Leadership and Trust

Problem Statement: Leadership in restoration, salmon recovery, and land use planning in the region, should be prepared to contend with the many compounding factors that are further exacerbated by the issue of coastal squeeze. Leadership is needed from the institutions involved in this work (e.g. Federal, state, local, Tribal governments, watershed groups, etc.), as well as the community level. Community leaders play a key role in building local support and relationships as well as in communicating the needs and concerns of their communities to others. It is broadly recognized that restoration projects and processes in Puget Sound estuaries are increasingly complex and multi-stakeholder – pointing toward the necessity to pull together the agriculture, salmon restoration interests, local/tribal/state/federal goals as well as other intensifying transportation and land use pressures.

Mid to large scale restoration also takes decades or longer to complete – periods of time in which elected leaders, political appointments, and staff can change considerably. What does it take to develop institutional leadership and individual leaders to manage this work? How do we build leaders who can hold the vision while negotiating the inherent compromise that will come?

What is Leadership for Addressing Coastal Squeeze:
Literature reviews provide some of the following elements for successful leadership:
- stress the importance of the ability to inspire trust in stakeholders, resolve conflict, and reach across traditional institutional and cultural boundaries to find solutions
- approaches environmental challenges from multiple dimensions; the spatial and temporal, biological and physical, social and cultural.
- willing to undertake and learn from monitoring programs (e.g. use adaptive management in decision making)
- Environmental issues are often full of uncertainties, complex, emotion-charged, and require long-term engagement and solutions.

Relevant Interview Quotes:
- “here in Snohomish County is that we got leaders. We didn't just get easy people that would get along well with one another. We got real leaders from each of the different stakeholder communities. But they were also people that we had a sense could work together, respect others' interests - even though they were advocate for their own communities' interests - that there would be mutual respect and an opportunity to reconcile and work out those differences in a way that created net gain” (SLS Member, 2016)
• “we've always been what I call ourselves is one of the last vanguards of the environment. Because all the monies - federal and state - has kind of dried up. And so we still stay involved and try to keep as much protection going on the river systems up there and anything that affects the river systems, where we can intervene in there and keep an eye on it” (Tulalip Natural Resources Staff, 2016)
• “everybody brought a different suite of strengths to the table and it was a remarkable experience to reflect on and realize how important those relationships and the leadership that everybody on the trustee council played in resolving all the conflicts we had” (Department of Ecology Staff, 2016)

Discussion Questions:

• What is needed for successful leadership of restoration projects and processes in the Puget Sound?
• How can we build trust in leadership? What partnerships must be made? Who must be involved?
• Why is trust important? What is trust? What elements are needed to develop trust?
• What would it take to develop sufficient leadership capacity to meet the challenges posed by the coastal squeeze? How do we get there?

Bibliography and references on Leadership:


