

Collaborative Planning on State Trust Lands:

A University of Michigan Study

*for the State Trust Lands Partnership Project
of the Sonoran Institute and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy*



About the Study:

Collaborative planning on state trust lands was identified for further research at the 2004 State Trust Lands Research and Policy Analysis Roundtable convened by the State Trust Lands partnership project of the Sonoran Institute and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. In March 2005, under the guidance of Dr. Steven L. Yaffee, a team of eight graduate students from the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment began conducting a region-wide survey and analysis of eight case studies in which state trust land agencies collaborated with stakeholders in trust land planning and management. The research team conducted 117 on-site and telephone interviews, each lasting roughly one to three hours. Through these interviews, the team answered a set of research questions concerning the benefits, challenges, costs and outcomes of collaborative planning on state trust lands. The goals of this research were to:

- Capture on-the-ground experiences of collaborative planning on state trust lands
- Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of this trust land management approach
- Distill a set of best management practices
- Provide broader recommendations for overcoming barriers to collaborative planning on state trust lands

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HOW DO INTERPERSONAL AND POWER DYNAMICS INFLUENCE A COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESS?

Each of the eight cases examined in this report illustrate how relationships, trust and the power shared among participants of a collaborative process can affect the dynamics of a process and influence its outcome. This chapter focuses on the following five main aspects of interpersonal relationships in collaborative processes:

- How relationships between parties influence the collaborative process
- How the collaborative process influences relationships among parties
- How relationships influence future interactions among parties
- Elements that give parties power
- How distribution of power affects the collaborative process

The very nature of collaborative processes indicates that many participants enter a process with preexisting relationships with other parties. Preexisting relationships may result from living in the same community, sharing interests, competing for resources, or other interactions. Such relationships are not static, however, and throughout the collaborative process they continue to change as participants work together, create a shared understanding of problems and solutions and ultimately create a final plan. Along the way, positive relationships serve to facilitate progress while poor relationships often hinder it. The relationships of process participants with outside parties can also influence the process direction and efficiency.

While relationships have a significant impact on a collaborative process, there are many ways in which the process itself also influences relationships. Process structure can have a large impact on relationships from the outset of the process. Process structure elements like ground rules, group principles, subcommittees, methods of addressing problems and the timeframe for the process can all be influential. As these elements change, whether through membership or influence changes, so too do relationships. In addition, there are more informal ways through which relationships are changed. These can include group hikes, song and prayer activities and informal meetings at local gathering places. All of these methods for altering relationships can be used strategically in the process to help foster positive relationships that will facilitate progress towards ultimate group agreement (Table 19-1).

Relationships created during participation in collaborative processes can also influence the parties' ability to implement the final plan or to work together in other capacities. Participants in the eight cases examined in this report also commonly mentioned that the positive relationships formed during the collaborative processes were a major benefit of the process.

Finally, the cooperative nature of collaborative processes also assumes a certain amount of power sharing.¹ The power that participants in collaborative processes have to influence each other and the outcome, whether real or perceived is a complex variable. The eight cases of collaborative planning on state trust land revealed a number of interesting examples of how a process is affected by who has power and why they have that power, as well as how groups work to reduce power imbalances among participants.

Table 19-1: Relationships across the Eight Cases and Actions for Improvement

| CASE | Beginning | Relationship-Building Actions | End |
|--|---|---|---|
| Castle Valley Planning Process | Community distrusted state land agency | —————→ Developing principles of success; group hikes | Better working relationships, particularly for CRC members and SITLA |
| Houghton Area Master Plan Process | City Department of Urban Planning and Design engaged community in process | —————→ Group field trip* | Working relationships; increased City and ASLD communication |
| Elliott State Forest Planning Process | Participants shared a common goal | —————→ Laid issues on the table and talked them through, tours of the forest, felt comfortable airing grievances | Better understanding of the Habitat Conservation Plan process; more buy-in to the management plans |
| Emerald Mountain Planning Process | Conflict between different stakeholders (recreators, ranchers, development interests and SLB) | —————→ Political support via letter-writing; subcommittee meetings increased mutual respect; newspaper editorials | Personal friendships developed; working relationships were established or increased |
| Mesa del Sol Planning Process | Beneficiary sued SLO | —————→ Beneficiary brought into process; personal meetings with neighborhood groups, city, businesses, elected officials | Strong working relationships among participants; Private-Public partnership with developer leading the process forward |
| Lake Whatcom Landscape Planning Process | Community and tribes distrust DNR | —————→ Forest walks; tribal song and prayer before meetings | Trust between community and DNR eroded when it appeared that the Board would not approve the Landscape plan |
| Southeast New Mexico Working Group | Mistrust among oil and gas, ranchers, & conservationists; Agencies had worked together some | —————→ Long hours working together; ate meals together; carpooled | Working relationships for agencies; improved/new working relationships; increased understanding of other perspectives; apprehension about implementation and follow-through |
| Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process | Community mistrust of state land agency; Community connections to State Land Board officials | —————→ Met at informal gathering places outside of process; lunch meetings; change in personnel | Improved relationships within the community |

* While this was a group-building exercise in the process, none of the HAMP interviewees for his report attended the field trip. Therefore, they could not comment on its possible contribution to relationship-building.

RELATIONSHIPS INFLUENCE THE PROCESS

Relationships among collaborative process participants and relationships between participants and outside parties can significantly affect collaborative processes. For instance, internal group relationships can help initiate a collaborative process, bring in additional membership, change the path of planning, help the group overcome impasses or create those impasses, improve understanding and motivate members to continue to participate. Meanwhile, relationships of participants with outside parties can facilitate or stifle processes, influence participants' actions within the group and create options through partnerships. Interpersonal relationships surrounding collaborative processes thus have a large impact on the direction of the process.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Many collaborative processes are bred out of existing relationships among parties, be those positive or negative. In the cases examined in this report, relationships played a role in the very issue or conflict that necessitated the collaborative process.

Good working relationships among parties can lead to the formation of a collaborative process. The Houghton Area Master Plan (HAMP) Process illustrates how preexisting working relationships between the City of Tucson and Tucson residents helped initiate a collaborative process. Recognizing and respecting the community's desire and expectation to be engaged in planning processes, the City of Tucson's Department of Urban Planning and Design invited neighborhood groups from the Houghton Road area and local land use planning and development professions to join the newly formed Citizen's Review Committee to provide input on the HAMP.

Strong positive relationships and a sense of community also acted as a catalyst for the Castle Valley Planning Process and the Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process. In the Castle Valley, Utah, an informal community phone tree provided a mechanism for increasing residents' awareness of the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration's (SITLA) pending land development plans. This awareness prompted members to form the Castle Rock Collaboration as a forum in which to engage SITLA collaboratively. Similarly, in Whitefish, Montana, some members of the Whitefish School Trust Lands Advisory Committee had connections to the Montana State Board of Land Commissioners. These connections helped them secure more decision-making power in the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's neighborhood planning process.

Despite many of the positive relationships that helped launch collaborative processes, according to Wondolleck and Yaffee, conflict, particularly protracted conflict, often provides the impetus for collaborative processes. With this conflict frequently comes a lack of trust due to stereotypes and experiences during past interactions, which can breed poor relationships between incoming process participants.²

In many of the cases of collaborative planning examined in this report, community members entered the collaborative processes with a significant mistrust of the state trust land agency. In the Castle Valley Planning Process, the town of Castle Valley distrusted the School and

Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) based on their previous negative perceptions of SITLA's sale of land at the base of Parriott Mesa. In the Lake Whatcom Landscape Planning Process, the community distrusted the Washington Department of Natural Resources because many in the community attributed the destructive effects of a landslide in 1986 to the agency's forest management practices in the area. In the Mesa del Sol Planning Process, the beneficiary, the University of New Mexico, distrusted the New Mexico State Land Office, because it had previously sued the agency over its attempts to make a land deal of which the University disapproved.

The Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process also illustrates how such rooted mistrust impacts the collaborative process. The Whitefish community's initial mistrust arose out of its fear that the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) would develop the Whitefish trust lands as they had in nearby Kalispell, Montana a few years earlier. This fear was compounded by the community's inherent mistrust of the government. Facilitator Janet Cornish noted that the community was "preset to believe that [the DNRC was] there to screw them. Plain and simple."³ This mistrust motivated citizens of Whitefish to lobby the State Land Board to modify the DNRC's public meeting decision-making approach to make it more collaborative and thereby give the community more influence on decision making.

When poor relationships mired in distrust persist, they can bog down the process and inhibit progress. Deeply rooted stereotypes and distrust held by the stakeholders was a major cause of these poor relationships in the cases examined. While it is common for people to associate others with particular characteristics, this tendency "polarizes participants, setting up us-versus-them dynamics that undermine the desire to collaborate."⁴ Moreover, stereotypes and the resulting polarized dynamic remain a threat to the collaborative process even if the stakeholders decide to collaborate. These misperceptions tend to result in emotional name calling sessions rather than productive meetings. Mistrust and stakeholder stereotypes create an atmosphere of hostility and suspicion.⁵ According to Wondolleck and Yaffee, a lack of trust can stall and even destroy a collaborative process by promoting and perpetuating suspicion about others' motives, methods, and data.⁶ This situation occurred in many of the cases examined in this report.

The Castle Valley Planning Process exemplifies how poor initial relationships between organizations and communities can influence a process in this way. In this case, the town of Castle Valley distrusted the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) because they perceived that the agency had failed to work effectively with communities in the past. As the Chair of the citizens group, Castle Rock Collaboration (CRC), Laura Kamala noted, "There was a basic distrust of SITLA. That was a big problem and a baseline that we started from."⁷ As the process moved forward, the town continued to hear about other communities' negative experiences, which further contributed to this distrust. Castle Valley Mayor Bruce Keeler noted that communities asked him, "What are you dealing with [SITLA] for? You can't trust them. You can't do business with them. They're going to screw you in the end."⁸ Such statements helped to exacerbate the town's mistrust for SITLA, which slowed the ability of the CRC and SITLA to work effectively together at the start of the process.

Problematic stereotyping was certainly embedded in the Southeast New Mexico Working Group, particularly for representatives of conservation and the oil and gas industry. Oil and gas industry

representative Dan Girand recalls that he felt that the group sometimes marginalized his opinion based on such stereotyping. He recalled, “Regulators and industry after a while tend to say, ‘Well that’s just old Dan. He’s a radical redneck.’”⁹ This stereotyping made it difficult for group members to feel respected and heard.

Much like the stereotypical conflict between oil and gas and conservation, the Elliott State Forest Planning Process involved stereotyping between logging and conservation interests. In this process, two bird species, the spotted owl and marbled murrelet, became famous in the early 1990s when they were listed as federally threatened species. These species became figureheads in the ideological war between the timber industry and environmentalists, a conflict that is based on the perception of fundamentally different value systems and contributed to the mistrust and stereotyping that surrounded these groups in the Elliott process. In addition, the environmentalists did not trust the Steering Committee to push for strong enough species protection. Again, this mistrust surrounded the group throughout the process.

Where positive relationships existed, such improved relationships in the group helped facilitate greater progress towards ultimately developing durable solutions. For instance, good working relationships helped groups get through impasses. In the Elliott State Forest Planning Process, participant Steve Denney noted that by knowing the other members of the group well, the Steering Committee was a “relaxed bunch.” He added that committee participants were “comfortable enough to joke with each other and jab each other in a good manner.”¹⁰ The relaxed nature of the group fostered by strong relationships allowed for the Steering Committee to prevent impasses and work efficiently.

Strong personal relationships in collaborative groups also provided an incentive for members to continue to participate in the process. For instance, in the Emerald Mountain Planning Process, participant Libbie Miller of the Colorado Department of Wildlife was particularly enthusiastic about the process because of the relationships she was able to foster and later benefit from in her work. She noted:

As an enforcement officer, I think the more interaction you are able to have with your community the better. People see you in a different light and they see the agency in a different light. When you interact on a different level instead of just strictly writing tickets to people or taking them to jail, you have a whole different kind of involvement.¹¹

For Miller, these new relationships increased the value of her involvement in the Emerald Mountain Partnership. She commented further:

It was a huge benefit for me, because I got to meet a lot of people who I would not necessarily. It is likely I would have gotten to meet them over time. However, when you work with somebody on a monthly basis, you certainly develop professional relationships that you wouldn’t get in any other scenarios.¹²

In some cases the collaborative planning process helped increase participants’ respect for one another as they gained a greater understanding of the issues with which different interest groups

grappled. This dynamic was especially important in the cases examined in this report because of the state trust land mandate. When participants came to understand the state land agency's legal constraints, they had a greater appreciation for agency motivations and respect for their point of view. For instance, in the Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process, there was significant disagreement at the beginning of the process regarding the trust land management capabilities of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). Through an extended education process, however, many members of the Advisory Committee came to accept the DNRC's interpretation of the mandate and even educated their fellow neighbors about the constraints inherent in trust land management at a later public meeting. In this way, such improved relationships and understanding can also serve as positive public relations for participants and the process.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUTSIDE PARTIES

In addition to the ongoing relationships of participants within collaborative processes, a number of relationships existed outside of a group's core membership that had significant impacts on the process and its members. For state trust land agencies, the agency's relationship with the trust beneficiary sometimes influenced how the agency could do business and how it felt it could participate in collaborative processes. In the Mesa del Sol Planning Process, the relationship between the New Mexico State Land Office (SLO) and the beneficiary, UNM impacted the process early on. While Commissioner Baca was close to the UNM president, a relationship that facilitated progress for the SLO's land development and auction plans, Baca's relationship with the UNM Board of Regents was decidedly unproductive.¹³ Thus, when Baca pushed for the first auction of the Mesa del Sol property, UNM sued the SLO and greatly delayed future collaborative planning. While UNM could be considered an "outside" party to the process prior to this interaction, the lawsuit resulted in UNM becoming an active party in the Mesa del Sol Process and essentially joining the collaborative process.

Relationships formed via partnerships between collaborative groups and outside organizations often increased the group's capacity and broadened their range of possible solutions. For the Elliott State Forest Planning Process, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service offered helpful partnerships to the collaborative process, sharing information and answering questions for the group about species habitat requirements and creating buy-in with federal agencies. One participant noted, "Another [way to deal with endangered species] is to develop an HCP where you work with the services, in this case [U.S.] Fish and Wildlife, to come up with a method on the ground that will both protect the owls and improve your ability to continue your activities there."¹⁴

Similarly, in the Emerald Mountain Planning Process, pursuing a joint solution with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) provided options for the process to continue to move forward in an otherwise plodding effort. In the Emerald Mountain case, work through the State Land Board and the BLM led to a federal land exchange process. If successful, this exchange will respond to the local need for a multiple-use management approach on the parcel and generate roughly \$17.2 million, the full market value of the land.

While many of these outside relationships facilitated the ability for groups to make progress towards a solution, groups did not always respond positively to outside input. In the Elliott State Forest Planning Process, the Steering Committee was unresponsive to critical public comment originating from environmentalists. This was largely due to the fact that the environmentalists' comments were seen as extreme view points when compared to the mild criticism from timber interests. As a result, the perception of an "us" versus "them" dynamic arose between the Steering Committee and the environmental groups.

THE PROCESS INFLUENCES RELATIONSHIPS

Just as relationships among different parties in, and peripheral to, a collaborative process influence the process, so too do collaborative processes affect the relationships. One of the greatest relationship outcomes of collaborative processes cited in literature is typically increased trust among participants. In A Desktop Reference Guide to Collaboration and Community-based Planning, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Sonoran Institute found that collaboration led to increased trust between BLM land managers and the public.¹⁵ In addition, Yaffee et al. found that trust can decrease adversarial relationships, enabling stakeholders to jointly address and solve conflicts.¹⁶

HOW COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES IMPACTED RELATIONSHIPS AMONG GROUP PARTICIPANTS

There are a number of ways by which collaborative processes can improve relationships among group members. As examined in the cases investigated in this report, there are two main categories of methods for improved relationships: collaborative structure and activities. Also, while relationships often improved over the course of the collaborative process, in some instances, the process increased tension in relationships.

Collaborative Structure

The structure of the collaborative process can have immediate and long-term impacts on group members' relationships. Often, elements of structure are established at the outset of the process. These include ground rules, means for participant interaction, methods by which the group will deal with problems, unique elements to meetings and the sheer time of the process. In addition, some structural elements can inadvertently serve to sour relationships among participants, particularly when roles are not clearly defined and when participants do not feel heard and feel incapable of influencing the process. Finally, when structural elements change, they also affect participant relationships.

Ground rules establish methods of interacting and provide an outline for a collaborative process that impacts relationships between members. When participants enter a collaborative process with preexisting tensions and distrust, establishing a set of ground rules can help govern and guide their interactions to foster healthy working relationships.

For the Lake Whatcom Landscape Planning Process, such ground rules proved to be a valuable tool in facilitating the collaborative process. Whatcom ground rules included: respect each other

and “no surprises” in issues pertaining to the group. The Lake Whatcom Process also had structured field trips to the land to help create a shared understanding of the problem.

The Castle Valley Planning Process similarly established guiding principles for success with the help of facilitator Marty Zeller. The principles outlined ground rules for participant interactions and established goals that served as benchmarks to help the group measure success. These principles for success helped to address participants’ different interests as well as tackle the significant distrust between the community and the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration that plagued the group from the outset.¹⁷ Zeller noted:

The principles basically were an exercise at the beginning of the process to get [the participants] to start talking to each other, to define some areas of common ground and to create an initial focus for the planning effort. [The principles] got them engaged constructively as opposed to destructively in the process.¹⁸

The Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process formalized a common goal for the group through the “Top of the Mountain” document. Having common goals in a single document helped the group focus on the process effort as opposed to individual ideas. This focus helped unite the Advisory Committee, which struggled early on with mutual mistrust between the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and the Whitefish community.¹⁹

The means by which input from different group members was solicited could also help foster relationships in processes. In the Mesa del Sol Planning Process, Commissioner Ray Powell’s personal meetings with Mesa del Sol neighbors, municipalities, and potential partners helped foster a sense of ownership for the project within the community and was a sign of Powell’s commitment to the process. As Jacqueline Dubose Christensen of the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce commented, Powell often went out to the community himself. She added, “He put enormous time and resources into this notion of developing Mesa del Sol and he worked people to sell it. He was actively out there. He didn’t send his team; *he* went out to sell it.”²⁰

The structure of the Elliott State Forest Planning Process helped maintain good relationships by dealing with conflict in the group immediately and upfront. One participant commented that whenever issues came up that created conflict, the group would lay the issue on the table and work it through until the problem was solved. For the Elliott process, this method may have helped prevent major issues from festering and creating further conflict.

In addition, some processes included particularly structural elements unique to the process situation that also helped foster positive relationships among participants. For the Lake Whatcom Landscape Planning Process, each meeting began with a tribal song and prayer, a result of the Lummi Nation’s participation in the process. Process participant and member of the Lummi Nation Tom Edwards recalled:

When we first started a meeting, we started with a prayer and a song. That really cleaned out the atmosphere of our meetings. Each meeting I went to there they asked me to open up with a prayer and a song. That just cleans

out the air. Before I wasn't doing that the atmosphere was just heavy in there. People arguing this way and that way. I stood up and said, "Can I sing a song and offer a prayer?" They said "yeah" and boom, it just cleans up the air. Everyone felt good about that, even the [Department of Natural Resources] folks.²¹

Finally, the amount of time allotted for a collaborative process can help to eventually foster positive relationships. For the Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process, time ultimately helped the group address its underlying mistrust as participants continued to work together and build a shared understanding. Committee member Paul McKenzie notes, "We had enough opportunities to discuss our differing points of view that . . . we realized that we weren't quite so far apart on these things."²²

While many elements help to improve relationships, some aspects of process structure can undermine relationships. In some cases, these strained relationships arose due to either unclear roles in the process, or because decision-making power was unevenly distributed in the group or in subgroups. For the Houghton Area Master Plan Process, members of the Citizen's Review Committee (CRC) were frustrated by the advisory role they played for the City of Tucson. Many felt they had taken on a role in which "it felt like we were there just to kind of rubber stamp."²³ Frustration and resulting strained relationships occurred throughout the plan development process because CRC and city representatives had different perceptions and expectations of the CRC's responsibilities.

In the Emerald Mountain Planning Process, which involved both the Emerald Mountain Partnership Board of Directors and the Advisory Council, similar troubles regarding participant role definition created tension and alienated some stakeholders. When the Partnership formed, individuals who had played major roles in the earlier Core Group planning process, but had vested interests in the Emerald Mountain parcel, were relegated to having non-voting status in the Advisory Committee. This change in roles was seen as a demotion by some participants and created frustration and distrust of the Partnership. Advisory member and rancher Jim Stanko commented on this feeling of alienation:

You're told you can't be part of it anymore because you've got a conflict of interest, and a person that's trying to get a bicycle trail through the thing is appointed, and they don't have a conflict of interest? . . . Now it's the Partnership off doing something and the rest of us may or may not know what they are doing, even though I'm supposed to be on the Advisory Group.²⁴

In some processes, unofficial subgroups also contributed to problematic relationships. In the Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process, a "shadow group" comprised of a subset of Advisory Committee members and stakeholders met outside regular Committee meetings to discuss substantive issues related to the process. Through this group, shadow group members worked to influence the proceedings of the official Advisory Committee. These ex parte conversations, and the eventual end-run in which the group instituted Roberts Rules of Order to remove trust land parcels from development talks, inspired mistrust and resentment among many other Advisory

Committee members who felt frustrated and ultimately betrayed by the side-dealings and lack of transparency of outside proceedings.

Just as structure has a large impact on relationships, changes in this structure also influence participants' relationships with one another. The continuity of the membership of a collaborative process can alter the relationships and interpersonal dynamics of those involved in the process. For the Mesa del Sol Planning Process, this change in membership was primarily felt after the election of new Commissioners of Public Lands. Over the last two decades, this project has seen four different land commissioners, each with a slightly different vision for the development and each with different assets and liabilities in their approach to working with the community and stakeholders. The three most prominent commissioners, Jim Baca, Ray Powell, and current Commissioner Patrick Lyons, have each altered the relationships within the process significantly. Under Jim Baca, the University of New Mexico (UNM) Board of Regents sued the State Land Office (SLO) over what UNM perceived to be a poor land deal resulting in UNM's significant distrust for the SLO and motivating the university regents to become more involved in the planning process. In contrast, Ray Powell's proactive approach to meeting with stakeholders and involving them in the planning process helped foster trust and positive relationships with interested parties. Most recently, Patrick Lyons has regained the trust and support of the Albuquerque National Dragway who had felt marginalized by the Powell administration. However, the Dragway is nervous about the future of its lease on the Mesa del Sol parcel when a new land commissioner is elected and the dynamics of the SLO and its relationships change once again.

Group Activities

Informal experiences and group activities can also significantly influence group relationships as individuals get to know one another personally, not based on stereotypes.

Informal activities like hikes helped to improve group relationships. In the Castle Valley Planning Process, a hiking experience for Castle Rock Collaboration (CRC) leader Dave Erley with CRC member Eddie Morandi, School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration Assistant Director Ric McBrier and McBrier's wife and dog helped these individuals with different interests get to know one another away from the table. The experience fostered trust and friendship.²⁵ According to McBrier, hiking trips and other such shared activities outside the planning process helped create long-lasting positive relationships.²⁶

For the Southeast New Mexico Working Group, member relationships also benefited from informal interactions. Working Group participant Bill Dunn of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish recalled that carpooling to meetings with oil and gas representatives allowed him to get to know other members of the group as people. This helped increase a sense of trust and cooperation within the group.

HOW COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES IMPACT ED RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUTSIDE PARTIES

One of the most cited methods for building and maintaining positive relationships between collaborative groups and outside parties was through communication and process transparency.

The Emerald Mountain Planning Process incorporated semi-monthly meetings that were open to the public in its collaborative process structure, and also held larger public meetings to present projects, provide information and gather input. In these ways, the group maintained relationships with the larger community. The Partnership also posted agendas, meeting minutes and planning documents on a website for community perusal. Due to such outreach by the Emerald Mountain Partnership (and the planning groups that preceded it), and the State Land Board (SLB), former State Land Board Director Charles Bedford describes the process as “a constant stream of communication.”²⁷ This communication kept the public informed about the activities and goals of the collaborative process while allowing outside groups a voice. Communication helped address opposition to the process and maintained working relationships between the Partnership and SLB and outside communities.

The Castle Valley Planning Process provides an example of the dangers of failing to effectively reach out to the greater community. Despite diligent attempts at community outreach, the process’ lack of transparency may have contributed to the breakdown of the planning process over the long-term. Castle Rock Committee (CRC) member Cris Coffey recognized that CRC’s efforts to communicate with the broader community were not always successful. She noted, “We tried hard to keep the community abreast of what was going on. And some people had a vast interest in what we were doing, and others, I don’t know that they really realized what was going on. And I think that’s often the case in communities like this.”²⁸ Thus, despite CRC’s attempts at outreach, the community remained unaware of the activities of the collaborative process.

RELATIONSHIPS INFLUENCE FUTURE INTERACTIONS

Relationships established during a collaborative process lay a foundation for future cooperative work among participants. In fact, researches McKinney and Field found that relationships are often considered a valuable outcome of collaborative processes, and that often participants noted that working relationships and quality of the process were more important than the tangible process outcomes.²⁹

The benefit of collaborative process participant relationships is often two-fold. First, good relationships between participants often indicate greater dedication to the implementation of the resulting process plan. Second, strong working relationships and even friendships among participants can be useful tools in future conflicts or simply daily work. Thus, the relationships formed in collaborative processes extend beyond the life of the process to influence future interactions among participants.

FACILITATING IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCESS PLAN

For the Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process, the Mesa del Sol Planning Process and the Southeast New Mexico Working Group, strong working relationships will be essential to meet the challenges of implementation of groups’ resulting plans. Particularly for the Mesa del Sol Planning Process, positive relationships among stakeholders are necessary for the ultimate success of the development and its long-term viability. At this point, commercial buy-in from the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and developer Forest City Covington are essential for

the long-term planning of the development. However, the Mesa del Sol development also relies on the continued support of its neighbors including Kirtland Air Force Base, the Isleta Pueblos and the City Council and mayor, any combination of whom could potentially knock the development off course and spoil decades of planning and increasing cooperation.

For the Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and the city of Whitefish already are working together to implement the Neighborhood Plan, starting with a recreation trail that will encircle Whitefish Lake. Many participants have said that the professional relationship that fuels this implementation is possible only because of the process.

IMPACTING FUTURE INTERACTION AND CONFLICT

Not only will the relationships formed in the collaborative processes be useful in implementing the group's final plan, they may also be beneficial in future work collaboration and in dealing with future conflicts. For members of the Castle Valley Planning Process, such business relationships have already been integrated into participants' work. In particular, the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) has worked more effectively with other organizations and communities because of the relationships and increased understanding of the trust land mandate that occurred during the collaborative process. SITLA Director Kevin Carter noted:

Some of the people that were involved in the collaboration certainly understand who we are better, they understand what our respective mandates, tasks and obligations are, and as a result of that, some of those individuals have been very helpful in unrelated activities that we've done. There was certainly an education process and some bridge-building that went on there.³⁰

Members of the Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process noted that improved relationships resulting from the process also had a major benefit for the Whitefish community. Whitefish Chamber of Commerce President Sheila Bowen noted that these benefits ranged from hugs on the street to greater public involvement in community activities like City Council and local planning meetings.³¹ Several Committee members commented that "the community is better off because we went through this process."³²

For the participants of the Emerald Mountain Planning Process, participants consider the strong relationships that resulted from the process to be a long-term benefit that will hopefully preempt future conflicts. Former State Land Board Director Charles Bedford noted that such relationships will likely also speed the process along in the future:

Because you develop these relationships early on, so that essentially you never have to go through these processes anymore. You do this in more of an informal, ongoing fashion, this sort of ongoing collaborative process. Sometimes you'll still have conflicts come up. But if you have the same guy that lives there for 10 to 15 years, that's passionate about this place, that has to go to the same supermarket as

the enviro goes to, and has a personality that allows for kind of problem-solving, then you've really created an incredibly powerful vehicle for going forward.³³

Professional relationships also developed through these collaborative processes that will continue to connect the parties involved. Rand French, a biologist for the BLM in the Southeast New Mexico working group, is now a wildlife biologist for one of the oil companies involved in the Working Group. This switch may aid in the implementation of the conservation plan, as French's professional training may be integrated into the needs of the oil company and help them better meet their environmental obligations through the Working Group's conservation plan and beyond.

The Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) and the City of Tucson are similarly looking forward to improved relations as a result of the HAMP Process. ASLD Commissioner Mark Winkleman noted the historical significance of the relationship forged between the City of Tucson and the ASLD. He said, "It showed that we could sit down with city staff and work cooperatively ... this is a much better position for us to be in with the City of Tucson than the Land Department has ever been in before."³⁴ Winkleman also noted that such relationships will improve the professional interactions between the two entities in the future.

ELEMENTS THAT GIVE PARTIES POWER

In all of the eight cases, there was a perceived power imbalance within the collaborative group with some participants seemingly having more power than others. In some instances this power seemed static, while in others the power varied depending on the situation. Participants in the eight cases reported that having access to resources that others did not, personal demeanor, representing an interest that held symbolic value for the group, having veto power over decisions and using the media to express interests and draw attention to the process influence the perceived or real balance of power within the collaborative group (Table 19-2).

Access to financial and political resources was a significant source of power for some participants in the Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process. According to Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Unit Manager Greg Poncin, "quite a few community members had these State Land Board members on their speed-dial. They had a very good working relationship."³⁵ In particular, members of the "shadow group," a subset of the Advisory Committee, felt empowered throughout the process because they believed they had political support for their ideas and the ability to influence these connections. Indeed, shadow group members felt comfortable significantly limiting development of the 13,000-acre area because they thought their political connections increased the likelihood of State Land Board approval. In the Lake Whatcom Landscape Planning Process some participants were perceived to have power because they had particular expertise or knowledge. For example, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) controlled the financial models of the timber harvesting in the area and some participants thought this gave them an advantage.

In seven of the eight cases participants accrued power because of their personalities. Often, this accrual of power resulted from having a dominant personality, being perceived as being level

headed, or through demonstrating leadership qualities. For example, some participants in the Lake Whatcom Landscape Planning Process noted that citizen representative Linda Marrom's dedicated personality and emotional investment in the process made her a powerful figure in the process. In the Mesa del Sol Planning Process some participants noted that Commissioner Powell's open personality made groups responsive to working with him.

One of the biggest motivating factors for the creation of the Emerald Mountain Planning Process was the community's sense of place and attachment to the agricultural heritage and pastoral landscape of Steamboat Springs. This sense of place gave participants representing these interests power in the process and imbued them with a degree of symbolism. For example, some participants saw rancher and long-time Emerald Mountain grazing lessee Jim Stanko as a powerful representative for the agricultural values they hoped to preserve in the community. Stanko provided a critical voice for farmland in the overall debate over the future planning of Steamboat Springs.

Routt County is unique, and Steamboat Springs is unique from the standpoint that while we do have tourism and skiing, agriculture is still a really important part of the community here. We value that and want to keep that. So, it was good to have somebody like Jim in there saying "hey, we can't let this type of stuff go."³⁶

In five of the eight cases, state trust land agency representatives participants had increased power because of their ability to veto options within the group. Because the agencies were the managers of the land being addressed in the planning process they were able to use their decision-making authority to influence decisions made by the group. For example, in the Houghton Area Master Plan Process, Greg Keller a planner from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) who attended Citizen's Review Committee meetings was able to say whether or not certain options or ideas meshed with the ASLD's management mandate. State Land Board Northwest District Manager Beverly Rave exercised similar power in the Emerald Mountain Planning Process and was able to reject or dissuade proposals or ideas from the Committee if they didn't meet acceptable levels of revenue generation.

Participants in both the Lake Whatcom Landscape Planning Process and the Mesa del Sol Planning Process were able to use the media to obtain power. In the Lake Whatcom Landscape Planning Process some participants would go to the press to express views or issues before they had been discussed or resolved in the context of the collaborative process despite a group agreement that discouraged this behavior. The visibility that this brought to their issues gave some participants more power. Representatives from the Albuquerque National Dragway on the Mesa del Sol parcel used the media as a way to both express and garner support for Patrick Lyons during his election campaign. Commissioner Powell, who preceded Commissioner Lyons had not renewed the Dragway's lease because of what some perceived as an incompatibility between what Commissioner Powell envisioned for the area and what the Dragway did. Commissioner Lyons made a campaign promise to reopen the Dragway and the Dragway responded by mobilizing its resources to support his campaign. In the Emerald Mountain Planning Process the position of supporters of conserving the agricultural, wildlife and recreational values of the land was increased by the significant amount of media attention paid to the area during Governor Romer's campaign to pass Amendment 16 which would allow for more flexible land management strategies that could include conservation.

HOW DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AFFECTS THE PROCESS

Much research has been done on reducing power imbalances in collaborative processes to increase the potential for a successful outcome. Barb Cestero notes that reducing power imbalances among stakeholders in a collaborative effort can ensure a “level playing field” on which to interact.³⁷ Wondolleck and Yaffee observe that more balanced power between participants in a collaborative process can create joint ownership of both the process and the outcome for all involved.³⁸

Reducing power imbalances entails giving stakeholders a higher degree of influence in the process decision making, and using decision rules such as consensus to build trust, commitment and equality.³⁹ According to some practitioners, rotating leadership or facilitation roles can improve the distribution of power within the group.⁴⁰ Closely related to the dispersion of power is the importance of a mutual recognition that the individuals and organizations involved in a collaborative process are interdependent.⁴¹ Recognizing interdependency can be achieved through developing group objectives or problem statements.

Reducing power imbalances among participants in a collaborative effort can lead to greater satisfaction with the outcome of the process. In some of the cases highlighted in this report power was distributed in a more balanced way among members of the advisory groups than in others. Unbalanced power distribution can lead to tension and conflict. However, in some cases, unequal power can both motivate and challenge a collaborative process.

One of the ways these groups achieved an even distribution of power was to make decisions by consensus. Using this decision-making model created an equal investment among group members and allowed each interest an equal voice in expressing their opinions to the group and affecting the outcome of the process.

In some instances, there was unequal power between members of the advisory group, or between the advisory group and other involved entities like cities. In most cases this did not ultimately hinder the group from developing a plan, except in the Castle Valley Planning Process where participants reached a stalemate prior to the possibility of a land exchange between the Bureau of Land Management and the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) as a method of conserving the land. However, in the Castle Valley case the imbalance of power also motivated and challenged the process. For example, the fact that SITLA possessed the majority of the power in the process enabled their participation and made it a more attractive option. This imbalance proved challenging for members of the Castle Rock Collaboration, but not crippling.

Additionally, in the Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process there was originally confusion about the allocation of power between regular and alternate members of the Advisory Committee. Time spent discussing this membership distinction distracted the group and took time away from working on a plan. As a solution, the group ultimately decided to make all participants regular members. Similarly, some members of the Citizen’s Review Committee (CRC) in advising the City of Tucson on the Houghton Area Master Plan thought that there was unequal power between the CRC and the city. This perception caused some CRC members to become frustrated because it was unclear to them how their recommendations were being

incorporated and used by the city. This lack of clarity also led them to question the importance of their involvement and could have contributed to some of the group attrition.

The emergence of a “shadow group” during the Whitefish Neighborhood Planning Process significantly affected the balance of power in that process. The shadow group was able to make important decisions concerning the Neighborhood Plan without the input of the rest of the group. Official process leaders like consultant Marty Zeller tried to reduce this power imbalance by meeting with members of the shadow group individually and dissuading them from making decisions outside of the larger collaborative group forum. Likewise, State Land Board staffer Kathy Bramer attempted to address the perceived power imbalance between the Advisory Committee and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). This imbalance emerged because of the political access and financial resources, identified above, and led some Committee members to believe that they did not really have to work with the DNRC. To address this power imbalance, Bramer traveled to Whitefish to remind Advisory Committee members that they did not “have the State Land Board in its pocket” and that they needed to work with the DNRC.”⁴²

Endnotes

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- ³ Janet Cornish (Community Development Services of Montana), telephone interview by Jessica Mitchell and Lisa Spalding, August 8, 2005.
- ⁴ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, “Collaborative Advantage: The Art of Alliances,” *Harvard Business Review* (July/August 1994): 105, cited in Wondolleck and Yaffee, *Making Collaboration Work: Lessons from Innovation in Natural Resource Management*, 59.
- ⁵ Wondolleck and Yaffee, *Making Collaboration Work: Lessons from Innovation in Natural Resource Management*, 60.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.
- ⁷ Laura Kamala (Director of Utah Programs, Grand Canyon Trust), interview by Stephanie Bertaina and Eirin Krane, August 19, 2005, Castle Valley, UT.
- ⁸ Bruce Keeler (Mayor, Town of Castle Valley), interview by Stephanie Bertaina and Eirin Krane, August 18, 2005, Castle Valley Community Center, Castle Valley, UT.
- ⁹ Dan Girand (Regulatory and Environmental Affairs, Mack Energy Corporation), interview by Stephanie Bertaina and Emily Kelly, August 26, 2005, Mack Energy Corporation, Roswell, NM.
- ¹⁰ Steve Denney (Southwest Region Assistant Supervisor, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), interview with Eirin Krane and Drew Vankat, August, 25, 2005, ODFW, Roseburg, OR.
- ¹¹ Libbie Miller (District Wildlife Manger, Colorado Division of Wildlife), interview by Lisa Spalding and Matt Stout, August 3, 2005, Colorado Division of Wildlife Area 10 Office, Steamboat Springs, CO.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ Tim Callahan (Planner, New Mexico State Land Office), interview by Emily Kelly and Drew Vankat, August 16, 2005, Albuquerque, NM.
- ¹⁴ Dan Shults (Southern Oregon Area Director, Southern Oregon Area, Oregon Department of Forestry), interview by Eirin Krane and Drew Vankat, August 24, 2005, ODF, Roseburg, OR.
- ¹⁵ Bureau of Land Management and Sonoran Institute, *A Desktop Reference Guide to Collaborative, Community-Based Planning*, 2001.
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- ¹⁷ Laura Kamala (Director of Utah Programs, Grand Canyon Trust), interview by Stephanie Bertaina and Eirin Krane, August 19, 2005, Castle Valley, UT.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*

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- ¹⁹ Diane Conradi (Attorney, Law Offices of Diane Conradi, and formerly of the Sonoran Institute), interview by Jessica Mitchell and Lisa Spalding, August 19, 2005, Whitefish, MT.
- ²⁰ Jacqueline Dubose Christensen (Vice President of Business Advocacy and Government, Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce), interview by Emily Kelly and Drew Vankat, August 16, 2005, Albuquerque, NM.
- ²¹ Tom Edwards, Jr. (Way of Life Department, Lummi Nation), interview by Alden Boetsch and Matt Stout, August 9, 2005, Tribal , Lummi Nation, WA.
- ²² Paul McKenzie (Stoltze Lumber), interview by Jessica Mitchell and Lisa Spalding, August 18, 2005, Stoltze Lumber, Columbia Falls, MT.
- ²³ Linda Morales (Principal, The Planning Center), interview by Alden Boetsch and Jessica Mitchell, August 3, 2005, Tucson, AZ.
- ²⁴ Jim Stanko (Rancher), interview by Lisa Spalding and Matt Stout, August 3, 2005, Steamboat Springs, CO.
- ²⁵ Dave Erley (Southeastern Field Agent, Utah Open Lands), telephone interview by Stephanie Bertaina and Eirin Krane, October 12, 2005.
- ²⁶ Ric McBrier (Assistant Director of Planning and Development, SITLA), interview by Stephanie Bertaina and Eirin Krane, August 15, 2005, SITLA, Salt Lake City, UT.
- ²⁷ Charles Bedford (former Director, Colorado State Land Board), interview by Lisa Spalding and Matt Stout, July 26, 2005, Great Divide Lodge, Breckenridge, CO.
- ²⁸ Cris Coffey (Resident, Castle Valley), interview by Stephanie Bertaina and Eirin Krane, August 18, 2005, Castle Valley, UT.
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- ³² Alan Elm (Realtor, ReMax Whitefish), interview by Jessica Mitchell and Lisa Spalding, August 16, 2005, ReMax Whitefish, Whitefish, MT.
- ³³ Charles Bedford (former Director, Colorado State Land Board), interview by Lisa Spalding and Matt Stout, July 26, 2005, Great Divide Lodge, Breckenridge, CO.
- ³⁴ Mark Winkleman (Commissioner, Arizona State Trust Land Department), interview by Alden Boetsch and Jessica Mitchell, August 2, 2005, Phoenix, AZ.
- ³⁵ Greg Poncin (Unit Manager, Kalispell Unit Office, DNRC), telephone interview by Jessica Mitchell and Lisa Spalding, September 6, 2005.
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³⁹ *Ibid.*, 103, 105.

⁴⁰ Cestero, 74

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