Creating Effective Groups To Address Pressing Local Problems:

A Resource Guide for Watershed Councils in the Pacific Northwest

Emmett Fiske
Creating Effective Groups To Address Pressing Local Problems:

A Resource Guide for Watershed Councils in the Pacific Northwest

Prepared by:

Emmett P. Fiske, Ph.D.
Washington State University

Emmett Fiske is an Organizational Effectiveness Specialist in the Department of Rural Sociology. The author is indebted to WSU Cooperative Extension colleagues (particularly Katherine Baril, Kay Hadland, and Robert Simmons) who found time to review an earlier version of this manuscript and to offer suggested improvements. Thanks also to Susan Roberts for editorial suggestions.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I: Gaining Access to Web-Based Resources for Your Watershed</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Is a Watershed?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Are Watersheds Important?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Should I Get Involved?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking that First Step: Capturing Your Feelings about the Watershed and its Future</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Contact with Others</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions—Your Feelings</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do You Want To Form a New Group To Address Watershed Concerns?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Groups?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part II: Creating Effective Watershed Planning Groups</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Understanding Others' Perspectives on Watershed Conflicts</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways of Looking at the World</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salience of the Frames in Watershed Planning Processes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Value of Developing Explicitly Stated Ground Rules To Govern Group Behavior</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic Ground Rules</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking the Second Step: Tailoring the Ground Rules to Your Specific Situation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions—Group Expectations</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Case for Consensus-Based Decision Making in Watershed Planning Processes</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Is Consensus?</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Consensus Always the Preferred Alternative?</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics and Principles of Consensus Processes</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Consensus into Everyday Actions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents (continued)

4. Dealing with Angry People .................................................. 19
   Introduction ........................................................................... 19
   What Constitutes Public Anger, and Why Is the Public Angry? .. 20
   Mutual Gains Approach ...................................................... 22

5. Perspectives on Power .......................................................... 23
   Introduction ........................................................................... 23
   Constituents of Power .......................................................... 24
   Potential Sources or Bases of Power .................................... 25
   Strategies and Tactics ......................................................... 25
   Application to Watershed Planning Processes ................... 26
   Moving from Individual Power to Group Empowerment ........ 27
   Taking the Final Step: Transforming Group Rhetoric into Watershed Planning Reality ..................................................... 27

Endnotes .................................................................................. 29

References .............................................................................. 30

List of Tables

Table 1. Characteristics of Watershed Conflicts .......................... 8
Table 2. Making Sense of the World around Us ....................... 10
Table 3. Salience of Frames in Watershed Conflict Resolution Process ................................................................. 11
Table 4. Generic Ground Rules for Watershed Planning Group Consideration ......................................................... 13
Table 5. Characteristics and Principles of Consensus Processes ..................................................................................... 19
Table 6. Distinct Types of Public Anger ................................. 20
Table 7. Sources and Bases of Power within Watershed Planning Processes ................................................................. 25

Overview

Throughout the United States, watersheds are where local conflicts over competing uses of natural resources not only reside, but ultimately are resolved—one way or another. Watershed conflicts can be incredibly complex and polarizing, given the high level emotional intensity diverse parties use to defend positions and to push distinct (often opposing) outcomes. Early casualties in such verbal skirmishes are tolerance and communication—people stop listening to those espousing contrary views and begin associating exclusively with like-minded supporters. This inward turning, “circle-the-wagons” mentality makes it difficult for those seeking improvement to intervene with appropriate actions to diffuse tension and initiate dialogue. Yet if nothing is done, the conflict probably will become more heated. As inflammatory rhetoric spreads the conflict beyond watershed boundaries, it ignites the passions of ever-increasing numbers of people.

The resolution of watershed conflicts can take various forms: litigation (lawsuits), legislation (laws, regulations, enforcement provisions, penalties) or collaborative processes involving citizen groups. This guide focuses specifically on collaborative processes. Such processes allow people affected by conflicts to participate directly in deciding their outcome; differing viewpoints are presented, discussed, and reflected upon. Participants come away with new insights and greater knowledge they can put to collective use in shaping a response every person can support.

The purpose of this publication is twofold: to facilitate constructive interaction among watershed residents; and to provide ease of access to available and relevant resources (agencies, groups, activities, sources of funding) for the particular watershed where you live. Rather than trying to be exhaustive in scope, this guide explores certain topics that tend to make or break successful watershed efforts.
Part I: Gaining Access to Web-Based Resources for Your Watershed

What Is a Watershed?
Simply stated, watersheds are areas of land that "catch" rain and snow, which then "drains" via a waterway or seep into manholes, streams, rivers, lakes, or groundwater. Since watershed boundaries are based upon geography, individual watersheds may encompass more than one political jurisdiction—whether county, state, or even country (Browner; Conservation Technology Information Center, Corn, Langbein, and Iseri).

The U.S. Geological Survey has developed a "hydrologic unit code" (HUC) classification system based upon surface hydrologic features to identify each unique watershed in the United States. The hierarchical classification system for each watershed (its "watershed address") can consist of up to sixteen digits—with each set of digits providing greater descriptive detail (Seaber, Kapinos, and Knapp). The first two digits refer to region, the third and fourth digits refer to sub-regions, and the fifth and sixth digits refer to basins. These initial six digits comprise the watershed basins. The seventh and eighth digits refer to specific watersheds within each watershed basin.

HUC 17060108 identifies the Palouse Watershed of southeastern Washington State, extending into the panhandle of Idaho.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Surf Your Watershed web site makes it easy to quickly learn a great deal about your local watershed. Once you have entered the necessary information (your five-digit zip code; the name of the county and state where you live; or the name of your tribal nation), a map of your watershed will appear, followed by additional information including watershed health assessments; environmental information; listing of all rivers, streams, and lakes; listing of aquifers; water usage; habitat information; and contact information for citizen-based groups at work in your watershed (provided by the EPA Adopt Your Watershed database).

http://www.epa.gov/adopt/

Why Are Watersheds Important?
Watersheds are where people live. They serve as sources of employment as well as enjoyment. All too often, watersheds can become battlegrounds for people holding differing views about how to treat natural resources. To cite several examples: around western rural-urban boundaries, the use of pesticides on agricultural crops generates concern because of both the drift from fertilizers and pesticides being sprayed and health concerns about the commodities so produced. Some individuals living in agricultural areas express concern about what the application of pesticides and fertilizers may be doing to the quality of the groundwater. Where wheat and grass seed are major commodities, the questions "how much, when, where, and under what conditions" to allow field burning have led to major local and regional conflicts. Where public lands have been allocated for cattle grazing, the extensive grazing of range lands raises major concerns. The environmental impacts of overgrazing are in question. The perceived underpricing of grazing fees only adds to the controversy. The listing of salmon, bull trout, and other fish as endangered species raises questions about competing uses of in-stream flows. Additional examples from your locality could be added to this list.

Why Should I Get Involved?
Who is better than you, yourself, to educate others about your interests and concerns, hopes, and dreams for the watershed in which you live? You have unique experiences, insights, relationships, and stories you can employ to help make your watershed a better place for current and future generations.

What is often missing is the opportunity—the means through which people can come together to share their knowledge on behalf of watershed improvement. All it takes is one individual like you to start the process. Interested?

Taking that First Step: Capturing Your Feelings about the Watershed and Its Future
While there are probably as many ways to start as galaxies in the universe, I suggest a simple activity that begins with you and spreads outward to involve others you want to include. This activity will enable you to put your feelings about your watershed into words to educate others. You might think of this as personalized baseline data gathering for your watershed.

The purpose of the following questions is to "pick your brains" about your watershed and what you would like to see happen. Take as much time as you would like. Play around with your responses until you are very comfortable with what you have written. Please take a few moments to answer the questions on pages 5 and 6.

After you have responded to the questions:

• Was this activity useful?
• Do you think others in your watershed might benefit from going through a similar process?
• If so, who might they be?

Making Contact with Others
Chances are, your list has rapidly grown to include a myriad of individuals, groups, organizations, agencies, and just plain "characters," living, working, and recreating within your watershed. Their affiliations probably run the gamut from agriculture to zoology—including business and industry, civic groups, environmental organizations, fisheries, forestry, recreation, schools, and agencies (local government, state government, federal government, and tribal government).

An individual or committee affiliated with one of your identified groups may already have begun gathering information about the watershed in which you live. The Adopt Your Watershed web site can provide a preliminary assessment of such activity in your watershed.

http://epa.gov/adopt/

Such information may have appeared in your local newspaper, been presented as an educational program at a local service club meeting, or perhaps was compiled as a class project and filed at your local library. Your local reference librarian should be able to assist in identifying locally relevant information.

If through your actions you find no organized efforts yet exist within your watershed, you might then start contacting representatives of the various local, state, federal, and tribal governments having jurisdiction within your watershed to determine what information has already been generated. Your local planning department and planning commission are excellent sources of information on your watershed. Planning department staff and planning commission volunteers regularly review proposed land use developments. Consult the current comprehensive plan to determine whether proposed actions hold the potential for adversely impacting your watershed.

Additional planning documents can be located within the local offices of state, federal, and tribal agencies having administrative responsibil-
Q-1 Current Situation. When you think of your watershed as it currently exists, what comes vividly to mind?

Q-2 Likes and Dislikes? Keeping that mental picture in the foreground for a moment: what elements of that picture do you like? What elements of that picture do you dislike?

Q-3 Moving into the Future. As you think about the future of your watershed, would you like it to look any different than at present? If so, in what ways?

Q-4 Your Suggested Strategy. Given your vision, what specific actions would you like to see implemented? What role do you see local people playing in your specified actions?

Q-5 What Needs to be Done Now? Many different issues may need to be addressed within your watershed. Some issues may be urgent, while others may hold the potential to become major issues if action is not taken within the foreseeable future. What issues are you particularly concerned about having addressed as soon as possible?

Q-6 Inaction. What do you think will happen if your suggested strategy or actions are not taken?

Q-7 Personal Commitment and Responsibility. How do you see yourself personally involved in bringing about your suggested changes in the watershed?

Q-8 Enhancing Public Involvement. What specific suggestions or recommendations do you have for increasing the likelihood of public participation in your proposed actions?
Do You Want To Form a New Group To Address Watershed Concerns?

Suppose your initial investigation into organized efforts within your watershed has identified one or more groups currently engaged in watershed-related activities. You might ask whether you share enough in common with members of that particular group to affiliate with them in their ongoing efforts. Do your concerns about the watershed mirror those of others in the group? Are your desired outcomes for the watershed compatible? Would strategies you suggest be embraced or rejected? Do you enjoy interacting with the members? If you have had the chance to observe a group meeting—was it a good use of your time?

Even if you wish to affiliate with a particular group, you may find you do not meet its criteria for membership. Certain requirements for membership may prevent you from attending. What do you do then?

If you are willing to invest your time and energy in forming a new group, here is information to maximize your chance for being successful! To begin with the basics...

Why Groups?

Groups can serve various functions—including social interaction (neighborhood potlucks); cultural enhancement (literary discussions); civic improvement (community chest); and task accomplishment (roadside clean-up). Some groups have multiple purposes, while others focus on a single activity or task.

Individuals who wish to become members of a group may be accepted simply by showing up and expressing interest—or subjected to rigorous background checks and asked to fill out exhaustive application forms. Group membership may require nothing more than "sweat equity" (participating in an activity), or an expression of financial support (payment of dues). Groups do indeed come in all shapes and sizes.

When you think about groups within the context of local watersheds, what may come to mind is a collection of individuals whose sole reason for being is planning/management of the watershed. Such groups are referred to as "work groups" (adapted from Hackman, 1987:322) that share the following characteristics:

- They are real groups (with clear boundaries, identified structures, differentiated roles)
- They have one or more tasks to perform (resulting in some outcome or product that can be assessed)
- They operate within a political context (involving various levels of government having jurisdiction within the watershed).

Watershed planning groups are more heterogeneous than homogeneous in their membership. Imagine the challenges these groups face when local residents holding widely diverging interpretations of watershed history, differing values, competing interests, and distinct desired outcomes for the watershed initially come together with governmental representatives to work on behalf of the watershed? Watershed planning groups that remain effective (adapted from Hackman, 1987:322-339) continually attend to three distinct issues:

- personal needs and values (people)
- interpersonal relationships (process)
- timely and meaningful outcomes (product)

No small order! The lay appears to lie in the watershed planning group's ability to establish (and follow) decision-making procedures. Through these, individual concerns get translated into proposed actions.

Although each participant in a watershed planning process brings a unique set of skills, experiences, and perspectives to the group, I hope within that mix of resources are the ability:

- to listen with an open mind,
- to suspend judgment,
- to act respectfully and responsibly,
- to be creative, and
- to engage others in constructive dialogue.

These leadership traits are essential to group formation and continued effectiveness.

An example of how you might go about capturing individual needs and values for group consideration appears in the section Taking That First Step. Later examples of what you might do to strengthen interpersonal relationships appear in the section entitled, Taking the Second Step. Timely and meaningful outcomes are covered in Taking the Final Step. But first, pause for a moment and reflect on why watershed planning groups have such difficulty getting started...

In a word: conflict! A cursory review of the characteristics of watershed conflicts identifies the many variables that make dialogue difficult, and decisions fraught with danger:

About now you are probably asking, "why should I put myself through so much grief to organize a watershed planning group?" Good question! Here is a great answer: because each person's opinions matter. Each person holds a unique perspective that can help others understand the history, current situation, and future possibilities of the watershed. All that is missing is a forum through which each person can assume the role of educator and share unique insights, ideas, and suggestions with others. That forum can be your watershed planning group.

Information contained in Table 1 provides clues about where you might start looking for potential participants in your watershed planning group. As you think about the multiple parties involved in your watershed, it may be fairly easy to identify the various public agencies (representing local, state, tribal, or federal government) having regulatory responsibilities within the watershed. You also may wish to consider additional public entities having taxing authority (such as educational service and hospital districts) for potential membership.

The quasi-public entities (public utility and irrigation districts) also may play important roles within the watershed.

When your focus shifts to the public, nonprofit sector, you may notice one or more national organizations (the Grange, Ducks Unlimited, the Sierra Club, or Trout Unlimited) already engaged in local watershed-related activities whose involvement would benefit your proposed group.

When you set your sights on a private sector user, you may identify a diverse set of businesses (including agriculture, chambers of commerce, forestry, mining, real estate, or land development, recreation, and tourism) that employ many of the watershed's inhabitants. Various umbrella organizations (the Farm Bureau, the Cattlemen's Association, Property Owners Association) having members within the watershed might like to become involved in your proposed group.

Now look at your proposed watershed planning group in terms of multiple issues. Your local newspaper is an excellent source for identifying expressed issues about the watershed. Besides keeping residents up-to-date on various activities in the area, your newspaper's "Letters to the editor" section along with its printed summaries of official meetings provides a ready list of issues and the individuals who hold them. Back issues of the paper should be available at your local library.

Do not minimize the importance of your local newspaper in identifying potential members of your watershed planning group! The newspaper provides a venue for individuals you might other-
Table 1. Characteristics of Watershed Conflicts

- **Multiple parties**: public and private sectors, regulators and users, having different levels of resources and experiences to bring to bear on the conflict;
- **Multiple issues**: various definitions of the conflict, differences of opinion on what is fact and what is fiction, treating the conflict as separate and distinct vs. seeing it as interconnected with other issues;
- **High degree of uncertainty**: given the difficulty of predicting the impact of proposed actions on the watershed’s future;
- **High degree of emotional intensity**: since individual livelihood and way of life, community well-being and survival, resource protection or preservation, or continued business solvency may be at risk if a contrary decision is reached;
- **Distinct root causes for the conflict**: conflict is perceived as competition over resources and interests or as a threat to one’s identity and values;
- **Direct linkage to public policy**: any potential remedy holds public policy implications, since statutory authority and jurisdictional interpretation, as well as application by local, state, tribal, federal or international governments will determine whether implementation actually occurs.

wise miss in your initial identification of likely watershed planning group members. Many interested people can contribute concerns about current conditions and future possibilities in the watershed. A number of the individuals who show up at town council and planning commission meetings and who write letters to the local newspaper may not be affiliated with any of the groups you have previously identified; yet their demonstrated personal initiative in identifying issues and sharing perspectives suggests including them in your group would benefit the process.

Congratulations on having identified the various potential members of your watershed planning group! If you need help in getting the group organized, you might consider turning to Cooperative Extension faculty throughout the Pacific Northwest for assistance. Individuals within Extension can provide the necessary educational resources (printed materials, facilitation assistance, linkage to relevant research and technical assistance) to help your group get started and function effectively.

Each state-level Extension organization maintains an electronic web page you can access for information pertaining to watershed planning.

Those web sites are listed below:

- **Idaho**
  (http://www.uidaho.edu/wq/wqhome.html)
- **Oregon**
  (http://www.upstreamconnection.com/wsep/index.cfm)
- **Washington**
  (http://wawater.wsu.edu)

Another source of educational assistance is the Western Rural Development Center. The WRDC is one of four USDA-sponsored regional centers whose purpose is to strengthen rural families, communities, and businesses by facilitating rural development research and extension (outreach) projects cooperatively with universities.

ties and communities throughout the West). Its web site:

http://www.ext.usu.edu/WRDC

So much for group formation! Now turn your attention to several issues that can spell the difference between dazzling success and dismal failure within your watershed planning group. The second part of this resource guide will examine the watershed planning process—particularly as individuals come together within a group setting to express their concerns and to share their ideas about the watershed. Get those waders on, because it is time to wade among the reeds and slish through the rushes in the search to better understand watershed planning groups and the individuals who comprise them. During the journey, you will stop at various watershed "viewpoints" to consider such issues as: making sense of the world around you; developing effective procedures ("ground rules") for group interaction; engaging in consensus-based decision making; channeling anger constructively; and correcting power imbalances within your planning group.

Through your heightened sensitivity to these issues, you will be in a better position to develop the necessary tools through which to "nudge" the group back on task when discussion takes off on a tangent, and the watershed planning process starts unraveling.

Part II: Creating Effective Watershed Planning Groups

1. Understanding Others’ Perspectives on Watershed Conflicts

Introduction

People react to watershed conflicts from a variety of perspectives and circumstances (adapted from Bolman and Deal, 1984). People within governmental agencies tend to focus on rules, roles, and responsibilities. They deal with conflict by shifting personnel, drafting new legislation, and revising agency procedures. Others may be more concerned over the impact of proposed changes in land use patterns on their continued enjoyment of local facilities, services, and natural resources. They place a high value on participating in public involvement processes to articulate their concerns and to educate others.

Local residents may be highly attuned to the political process and to shifts in the distribution of power. They are skilled at building coalitions and changing them as often as necessary to maintain the upper hand in conflict situations. Yet others may look for deeper meanings in the various watershed-related conflicts affecting everyday life. They attend to local symbols and rituals as important ways of connecting the culture and traditions with an uncertain future.

Ways of Looking at the World

When watershed conflicts or controversies arise, people interpret them through the "lens" they find most comfortable. They bring their various interpretations—all of which are relevant—to complex situations, in the hope of reaching satisfactory solutions. Though most have a common desire to resolve the situation, too often they are unable to untangle the conflicting points of view without outside assistance. Skilled intermediaries, usually referred to as facilitators or mediators, are responsible for managing the conflict resolution process within the watershed.

Bolman and Deal (1997) have identified four distinct lenses (or frames) through which individuals interpret and respond to the world around them (Table 2). As Bolman and Deal repeatedly emphasize, events can be simultaneously interpreted in a number of
ways—each of which is valid, yet when taken by itself is usually incomplete. These multiple realities make communication difficult, because the same event is understood as serving distinct purposes. In the midst of such complex watershed realities, the most pressing challenge facing the planning group is reaching agreement on the most appropriate frame for the situation. That frame also must most effectively convey the meaning to others.

It is likely all of the above frames come into play as diverse interests come to grips with the watershed conflict and begin determining proposed actions. For group members to engage effectively in the discussion, they need to possess the ability to perceive and understand situations from each of these distinct vantage points. This ability to reframe the situation is particularly useful when the frame a member is using to using no longer seems able to grasp the meaning of what is unfolding.

**Salience of the Frames in Watershed Planning Processes**

Table 3 attempts to capture each frame’s salience in helping members understand the behaviors of others throughout the conflict resolution process within a watershed.

---

**Table 3. Salience of Frames in Watershed Conflict Resolution Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Asked</th>
<th>Likely Response from People Utilizing Each of the Frames</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defining Frames</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pregroup Formation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How much conflict is present?</td>
<td>low to moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How much ambiguity and uncertainty are present?</td>
<td>low to moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are people working top-down or bottom-up?</td>
<td>top down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How important is the technical quality of the decision?</td>
<td>important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How important are commitment and motivation?</td>
<td>important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How important are resources?</td>
<td>moderately scarce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During Negotiation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How do you feel about the process?</td>
<td>maintain group goals by having authorities resolve conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What is the focus of the negotiations?</td>
<td>analyze roles and responsibilities to fit tasks and environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What type of involvement is needed to address the conflict?</td>
<td>strategies to set objectives and coordinate resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What do you hope the negotiation process will achieve?</td>
<td>keep group linked in the right directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How is the group preparing for meetings?</td>
<td>formal occasions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Why do you choose to participate in meetings?</td>
<td>transmit facts and information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How do you view decision making?</td>
<td>rational sequence to produce the right decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How do you motivate others to implement any decision reached?</td>
<td>economic incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When Watershed Conflicts Cannot Be Resolved</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. When decisions are not made, or the group does not reach consensus, what is the result?</td>
<td>unproductivity, confusion, and chaos throughout the group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Adapted from Robinson and Deal, 1997: 267-268, 271 and 311)*
This table suggests the structural frame will likely be most salient in low-level conflict situations within the watershed where resource scarcity is not really an issue. Little ambiguity and uncertainty are present; rules, roles, and responsibilities (also tasks and goals) are clearly defined and articulated; and decisions are made on the basis of technically sound information.

With increased conflict within the watershed come greater ambiguity and uncertainty, and greater pressure on the "existing order" (since the current approach is not working) to try something different. People begin losing faith in the existing order's ability to remedy the situation. The existing order responds by proposing an alternative, inclusive approach that realigns roles and responsibilities to coordinate the additional people (particularly outside facilitators or mediators) being brought into the mix. The existing order proposes the goals for this alternative approach as well as specifying tasks and time lines (usually via a proposed work plan for the watershed planning group).

Participants in the watershed planning effort, however, differ over what has transpired, what information is needed, how decisions should be reached, and what (if anything) should be done. When you reach this point, the human resource and political frictions appear to be particularly salient. People's needs and values are expressed in meetings where group norms keep hostilities in check. Consensus-based decision making pushes task completion further and further behind specific target dates. As frustration sets in, some members press for realigning the process with the work plan (structural); others want to gain clarity via greater deliberation around the negotiation table (human resource); yet others may propose "time outs" so respective causes can decide appropriate next steps (political).

About now the negotiation process can really use someone with a symbolic frame to make sense of what is happening. Through formal presentations as well as spontaneous events, the symbolic frame will recast the experience (perhaps through humor or story telling) in terms that give new and special meaning to everyone involved.

The symbolic frame is especially salient at the conclusion of watershed planning processes, when either celebrations or wakes are in order. One can count on the symbolic frame recasting whatever has occurred in words and props that uplift and inspire. The symbolic frame heals people's spirits so they can work together another day...

Once the watershed planning process has run its course, attention returns to the political frame for implementation (positive outcome) or coalition formation to redistribute power (negative outcome, with the existing order emerging wounded and weaker—fair game for attack).

2. Value of Developing Explicitly Stated Ground Rules To Govern Group Behavior

Introduction

Operating procedures or protocols (commonly referred to as "ground rules" or "group norms") within collaborative, decision-making processes enable watershed planning groups to function more effectively. Procedures developed and adopted by group members cover a variety of topics—including:

- **How decisions are made** (via consensus, voting, or some combination);
- **Roles and responsibilities of participants in meeting management** (members and alternates, facilitators/mediators, staff, the general public, the media);
- **Treatment of others** (treating others with respect, seeing them as having legitimacy);
- **Degree of engagement** (via active listening and involvement, honesty and openness, creative suggestions);
- **Data for decision-making** (for example, how and by whom information is obtained, shared, and verified);
- **Desired products and outcomes** (what is expected, by when, and for whom? how will we know progress is being made—both by the watershed planning group members and by their constituents?); and
- **Sharing of the process with others** (how meeting summaries are to be prepared and disseminated; how to present educational efforts—such as newspaper articles, meetings, field trips—to involve the general public).

Several schools of thought pertain to ground rule development. Some individuals believe groups "lose less time and can get down to business" more rapidly by importing the ground rules from some other entity. Others stress that ground rules, to be effective for group members, must be sensitive to the specific needs, unique circumstances, and particular situations (local culture and traditions) of group members.

**Generic Ground Rules**
A generic list of ground rules for effective groups has recently been proposed for consideration by people involved in collaborative decision-making processes (Table 4). The rationale (Schwarz, 1994: 74) follows:

"Groups develop a set of norms that tell members what kind of behaviors are expected and not expected of them. Unfortunately, because group norms are often unspoken, members may misinterpret them. This makes it more difficult to enforce the norms when members violate them. To reduce these problems, group members can explicitly agree to follow a set of ground rules."

Each of the sixteen ground rules (Schwarz, 1994: 76–85) is briefly described below:

---

**Table 4. Generic Ground Rules for Watershed Planning Group Consideration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Test assumptions and inferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Share all relevant information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Focus on interests, not positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Be specific—use examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Agree on what important words mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Explain the reasons behind statements, questions, and actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Disagree openly with any member of the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Make statements, then invite questions and comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Jointly test ways to test disagreements and solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Discuss &quot;undiscussable&quot; issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Keep the agenda focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Do not take cheap shots or otherwise distract the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>All members are expected to participate in all phases of the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Exchange relevant information with non-group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Make decisions by consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Do self-critiques</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Test assumptions and influences
   When people assume something, they consider it true without verifying it. When people infer something, they draw conclusions about what they know and do not know based on what they know. Testing assumptions and influences enables members to obtain valid information and make informed choices.

2. Share all relevant information
   This ground rule means each member tells the group all the information she or he has that will affect how the group solves a problem or makes a decision. Sharing information ensures members have a common base of information. This includes sharing information that runs contrary to one’s preferred position.

3. Focus on interests, not positions
   To make decisions to which all members are internally committed, members must find a solution that meets everyone’s interests. Interests are the needs, desires, and concerns people have in regard to a given problem. Solutions or positions are the ways people meet their interests.

4. Be specific—use examples
   Specific examples use directly observable behaviors to describe people, places, things, or events. Unlike general statements, specific examples generate valid information because they enable other members to determine, independently, whether the examples are valid.

5. Agree on what important words mean
   When members unintentionally agree or disagree with each other, it is often because the same word means different things to them. One way to determine whether all group members are using a word to mean the same thing is to ask them the first time the word is used.

6. Explain the reasons behind one’s statements, questions, and actions
   Explaining one’s reasoning helps people interpret behavior correctly and reduces the chances of people assuming or inferring things that may not be true.

7. Disagree openly with any member of the group
   Disagreeing openly is consistent with the core value of valid information. Yet, sometimes the composition of the group makes it difficult for certain members to disagree with others. Adoption of this ground rule sends a clear message to everyone that disagreement is “OK” and that differing opinions and interpretations should not be taken personally.

8. Make statements, then invite questions and comments
   Making statements and then inviting questions and comments about them means expressing one’s point of view (making sure to explain the reasons) and then asking others to respond, including whether they agree or disagree. Inviting others to comment on statements encourages them to question and challenge the ideas and helps focus discussion as a dialogue rather than as a series of monologues.

9. Jointly test ways to test disagreements and solutions
   To do this, each person would have to be willing to accept the possibility that her or his information is inaccurate or incomplete. Then, they would jointly develop a method to test which “facts” are relevant. The method might include jointly agreeing on who is to speak, what questions to ask, what statistical data to consider relevant, and how to collect the data. Whatever method is used, it is critical that members agree to it and agree to use the information that comes from it.

10. Discuss “undiscussable” issues
    Every group typically has undiscussable issues. These are issues relevant to the group’s task but ones members believe they cannot discuss openly in the group without some negative consequences. For the group to share valid information and allow members to make free and informed choices, members need to make undiscussable issues discussable within the group.

11. Keep the agenda focused
    Focusing the discussion means ensuring members are discussing relevant issues, everyone is focused on the same issue, and everyone fully understands the issue. Sometimes, a group spends time discussing issues irrelevant to its task. To refocus the group on relevant issues, it helps to identify how the group wandered off track. Keeping the discussion focused also means discussing the issue until all members understand it.

12. Do not take cheap shots or otherwise distract the group
    Almost everyone has been the target of a cheap shot—a witty or snide remark that insults someone. A cheap shot generally makes the target feel bad and does not help the group.

13. All members are expected to participate in all phases of the process
    This ground rule means simply that each member’s participation is essential for the group to work effectively. For the group to benefit from the different views of members, all must contribute to the extent they have relevant information to share.

14. Exchange relevant information with nongroup members
    To be effective, a group must work well with people outside the group with whom the group members are interdependent. To make decisions on valid information, groups often need to obtain information that resides outside the group.

15. Make decisions by consensus
    Making decisions by consensus is at the heart of the ground rules. Consensus means that everyone in the group freely agrees with the decision and will support it. If even one person cannot agree with a proposed decision, the group does not have a consensus. Reaching consensus usually takes more time than voting, because it is hard work to find a decision or solution that everyone supports.

Individuals often are reluctant to use this ground rule, because in their experience groups rarely are able to reach consensus and because they fear key decisions will not get made, perhaps creating a tyranny of the minority. Many groups are unable to reach consensus because they do not use an effective set of ground rules; using the above ground rules increases the likelihood a group will reach consensus.

16. Do self-critiques
    For a group to become more effective over time, it must have some way to systematically incorporate its successes and to learn from its mistakes. Self-critiques provide a way to do this.

Taking the Second Step: Tailoring the Ground Rules to Your Specific Situation
The generic ground rules can serve several important functions as you begin considering how you would like your watershed planning group to “work.” First, they may stimulate further personal reflection on your envisioned planning process. To aid in this effort, recall an earlier activity (please refer to the section Taking That First Step) when you wrote down your feelings about your watershed and its future. This time, concentrate on the envisioned watershed planning group and your participation in it.

Briefly state as clearly as possible your expectations for the watershed planning process. The intent is to have you describe the most appropriate learning environment for yourself, as well as identify the desired behaviors you would like to see exhibited by other members of the group. Please take whatever amount of time is necessary (perhaps you would like to set aside a while, and come back to it later) to generate as complete a response as possible:

---

14

15
Q-1 How do you like to learn?

Q-2 What facilitates your learning?

Q-3 What hinders your learning?

Q-4 What will need to occur during the envisioned watershed planning process to gain your positive evaluation of that experience?

Q-5 What, specifically, do you feel are the responsibilities of each watershed planning group member? Do you have any suggestions regarding personal behavior and interacting with others?

After you have responded to the questions:

- Was this activity useful?
- Do you think others in your watershed might benefit from going through a similar process?

If this experience has been positive, you might consider sharing all or part of it with others within your watershed. You could provide people with copies of the generic ground rules as well as the above questions; distribute only the questions; or generate your own set of questions for others’ response...

3. The Case for Consensus-Based Decision Making in Watershed Planning Processes

Introduction

Consensus forms the building blocks allowing collective responses to take shape. With consensus, decisions can only be reached through a process that encourages each participant in the watershed planning group to listen carefully, to ask questions for clarification, and to share understandings with others around the negotiation table. When disagreement occurs, participants are responsible for exploring alternative avenues for reaching agreement. This intense interaction unleashes participant creativity and triggers synergistic alternatives everyone can support. Since the people directly affected are actively participating as negotiators in shaping potential outcomes, the likelihood is greater that whatever watershed plan is developed will be implemented.

Given its strategic importance centered at the core of multi-party decision making, it is something surprising that so little has been written on consensus. Most authors devote anywhere from a scant paragraph to several pages to the concept, boiling down complexity and nuance into “no voting,” “everyone is in agreement,” or “being able to live with the result.” In their quest to keep things simple, the writers perpetrate a tremendous injustice on readers as they suck the soul of, and anesthetize the passions from, a dynamic and evolving interactive process. Addressing the richness embodied in this process can fundamentally and forever change negotiator behavior for the better.

The following discussion draws from several recent publications by the Canadian Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (Canadian Round Table, 1993; Cormick et al., 1996). This inclusive effort involved more than one hundred representatives from all sectors of Canadian society—national, provincial, and indigenous round tables—who labored for more than 30 months to develop guiding principles later articulated into proposed practices.

What Is Consensus?

If you have ever served on a committee where the discussion you hoped would occur was summarily terminated by the chairperson’s directive to take a vote and abide by the results you will probably begin appreciating consensus’ alternative approach. Its attraction may be even stronger for those on the wrong side of a decision who felt others’ desires were being rammed down their throats.

Although no hard data back up the following statement, I suspect most people view consensus as the polar opposite of voting; that is, people simply substitute one action (consensus decision making) for another (voting). When this perspective is coupled with the predominant cultural tradition that places a high value on “taking charge” and “just doing it,” the end result is people professing to practice consensus, who in actuality are doing more talking than listening as they attempt to wear others down to their point of view. You might call this form of consensus decision making “consensus by attrition,” since its overall intent is to put others into frames of mind where they no longer care to continue challenging perspectives different than their own. It becomes easier to just give up, give in, and move to another item on the agenda...
Understanding the concept is much deeper and broader. Consensus is an evolving process that holds the potential for its participants engaging in eye-opening and mind-altering dialogue over watershed issues and values that directly affect the continued well-being of all concerned. Some negotiators immediately see the value of taking a risk (to get the ball rolling) and "baring their souls" by making statements that will likely be vehemently challenged by others; most proceed with extreme caution, choosing to listen and reflect rather than emotionally respond. Consensus is a process that proceeds in jerks and gyrations rather than in one continuous acceleration. The ride begins to smooth out only when its participants have developed sufficient trust to actively engage in impassioned discourse.

Perhaps consensus is such a difficult concept to grasp due to the number of variables that must somehow function in unison if consensus is to be attained and its desired outcomes realized. A consensus process assumes a great deal of its participants: that people possessing distinct agendas, varying levels of expertise, and unequal supplies of resources (such as money, time, power)—even those professing envy towards others around the negotiation table—will be able to act respectfully and responsibly in shaping an interactive process. The process must address each person's needs and values and identify umbrellas mechanisms that crystallize collective needs and values.

For a consensus process to have any hope of succeeding, its participants must first agree on what the content of proposed watershed deliberations will include. Participants then need to agree how they will engage one another in constructive discourse along the way towards resolution. What participants inevitably discover is that they must listen actively with inquisitive minds and talk honestly from impassioned hearts about why planning is so important for the future health of the watershed and its inhabitants. A consensus process becomes a series of interpersonal encounters aimed at building individual commitment and collective responsibility for changing the status quo. No easy task when temperatures are short and time becomes an investment nobody particularly wants to make!

Is Consensus Always the Preferred Alternative?
No. Cormick and colleagues identify five distinct situations where consensus-based processes would not be appropriate: when used to delay decisions or deceive participants; and when one or more members has a distaste for compromising principles, disavows any form of negotiation, or lacks sufficient group development skills to effectively represent constituent interests and values.

Characteristics and Principles of Consensus Processes
Consensus processes are characterized by people's ability to directly participate in, control the dialogue during, and determine resultant public policy through, discussions affecting their continued well-being. Within the context of the watershed planning process, discussions offer each person the opportunity for educating others and help to resolve the controversy. Discussions can explain the various historical factors, cultural considerations, distinct values and the diverse perspectives and unique vantage points involved. Consensus moves through a progressive sequence as participants agree first on the process, then substance, and finally on the watershed planning document. Participants ultimately assume personal responsibility for moving words into action and rhetoric into reality.

The Canadian Round Table (1993-8) has identified ten distinct principles guiding consensus processes to successful outcomes (Table 5). These principles help draw people in and gain their commitment (principles 1-3); shape the manner in which issues are addressed, information is shared, and decisions are reached (principles 4-8); and generate collective support for implementing agreements reached via closely monitored specific actions (principle 10):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Characteristics and Principles of Consensus Processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Purpose Driven—people need a reason to participate in the process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Inclusive not Exclusive—all parties with a significant interest in the issue should be involved in the consensus process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Voluntary Participation—the parties who are affected or interested participate voluntarily;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self Design—the parties design the consensus process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Flexibility—flexibility should be designed into the process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Equal Opportunity—all parties must have equal access to relevant information and the opportunity to participate effectively throughout the process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Respect for Diverse Interests—acceptance of the diverse values, interests, and knowledge of the parties involved in the consensus process is essential;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Accountability—the parties are accountable both to their constituencies and to the process they have agreed to establish;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Time Limits—realistic deadlines are necessary throughout the process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Implementation—commitment to implementation and effective monitoring are essential parts of any agreement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The Canadian Round Table (1993-8)

Building Consensus into Everyday Actions
Consensus building is all about people taking personal responsibility in fostering trusting relationships. It crawl's forward cautiously and incrementally as individuals begin letting go of controlling behaviors, suspend judgment, and start listening to others' perspectives. The process loses its hesitancy as individuals become receptive to new ideas and begin reflecting on how such diverse information might shape a new and broadened understanding. Forward progress becomes energized when personal advantage gives way to collective satisfaction in the form of a consensus agreement all parties can embrace and strive to implement.

The fuel powering the process through which consensus is built are the core values of valid information, free and informed choice, and internal commitment to choice.18 Adherence to the Canadian Round Table's first three principles enables participants to generate and validate information on which to base informed decisions (principles 4-9), and implementation (principle 10). Put another way: these guiding principles become the conduit to express core values in everyday actions that collectively lead to making a better watershed.

After this discussion, why would anybody want to return to voting?!

4. Dealing with Angry People

Introduction
This discussion assumes your valiant efforts (along with those of others) have stimulated the formation of a watershed planning group. What behaviors might you encounter when the various members actually sit down and begin interacting?

Information in this section is based upon the book *Dealing with an Angry Person: The Mutual Gains Approach to Resolving Disputes* published in

18
1996 by The Free Press and authored by Lawrence Susskind and Patrick Field. Through their close association with the MIT-Harvard Public Disputes Program, the authors draw upon varied case examples to illustrate the concepts relating to public anger and its amelioration. Although their attention focuses primarily on actions taken by corporations and governmental agencies that result in public anger, outrage and retaliation, their findings hold considerable relevance for watershed planning groups.

What Constitutes Public Anger, and Why Is the Public Angry?

Susskind and Field argue that anger is a defensive response by the public to protect itself against the adverse impacts of corporate or governmental actions. Anger is not just out there lurking in the environment waiting for some opportune moment to pounce, unannounced, on corporate citizens and governmental personnel; rather, public anger tends to be triggered by some event (already felt, or anticipated) whose consequences are deemed dire.

Table 6. Distinct Types of Public Anger

| 1. Anger and hurt | When a specific action has occurred, and pain has been inflicted on the public. |
| 2. Anger and risk | When people are afraid of pain being inflicted on themselves from actions whose consequences cannot be clearly and unequivocally determined or measured. |
| 3. Anger and belief | When people perceive the world and their respective roles in it come under attack. |
| 4. Anger and weakness | When people feel frustrated (and powerless) because their views are not being considered, much less discussed, by others whose actions will directly affect them. |
| 5. Anger and lies | Nothing provokes public wrath like the feeling of having been lied to. Such action violates the public trust and seriously damages (if not destroys) any relationships previously cultivated between the perpetrator and the public. |
| 6. Anger and show | Sometimes public outrage is feigned to mobilize one's constituents against proposed corporate activities or governmental policies. |

Source: Lawrence Susskind and Patrick Field, Dealing with an Angry Public: The Mutual Gains Approach to Resolving Disputes, pp. 21-34

Relevance to watershed planning: Some members of your group may view development of a watershed plan as providing a blueprint to limit their normal and accreted usage of watershed resources (such as fear the plan will require the fencing of streams). Such an attitude encourages people to focus on protecting turf and maintaining the status quo rather than opening their minds to alternative futures for the watershed. As these members dig in their heels and attempt to take potential watershed options off the table, they are labeled as "obstructionists" and criticized for not acting in "good faith." Tempers flare, with inflammatory remarks quickly vaporizing any trust thus far developed!

3. Anger and belief—when people's perception of the world and their respective roles in it come under attack.

Relevance to watershed planning: Be prepared for one or more members of your group to reframe the watershed planning process as nothing short of a governmental land-grab—part of some grand design by outsiders to unseat local control and private property rights by locking up the watershed from further development forever. While group members are certainly entitled to their respective opinions, you can readily imagine the tensions created when someone from outside the watershed (particularly a governmental agency representative) sits down to talk with locals about the future of the watershed. Suspicious minds begin sorting participants into "us" and "them" categories as a (usually abridged) copy of the U.S. Constitution is pulled out and cited as the first line of defense!

4. Anger and weakness—when people feel frustrated (and powerless) because their views are not being considered, much less discussed, by others whose actions will directly impact them.

Relevance to watershed planning: Frustration can set in when one or more group members notice their expressed desires for the watershed are not supported by the majority. The watershed deck appears stacked against them. They equate their verbal input as talking to a stone wall; their ideas appear to be tuned out by others and dismissed out of hand.

5. Anger and lies—nothing provokes public wrath like the feeling of having been lied to. Such action violates the public trust and seriously damages (if not destroys) any relationships previously cultivated between the perpetrator and the public.

Relevance to watershed planning: A fuzzy line separates lies from "misinterpretation." Anecdotal evidence (as whether a particular endangered species utilizes the watershed) can be used to advantage in pushing for a particular planning outcome. More likely, anger begins boiling over when one or more aspects of the watershed (such as stream flows or water quality) certain members believed would be addressed by the planning group is taken off the table for further discussion.

6. Anger and show—sometimes public outrage is feigned to mobilize constituents against proposed corporate activities or governmental policies. Dramatic gestures and pronouncements played out in front of an accommodating press make for great camera footage, sound bytes and headline-grabbing quotes—even if motives are suspect.

Relevance to watershed planning: When consensus cannot be reached regarding a particular issue, the group's ground rules may provide a decision-making safety valve in the form of voting. When the time comes to cast ballots, however, those in the minority (who have thus far failed to sway others to their point of view and now want no part of a decision they find distasteful) may choose to disassociate themselves from the decision by
Mutual Gains Approach

Susskind and Field’s mutual gains approach is based upon the authors’ in-depth assessment of what went wrong as corporations and governmental agencies followed conventional wisdom in dealing with a public angry over being hurt, put at risk, or having their values and beliefs threatened. The six guiding principles presented below are drawn from twenty-one prescriptions (that is, statements of what ought to be done) generated to rectify the severe shortcomings of current practices:

1. Acknowledge the concerns of the other side

To acknowledge others’ concerns, a person must first be willing to express a genuine interest in learning what others’ viewpoints really are. Personal judgments must be suspended while one listens carefully to what is being said. Active questioning is required during the discussion when broad or ambiguous statements are issued, so the messages sent are ultimately the ones being received. Once understanding is achieved, a dialogue can employ concerns as sources of education in a free-flowing informational exchange.

At least this is the hope! When people are angry, however, they tend to pull in their “antennas” and pull out their weapons. The weapons in this case become harsh, accusatory words paining recipients to the wall. Listening loses out as “Let me sell you” takes over, and civility becomes one of the first casualties.

2. Encourage joint fact finding

Dialogue transforms concerns into shared (although contrasting) histories of events shaping the present situation. One person’s “facts” may be viewed by others as nothing more than fantasy or wishful thinking. A good way to determine “Whose facts are right and whose are wrong?” is not to ask that question. Rather, ask people to identify questions for which information needs to be obtained, and then to work collaboratively in its pursuit.

So goes the theory: When people are angry, however, their facts are unequivocal while others’ facts become immediately suspect. Since things are either white (my facts) or black (their fantasies), why kid yourself over the notion that some gray may be waiting to be found? And yet...maybe something is waiting impatiently out there in the shadows. Indeed there is, and it is called risk!

3. Offer contingent commitments to minimize impacts if they do occur promise to compensate kno...close! But unintended impacts This concept is relatively straightforward. If proponents of a change strongly believe their proposed actions will have negligible impacts on the public, they should be willing to “put their money where their mouths is,” and back up the rhetoric with specific (binding) commitments to offset unforeseen impacts with appropriate levels and kinds of compensation. Why be a nay-sayer when a little up-front commitment can turn you into a good neighbor?

While this concept is probably one of the better dispute resolution concepts to come along, its practice is scarred by proponents of changing the status quo. It is not that simple. Proponents of change see a promise to compensate as unnecessarily adding to the cost of whatever project, practice, or policy currently is being implemented. The public sees the same promise as nothing more than the current version of a long line of empty promises made to disavow skeptics and keep things on track.

4. Accept responsibility, admit mistakes, and share power

Most people’s formative years censored count...less reminders from parents, teachers, and others to take responsibility for one’s actions—particularly when the results created problems for others. We also learned at an early age that sharing with others was a virtue and hoarding was a vice. Then we grew up—coming into regular contact with others who seemed to move further ahead by holding back on information and hanging on to whatever power (that is, knowledge, expertise, coercion, alliances and networks, ability to control rewards...) they seemed to momentarily enjoy. For some, personal ethics became increasingly conditioned by particular “situations,” as the situation became more and more comfortable the notion of taking responsibility began slipping away...

Some of those very people now are dealing with citizens who are angry and out for blood following the resounding failure of various business and governmental pronouncements to appease the public. For such individuals, asking forgiveness from the public is not possible. Too bad they see such action in terms of weakness, when most others would view it as a sign of strength!

5. Act in a trustworthy fashion at all times

One of the best pieces of advice ever received came from a grizzled veteran of public participation processes who gave the following response about building trust: “To gain the trust of others you must take the first step yourself!” Trust is not a passive entity; it must be cultivated through give-and-take interactions and fulfilled commitments that occur between individuals over time. Through the increased comfort felt in the other’s presence, one begins letting go of hedged, conditional acceptance and moves toward fully embracing another’s statements. A vegetarian friend likened this process to “peeling the layers off the onion.” Precisely because trust is so hard to gain and so easily lost, people throughout the ages have been encouraged to follow the Golden Rule: “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Great advice much of the time. But when anger reigns its ugly head, the rule invariably gets modified as others begin trying to do you in!

6. Focus on building long-term relationships

Unlike children who have ready made escape valves in “I’m packing up my toys and going home!” when interpersonal relationships get heated and distance apart seems the best device for cooling things down, business and government are normally not so mobile. Policies and practices are based upon planning horizons that project involvement far into the future. In short, business and government are in it for the long haul. Often their activities are perceived as intrusive, particularly when agents doing the promoting are “not from around here” and do not seem to understand local concerns.

When tempers flare and eyes start to glaze, what some see as the shaping of public opinion and involvement others perceive as public plays and being pushed around...and finally pushed out of the picture so outsiders can have their way. Nobody is much in the mood anymore to do any listening, let alone reflect on the fact that each response from business and government to the public’s anger tends to unravel relationships that much more. Yet the notion of building long-term relationships implies an unwavering commitment to getting through and beyond current tempers.

When dealing with an angry public, individuals will likely keep challenging each other until you or they create an appropriate forum that gives the opportunity to listen, share, and learn. Your watershed planning group can become that forum—for building the necessary trust and commitments essential for plan development and implementation.

5. Perspectives on Power

Introduction

The past two sections have been bumping along an emotional continuum began undercool mom...
ing breezes and cloudless skies (consensus) before passing through a stilling hot and humid afternoon (ango). Although night is now fast descending, there is still a ways to go before journey’s end. So, what should you do? Circle the wagons and take a much-needed rest, or, plunge into the darkness—risking life and limb to caravans members—to arrive at the final watershed destination more quickly and thus pivot an end to all the short tempers and bickering now constantly swirling about? The decision, given these circumstances, belongs to the wagon master. The wagon master in charge is barking “move on!" if the group is to reach Power by morning.

This section is about power, pure and simple. (Actually, neither adjective is entirely appropriate—given most people’s reaction to the word and especially the concept.) The word association is broadly negative.12 Perhaps you hold the same view. How would you respond to this “fill in the blank” statement: “When I think of the word power I think of ____.”

Hm! An interesting response! Would you care to reflect on your reaction? Are particular people or circumstances coming quickly to mind that embody the word (or words) you selected? You may want to keep your initial reactions to power in mind as you progress through this section...

You may find it surprising that almost nothing has been written about power and its relationship to watershed planning processes. Perhaps because the word is associated with individual actions, not collective processes. Perhaps it is because the watershed planning field is still in its infancy. Irrespective of reasons it demands attention here, since “in situations of conflict, power is the mechanism, the currency by which the conflict gets resolved.”13

In discussing the use of power in watershed planning processes, we have the opportunity to witness how the means and ends (and motives) as well as strategies and tactics of individuals in a collective process struggle for primacy within a structure designed to keep them in check. The

outcome is always in doubt. Will the watershed planning process become a scorpions’ dance to the death, as individuals utilize their various sources and bases of power to do whatever is necessary to prevail? Or will the process take the form of a playful dance of butterflies, where participants are empowered to posture even higher in search of that wind carrying them toward new horizons? The outcome is always in doubt...

Various sources have been tapped for this section. Some come from organizational development literature, while others cover community organizing and political theory. The discussion will explore what constitutes power, what are its various sources or bases, and how it might be employed (strategies and tactics) throughout the watershed planning process. The focus will be on “reining in” the destructive uses of power to allow its constructive counterparts the opportunity to function effectively.

Constituents of Power

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of power is about as easy as grasping a greased pig! The topic quickly morphs into the proverbial elephant being described by a group of blind individuals who have each experienced a distinct aspect of the concept.

- For certain individuals, power is best understood by examining the personal attributes of the possessor (what special characteristics enable one particular person or group to gain advantage over others?)
- Another approach focuses exclusively on the motive underlying the use of power (why did that person or group do what was done; what was the intent?)
- A third emphasizes the context and consequences of power’s use, whether intended or not (who was impacted by the outcome, and how were they affected?)
- While yet another home in on the backlash provoked by the use of power as demonstrated through the mobilization of countervailing forces to challenge existing power and modify anticipated consequences (who is involved in coalition formation, and where does the initial skirmish occur?)

Which of the above is most appropriate for pursuit, and where does one start? A quick review of prior sections suggests all are appropriate and need to be considered, since watershed planning processes comprise individuals and coalitions possessing distinct perspectives, differing amounts and mixes of power sources, and diverse strategies and tactics—many one of which may gain prominence at any given moment. As with truth, beauty, and a host of other concepts: what constitutes power lies in the eyes of the beholder.

Potential Sources or Bases of Power

For more than forty years, the concept of power has played an important part in social science research and application. Initially, power was understood mainly in terms of one’s structural position. The concept has further evolved via personal skills and characteristics (attributes such as knowledge and personality), as well as behavioral ability to deal with uncertainty. More recently, people view power both as an independent variable (relating to the particular abilities and backgrounds of individuals irrespective of context) and as a dependent variable (related to the particular situation or context in which the individual is immersed).

Table 7 summarizes the sources and bases of power within the context of watershed planning. The review indicates power is derived through one’s structural position, personal attributes, behavioral abilities, or a combination of these:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socially sanctioned legitimacy or authority</td>
<td>Knowledge (expertise, information, and experience)</td>
<td>Alliances and networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of rewards</td>
<td>Personality (energy and stamina, verbal facility, charisma)</td>
<td>Coercion and manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political access</td>
<td>Professional credibility (reputation)</td>
<td>Access and control of agendas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff support</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Framing (control of meaning and symbols)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige</td>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity to articulate a vision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategies and Tactics

Another way of interpreting Table 7 is in terms of resources (the means) an individual might draw upon to obtain desired results (the ends). These resources can be used in different combinations and distinct sequences depending on specific cir-
This is the land usually described by writers concerned with power strategies and tactics. Their narratives are replete with juicy words and phrases detailing how individuals plot, scheme, caudle, and connive—doing whatever it takes in stumping to the top. The writers make no excuse nor harbor any apology for emphasizing the base aspects of power since, according to them, this is how really really works! Those people with whom one is engaged are viewed not as potential friends or likely collaborators but rather as "opponents" or "enemies" standing in the way of individual attainment.

Taking a right turn and climbing to the collaborative high ground is the preferred direction taken by watershed planning participants (which is not to say—or naively assume—participants deviate from this path from time to time). In shifting to higher ground you will pass through foothills made up of individual powers eventually displaced through prolonged dialogue leading to greater understanding and interpersonal empowerment. This journey is described below.

Application to Watershed Planning Processes
Watershed planning processes are about transforming individual powers into collective empowerment. Through words and actions, participants somehow stimulate in others the necessary motivation and confidence to engage in behaviors to reach the previously unattainable. Whether the desired end or goal is actually attained is less important than the fact individuals collectively are now attempting to do so.

Within watershed planning processes, this empowerment is dialectic. Through give-and-take dialogue, participants trigger new and creative ways of thinking about the watershed both now and into the future.

You are certainly justified in saying, "whoa, hold on" about now if the impression is gained that all one need do to keep the abuse of power in check is wave a magic wand in the form of a facilitator or mediator at participants and utter some banality like "be nice!" and then behold it so during the watershed planning process. Actual negotiation will soon signal whether individuals are really serious about engaging (via interpersonal behavior) in collective activity. This time sorely tests professed "good faith" and "good will" through the physical presence of negotiators whose faces and representations symbolize past transgressions, teeth and nail opposition, and anticipated deception—a likely combination if there ever was for mischief to be made! Will negotiators talk a good line around the table, only to maneuver behind the scenes undermining the process; or instead, approach the negotiation with open minds and a willingness to suspend judgment and reflect upon others' concerns and suggestions? The hoped for goal is that representatives around the table come to a fairly quick agreement on the procedures (ground rules) through which negotiations will occur. These procedures set the parameters for discussion and provide the necessary behavioral guidelines through which to unmask destructive power strategies and tactics whenever they appear.

Moving from Individual Power to Group Empowerment
This roller coaster of a ride with power as co-pilot has covered considerable landscape! This excursion was not only able to bubble along for a bit at the bottom of the barrel containing a witches' brew of mean-spirited mischief concocted by inhabitants of power's dark side. It also had the opportunity through empowering dialogue with others to go with the flow of its positive force and rise to the top and beyond—and in the process gain a collective vision of what might be done for the benefit of all.

The study of power is a conceptual examination of contrasts. Power can be that proverbial rock on which wise individuals build their houses and live by golden rules just as it can serve as a lethal weapon by which to inflict eye-for-an-eye harm on others. The use to which individual power is put depends on one's motives.

Watershed planning processes provide a context wherein individual motives and perspectives, strategies and tactics might be fully explained, respectfully discussed, thoughtfully considered, and passionately incorporated in collective action. Realization depends on the extent to which effective procedural safeguards are initially developed and later honored during this evolutionary transition from individual powers being used solely to prevail to the point where collective empowerment leads to the improved well-being of all.

Taking the Final Step: Transforming Group Rhetoric into Watershed Planning Reality
Actually, this should occur almost automatically if the needs and values brought by individual members to the planning table have been factored in to group deliberations and allowed to influence the overall design and content of the planning document. This discussion has offered several examples for identifying personal issues as well as strengthening interpersonal relationships among members of your proposed watershed planning group. As the process continuum has progressed from individual needs and values, to interpersonal relationships, to collective action, you have consciously attempted to build trust within the watershed planning group by encouraging members to engage in action that demonstrate their individual commitment to, and personal responsibility for, developing an actual watershed planning document.

Quickly review what has been done thus far to enhance the effectiveness of your proposed watershed planning group:

1. Identification of individual needs and values of potential members (Taking That First Step).

By framing the data collection process or an educational opportunity through which potential members could clearly discriminate their perspectives about the watershed and its future, you were able to gather the various pieces of the "truth" possessed by individuals. That data...
could later (via dialogue and decision-making guided by the group’s ground rules) be interwoven into a collective truth capturing the planning group’s vision about the watershed and its desired future condition. Information deemed relevant by individual members had the opportunity to be presented, discussed, and evaluated. The information acceptable to all group members became the valid information influencing the design and content of the watershed plan.

2. Elaboration of potential procedural norms ("ground rules") to strengthen interpersonal relationships (Taking the Second Step)

By asking for individual suggestions about how the proposed watershed planning group should operate, you were able to generate a list of potential "ground rules" governing the planning process. Through the extensive deliberation that followed, members were given the opportunity to weigh the pros and cons of each item on the list to determine which would become part of the group’s operating procedures. While reaching agreement on the ground rules to govern group behavior and decision-making was no easy matter, your ability to recognize, understand, and then effectively channel individual anger and power plays facilitated its attainment. You became the conduit for sharing valid information through which your watershed planning group members could make free and informed choices; not as frequently occurs within many group processes the sole repository in which such information would be hoarded for later access. Your data gathering from others provided the necessary information (via people’s responses) to begin propelling the process clear through actual drafting of the watershed planning document.

Before wrapping this up, re-examine Hackman’s group effectiveness criteria. Stripping the concept to its bare essentials, three elements arise to be concerned about: people, process, and product. Once you have covered that last element you will be ready to put yourselves on the back and call it a day.

Please recall that watershed planning groups tend to be inhabited by individuals holding unique perspectives on the world. One of those perspectives (the technical) continually recalls a task to complete and a timeline to meet. Yet other perspectives (such as the human resource or the political) quickly counter with statements like “why should I care about the task if my concerns are not built into its attainment?” Their views tend to predominate during the initial phases of the watershed planning process—leading to improved relationships among members who may develop into mutual trust.

Once members become comfortable in each other’s presence it is much easier to turn attention to the anticipated product of the planning group’s interactions: the watershed plan. Hopingfully by this point the members will have agreed on what should be covered and how it should be addressed. Since plan contents are based upon the members’ shared concerns, each individual should be internally committed to the choices offered within the plan. Such commitment increases the odds of plan contents actually being implemented throughout the watershed.

Here are parting words of advice: do not discourage when your best intentions get bashed/bucked...or your unconditional trust is trashed by others and tossed to the sidelines? Yeah, it is tough being a messenger when your words are not embraced and recipients choose to do you in. At times like those, just reframe the situation via the symbolic perspective and disarm those downers by floating out the following proposed ground rule: “if you are going to be bashing away you sure had better be Capable”

Endnotes

1 The remaining eight digits provide greater detail about watershed sub-basins.

2 Adapted from information contained in Enrich, 1982; Carpenter and Kennedy, 1988; and Redman, 1987.

3 Which probably contain the other characteristics of watershed conflicts: uncertainty, emotional intensity, distinct root causes, and linkage to public policy.

4 Lenses, frames and perspectives are interchangeable terms describing how individuals, in relating to the world around them, make sense of what is occurring. Our various interpretations and understandings of what we see influence how we decide to respond or react. The phrase "seeing the world through rose-colored glasses" illustrates their dual nature: frames give us comfort and predictability in the midst of uncertainty while simultaneously discouraging contrary interpretations from being perceived.

5 The symbolic frame continuously tugs at one’s sleeve, reminding that “cause and effect” are only words dreamed up by someone attempting to make sense of the world. While that interpretation may help sense, it is meaningless for others. Perhaps by thinking of the watershed planning process as a play in which all four frames (the structural frame’s drama, the human resource frame’s love story, the political frame’s tragedy, and the symbolic frame’s comedy) are continuously being enacted via scripts nobody has previously seen, much less rehearsed, the watershed planning participants may step out of the audience (much like a director) and onto the stage, to suggest which script should be used at a particular moment in time.

6 Silence refers to each frame’s ability to illuminate certain circumstances in ways that provide greater meaning to the interpreter.

7 Local or tribal government as well as representatives from the various state and federal agencies having jurisdiction within the watershed.

8 This point is elaborated in the following section.

9 Discussed in the previous section covering “ground rules.”


11 Normally throughout the Pacific Northwest, a local entity (county government or conservation district) is required to submit an application to the state agency to obtain governmental sanction and financial assistance. Applicants may receive extra consideration for agreeing to address certain aspects (like instream flows and water quality) in the proposed watershed planning process. Such indication may make all the difference in determining whether a local planning group receives state funding or not.

Once work on the plan actually begins, however, members may find that what gets addressed is less than what was specified in the application.

12 An elaboration on power follows in the next section.

13 Substitute the word “leadership” when referring to power’s positive aspects...

14 Words that may come to the forefront include, among others: coercion, manipulation, ruthlessness, control, dominance, evil...

15 Jeffrey Pfeffer (1981). Power in Organizations, pg. 70

16 Pfeffer (1992) shares a wonderful insight about ends and means in Managing with Power (pg. 16): "It is interesting that when we see power ourselves, we see it as a good force and wish we had more. When others use it against us, particularly to thwart our goals or ambitions, we see it as evil..."
References


"The CITC was established in 1982 under the charter of the National Association of Conservation Districts, a non-profit conservation organization."


"As of April, 2002, this database contains more than 3,000 groups that you might want to join... (Through this EPA lead sAdopt Your Watershed campaign, EPA challenges citizens and organizations to join us and others who are working to protect and restore our valuable rivers, streams, wetlands, lakes, ground water, and estuaries.)"


30
New companion video available,

Living on the Edge—
A study of grass-roots water quality councils
in the Pacific Northwest (VT0102)

2.5 hours $25.00
See ordering information below

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Agriculture and Home Economics

Copyright 2002 Washington State University

WSU Cooperative Extension bulletins contain material written and produced for public distribution. You may reprint written material, provided you do not use it to endorse a commercial product. Alternate formats of our educational materials are available upon request for persons with disabilities. Please contact the Information Department, College of Agriculture and Home Economics, Washington State University for more information.

You may order copies of this and other publications from the WSU Bulletin office, 1-800-723-1763, or online http://pubs.wsu.edu

Issued by Washington State University Cooperative Extension and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Cooperative Extension programs and policies are consistent with federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, sex, religion, age, color, creed, national or ethnic origin; physical, mental or sensory disability; marital status, sexual orientation, and status as a Vietnam-era or disabled veteran. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Cooperative Extension office. Trade names have been used to simplify information; no endorsement is intended. Published July 2002. Subject codes 376, 770, 700. G.