

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

A New Phenomenon?

Out of the progressive field of environmental conflict management, a new genre of collaboration is currently breeding controversy in the environmental arena. Collaborative resource management partnerships (collaborative partnerships) are initiatives in which diverse stakeholders work together to address the management of natural resources. These groups, which include watershed councils, Coordinated Resource Management processes (CRMs), and sustainable community initiatives, among others, have stimulated a lively, if not contentious debate about the role of direct citizen involvement in environmental planning and management. Using processes that promote problem-solving and focus on individual interests and shared concerns, collaborative partnerships are taking root across the United States addressing issues as varied as watershed management, riparian restoration, forest management, endangered species recovery, and grazing management (Jones 1996, McClellan 1996).

In the West, collaborative partnerships have proliferated in the last ten years. Oregon alone now has 88 watershed councils recognized by the Governor's Watershed Enhancement Board (GWEB, 1999). CRM, a little known landowner cooperation process born in the early 1950s has exploded in recent years to become a popular consensus based resource problem-solving tool, with hundreds of efforts and variations nation-wide (Kruse, 1998). In Gunnison, Colorado a model for collaboration between ranchers, agencies and environmentalists expanded into the Bureau of Land Management's Resource Advisory Council (RAC) program---with RACs in each of the 24 western states. The growth and success of a few local partnerships are influencing national policies. Responding to grassroots models, the Clinton administration has advocated collaboration as the key to the reinvention of government decision-making, in turn generating more partnership activity.

While the increase of collaborative approaches to environmental decision-making seems to mark new territory for public and private land management, some argue that collaborative problem solving and decision-making is in fact nothing new. In Principles of Political Economy, John Stewart Mills wrote, "It is hardly possible to overrate the value...of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar...Such communication has always been, and is peculiarly in this present age, one of the primary sources of progress" (Mills, 1848). Modern day partnerships are indeed reminiscent of the New England Town Meetings---with people of different backgrounds, values and views gathering to work through community decisions.

For some federal agencies like the Bureau of Land Management, the collaborative groups that are springing up throughout the West might be seen as an expansion of the way landowners and agency officials have always dealt with each other (Bryan, 1999). T. Wright Dickinson, County Commissioner and rancher from Moffat County, Colorado, speaking about the Resource Advisory Council model, states, "These ideas of getting diverse stakeholders together

to deal with natural resource issues go back to 1934 when the BLM was created” (Dickinson, 1999).

Although the process may be familiar, the nature of the settings, origins, issues, organization, participants and outcomes in which collaboration is being applied have changed in many ways. The sheer number and diversity of these groups and their possible impacts on local communities, the environment and environmental policy warrants closer investigation.

Origins of Collaboration

As with any social movement or paradigm shift, it is difficult to establish a single source or reason for the growth of partnerships. The impetus for collaborative problem solving derives from many realms, including national and international policies, resource scarcity and environmental crises, and demographic shifts. People are beginning to frame environmental issues differently, blurring the battle lines as industry attempts to “green” its practices and environmentalists consider social and economic issues.

Certainly the increasing global interest in “sustainability” has influenced domestic support for initiatives that integrate environmental, social and economic concerns. Internationally, a sense of crisis and the realization that countries could no longer keep or solve environmental problems solely within their borders led to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The Agenda 21 commitments focus on sustainable development which “requires us to conceptualize problems and solutions differently . . . to think more creatively and collaboratively about solutions. Instead of thinking about an environmental problem strictly in terms of environmental solutions, sustainable development forces us to design and implement a solution that also furthers economic and social goals” (Dernbach, 1997:10507). These concepts are also the essence of most collaborative partnerships.

Stakeholder negotiation is increasingly used as a way to resolve environmental conflict. In the 1960s and 1970s, the modern day environmental movement was born out of conflict between diverse interests, including environmentalists, industry, policy-makers and managers. In the 1980s, however, the field of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) grew with the objective of resolving disputes with less cost and time than courtroom processes (Susskind 1980). Grant-making foundations like the Ford Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation began supporting the promotion of ADR shortly after (Bingham and Haygood, 1984). In 1990, with the passage of the Administrative Dispute Resolution Act (P.L. 101-552) and the Negotiated Rulemaking Act (P.L. 101-648) (Plater et al 1992), many government agencies also began to look to ADR as a means of handling internal and external conflicts (Susskind et al 1993). Several organizations like RESOLVE, the Keystone Center, and the Center for Dispute Resolution now provide professional mediation assistance in support of environmental dispute resolution. In 1998, Congress created and appropriated funds for the Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, an extension of the Morris K. Udall Foundation to promote mediation as an alternative to litigation (H.R 3042) (New York Times, 1998). In the 1990s the principles of ADR have transmuted into an on-going adaptive process, applying the experience gained in one-time negotiations to community-based problem solving.

The increase of collaborative groups in the west can certainly be attributed to the rapidly changing demography of rural communities. Many western communities historically dependent on resource extraction are watching urban dwellers relocate to rural towns in search of a different lifestyle and access to recreational opportunities. Computers and the Internet have changed the way we work, dissolving the economy's geographical bounds. These newcomers see the land in a vastly different way. Comparing the West as recently as 40 years ago, rancher T. Wright Dickenson remarks, "Diversity at that time was cattle and sheepmen, not the broad diverse interests using the public lands today" (Dickenson, 1999).

Most participants and proponents of collaborative partnership models also cite the failure of traditional decision-making processes as a primary motivation for the collaboration movement (Erickson, 1998; Wondolleck et al, 1994). Many see the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) model for citizen participation as adversarial in nature, instigating litigation and protracted court battles without "mobilizing the understanding, trust, and capabilities needed for effective action" (Wondolleck et al, 1994). Former environmental advocate and now mediator Todd Bryan, commenting on the traditional adversarial path to environmental protection, says, "I fought a lot of battles and I won many of them, but I don't ever remember changing anyone's mind" (Bryan, 1999). Review and comment procedures are not creative processes and may fail "to deal with the full set of issues that contribute to the ...problem at hand" (Wondolleck et al, 1994). Frustration with the NEPA participation model has influenced both agency and citizen initiatives to change the definition of participation in environmental decision-making. Along with the shortcomings of the process, some feel that "almost all of the "easy" gains [for the environment] have been made. What's left are small and costly gains" (Mohin, 1997). Gridlock often characterizes the initiation of a collaborative approach to dealing with issues formerly dealt with in administrative hearings and the courts.

Frustration also stems from existing state and federal agencies originally designed for single interest management strategies. Increasingly, scientists and managers are realizing that few environmental problems fit neatly within agencies' jurisdictional boundaries. Although solving those problems requires coordination, as former *EPA* Administrator William Ruckelhaus pointed out, environmental laws were written "to stand alone, instead of directing agencies to search for the best combination of policies to benefit the environment" (1993 in Mohin).

The Clinton Administration has advocated collaborative approaches to environmental problem solving in a variety of ways. The emphasis on innovative public – private partnerships highlighted in Reinventing Government (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992) forms the basis of many current policies. The Council on Environmental Quality, the President's chief advising body on environmental policy, based the Reinventing NEPA program on "the belief that collaboration, information sharing, and flexibility are the key to effective and responsive government" (McGinty, 1997). President Clinton himself lauded former CEQ chairwoman Kathleen McGinty's efforts to "promote collaboration over conflict, and to demonstrate that a healthy economy and a healthy environment not only are compatible, but are inextricably linked" (Clinton, 1998). Behind the oratory lies a fundamental shift in political values regarding the

use of public lands. Increasingly, the value of recreation, wildlife habitat, and clean water surpass the value of traditional extractive uses for the land (Pendery, 1997). Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt's celebration of success stories around the country have brought several unique initiatives into the public eye.

Traditional resource management jurisdictions are also beginning to evolve into landscape, ecosystem, or watershed boundaries, encouraging multi-stakeholder collaboration. In 1997 on the 25th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, the Administration's Clean Water Initiative directed agencies to develop a plan for clean water protection. The Action Plan "charts a new course emphasizing collaborative strategies built around watersheds and the communities they sustain" (The White House, 1998). Massachusetts is also currently reorganizing its management strategies through the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, in the form of the Massachusetts Watershed Initiative. This initiative is an innovative program to better protect natural resources through a comprehensive approach based on cooperation, integration and partnership (Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, 1998).

New Initiatives

National and State Legislation / Policy

The Clinton Administration has also promoted community-based efforts to form partnerships and devise creative solutions for sustainable development. For instance, the National Town Meeting on Sustainable Development, held in Detroit, Michigan, in May, 1999, brought together community leaders and highlighted examples of successful local initiatives.

Across the board, federal agencies are attempting to reinvent the way they manage resources and make decisions. From the top down, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) proposes to reinvent NEPA (CEQ, 1999) and improve on the review and comment public participation structure traditionally used by agencies. Also, in an effort to promote efficiency and improved compliance, the 103rd Congress in 1993 approved alternative compliance as an amendment to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (S.1114, 103rd Congress. 206 Mohin, 1997). The amendment allows for flexibility in attaining compliance with federal environmental regulations, given the involvement of stakeholders and superior environmental performance.

"Adaptive Management" is a term used to describe the process of experimentation, monitoring and demonstration of new management techniques. The Northwest Forest Plan created ten Adaptive Management areas in Oregon, Washington and Northern California which are "intended to be a focus for innovation in ecosystem management, science, community collaboration and technical applications" (US DOI / USDA, 1996).

At the "Environmental Summit on the West" in late 1998, the Western Governor's Association espoused a new doctrine called "Enlibra", meaning "moving toward balance" (Greenwire, 1998). The doctrine, developed by Governors Kitzhaber of Oregon and Leavitt of Utah, promotes "collaboration [and] local decision-making" (Brinckman in Greenwire, 1998).

Some of these policies have trickled down to the federal land management agencies responsible for how natural resources are managed across the country. It is important to note, however, that paper policies may not reflect support for collaborative efforts in the field. In fact, as Don Snow of the Northern Lights Institute points out, "A century of law, policy, and custom has insulated federal land managers from sharing much power with local citizens. It may take a substantial shift in policy to change this fundamental power relationship between federal decision makers and local, or collaborative, conservationists" (1998). Agencies like the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the USDA-Forest Service (USDA-FS), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are, however, initiating some programs that support collaborative partnerships. Some of those initiatives are summarized below.

Bureau of Land Management

The BLM's Coordinated Resource Management Planning process (CRM or CRMP) was developed in the 1940's and has been adopted by many newer collaborative groups, particularly to address grazing or watershed issues. In 1994, the agency's Rangeland Reform initiative was based on ecosystem management principles, which promote a holistic approach that incorporates both ecological as well as socio-economic concerns. With reform, Ecosystem Management became a BLM agency commitment (Pendery, 1997). In the agency's 1997 Annual Report, collaborative management is stated as a Blueprint Goal. The BLM is "dedicated to understanding socio-economic and environmental trends, being more inclusive in its decision-making and implementing appropriate on the ground activities (BLM, 1997). The goals also state: "The BLM is committed to building effective partnerships that will accomplish three interrelated goals: (1) Improve understanding of environmental, social and economic conditions and trends (2) Promote community-based planning and (3) Expand partnerships to implement on the ground activities "(BLM, 1997).

Strategies include the development of a network of natural resource ADR consultants in all BLM states (BLM, 1998) and a new training focus. Regional offices are beginning to provide training in ADR and collaboration for their field staff (Bryan, 1999). The BLM Partnership Series workshops are a series of classes designed to help BLM employees learn to identify and work with human and cultural resources within a community. The goal is for staff to apply this knowledge to planning and collaborative-decision making in order to enhance the landscape and promote healthy communities (BLM National Training Center).

A primary effort of the agency to support collaborative processes is the creation of formal Resource Advisory Councils (RACs) in 24 western states. In each state, the governor appoints diverse stakeholders to the council, which uses consensus decision-making to address issues related to rangeland management (BLM, 1998).

USDA-Forest Service

In 1992 the Forest Service began a dialogue which focused on the understanding that "decisions made through collaboration with local communities are built with broader

knowledge and experience and are more likely to be implemented" (USDA FS, 1999). As part of this dialogue, Chief Dombeck stated, "Our goal is to increase the Forest Service's capacity and desire to collaborate with all forest users, owners and interests as a way to improve relationships and resource stewardship" (Dombeck in USDA FS, 1997). In 1997, a collaborative stewardship team was appointed to look at the capacity of the Forest Service to implement collaborative approaches.

One example of the Forest Service's initiative to support collaboration is the Sustainable Forests Roundtable, a multi-stakeholder forum for sharing information and perspectives that enable better decision-making regarding sustainable forest practices. The Forest Service has also published brochures and web pages describing the agency's intent to sponsor resource stewardship and conservation partnerships on an area-wide or watershed basis. (USDA FS (2), 1999). Regional offices have developed internal documents framing a commitment to "collaborative planning" and "agency/stakeholder partnerships" (Northern Region USDA-FS, 1997).

Environmental Protection Agency

Although the EPA is primarily a regulatory agency rather than a management agency, there are several programs that reflect the agency's support of collaborative initiatives. One of the most expansive and somewhat nebulous programs is community-based environmental protection (CBEP). Community-based environmental protection is "a framework for identifying and solving environmental problems by setting priorities and forging solutions through an open inclusive process driven by places and the people who live in them" (EPA (1), 1999). Through this program, regional offices work to recognize, highlight and support community efforts to protect the environment.

The National Estuaries Program also includes multi-stakeholder committees for each of the estuaries in the program. These committees, which involve landowners, interest groups, and others, work collaboratively with the EPA to oversee restoration and management efforts (EPA(2), 1999).

A third example of an EPA direct program is Brownfields Redevelopment. Starting in 1993 the Clinton Administration provided seed money and recognized model communities working to redevelop inner city brownfields. Model Brownfields projects are collaborative in nature, involving residents, businesses, community leaders, investors, lenders and developers (The White House, 1997).

Categories of Collaborative Initiatives

Collaborative partnerships often fall into several familiar categories. Although our research showed that partnerships neither fit easily into these categories, nor do familiar labels capture the range of partnerships that exist, it is useful to briefly summarize the categories of natural resource management that include collaboration among diverse stakeholders as a part of their process.

Sustainable Communities

More a movement than a definable program, sustainable communities initiatives are example of communities both small and large that attempt to define and procure a sustainable future, in terms of economic, social and environmental health. The Sustainable Communities Network serves to link these initiatives across the country (www.sustainable.org). The National Town Meeting Program, which focuses on sustainable communities efforts, intends “to engage all Americans in charting a course for prosperity in the years ahead” to “maintain good communities, protect the environment, spend public resources wisely and achieve growth efficiently” being developed at the local community and business level (Sustainable America, 1999).

Ecosystem Management

Ecosystem Management (EM) is a label that has been applied to many different kinds of landscape scale management projects that emphasize a holistic perspective on ecosystem relations, long term planning, establishment of collaborative relationships among stakeholders, the need to protect the environment while providing for the sustainability of local economies (Yaffee et al, 1996; Keystone Center, 1996). Some EM initiatives are primarily large-scale agency managed projects while others involve citizens (Burchfield 1998, Yaffee et al, 1996). Collaboration in ecosystem management often means collaboration between agencies, not necessarily between all stakeholders, nor on a community level. There are over 500 EM projects in the country (Yaffee et al, 1996).

Watershed Initiatives

Many collaborative efforts organize around watershed boundaries or focus on water issues. While managing natural resources within natural drainage basins is not a new idea for either the U.S. or Europe, the sudden interest in the U.S. in the "watershed ideal" is new (Getches, 1998). The interest in watershed management in part relates to the changing demography of the West, which is no longer predominantly rural. Although 90% of people in Pacific states live in urban areas and 65% of Rocky Mountain states' population is urban, irrigated agriculture still uses the most water. Increasing support for instream values is forcing a change in the way federal water institutions manage western water (Bell, 1997). In a report to the Western Water Policy Review Advisory Commission, Craig Bell notes that "Legal and political gridlock is forcing varied interests to come together and work out their differences and find grounds for mutually beneficially relationships" (1997). Watershed boundaries are increasingly used as way to integrate management and protection, and to coordinate water policies.

Several states support watershed based approaches to natural resource management. For example, the Oregon legislature passed the Oregon Plan to address endangered fish habitat restoration throughout the state by the formation of local watershed councils. In Massachusetts,

the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs is reorganizing the state's resource management plans to conform to watershed boundaries (Armstrong, 1999). In North Carolina, the legislature recently approved a statewide river assessment project that is focused on the state's major river basins.

Coordinated Resource Management

Coordinated Resource Management is a process that originated in the early 1950's in the Soil Conservation Service. It has evolved over the last five decades to become a popular tool that allows for direct participation of all stakeholders concerned with natural resource management in a given planning area (Society for Range Management, 1997). Sanctioned by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Soil Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service, and Cooperative Extension Service, the CRM concept has been widely adopted and modified beyond its initial agency initiated sphere. CRM serves as a general yet adaptable set of guidelines for inter-agency cooperation and consensus based decision-making among stakeholders (Philippi, 1998). Although no one knows the exact number, there are hundreds of CRM initiatives across the country.

Habitat Conservation Planning Processes

Habitat Conservation Planning processes (HCPs) arose from the amended section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act, which allows for incidental take of an endangered species given the approval of a conservation plan (USFWS, 1999). The HCP process is described as "a program that, at its best, can integrate development activities with endangered species conservation, provide a framework for broad-based conservation planning, and foster a climate of cooperation between the public and private sectors" (USFWS, 1999). Although most HCPs are the result of negotiations between a single landowner and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, some involve multi-party collaborative efforts. The process is accelerating rapidly, with over 225 HCPs throughout the country (Anderson et al, 1998).

Why this project?

Given the range and diversity of programs and initiatives that include multi-party collaborative processes to manage natural resources, it is difficult to understand the landscape. There are no clear maps to help people understand what is happening across the U.S. Familiar categories like ecosystem management and watershed councils include great variation within the kinds of groups falling under each label. Also, the lines are blurred, and many groups that do not fit neatly merely fall through the cracks. It is no wonder people are confused and that a few groups that make it into the news become models of both what to expect, as well as what to criticize or to support. There is a need to describe the landscape of collaborative partnerships, clearly defining the differences and similarities between the many groups that exist in order to better inform the current debate about these processes. Exploring how individual partnerships work together on the ground to manage natural resources can illuminate the real challenges and opportunities that these "nascent experiments at civility" (Ken Cairn, 1997) confront.

Goals and Objectives

From this project, we expect to gain an understanding of the range and variation in structure, objectives, and outcomes of collaborative resource partnerships in the U.S.; positive and negative critiques of these partnerships, and the opportunities and challenges facing collaborative initiatives. Through interviews and case analyses, we will discern how these partnerships capitalize on opportunities and overcome barriers to meeting the standards and criteria of concerned observers.

We will review the literature and interview a broad range of key participating and non-participating stakeholders in collaborative partnerships in order to:

1) Describe the range and variation of Collaborative Partnership initiatives

In order to visually represent the range, variation and scope of collaborative partnerships we will create a map to describe collaborative partnerships according to characteristics such as:

- Location
- Issues
- Participants
- Outcomes
- Decision authority
- Connection to existing procedures
- Elements of process structure
- Scientific basis for planning, decision-making, implementation, and monitoring
- Level of support / opposition
- Level of experience / knowledge
- Funding
- Time frame (when initiated / meeting frequency)
- Scale of projects
- Land ownership

2) Examine the issues raised in both positive and negative critiques of collaborative partnerships.

We will identify and describe the positive and negative critiques surrounding collaborative partnerships. This information will be used to generate hypotheses regarding the criteria used by stakeholders to determine acceptable versus unacceptable collaborative partnership processes.

3) Illustrate and analyze what role these varied perceptions of the collaborative partnership process play in select case studies.

Within the range of collaborative partnerships, we will select and develop 10 in-depth case studies that exemplify the findings of our research.

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