partnership***

- Who and/or what initiated the partnership?
- Why was the partnership initiated?
- When was the partnership initiated?

#### ***Issues Information***

- What natural resource issues is the partnership concerned with?
- How visible were these issues prior to the partnership formation? How were they dealt with before the creation of the partnership?
- Is the area of interest primarily public or private lands (give percentages of ownership)?
- How large is the geographic area the partnership decisions would affect?
- How far do members travel to participate in partnership activities?

#### ***Organizational Information***

- Who are the members of the partnership and whom do they represent?
- Does the partnership have a relationship with agencies responsible for the resource? If so, please describe.
- Why did members chose to participate?
- What were principle goals of the partnership at the beginning? Have they changed?
- How did the partnership establish its goals?
- Is there a formal mission statement? What is it?
- How is the partnership funded?

#### ***Process Information***

- How often does the partnership meet? Where?
- How did the partnership choose to meet on this schedule?
- How does the partnership make decisions (e.g. How did the partnership establish its goals? consensus or majority rule)?
- Does a facilitator assist in the process?
- Does the partnership have any formal decision-making authority?
- How much time do you invest in this partnership?
- How does this compare to the time others invest?

### *Outcomes*

- What kind of projects has the partnership accomplished?
- What would you say has been the greatest accomplishment of the partnership?

## **PART II. CHALLENGES, STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### *Choosing to Collaborate*

#### STATEMENT:

There are always a variety of different ways to try to solve a problem or encourage action or decisions by others. Participating in public hearings, appealing agency decisions, filing lawsuits are certainly some options that have been frequently used. Multi-part collaboration is another option.

#### QUESTIONS:

Why did you choose to collaborate in this case?

What other options did you have? If the collaborative group would not have formed, what could you have done to address your concerns/problem?

Who, legally, or administratively, was "in charge" and why were they not able to deal effectively with the situation?

What do you think would have happened with these issues/problems if the collaborative group had not formed?

Weighing what the group has accomplished versus what likely would have occurred otherwise, what do you think are the most important achievements of the collaborative group?

How would you describe the role of the collaborative partnership relative to that of the responsible agencies?

What advice would you have with regards to the role a collaborative group should play and its relationship to official agencies?

### *Ensuring Representation*

#### STATEMENT:

One challenge that collaborative groups encounter is achieving sufficient representation of those individuals and groups who will likely be affected by the group's decisions. This is a two-edged sword. The more interests that are represented, the more complete the information and knowledge about the issues at stake; at the same time, the more people that are involved, the more difficult it can be to manage discussions and reach decisions.

#### QUESTIONS:

How did your group select participants?

Were concerns ever raised about the lack of representation of any particular group or interest?

In hindsight, do you feel that there were some interests that should have been involved but weren't?

What advice would you give others about how to deal with this challenge of ensuring adequate and fair representation within a manageable process?

### ***Local/National Tension***

(NOTE: If this is an issue, it will likely be raised in responses to the above question. If it is not discussed then, however, you should directly raise it, if the group deals with public land.)

#### **STATEMENT:**

Most collaborative groups coalesce out of a shared concern for an aspect of the environment that directly affects their lives in some way. Because many groups are located in out-of-the-way places, focused on specific resource base, representatives of regional or national groups find it difficult to participate, or even be aware of the group's discussions and decisions. Some criticize collaborative groups that are looking at issues dealing with public lands because they fear that local interests will dominate at the expense of broader national or state interests.

#### **QUESTIONS:**

Did this local/national tension become apparent in your group?

How did you deal with it?

In hindsight, what would you have done differently?

What advice would you give to others about how to deal with this challenge?

### ***Accommodating Diverse Interests***

#### **STATEMENT:**

The diverse representation that makes collaborative groups unique presents both opportunities as well as challenges. On the one hand, "two heads are better than one" and having diverse perspectives at the table can lead to more innovative solutions that are better tuned to the specifics of the problems being addressed. This diverse representation can also lead to a more broad-based and thorough understanding of the issues at stake. At the same time, this diversity poses inevitable challenges. To accommodate many different stakeholders sometimes requires that compromise. Some fear that compromises lead to "lowest common denominator solutions" that are less desirable than what otherwise might have been decided.

#### **QUESTION:**

Has your group confronted this two-edged sword?

What have been the positive aspects of a group comprised of diverse interests?

What challenges have been encountered?

In what ways do you think it may have improved the decisions that you have made?

In what ways do you think it may have diminished decisions?

What advice would you give to others about how to maximize the positive aspects of representation by multiple stakeholders while minimizing the shortcomings?

### ***Dealing with Scientific Issues***

#### **STATEMENT:**

Many environmental problems and natural resource management issues are both scientifically complex and involve elements of risk and uncertainty. An additional challenge for collaborative groups is to meet the diverse needs and concerns of those involved but, at the same time, to do so in a way that is scientifically sound and credible.

#### **QUESTION:**

How did your group deal with the scientific dimensions of the involved issues?

How did you obtain scientific advice and expertise when it was needed?

Did some representatives have the necessary scientific background? Consultants? University involvement? Agency expertise?

What actions did your group take to ensure that decisions were in compliance with federal and state environmental laws and regulations?

In hindsight, would you have dealt with this issue in a different way?

What advice would you give to others about how to deal with this challenge?

### ***Accommodating Diverse Capabilities***

#### **STATEMENT:**

One inherent challenge to collaborative initiatives is that people bring varying levels of knowledge, skills, power and resources to the table. Some people fear that collaborative processes may lead to unfair or inequitable attention to some interests given inevitable differences in power, resources and skills between the parties.

#### **QUESTIONS:**

Was this a challenge that you or your group encountered?

How did you deal with the reality that people do come to the table with different levels of power, resources and skills?

Now having the benefit of hindsight, what do you wish you had done differently?

What advice would you give to others about how to deal with this challenge?

### ***Additional Insights Particular to this Case (Last Remarks)***

Are there any other issues or thoughts about your partnership group that you think are important or useful for our project to know about?

## CHAPTER 3: CRITIQUES OF COLLABORATION

Although many individuals, organizations and agencies involved in the natural resource management field support increased public participation, the ascent of community-based collaborative partnerships raises important questions about the appropriate roles of citizens, agencies, industries and interest groups in environmental decision-making. Controversy over the widespread growth of local partnerships has sparked a national debate amongst supporters and critics of these processes. Regional periodicals like The Chronicle of Community and High Country News are forums for diverse perspectives on the issues at stake. Articles in The New York Times and The Washington Post have brought national attention to community-based collaboration, while the Internet facilitates the rapid exchange of opinions.

The spotlight on the Quincy Library Group (QLG) legislation, the Forest Health and Economic Recovery Act (S 1028), has polarized the debate over the legitimacy of collaborative processes, and much of the dialogue centers on the chance of 3A(- profile ex)-109(ample.f)JTJ T\* the order of Bontherushn t edify or eamonizes can eapeates a cavcility I thnk wmag of vmaln(g)10.3f the chll(eag)9.5(es t atmany)29.5(suinterf comit(ment t neiug)9.5(abolinces imlies"t KenCairn, 1997).f)JTJ /F3

Watershed, 1998), and both government agencies and private organizations support the watershed framework for natural resource management. Although not all watershed initiatives are collaborative (indeed many local councils are instead moderate environmental organizations), among collaborative partnerships, the watershed approach is widespread. Criticism of collaboration largely limits itself to the western states, where public land issues intertwine with management of private lands.

### ***Innovative Solutions***

Many believe collaboration produces more creative and adaptive solutions to complex natural resource management problems (Wondolleck, 1996; Yaffee, 1998). Even for public land management, involving stakeholders can produce innovative approaches to public lands management (Brick, 1998). Advocates of collaboration contend that ecosystem issues are local by definition and cannot be resolved with top-down solutions from federal agencies in Washington (Sadler, 1994; Dewitt, 1994). Top down management follows routine strategies and may not consider the range of possible solutions.

In contrast, cooperation between stakeholders can “overcome the inherent fragmentation in our society between multiple agencies, levels of government, public and private sectors, diverse interest groups, and different disciplines and value structures (Yaffee, 1998). Inkpen suggests that decision-making can be improved by the new knowledge created within a collaborative initiative (Inkpen in Yaffee et al, 1995). With more issues and perspectives on the table, groups can combine management strategies in new ways or imagine new ways to solve problems. Brick avows that “Experimentation on the periphery” is a prime way to promote flexibility and creativity (Brick, 1998).

### ***Problem Solving and Effective Results***

Dewitt labels this new model of governance “civic environmentalism” (Dewitt, 1994). He emphasizes that new kinds of environmental challenges, such as nonpoint pollution, pollution prevention, and ecosystem management can only be addressed through collaboration among the various actors (Dewitt, 1994). In these cases, he asserts, federal regulation is neither as effective nor sufficient to solve the problems (Dewitt, 1994). Even elected officials and agency representatives have become aware that without the backing of local communities, decisions made will not be as potent or taken as seriously as those that have included citizens’ input throughout the process (Thomas, 1998).

Proponents of collaborative partnerships claim that they produce the most effective results in the long term (Propst, 1997). They maintain that involving stakeholders in planning, implementation and monitoring of management projects encourages ownership by all participants, which in turn facilitates implementation. Supporters insist that the traditional top-down decision-making processes, on the other hand, have never worked (Erickson, 1998). Decision-making that doesn’t include stakeholder concerns is seen as leading to stalemate and frustration, common catalysts for collaborative alternatives (Van de Wetering, 1998; Yaffee et al, 1997).

It is argued that incremental successes, implemented step by step through a collaborative process, are often more permanent (France, 1998). Although partnerships should not be expected to solve all problems or radically change public lands management, they may contribute substantially to implementable solutions (Brick, 1998). According to Selin and Chavez (1995 in Yaffee et al, 1997) “collaborative designs can be a powerful tool for resolving conflict and advancing a shared vision of how a resource should be managed”. Collaboration can provide a gauge of what is politically possible to achieve (Brick, 1998).

Supporters testify that collaboration encourages participants to focus on their personal role in the management of a resource and the search for solutions, rather than pointing fingers (Yaffee et al, 1997; Erickson, 1998). For example, ranchers in the Blackfoot Challenge in central Montana have taken the responsibility to rectify the impacts their land management practices have had on watershed health. Their leadership serves as a model for others in the community and has resulted in substantial on the ground improvements (Erickson, 1998). Since private forest landowners own 73% of the nation’s forest (358 million acres), the quality of private land management can have a significant impact on the nation’s natural resources (Zeller, 1997). Zeller contends that this pattern of land ownership is yet another reason to promote collaborative initiatives that involve both private and public land owners in natural resource management decision-making (Zeller, 1997).

### **Community Sustainability**

Collaborative processes can build trust between parties, a necessary condition for problem-solving to occur (Gieben, 1995). The benefits for communities and ecosystems are mutual, according to many participants. Collaboration helps communities relearn lessons of “tolerance, commitment, persistence and inclusiveness” (KenCairn, 1998). Partnership participants claim that one of the most important benefits of the process was connecting people within a community (APPLEGATE VIDEO). Supporters allege that until people talk to each other, neither understanding nor problem solving can occur; personal relationships and dialogue are vital. New relationships can “defuse future conflicts and promote future bridging (Yaffee et al, 1997). Yaffee and Wondolleck (1995) have dubbed these information and relationship networks “knowledge pools and relationships”, both essential elements of collaborative initiatives. Solomon asserts that “If you have not established yourself with someone, you have lost the opportunity to influence him” (Solomon, 1996). Broader influence can remove the barriers to stewardship (KenCairn, 1998). Not only might ecological restoration and sound management protect the “ecological capital” of rural communities, but according to one participant, “community success and pride will protect more habitat than any law we could write” (Michael Jackson quoted in Hamilton, 1993).

Many believe that sustainability goes hand in hand with collaboration. Neither the traditional environmental movement (Brick, 1998) nor federal land management agencies (Zeller, 1997) are organized to address the concerns of rural communities, where economic welfare and the health of the environment are highly interconnected. According to supporters, partnerships

can demonstrate that environmental preservation does not have to conflict with jobs in rural communities (Brick, 1998).

### ***Expanding the Tool Box***

According to most proponents, collaboration can and should happen within a strong framework of national laws. They are convinced that collaboration does not negate the need for strong national policy and environmental laws; it is a way to implement solutions. . A challenge to partnerships is to explain how their work can be integrated into national policy (Brick, 1998). According to Tom France of the National Wildlife Federation's Northern Rockies Natural Resource Center, a participant in the process that developed a Citizen Management Plan for the reintroduction of Grizzly Bears into the Selway-Bitterroot, the question was never whether to comply with the Endangered Species Act, but how (France, 1998). Environmentalists who support collaborative efforts agree that it is important to have a big toolbox. Participating in a collaborative group does not mean abandoning other strategies. Lobbying and litigation remain powerful tools to uphold national environmental standards in situations where a local initiative threatens to circumvent the law (France, 1998; Brick, 1998; Rasker, 1998).

### **Critical Perspectives**

Collaborative partnerships are also harshly criticized. Many national environmental groups have refused to participate in several high profile partnerships, while others raise important questions that have gone unanswered (McCloskey, 1996). Concerns range from condemnation of alternative dispute resolution as a tactic to delegitimize conflict and co-opt environmental advocates (Britell 1997, Modavi 1996), to uncertainty over local control of national resources and the scientific soundness of negotiated agreements. Legislative support for the proposals of at least two groups (located in Quincy and Tuolumne County, California) have heightened fears that local efforts will pre-empt national interests, bypassing environmental safeguards and the opportunity for non-participant's review and comment along the way (Duane, 1997; Cockburn, 1993; Blumberg, 1998 ).

At the heart of the matter is the precedent set by administrative and popular support for a process that has wide variation and no accepted standards for structure, functioning, or evaluation of outcomes (Huber, 1997). Simply put, these processes raise many questions for organizations that have been long active in normal governmental processes and who are uncertain about their role and capacity in this alternative forum. Concerns have been heightened by the passage of the Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery and Economic Stability Act of 1997 (July) in the House by a vote of 429-1 (U.S. House of Representatives, Herger 1997).

### ***Co-optation***

One of the most common criticisms of collaborative initiatives is that they result in the co-optation of environmental interests. Because of power imbalances and a lack of formal negotiation training, it is argued that environmental representatives cannot adequately defend their interests when faced with industry representatives (Britell, 1997; Moldavi, 1996; Coggins, 1998). Financially vested representation might skew the debate and thus the outcomes of a collaborative process. In fact, critics claim, government and industry use the term collaboration as a euphemism for a sell-out of environmental goals (Cockburn, 1993).

### **Local Control Compromises Federal Laws**

Critics are especially concerned about local ad-hoc groups working collaboratively on issues dealing with Federal lands. While much of the debate centers specifically on the QLG, concerns about the legitimacy of local control over national resources permeate the literature. Legally, local interests have no more right to comment on, much less decide the fate of federal lands, merely because they happen to live in proximity (Blumberg, 1998). Federal environmental legislation ensures the systematic management of national resources according to baseline standards. It is believed that local collaborative partnerships can dilute those standards and threaten hard won national laws like NEPA and NFMA (Blumberg, 1998). Some critics even claim that the USFS wants to replace NEPA with collaboration (Holmer and Davitt, 1998). Relying on local collaboration to devise solutions to natural resource management problems is said to be an “abdication of legal responsibilities” (Coggins, 1998). If everyone collaborates and reaches a compromise, strong national environmental goals will be harder to achieve (Coggins, 1998; Wuerthner, 1998).

### **Lowest Common Denominator Solutions**

Critics assert that collaborative groups can not produce the best decisions for environmental protection, because only lowest common denominator solutions survive (McCloskey, 1996). They argue that there is no win-win solution, but rather a distribution of the losses (Coggins, 1998). Groups might not work with the full range of options on the table, because not all voices are represented. Without adequate representation of environmental concerns, groups may not question other impacts or future consequences of decisions. Wuerthner (1998) calls partnerships “patch-up, fix-up, half-way” solutions. A common assumption is that recommendations and decisions of citizen-dominated partnerships are not science-based implementation of national laws (McCloskey, 1996; Letter to Committee of Scientists, 1998).

### **Complacency**

Since most people do not like conflict, they buy into the idea of collaborative partnerships. If people are convinced that compromise achieved through collaboration produces the best solutions, it may reduce the incentive to look for other alternatives. There may be more politically difficult solutions that are better for the environment that are not considered. Collaborative groups provide a safe alternative to crisis by holding off an inevitable crash

(Wuerthner, 1998). For example, according to environmental activist George Wuerthner, the Northern Forest Council in Maine maintains the logging industry's image of a sustainable working forest and thus the public's confidence in a workable solution, even though the economy is failing and companies are not reinvesting in mills. Compromise can avoid the search for long-term solutions (Wuerthner, 1998). It may also inhibit the mobilization of voices of opposition (Moldavi, 1997). In the west, critics are convinced that collaborative groups serve to protect the status quo from modern reality and prolong unjustifiable subsidies and preferences (Coggins, 1998; Wuerthner, 1998).

### **Representation**

Another issue is that of adequate representation of legitimate stakeholders, particularly those who represent national environmental concerns. The vast landscape of the west often makes it impossible for an environmental organization with an interest in an entire region to participate in every collaborative effort that appears. Indeed, collaborative efforts are very time-consuming processes, and local citizens complain that they are disadvantaged in their capacity to maintain a high level of participation. In addition, some communities simply are not particularly diverse in their perspectives. Smaller community groups may represent a cross section of the community, yet represent a tiny percentage of nationwide views. These local groups are generally applauded for their initiative as long as their decisions affect only private not public land.

Some groups like the Willapa Bay intentionally exclude environmentalists to avoid divisive opinions (Colorado Natural Resources Law Center, 1996). Although most partnerships claim to have diverse representation, critics disagree. Dissenting views may not be invited to participate in closed processes. The environmental representatives are usually more "moderate" (Wuerthner, 1996) or "tractable and malleable" (Britell, 1997) or they may have other financial interests. If a minority environmental voice is present, they may fear being outvoted or pressured to go along with the majority opinion, especially when that majority is more powerful.

### **Irreconcilable Values**

For collaboration to work, participants have to be able to define a common end goal. Therefore, many issues are not susceptible to unanimous agreement. Often, values differ irreconcilably (Coggins, 1998; Wuerthner, 1998) and it is impossible to get past philosophical differences. Critics claim that partnerships tend to self-select for "like" perspectives (Sommarstrom, 1998), since stakeholders with more radical viewpoints may be unwilling to redefine their ultimate goals in the context of a common group goal. Critics also feel that if groups choose only "likes," they fall short of what defines a collaborative group (Sommarstrom, 1998). Even supporters of collaboration admit that it may be inappropriate or not feasible for some volatile environmental issues like endangered species listings or wilderness area designation where the outcome must be all or nothing (Van de Wetering, 1998).

## **Precedent**

Collaborative efforts are being held up as paradigms: solutions that can be applied to the whole landscape. However, a particular process may be successful because of a unique set of circumstances. Success is proclaimed under limited qualifications (Wuerthner, 1998). For example, the Applegate Partnership had the advantage of strong local environmental organizations with resources and well-qualified professionals (Britell, 1997). Success should not be extrapolated to call for national policy mandates for collaboration because of a few poster children. Scale is also important: something that works on a small scale will not necessarily work if expanded to a larger arena.

## **Authority**

The question of authority is also raised. Partnership agreements are believed to be inherently unenforceable (Coggins, 1998). Environmentalist representatives are unable to commit the public or the environmental community to a course of action (Britell, 1997). The interest groups that they represent may not have the internal cohesion necessary for a particular member to be able to represent the organization's viewpoint in a collaborative process (Yaffee et al, 1997).

## **Conclusion**

This review of the supportive and critical perspectives on collaborative initiatives raises several key questions for our research team. Can partnerships be described globally or even compared to one another fairly? What characteristics do partnerships have that might differentiate them? How can we describe the range and variation of collaborative partnerships to truly understand what collaborative resource management looks like?

The following section, Chapter 4 - *Mapping the Terrain*, attempts to answer some of those questions, painting a broad picture of the collaborative landscape. Our intention is to provide a more comprehensive perspective on the varied forms and characteristics of collaboration than that currently portrayed in the literature.

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