

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 information were investigated, including academic and professional journals, web sites, popular press, previous case study reports, and government documents. Specifically, we used the following topic areas to access information related to collaborative activity:

- Environmental conflict resolution
- Alternative dispute resolution in environmental conflicts
- Positive and critical perspectives of collaboration in resource management
- Collaborative approaches in natural resource decision-making
- Case histories of well known collaborative partnerships

This step contributed to development of the first three chapters of our work:

Chapter 1: Background

Extensive literature review provided the information needed to create a descriptive history of collaborative efforts, detailing interest-based organizational activity and agency operations in the United States. It also helped to explain why there is confusion about the collaborative process and, moreover, why it is important to begin trying to understand the landscape of collaboration.

Chapter 2: Critiques of Collaboration

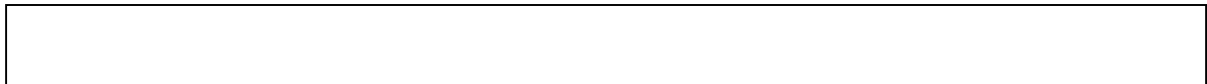
Understanding the literature also provided insight into the broad critiques, both supportive and negative, of collaboration. As such, this chapter became a review of the supportive and

Unassisted: The Double H Ranch CRM in Ten Sleep Wyoming represents a small livestock forage improvement partnership that has met informally since 1992. Consisting of a mere ten participants from state agencies along with ranchers, the group has never seen the need to run meetings with professional facilitator (Weeter, 1998).

Assisted: In comparison, the Clark County HCP process (Chapter 7) has used a highly skilled facilitator for nearly nine years. Aimed at protecting the habitat of the Desert Tortoise through conservation of public lands, multiple stakeholder interest accompanied by heated feelings over the issue of public land access and protection have made facilitation of meetings a necessity (www.ncedr.org/casestudies/hcp/clark.htm).

Finally, many partnerships begin with assistance from a neutral facilitator, but then continue on their own once established. The Animas River Stakeholders Group (Chapter 5), for instance, was formed in 1994 when the Colorado Center for Environmental Management was asked by the Colorado Department of Health to help organize interested parties to address metal contamination in the Animas Valley, a historic mining community. Once the group gained momentum, internal members replaced the outside facilitator on a voluntary basis (Buffalo River Stewardship Foundation, 1999).

Transparency



Collaborative decision-making also varies in the degree to which the process is open or closed. In an open process, the *non-participating* public has access to the decisions made and information exchanged at the table. Participation may be closed yet the process remains open. For example, a FACA chartered advisory committee may limit participation to chosen stakeholders, but by law must be fully open to the public.

In the Blackfoot Challenge (Chapter 6), meetings are entirely **open** to the larger public. All stakeholders in the Blackfoot Valley are encouraged to become part of the process and different conduits for communication announcing meetings and projects are used to recruit as many people as possible. Participants in the Blackfoot Challenge do not want residents to feel that resource decisions are being made for them.

The San Miguel River Coalition, based in Telluride, Colorado, feels that to keep the group focused and collaborative in nature, meetings should be **closed** to the public. Coalition members include the BLM, the USFS, San Miguel County, the Town of Telluride, Telluride Mountain Village Metro District, The Nature Conservancy, and representatives from the private sector (Buffalo River Stewardship Foundation, 1999).

Participants in the Animas River Stakeholders Group try a variety of strategies for dealing with the challenges of representation, including these:

- Active recruitment
- Loose group structure
- Educational forums

Active recruitment

As coordinator of the group, Bill Simon addresses the concern of ensuring adequate representation through active recruitment of participants. It takes knowing your community so that he knows who to go to and when to maintain balance. He states: "When it gets out of balance, I try to find somebody or some group from the other side of the fence to come to a meeting and put forth the other side of the issue."

Loose group structure

Another strategy that has been adopted by all group members is to focus on keeping the process loose. Those interviewed feel that the loose structure has fostered greater involvement because someone feels that he or she can jump in at anytime. Larry Perino points out: "This has resulted in a slower process, but that it has been worth it."

Educational forums

The group also conducts a library series, which serves as a friendly non-intimidating forum to educate locals and out-of-town laypeople about the issues in the Animas Basin as well as the activities of the Animas River Stakeholders Group. Each talk centers on a given issue and serves to clarify information discussed at the Stakeholder meetings. Although this series might not directly result in a greater community attendance record, these series are informative and provide a way for residents to learn about the issues without having to be at the meetings. Bill Simon points out that these meetings were very successful for the first year and a half and states: "The thought was, and still is, that people may be interested but may not want to participate in the political debate that stakeholder meetings encourage. Then too, the meetings tend to be focused on so many issues, acronyms are used extensively, and are dominated by state and federal representatives, whose involvement, although necessary, is not your local community friendly environment." He also notes that they are scheduled for this summer and will be scheduled right before the meetings so that people can leave if they want to.

Advice

Those interviewed offered several suggestions for others considering the issue of ensuring sufficient representation such seeking local input, keeping agencies in check, contacting politicians, knowing your community/constituency, and providing financial incentives for local participants:

Make information accessible

The group has also made sure that information is readily available to anyone who cares to see or use it. That way if some participants do not attend a meeting, they are still able to learn what was discussed and decided upon and can in turn make an informed decision about what they are and are not going to support. It can be looked upon as an insurance policy.

Create an open process

Another strategy has been to keep the process open while making efforts to encourage participation of the opinion leaders or elders in the valley. Having their strong voice and endorsement of the Challenge has increased local perceptions and trust concerning the motives of government.

Conduct workshops

The Challenge has also held several workshops where they have invited groups or individuals such as the Goldmine Company and biologist and hydrologists. According to Greg Neudecker, "By holding these workshops and not taking sides, we have effectively brought in all sides and have provided to the public information about the watershed so that people can then make educated decisions. We hope that by doing this, entities such as the Goldmine Company and the timber industry will see the Challenge as what we are-a neutral entity."

Assign participants to communities

Another strategy used to empower individuals and try to increase their interest in the Challenge was to put them on committees as representatives. Jack Thomas explains, "We put those who did not want to be there on the Executive Committee. We just made a spot for them." This has been the case with Plum Creek Timber representatives who are used to having things the way they want them and are only there to watch out for the interests of Plum Creek.

Advice

Those interviewed offered several suggestions for others considering the issue of ensuring sufficient representation. Advice included being aware of time constraints, working with opinion leaders, and using enthusiasm to broaden involvement:

- Land Lindbergh advised: "Be aware that people often do not have sufficient time to attend meetings and be involved on a regular basis. There have to be ways for groups to make the community aware of the availability of services of the group in a way that might make residents respond to the issues." Jack Thomas adds: "Make extra effort those people [skeptics] to the table. Contact them and talk to them a little bit. A lot of people, for instance, talked to Plum Creek so even if they still primarily saw it [the Blackfoot Challenge] as a PR effort, they began to see advantages to being at the table."

CHAPTER 7:

CLARK COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLANNING PROCESS

Clark County, Nevada
Prepared by Merrick Hoben

This case exemplifies the use of a private land conservation tool---Habitat Conservation Planning (HCP)---in a collaborative public land management framework. The Clark County HCP process was chosen for in-depth research because of valuable insight it provides about key aspects of effective collaborative initiatives. The role of significant financial resources, lack of viable alternatives for stakeholders, and the development of trust over time are highlighted because of their impact on the form and success of this natural resource management effort.

Interviews:

Brad Hardenbrook, NV Department of Wildlife, (2/23/99)
Christine Robinson, Environmental Planning Manager, Clark County, (3/5/99)
Jim Moore, The Nature Conservancy, (2/20/99)
Karen Budd-Fallon, Ranching and multiple-user representative, (3/18/99)
Mark Trinko, ORV multiple-user, Las Vegas, (3/1/99)
Michael Burrows, USFWS-Staff Biologist, Las Vegas Office, (2/17/99)
Paul Selzer, HCP mediator, lawyer, (3/4/99)
Sid Sloane, BLM representative, Wildlife Biologist-Las Vegas office, (3/2/99)

PART I: BACKGROUND

Origin and Issues

Encompassing over 5 million acres and 13 major ecosystem types, the mountainous Mojave desert climate of Clark County covers the southern tip of Nevada and five major cities, including Las Vegas and its surrounding valley (Aengst et al., 1998). Recognized as one of the fastest growing regions in the country, 4,000 to 7,000 people move to the area per month to enjoy its burgeoning economy and bountiful recreation opportunities found in the nearby mountains and wide open desert spaces. Indeed, this primarily rural landscape, located on 91% federal lands, is slowly changing from a region once dominated by ranching and farming communities to that of an expanding metropolitan region with a population of well over one million---a common scene on the changing face of the West.

Growth and activity, however, have not come without ecological cost. The Desert Tortoise, the Nevada State reptile found throughout the region, is one of many species whose habitat

- Teri Devlin felt a facilitator is helpful: "I think you need a very neutral facilitator. [TNC] sometimes are not seen as neutral, but early on I think we were because we were private and not under grant money. That neutrality allows you to not have one or two strong issues that bring the group in one direction."
- Marc Smith felt not giving up was important: "Keep hammering at it. Try to approach it through many different route. One mode of communication is not going to reach everyone so you have to keep trying, local newspaper, direct mailings."
- Mary Ann Core said: "It depends upon the size of the watershed. If you have a small watershed you really can do a good job of getting citizens there."
- Dennis Hall expressed the need for a staff person: "It needs to be someone's job to be thinking about that. Everybody's commitment to be open to the process. Even today I run into people who want to categorize people as friends and enemies. I am not willing to accept the creek has any enemies. We need to continue to reach out to people even as we question the judgement of some of the landowners."

Accommodating Diverse Interests

Various federal, state and local agencies and other governmental entities such as NRCS, USGS, US EPA, USFWS, ODNR, OEPA, Franklin County Zoning Commission, City of Columbus, Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, provide the basis for the diversity within Darby Partnership. Other members such as Darby Association, a local grassroots preservation group began over twenty-five years ago, TNC and OFA make up the majority of the non-governmental diversity. At various other times depending upon the issue being discussed citizens, developers, other environmental organizations and citizen groups have made up diverse interests around the table.

Challenges

The challenges the diversity of interests' poses for Darby Partnership is limited due to the informal, information sharing structure where each member maintains autonomous decision-making authority. Several members did mention a few challenges that diverse interests brought to the process. Several felt trusting government motives, the fact that there may be too many interest within the watershed, and different agency objectives, are some issues raised by members.

When asked about the challenge of compromise from diverse perspectives, Teri Devlin explained: "It is more information sharing so that issue has not really come up. People give back advice from their expertise, sometimes it stops at that. Sometimes it is taken up by a smaller group of partners that have specific interests in that and then we continue to work at it until we come up with a solution." Devlin continued, "The term win-win is what we would

from doing. We gather all this stuff up and get people involved and you're half way through and you say 'what question were we trying to answer?'"

Strategies

The primary strategy of the council when dealing with scientific issues is to convene technical task forces made up of experts on the issue at hand. Council members brainstorm possible candidates, including agency or industry staff, university faculty or private consultants. Recognizing that even scientists will have different perspectives on the issue, the council tries to balance the task force with a diverse representation of experts. Blackmore says, "[Task force members are] truly scientists, we're not trying to make sure we got one of every flavor, but we do try to get them into the group, especially if they have land that will be impacted or are decision-makers." Rice adds that the council never asks only one expert's opinion. In the early years, most of the council's meetings revolved around educating its members. Thompson recalls, "We held primers and invited some of the best known professors from Oregon State in fish biology and water quality and wetlands issues." Even six years later, Emily Rice estimates that half of each council meeting is spent on educational presentations.

To address the problems of public misperceptions, the MWC recently hired an education director who is working with schools and residents. Another strategy that was highly successful was the organization of a water quality forum after severe flooding in 1996 provoked conflict within the community over the impacts of land management practices on water quality. Many outside experts were brought in and over 200 community members attended. The forum offered the opportunity to present scientific data and information in an accessible format to the public.

In an effort to provide credible information, the council has been cautious about drawing conclusions from preliminary water quality monitoring studies. John Allen says, "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."

In order to ensure compliance with federal and state environmental regulations, the council relies on the expertise of agency participants who understand the laws. In the words of Blackmore, "The expertise is there if somebody starts treading on thin ground."

Advice

Participants had many words of advice for other collaborative resource management initiatives and watershed councils.

"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).

The Nanticoke River watershed is also host to a diversity of plant and animal life with habitat ranging from estuarine marshes to upland forest. In addition to a wide variety of tree species such as loblolly pine, sweetgum, red maple, and seaside alder, it is not uncommon to observe endangered and threatened species such as bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and the Delmarva fox squirrel (Nanticoke Watershed Alliance webpage, 1999). Other watershed species include fox, deer, turtles, snakes, and beaver. The Nanticoke River watershed, together with the neighboring Blackwater River, also supports 35% of all wintering waterfowl and provides valuable and commercial recreational fisheries.

Although the level of biodiversity in the watershed is unparalleled in the region, the Nanticoke River watershed has not entirely escaped the pressures of people. Steady development, increasing levels of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, as well as boat traffic all affect its ecological richness. The water quality of the Nanticoke River reveals the most obvious signs of degradation where algae blooms block out light to the river and nutrients, many found in leaking septic systems as well as in the soil, mimic fertilizers. When these blooms die, they settle at the bottom of the river, and decompose taking with them much of the oxygen that aquatic species need to survive.

In response, local residents have directed their efforts towards the protection of the river. Several citizen groups have organized themselves as stewards of the river in an effort to maintain the ecological integrity of the watershed. The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance is one of these groups that decided to cross-state boundaries and to convene diverse interests in the watershed. They pledged to work together, to share information, and to find ways to protect the watershed in a manner that is acceptable to all residents. This is a far cry from just a few years ago, when distrust, hidden agendas, and opposition prevailed.

Early Stages

NWA began by developing a vision of protection of the river and watershed. These tasks lead them to eventually seek input from farmers, foresters, watermen, industry, academia, private businesses, and other non-profits. Initially, the NWA was solely an attempt to bring together diverse stakeholders to see if they could reach some common ground. As former NWA member, Charlie Cipolla illustrates: “It was sort of to check your guns at the door, to cease hostility and to sit down with timber people and developers to see if there was anything to discuss.” This initial group evolved to its present day state of twenty member organizations attempting to expand on their knowledge base and projects.

Lisa Jo Frech, the Executive Director of the NWA summarizes the overall sentiment shared by those involved with the group in its initial stages: “We knew that to protect the river, it was going to take different parties coming together. We would have enjoyed or autonomy, have made decisions really quickly and have been radical but there would be real limits to what we could do without the technical and financial support of other organizations and without the recognition of a broad based consortium.”

Current membership of the NW RAC includes county officials, a forestry consultant, an oil and gas engineer, several ranchers, a mountain bike shop owner, a mayor who represents archeological interests, a person representing wild horses and burros, and two people representing environmentalist interests among others. Every member interviewed described the NW RAC as containing diverse interests. Troy Rarick, a mountain bike shop co-owner, calls the group "well-rounded" and Walid Bou-Matar, an oil and gas engineer, states: "our members are very diverse."

Process

The NW RAC meets at varying times depending upon the issue they are dealing with. Currently, the group meets once every two months. Most members think this meeting schedule is working fine. Geoff Blakeslee, who represents The Nature Conservancy, said the meeting schedule was, "just right, plenty to discuss, and not a dull moment, but I can't justify additional meetings." Troy Rarick noted, "Meetings are just right, anymore frequently it would be too hard to travel to all meetings and if you don't have everyone coming you lose your effectiveness."

Meetings are open to the public with time provided for public input. Mark Morse noted that public attendance, "varies greatly with the issue we are dealing with and the time of the meetings." Meetings are held throughout the northwestern corner of Colorado in order to get different communities involved as well as to spread travel distances around for members. Don Peach noted his travel time varies greatly depending on where meetings are held: "I either have to travel two miles when it is right in Rangely, or up to eighty miles when it is further away." Members of the NW RAC are reimbursed by the BLM for travel and other expenses such as meals or lodging when necessary.

Mark Morse noted that at one point early on he felt a facilitator was necessary for every meeting: "At one time we used to run facilitation for every meeting." Morse continued that, currently, most meetings are not facilitated unless "we have a subject that could be divisive." One of those contentious issues is a debate over six potential wilderness sites in NW CO. Morse said, "Wilderness stuff always had a facilitator." Morse stressed that the facilitator helped to maintain the integrity of the group during contentious discussions.

The agenda is set prior to each meeting by the NW RAC with input from Mark Morse. Morse states: "I adjust meetings if something comes up, but not without input from RAC members." In between meetings Morse said: "I send lots of info to read over." Meetings are run by either the Chair, T. Wright Dickinson, or Co-Chair, Don Peach. Dickinson noted that the group elects the Chair and defines its role. Dickinson speaking about his role said: "I am listening and watching folks to make sure everybody gets a chance at speaking and making sure everyone is heard." The Chair also signs meeting minutes kept by a BLM staff person, and as Dickinson puts it, other "figurehead" duties.

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