Collaboration in Resource Management:
Objectives for Pilot Offering of Training Course
November 13 - 17, 2000

Reason for the course: During the last decade, federal agency personnel who are involved in land or water resource management have faced extraordinary challenges that in many situations have required them to abandon traditional, single-agency methods of doing business and adopt some form of collaborative approach. Collaborative efforts have ranged from small, locally-directed, informal arrangements involving a small number of partners to large regional efforts initiated by the President or Cabinet members in Washington. While collaboration is definitely not for every situation, the trend toward collaboration in resource management is expected to continue in the years ahead, and federal personnel need to be prepared to meet the challenges they will face. This training course has been developed with that purpose in mind.

Course objectives: The principal objective of the course is to give federal resource managers, and other agency personnel whose activities affect resource management, knowledge and skills that will better equip them to deal with future problems requiring collaborative processes. Through presentations, class exercises, panel discussions, and case studies, participants will enhance their understanding of the process of collaboration, the phases that most collaborative efforts go through, the types of challenges that must be overcome, the issues that need to be addressed in developing and implementing a plan of action, and key factors that are likely to determine the success or failure of a collaborative effort.

A corollary objective is to help create a network of conservation professionals who are skilled in collaboration – a network of individuals who can serve as coaches and mentors to more junior members of their organizations and who will ensure that future agency leadership is prepared for the challenges of collaborative management that agencies will inevitably face.

Focus on federal agencies: The designers of the course recognize that for a collaboration to be successful, *all* affected parties, both federal and non-federal, must come to the table and participate in developing the solution to a problem. Nonetheless, this course looks at collaboration *from the perspective of* a federal agency and focuses on the issues common to federal personnel – particularly the difficulties of getting the federal agencies, with their different jurisdictions and statutory mandates, to act in a collaborative fashion, as well as the institutional impediments and other obstacles faced by federal agencies. The initial offerings of the course will be limited to interagency groups of federal agency employees. Eventually, participation will probably be expanded to include other types of stakeholders.

A crucial element of the course is its interagency nature. The course has been developed by representatives of many federal agencies, and class participants will have a variety of backgrounds and agency affiliations. The personal interactions of participants from multiple agencies will be an important part of the learning experience, as will the opportunity for participants to explore candidly the different perceptions that federal agencies have of each other and the difficulties of finding common ground in the context of different agency missions.

The pilot: The value that participants receive from the course will depend in large part on how fully they participate in the class exercises and discussions. At the same time, participants in the pilot should keep in mind that the course is currently a "work in progress." The initial offering of the course on November 13 - 17 is a test run, and participants will be asked to critique the class and suggest how it might be improved. Based on experience with the pilot, modifications will be made before the course is offered in other locations around the country, starting in early 2001.