

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

Topic: Measuring Success of Cooperative Conservation Efforts

Session number: 41

Facilitator: Michael Elliott

Morning

Location: 231

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.*

Environmental changes are long-term. We need to establish intermediate goals because environmental goals long-term and collaboratives need to focus on and measure shorter-term, intermediate progress. Particularly important to intermediate goals is measuring the process outcomes (e.g. development of partnerships and changes in the participants' behavior and attitudes).

Within the context of existing laws and regulations, collaboratives should be bottom-up (grassroots) and not top-down. They should be driven by concern for particular resources in particular places and supported by all stakeholders, including the federal government.

The establishment of goals and the availability of resources need to be considered together. While goals are primary, they need to be achievable. On the other hand, collaboratives need to identify larger goals because often drive resource availability.

An important role of the federal government is to develop and provide toolboxes to help groups set goals and monitor success. These tools should be designed to make it easy to measure and monitor success. Significant resources are needed for measuring and monitoring success. The predictability and availability of resources is often missing.

While data is extremely important in measuring and monitoring progress, it should not limit the goals that are set, but inasmuch as goals can be measured, care should be taken in establishing these measures and a baseline set of data should be considered. Also, for many collaboratives, measuring and monitoring should be kept simple and should take into account the experience of the participants and not just the ultimate environmental impacts (e.g., are they having fun).

All evaluation depends on the integrity of the process and having the right mix of stakeholders involved.

- 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.*

Create an interagency task force to develop protocols for evaluation that local communities can accomplish with resources that they are likely to have. This means at the very least having protocols that someone skilled in environmental evaluation could direct schools, conservation corps, and other local groups to gather data and monitor the progress of the project. The protocols should provide quality assurance so that the data that emerges from the monitoring is considered legitimate by state and federal agencies and funders.

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There is a need for federal agencies to provide seed monies around the monitoring and measuring of success. Monitoring should be considered integral to implementation of the project and resources need to be earmarked for monitoring.

Provide recognition to effective collaboratives and use the criteria for the awards to stimulate more effective monitoring and measuring of success. Use public agency press releases and other forms of recognition to support this goal.

Federal government should provide a toolbox that supports evaluative processes which should include clear measures of effective collaboration processes (building relationships, improving communication, developing partnerships) as well as measures of environmental outcomes (improvements in wildlife density). The toolbox should provide assistance and guidance, but not be required.

Inasmuch as federal agencies can reduce uncertainty in providing future funding, look at the budget process to identify areas where no-year money may be utilized to support collaboration processes.

Protocols and language used for measuring and monitoring collaborative projects should be consistent across federal agencies that provides clarity about what is needed to collaboratives.

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.*

Local collaboratives need to define more clearly the existing problems such as the presence of litigation or the absence of effective communication that caused the creation of the collaborative and set goals to enable them to get credit for improvement in those conditions.

Local collaboratives should look beyond the immediate environmental goals to community goals such as sustainability or improvements in public health and incorporate those in their community goals of measuring success.

Recognition of successful collaboratives does not just include the federal government as noted above, but should also be done at the state and local level as well.

Utilize business planning and evaluation processes and the resources of corporations (including employees) to build more effective collaboratives.

Design measures of success with the partners in the collaborative.

Consider replicating a local, citizen-centered program (e.g., Conservation 2000, State of Illinois) that provides funding on specific geographic or land management region basis, and have the local people involved in decision-making.

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

“bottom up and not top down”

“Look at the common denominator. What kind of steward is inside here? (points to heart)”

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