Collaborative Approaches to Planning and Public Engagement

**Problem Statement:** The coastal squeeze forces restoration practitioners to operate in increasingly complex, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-stakeholder environments. In order to reach the ambitious restoration targets for the region, the next generation of restoration projects must take place in these complex social, institutional, and ecological spaces. Restoration practitioners must be prepared to work with the people and institutions in and adjacent to potential restoration areas. Restoration planning will be forced to contend with a broad suite of interests – from the tribes, salmon recovery groups, the agricultural sector, and urban development pressures. Various studies in fisheries and coastal management demonstrate that a collaborative approach, which proactively engages the tribes and these stakeholders, is likely to be useful in avoiding conflict, reaching creative solutions, and successfully managing restoration goals in the years to come.

**What is Collaborative Planning for Addressing Coastal Squeeze:**
Experience and studies provide some background on successful collaborative planning:

- Collaborative planning *engages various relevant constituencies* in defining problems, collecting information, creating coalitions, taking action and learning from experience. Collaborative planning is inclusive and iterative. Collaborative planning goes beyond a reliance on government agencies, laws and science to identify solutions and take action.
- There is emerging agreement that *transparency, participatory planning, and multi-constituency processes are of both practical and ethical value.*
- Collaborative relationships that are created out of genuine *shared interest and commitment* to issues tend to be more productive than collaborative relationships that are mandated.
- *Good communication* is highlighted as important, as is *shared decision-making.* A shared understanding of and agreement on the problem, action goals and objectives, and information exchange are common aspects of collaborative planning processes.
- *Inclusive and participatory processes founded on trust and broad representation* of constituencies are widely recognized as important to successful collaborative planning.
- *Good leadership* that endorses and encourages the collaborative processes is key to success. The engagement of key social groups, institutions and leaders from outside the immediate community of collaboration is also recognized as important.
- Environmental management entails trade-offs, and therefore *conflict resolution* is a common aspect of collaborative planning.
- Collaborative planning processes need to be tailored to the *local issues and governance context.*

**Relevant interview quotes:**

- “And we've made agreements with the farm community that if we support their culture and economy, that they would support ours. And they agreed to that.” (Tulalip Natural Resources Staff, 2016)
- When asked what makes collaboration work: “I think, you know, I guess you could simply just say, communication. If there was a problem, I think we had enough experience within the greater group that we could, one or the other of us would come up with a solution.” (Tulalip Natural Resources Staff, 2016)
“I'd emphasize that these are communities that have had a history of conflict often. But there are many common principles and values between those two communities. They're both looking seven generations - in fact, we've got a farmland protection initiative, a resource lands protection initiative that we're calling 'The Seven Generations Resource Lands Effort'. And that's true for the farmers. They want to look multi-generations ahead. True for the Tribes. They've been famous for that seven generations approach and the long look. They are also both food producers. Obviously agriculture produces a lot of food, but salmon and medicines and herbs from natural areas, restored areas, are critical to tribal culture. So there are a lot of similarities. And we've seen a bridging and a coming together and building of trust between leaders in the Tribal community, as well as in the agricultural communities.” (SLS Member, 2016)

Discussion Questions:

- Are the development of more collaborative processes needed, worthwhile and/or feasible for restoration in Puget Sound? Why or why not? What specific challenges might need to be overcome?
- What is needed for successful collaborative planning processes around restoration in Puget Sound?
- How can we develop restoration goals that meet the interests of diverse social groups?
- What would it take to achieve successful collaborative planning and public engagement to meet the challenges posed by coastal squeeze? How do we get there?

Bibliography and References:


