

**White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation
Day 2 Breakout Session Compilation**

Topic: Managing Diverse Resource Demands on America's Public Lands: A Cooperative Approach to Improving Conservation

Session number: 40

Morning

Facilitator: Matthew McKinney

Location: 276

This summary cannot be more than two pages; allocate space as needed among the categories.

A. Major Repeated Themes Raised in the Discussion. *A grouping of ideas repeated with some frequency in the session and brought up again during the group summation process. Also includes diverging views and/or questions about the topic.*

Key Ingredients & Best Practices

- Information – “good data and good maps,” scientific baseline for decisions and data on economic and social impacts of decisions is especially important. Best if generated jointly by all stakeholders – joint fact finding.
- Representation – All key stakeholders need to be at the table with a meaningful role and need to understand everyone's interests, responsibilities, and decision constraints and mission requirements. Enable communication and build trust.
- Integrate informal community networks with formal planning processes – Agencies need to develop relationships with local people and get personally involved with the local community. Laws themselves not necessarily broken, just the way they're implemented.
- Timing and timeline - Process needs to begin early and involve stakeholders proactively before problems arise. Short-term administrative deadlines need to be adjusted to the longer-term realities of collaboration.
- Education – Teaching local decision makers and stakeholders about the planning process and how they can get involved.

Barriers & Obstacles

- Competing time demands for participants who wear many hats
- Litigation – everything people do has to be made bullet-proof, (instead of actually solving problem)
- FACA obstacle preventing ordinary people from gathering together to solve the problem

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- How to get top-down agencies to encourage risk-taking, mentoring staff to change practices – a support network
- Lack of a locally-shared vision and a common base of knowledge (scientific and otherwise)
- Someone litigating and blowing apart consensus after it's developed – chills the whole process
- Lack of clear understanding of planning processes and common baseline of knowledge (enviro, social, economic, everything)
- Lack of understanding about the need for a long-term planning horizon – beyond just a few years
- Traditional formal processes are often ineffective yet locked in – a Bureaucratic box of regs with rigid terms – precludes new approaches
- Lack of understanding of purposes, mandates, purpose of various public lands
- Not enough people are staying engaged in process – not enough fuel to carry on, especially for implementation and monitoring
- Temptation to speed up, complete process, but there is risk of inadequate info or relationships
- Institutional structure - how contracts are selected, no \$ for facilitator. Typical planning process out of step with needs of cooperative conservation.
- Lack of neutral facilitator in really controversial decisions
- Not developing an adequate science knowledge baseline to make informed decisions. Not enough \$, time, commitment by partners. And ongoing monitoring – first thing cut by agencies.

B. National-level Practical Actions *that could be taken by the Federal government, national NGO's, and other national organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

National-level

- Change NEPA legislation to incorporate community decision-making networks
- Research recreational impacts and update policy
- Special planning guidance on how to do Coop Cons
- “shelters of innovation” – Mresources avail for projects to take risks and take the next step.
- Divergent view - Give all FS land to the BLM in AZ
- Need a vision of what a good process actually is – what exactly is it?
Congressional Blue Ribbon panel for pilot projects to develop standards
- Agency leaders need to mix it up with the public more – town hall meetings
- Better strategic planning to transcend politics, work toward long-term shared conservation vision
- More coordination among agencies.

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C. **Local-level Practical Actions** *that could be taken at the local or community level by Tribes, state and local communities, private citizens, and local organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

- Find best examples – case studies. Raise the platform of understanding locally – training for local staff and stakeholders - opens up opportunity for community to be involved, have them identify problems and objectives. Cooperation and education among agencies and state, city, county officials. Leverage interests and resources, share info and expertise.
- Share data and contact lists.
- Pragmatic and personal contact between USFS and adjacent landowners – “look over the fence”
- “Loosening the reins on local managers, allow them to be more creative and communicative”
- Allow decisions to be made by local managers.
- Agencies need to provide incentives for staff to get involved in communities.
- “This is a people issue.” Empower a champion (probably an agency person) at the local level to drive the process
- Remember customs and culture of the area, define it and keep it part of official planning documents
- Incentives to keep staff local, remove barriers that prevent them from participating in community activities

D. **Particularly insightful quotes from participants** that capture the essence of key points made during the group’s discussion.

“It’s all about people”

“Forest Service staff need to want to talk to people and not to the trees.”

“Our screw ups are not with NEPA analyses but with flesh and blood relationships – the human element – before it ever gets to a NEPA analysis”

“Build relationships TO deal with difficult issues, not build relationships OUT OF dealing with difficult issues.”

“You get more with honey than you do with money”

“agencies don’t embrace adaptive management or outcome-based decisions. System is hide-bound as all get-out, no rewards for agencies to take risks.”

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