

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

Topic: Improving Certainty and Incentives for Stakeholders

Session number: 47

Facilitator: Frank Dukes

Afternoon

Location: 261

A. Major Repeated Themes Raised in the Discussion

- Flexibility on the part of agencies is key. And has kept people at the table. Too much emphasis on certainty that a creative alternative has to work before it's tried can stifle innovation.
- Agencies should focus on sharing conservation goals locally so that landowners & stakeholders can come up with a menu of options for implementation that will work and even exceed goals. Then support these practices with technical assistance and monitoring for feedback and accountability.
- The high level of Department support for locally driven collaborative solutions is encouraging, but there is a disconnect to making it happen between and within Departments and agencies.
- Legislators and elected officials can be key in supporting processes that develop local solutions rather than fixing it themselves.
- Some incentives work because the regulatory hammer is behind it. Example: ESA and Safe Harbors work to provide increased certainty over time. Other programs just focus on incentives. Example: CREP.
- Sometimes state and local governments can be a barrier to locally and collaboratively designed solutions if they don't provide for a participatory process. This can be a problem when Federal programs are delivered through state and local governments and can impede local access and dialogue with federal agencies.
- Private forest owners struggle with trying to knit together the array of different programs between NRCS, Forest Service, Department of Interior and EPA, but these departments and agencies don't talk to each other. Program delivery is too fragmented. Stakeholders can contribute to this problem because they may not want to share their programs with other stakeholders. Example: Agricultural constituents don't want to share their programs with forest owners or vice versa.
- Program fragmentation and agency territories don't create certainty and are a major disincentive.
- Certainty is still illusive. We invest a lot of time up front in collaboration & manage to create agreements among diverse parties, but it can still be easily derailed by special interest groups when an issue goes national and is then subject to politics or courts.
- Need a better language for incentives to distinguish between different types of incentives.
- Sometimes it's better for agencies to just say NO rather than MAYBE when you'd like to say NO. However, others think that the public gives up too early.

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B. National-level Practical Actions

- Implement the cooperative of the 2002 Farm Bill that already gives authority to coordinate programs and design or tailor programs to meet local conservation needs. I.e. why is it not being implemented?
- Establish or empower CEQ to establish a federal environmental council to mediate and develop mechanisms for interdepartmental long range conservation goals for the country and to reduce fragmented delivery of programs for these goals. A Diverging view of the role of this council is to target particular problem areas that keep coming up in states and communities rather than remain at the general or programmatic level.
- Work in partnership with the IRS to achieve cooperative conservation. Tax codes and audit guides can have a dramatic effect on the ability to meet conservation goals. Examples of goals included fragmentation of open space and energy conservation. At the local level, also include state tax organizations and law.
- Focus on setting up or using existing processes that design local solutions or prevent further problems rather than legislating or institutionalizing solutions that may have worked some place else.. These processes must include the following: inclusive processes for all stakeholders involved, transparent process, provide accountability (produce a better environmental result than current processes), and have clear goals.
- The above have to be combined with incentives for agencies to support these processes and create institutional change, recognize and reward agencies and individuals that support these processes across state, local and federal agencies.
- Provide training for collaborative problem solving within state local & federal agencies.
- Create “ombudsmen” within agencies and Departments for unsticking projects and collaborative innovations. This position must be at a high enough level to help overcome inertia within the organization.
- Develop a working group between agencies to strategize ways of implementing NEPA that includes adaptive management.
- Use funding as an incentive by expanding the model of Conservation Security Program to fund projects that have cooperation and collaboration in place and have demonstrated ability to work together. Some funding could be set aside to prepare communities for this type of readiness. If sustained over a period of time, more projects will demonstrate readiness and manage situations with increasing levels of conflict.

C. Local-level Practical Actions.

- Local communities should ask for & set up integrated meeting with federal agencies and state and local agencies.
- Be more strategic about where and when you use collaboration and design the process well to create more certainty. This dialogue should happen at the local level between various agencies and stakeholders. A third party may be useful for facilitating this dialogue and validating the best opportunities for collaboration.
- Be clear with participants that there is a substantial investment of time and money on the front end, but this investment is more effective and efficient at the beginning of the process rather than the back end or having to repeat the process.

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