

Community-Based Collaboration Workshop Maximizing Success – Avoiding Pitfalls



Workshop Summary
Fairmont Hot Springs, Anaconda, MT
Nov 30 – Dec 1, 2016



Background and Workshop Rationale

“Focus on the 80% held in common rather than the 20% in disagreement” Blackfoot Challenge

An ever-increasing number of organizations in the Northern Rockies are embracing opportunities to collaborate at the community level to advance conservation. Some of these organizations have been involved in collaborative initiatives for many years, while for others such approaches are new and untested.

Collaborative approaches to community-based conservation are not always well defined and many of the terms and concepts used to describe such approaches are used loosely. Moreover, there are relatively few references offering case studies, or providing insights from practitioners or academics with regard to “Best Practices” or “Guiding Principles.” As a result, projects generally described as “community-based collaboratives” vary widely in their design, execution and success.

Recognizing the wealth of knowledge and experience from individuals and organizations in the Northern Rockies region, and drawing on available research and expertise from academics and conservation practitioners, this workshop provided an opportunity share and discuss learnings from community based collaboration initiatives, craft shared definitions and principles, and identify best practices for maximizing conservation impact while avoiding pitfalls.

The convenors of this workshop hoped that organizations and individuals—both experienced and new to the field—would gain knowledge and ideas from this event that would enable them to be more effective in their current and future projects and, as a result, the communities served by collaboratives would have a better understanding and appreciation of the value of their conservation efforts.

Workshop Participants

The primary target audiences for this event were leaders of community-based conservation organizations across the High Divide and other Northern Rockies landscapes, including the watershed groups, ranchlands groups and place-based organizations that serve as the backbone of landscape-scale conservation work. Participants representing such groups included directors, program managers, and board members.

Other workshop participants included seasoned trainers and consulting practitioners, representatives from state resource management agencies, academics who have researched and analyzed collaborative projects, and members of other regional non-profits. (See “List of Participants” later in this document.

Workshop Planning Team and Facilitation

Design, planning and delivery of the workshop was coordinated by a planning team comprised of the following:

- Alice Buckley (Future West)
- Dennis Glick (Future West)
- JoAnn Grant (Heart of the Rockies Initiative)
- Michael Whitfield (Heart of the Rockies Initiative)
- Gary Burnett (Blackfoot Challenge);
- Shawn Johnson (University of Montana, Center for Natural Resources & Environmental Policy)
- Mindy Crowell (University of Montana, Salmon Valley Stewardship)
- Don Elder (Training Resources for the Environmental Community, TREC);
- Julian Griggs (JG&A / TREC)

Julian Griggs (Dovetail Consulting Group) also served as the workshop facilitator.

Purpose and Workshop Objectives

“consensus is like music—everyone can enjoy hearing harmony even if they don’t like the song.”
Janis Joplin

The overall purpose of the workshop was to maximize the success and increase the impact of organizations embracing collaborative, community-based approaches to conservation.

The specific objectives of the workshop were as follows:

1. Ensure all participants have a shared understanding of key terms and concepts related to collaborative community based conservation and appreciation of the range of such initiatives across the Northern Rockies region.
2. Drawing from research, case studies and practical experience, identify a suite of guiding principles and best practices for effective, community-based collaboration, as well as some of the common pitfalls to be avoided.
3. Determine how guiding principles and best practices for effective, community-based collaboration might be applied to increase the effectiveness of conservation projects and initiatives in the region.
4. Confirm how lessons and insights from this workshop might be summarized and shared with others both within the Northern Rockies region and beyond.

COMMUNITY-BASED COLLABORATION WORKSHOP AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30:

- 9:30** Opening
- *Welcome*
 - *Introductory Exercise*
 - *Confirmation of workshop objectives/agenda*
 - *Housekeeping and logistics*
- 10:00** Keynote: What is Community-Based Collaboration:
Jim Stone & Randy Gazda
- *Questions, discussion*
- 10:45** Presentation and Exercise: Issues, Challenges, and Questions
- *Framework: Conditions Facilitating Collaboration*
 - *Triads: Issues, challenges, questions to populate framework*
- 11:20** Refreshment Break
- 11:40** Case Studies: Getting Together
- *Barb Cestero*
 - *Pat Flowers*
 - *Gary Burnett*
- 12:15** Small Group Exercise
- *Strategies to maximize impact, ways to avoid pitfalls*
- 12:30** Lunch Break
- 1:30** World Café: Working Together
- *Toni Ruth*
 - *Amy Robinson*
 - *Renee Hiebert*
 - *Bill Milton*
 - *Barb Cestero*
 - *Sunni Heikes-Knapton*
- 4:10** Review & Synthesis: Getting Together, Working Together
- Small Group discussions:
- *What is the most important 'take away' from today?*
 - *What will I be doing differently as a result of what I have learned?*
 - *What questions remain?*
- Highlights by topic area / populating framework
- 4:50** Summary and Wrap Up
- *Review of the day and agenda for tomorrow*
 - *Mid-point evaluation*
- 5:00** Adjourn, Colla-beer-ation reception
- 7:00** Dinner with Guest Speaker

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2016

- 9:00** Opening for Day 2
- *Introductory comments*
 - *Presentation: Summary of Outcomes from Day 1*
 - *Review and confirmation of agenda for today*
 - *Housekeeping and logistics*
- 9:30** Case Studies: Delivering Results
- *Brad Smith*
 - *Brandon Hoffner*
 - *Kristin Troy*
 - *Nils Christoffersen*
- 10:10** Triad Exercise
- *Strategies to maximize impact, ways to avoid pitfalls*
- 10:30** Refreshment Break
- 10:50** Presentation and Discussion: Learning and Resilience
- *Presentation: Monitoring and evaluation: Shawn Johnson, University of Montana*
 - *Questions, discussion*
- 11:20** Popcorn Panel, *Rapid Fire Q&A*
- *Michael Whitfield*
 - *Bill Milton*
 - *Pat Flowers*
 - *Kristin Troy*
- 12:00** Lunch Break, *sign up for small groups*
- 1:00** Small Group Exercise: Emerging Best Practices
- *Synthesis of best practices*
 - *Getting Together*
 - *Working Together*
 - *Delivering Results*
 - *Learning and Resilience*
 - *Other TBD*
- 2:30** Refreshment Break, *Preparation of small group reports*
- 2:50** Presentations
- *Reports from small groups / populate framework*
- 3:20** Looking Ahead: Integration and Application
- *Participants meet with colleagues to consider application of best practices to their current or future collaborative initiatives*
- 3:45** Summary and Next Steps
- *Review of outcomes from the workshop*
 - *Clarification of next steps, including workshop summary report, opportunities for further networking*
 - *Workshop evaluation, Closing comments*
- 4:00** **Close**

Summary
Community Based Collaboration Workshop
Fairmont Hot Springs: Nov 30 – Dec 1, 2017

1. Keynote Presentation: What is Community Based Collaboration?

Jim Stone and Randy Gazda highlighted key elements of community based collaboration by drawing on their experience of the Blackfoot Challenge. This process began in the 1970's, as local landowners recognized that they "needed to come together to figure it out" rather than have outsiders dictate land use in the watershed. These collaborative efforts became particularly important when the watershed achieved national notoriety (i.e. "What follows 'A River Runs Through It'? A realtor runs through it!"). Over the years, participants in the collaborative process recognized the importance of trust building, and recognized that the process needed to not only tackle natural resource management issues, but also address conservation, social, and economic considerations.

Some of the lessons learned from the Blackfoot Challenge include:

- ✓ the delicate issue of taking positions on controversial issues as a collaborative versus 'staying on the fence';
- ✓ adopting a 'ridge-to-ridge' perspective and speaking with a common voice;
- ✓ inviting everyone to the table to ensure that the process has credibility;
- ✓ letting sub-committees develop when needed, rather than prescribing elaborate governance structures up-front;
- ✓ starting with a focus on the 80% held in common rather than the 20% that represents the problem areas;
- ✓ balancing the use of science with the 'art' of social processes; and, proper pacing.

This case study concluded with an emphasis on the importance of trust building, which requires patience and time.

2. Panel Session: Getting Together

Barb Cestero shared her experience from the Gravelly Landscape Collaborative, a process triggered not by a crisis but because of a shared interest among private landowners in addressing changes in the landscape. The collaborative process began with a field trip and included a deliberate effort to identify stakeholder groups, as well as individuals who might be able to represent those interests. Following an initial meeting of ~50 people, a core group of ~20 set to work define purpose and goals, and to develop an 'outreach plan,' which ensured that on-going efforts were made to engage with 'sceptics.' ***A lesson learned from this process is the importance of the 'tone' set by those involved, and their willingness to engage with others who might hold different values or perspectives.***

Pat Flowers highlighted eight lessons from his experience with the Madison Valley Elk Management Working Group collaborative process, noting that, in the words of Janis Joplin, "consensus is like music—everyone can enjoy hearing harmony even if they don't like the song." Lessons learned included:

- (i) there often needs to be something to galvanize the need for collaboration, which can focus participants on a shared purpose;

- (ii) (ii) the collaborative process needs to be community-led;
- (iii) (iii) it may be important to select a facilitator who has a track record of success and who is acceptable to all parties;
- (iv) (iv) being open to the involvement of all participants can create logistical problems, but often a 'self-winning process' then occurs;
- (v) (v) those involved in the collaborative process should actively discuss which key interests are actually needed at the table (i.e., who isn't here?);
- (vi) (vi) participants should have the necessary authority to make decisions at the collaboration table;
- (vii) (vii) positive leadership is critical and often rises organically—collaboration may flounder in fact, if such leadership is absent; and,
- (viii) (viii) financial support may be needed (for meeting space, facilitation) and is ideally shared among participants.

Bill Milton shared his experience from Petroleum County (~500 residents), reflecting on the importance of a **'few people who recognize a need simply to get together.'** He noted that in one example, participants were engaged in dialogue for as much as six years before a shared workplan was developed. **Patience is thus an essential ingredient for effective collaboration.** Bill also noted that the question of scale is often problematic. In some cases, the impetus for longer-term collaboration arises when an issue of common concern is identified, and when local stakeholders recognize the value of on-going dialogue. In this context, it is sometimes valuable to engage multiple generations in collaborative initiatives, in part to overcome the reluctance of the older generation to become involved in 'yet one more process.' Bill also noted that the agenda for collaboration should not be held so tight so as to stifle exploration of emerging issues that are of common concern.



3. Getting Together: Key Strategies and Ways to Avoid Pitfalls

- *Convening:*
 - Take advantage of a triggering event and then develop shared purpose/mission;
 - Focus first on the people, rather than the problems, goals, or the process;
 - The convenor matters;
 - Organize around shared interests and concerns (particularly the 'catalyzing issues'), and unmet needs;
 - Meet people where they are—avoid too much structure too soon;
 - Tone really matters—set the right tone at the outset and don't let people upset the tone;
 - Focus on small steps, aim for early successes and celebrate them appropriately—find something that everyone is interested in/wants;
 - Never meet just to meet;

- Let the landscape, the people and the nature of the issues of common concern dictate the necessary scale of collaboration and the scope of the discussion;
- Develop trust and vision early; and,
- Listen, listen and listen again—practice patience, and really hear people’s needs.
- *Representation:*
 - Get all of those involved who are the most interested and who are willing to put time into the collaboration;
 - Think about driving time to meeting locations, length of meetings;
 - Recognize that getting people to show up is a success (and offer food);
 - Make sure that anyone who has the ability to torpedo the effort are engaged;
 - Remember that you don’t have to have everyone there to start—not everyone will be able to attend all meetings;
 - Interact actively with those who choose not to be involved—don’t just hang out with people ‘like you’;
 - Accommodate multiple learning styles/communication styles; and,
 - Make efforts to involve all generations.
- *Leadership:*
 - It is important that the leader—who may or may not be the convenor—is motivated, capable and interested, and that they are trusted and respected; and,
 - It may be necessary to engage a neutral/impartial facilitator at an early stage who can support the nascent collaboration process.



4. Working Together: Key Strategies and Ways to Avoid Pitfalls

Through the ‘World Café’ exercise, and based on a variety of case studies and examples—some of which were successful, and others which were less so—the following insights/lessons learned, strategies and ‘ways to avoid pitfalls’ were identified by workshop participants. Not all of these ideas have been discussed in plenary and the material below does not represent outputs that are supported by all workshop participants. (It should also be noted that some of the material below also informs the ‘Getting Together’ aspects of community-based collaboration.)

- *Inclusion:*
 - Inclusiveness and an ‘open door policy’ are really important and yet can be among the most challenging aspects of community based collaboration;
 - Find people who have a collaborative spirit and who represent diverse values;
 - Avoid turf/personality battles;
 - Trying to be all-inclusive can be challenging, particularly when: (a) participants are *individuals* (who may or may not be collectively reflective of the diversity of interests in the community) rather than *representatives* for particular interests, (b) there is high turnover/lack of consistent attendance, or (c) some individuals are intent on ‘blocking’ the process. As a result, there may be a trade-off between inclusion and the ability to make progress or reach structured decisions;

- It is essential to build relationships with key stakeholder groups early on—including with state or federal agencies that have decision making authority relative to the issues at hand; and,
 - It may be necessary to ‘go to them’ rather than expect stakeholder groups who are not involved to come to you.
- *Shared Vision:*
 - Developing a shared vision may be a key ingredient for the success of collaborative initiatives—it may be important to focus on this as a ‘bottom line goal.’
- *Ground rules:*
 - Establish ground rules early;
 - Include an emphasis on listening as a part of the culture of the group;
 - In some cases ground rules can be informal, while in other cases they may remain informal—in either case however, it is important to consider what will happen when problems arise;
 - It can be relatively easy to get ground rules on paper, and much harder to enforce them!
 - Review and renew ground rules periodically, especially when the membership of the collaborative process changes;
 - Identify someone responsible for enforcing the ground rules; and,
 - In addition to ground rules, partnership agreements may also be helpful to guide multiple parties engaged in a collaborative initiative (or a coalition)—this may include a shared communications plan, which defines how communications will be managed, and how groups might ‘share the credit;’ or ‘share the pain’.
- *Facilitation:*
 - Several workshop participants highlighted the role of an impartial, capable facilitator with a solid track record who is acceptable to all parties; and,
 - One of the key roles for such a facilitator is providing a central focus for information management and process management.
- *Planning/Shared Agenda:*
 - Identify and articulate the needs and interests of others;
 - Setting a respectful tone at an early stage is crucial—emphasize civility, and mutual respect;
 - Be flexible and willing to expand the agenda as needed; and,
 - Set clear goals and reasonable timelines.
- *Decision Making:*
 - Be clear and consistent about the approach for decision making that is to be adopted;
 - Use ‘interest-based decision making’ rather than ‘positional argument’;
 - Only discuss issues when the relevant partners are at the table;
 - Strive for intuitive, strategic thinking and allow it to be shaped by the group;
 - Seek consensus not ‘compromise’ (because this latter term connotes compromising on values, as well as interests)—and focus on the overlap in interests;
 - Decision making should ideally be committee- or board-driven, not staff-driven;
 - Consensus decision making can be challenging if there is uncertainty over what it actually means;
 - ‘Fallbacks’ are needed in the event that the collaborative process reaches an impasse, or when consensus cannot be achieved. Such fallbacks may include working through the issue via sub-groups, gathering more information, delineating areas of agreement/disagreement in writing, and preparing majority/minority reports;
 - Other guidelines to assist with decision making may include a requirement to propose alternatives if you withhold support for a consensus decision (i.e., you can’t just ‘block’ or simply say no); and,

- In some cases, a collaborative process may need to refer an unresolved issue to the statutory decision maker, with supporting information outlining the deliberations of the collaborative process.

- *Coordinating Activity:*

- Clarify roles and responsibilities within the collaborative process is key; and,
- Be prepared to pay for good coordination.

Learning: Learn from other collaboratives and bring that language/tools/examples to your group for consideration.

- *Leadership:*

- Identify community based leadership to convene, introduce and start the conversation (e.g., a local landowner);
- Reliance on a few key individuals to do all the hard work may result in burnout—the role of a leaders may therefore include delegating responsibilities to others, so that the work is completed effectively;
- A collaborative may be difficult to sustain if leadership is diffuse—in some circumstances, it be inevitable and necessary that a few key individuals (the ‘keepers of the flame’) are willing to commit substantial time and effort to the collaborative process;
- Find funding to support leadership roles (and administrative activities); and,
- Strive to find the right balance between workload (getting work done), engagement with multiple interests; and process—find a good leader/coordinator.

- *Language:* Be precise in the use of language (e.g., ‘buy-in,’ ‘compromise’).

- *Building and Sustaining Constituency Support:*

- Host field trips and tours prior to collaborative meetings—this might help ensure that more people show up and that there is a richer conversation and a shared understanding of the issue;
- Focus on the 80% we agree on—look for common ground first;
- Share resources for the benefit of the whole group;
- Give all participants space to contribute;
- Celebrate incremental success; and,
- Suggest that members have to replace themselves.

- *Securing Technical Support:*

- Be cautious about science leading the conversation;
- Beware the paralysis of a continued search for information;
- Just ask—be clear on your needs;
- Pay attention to different kinds of knowledge (e.g., science, local knowledge);
- Strive to include conversations about what people are experiencing locally; and,
- Avoid the pitfall of not trusting technical support, leading to multiple/repeated attempts to collect relevant information.

- *Pacing:*

- Clarify expectations up front;
- Identify milestones and set deadlines;
- Use strategic planning sessions to decide which projects to maintain/let go so that momentum can be maintained overall;

- When consensus is achieved, act on it promptly;
- Avoid meeting fatigue by being sure to get things done;
- Pause when needed so that people can ‘catch up’ and get up to speed—and use mentoring and orientation when a new person comes on board;
- Maintain proper pacing and focus on continued relationship building; and,
- Allow time for the building of trust (i.e., be patient).

5. Dinner Presentation

Nils Christoffersen shared his experience with community based conservation in Africa, noting that where districts and villages had **strong, inclusive, transparent governance**, the results were astonishing—poaching levels dropped, deforestation slowed significantly, household income rose, and communities invested in schools, clinics and water systems. This suggested that incentives to maintain and manage wildlife outside of national parks were more likely to succeed than regulation and enforcement. Ultimately, these ideas developed and spawned regional experimentation in community resource management—a shift from “Conservation for the People” (a paternalistic nod to local interests) to **“Conservation with the People”** (community resource management in its current form).

Nils focused the bulk of his presentation on the experience of Wallowa County in Oregon. In the early 1990s, there was a policy shift from an emphasis on sustained yield from national forests to an emphasis on ecosystem management, which created considerable uncertainty. In response, greater attention was given to social processes, iterative in nature, to guide management decision making. For various reasons however, this was not an easy shift, resulting in dramatic declines in forest harvest levels and gross revenues. This has impacts for local communities, school enrolment, and domestic violence.

To tackle this problem, the Wallowa County Commissioner brought citizens together to forge a new vision, including a new economic development strategy, an innovative partnership with local interests and tribes, the creation of a natural resource advisory committee, and the creation of a community based non-profit to assist in the innovation required to maintain, sustain and improve working landscapes, and the jobs associated with these lands.

Wallowa Resources today is focused on land, knowledge and community stewardship. For Wallowa Resources, ‘stewardship’ signifies their responsibility to manage and respond progressively to the factors affecting the sustainability of land and communities. This work requires the integration of social, economic and ecological issues to identify and implement strategies that will conserve cultural and biological diversity, promote sustainable use, and ensure the fair distribution of benefits. It also requires (i) partnerships—collaborative relationships that build consensus on the desired future; (ii) coordinated efforts and leveraging of resources; and, (iii) the framework to scale up and address larger regional and national constraints to local sustainability.

The importance of this work is more pronounced today. Recent economic transformations in the US, and globally, are leaving many families behind. Based on one study, 80% of US households had experienced flat or declining incomes over the last ten years. The West has become the most urbanized region in America, and 75% of the region’s jobs are concentrated in less than 10% of the counties.

In closing, Nils suggested **we need to think hard, and take action, to rebuild the social contract for conservation, and more broadly for land and community stewardship**. There is tremendous latent investment potential in the human and natural resource assets of rural communities—potential that can be put to work doing restoration, and maintaining good stewardship, of our public lands, and more broadly our working landscapes. The opportunity to rebuild soil health, restore forests and riparian areas—and wildlife habitat, while producing high quality food and fiber and renewable energy exists. If these opportunities are seized, we can build new **partnerships between urban and rural America**, we can break down misconceptions and harmful characterizations, and we can mobilize the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of Americans to demonstrate the possibility of stewardship, vital communities, and vibrant families. It is unlikely that the new Administration will be investing in federal land management,

environmental stewardship (or protection), or real rural development, and so its more important than ever that communities, cities, states get organized, and that public-private partnerships are leveraged—to realize the potential returns from sound investments in land and community stewardship.

6. Day 2 Michael Whitfield and Ann McCauley “Takeaways” from Day 1:

“Getting Together”

- Take time to build trust, take time to understand needs
- If there are other things detracting from trust building – perhaps real collaboration is not occurring
- Always create a safe place and establish ground rules for your collaborative process
- Facilitation is extremely important – the facilitator must be trusted and respected by collaborative leaders
- Be intentional about bringing the right people to the table. Make it easier for stakeholders to participate. Keep them all informed

“Leadership”

- Leadership must be trusted, respected and motivated to advance collaboration
- The facilitator must be neutral and trusted

“Working Together”

- Maintain representation from all sectors
- Get decision makers involved early in the process
- Provide space for relationship building
- Build community around shared vision and landscape
- The “tone” and ground rules should be precise and respect other opinions
- Find the 80% you can agree on
- Provide space for interests to be expressed
- Identify clear goals and timelines with room for creativity
- Identify clear guidelines for decision making – consensus and non-consensus
- Insure that there is “value added” for those who participate
- Insure that there are clear goals, milestones, communicating actions – pause or step back when needed
- Use science to inform the action, but not to drive it
- Strive to achieve conservation BY the people



7. Case Studies – Keys to Delivering Results

Presenters shared their various experiences highlighting concepts: working with agencies and decision makers, adapting tools for specific local needs, utilizing tradeoffs in negotiations, and navigating extremes on either side of an issue.

Kristin Troy – Lemhi Regional Land Trust

The group operates in a landscape that is 92% federal land, with private land concentrated in valley floors along rivers. The economy is largely based on ranching. These two factors are critical because conservation of salmonids and maintenance of open space and working landscapes formed the basis for environmental work in the area. The initial goals of the group were socioeconomic and community-centric. In the early stages agency experts were focused on fish conservation while ranchers were looking at easements. It wasn't until these two groups came together combining the "art" and "science" of the work that they really became effective. The land trust was able to package riparian conservation measures into the land trust work which gave them a permanent legal framework. Essentially this bundled the site-specific work of the technical team with the broader work of the ranchers seeking easements. This work has broadened, deepened, strengthened, and accelerated the pace of conservation in the community.

Maximizing Impact:

- Be mindful of social license and community support; "grocery store accountability"
- Combine technical expertise with social perspective – the "art and science" of collaborative conservation
- Find opportunities to use existing tools in new ways that work for the specific issue and location
- Find permanent legal structures for conservation work
- Be aware of particular needs and challenges of a place (e.g. salmon and subdivided ranches) and figure out overlap/synergy so that those challenges become mutually supportive opportunities

Brad Smith – Boulder White Clouds Conservation

Brad discusses the work of the Idaho Conservation League and many others in an effort to create Wilderness designation in the Boulder White Clouds in Central Idaho. This "collaboration with a lower case c" was initiated by 2nd District Congressman Mike Simpson (R) who was intent on working across the stakeholder community to find the combination of terms that would allow a deal to move through congress. At various points in the process, groups involved on all sides of the issue took heat for their collaboration with non-traditional partners, resulting in two derailments. Ultimately, the Wilderness Bill passed prompting Secretary of the Interior to comment; "What is it about Idaho?" which reflected the dearth of successful Wilderness Bills in other states.

Maximizing Impact:

- Working with non-traditional partners can be fruitful, but most likely will require more tenacity
- When fatigue sets in while facing issues,, think outside the box to re-stimulate conversation
- Deals often end up being compromises: if you don't have something to offer, you can't expect others to give. "Find the art of the possible."

- “Success can create a culture of success”: proves that successful collaborative work is possible and worthwhile

Brandon Hoffner – Henrys Fork Watershed Council

The Henrys Fork Watershed Council in eastern Idaho was created in 1993 to address several sedimentation events and the need for a management plan for the watershed. The Watershed District and the Henrys Fork Foundation share responsibility for managing/facilitating the council and the groups tackles a wide variety of public and private land related conservation and restoration issues as well as river management issues. Proposed projects are run through the “Watershed Integrity Review and Evaluation (WIRE)” process to determine if it is an appropriate project for Council involvement.

Maximizing Impact:

- The council strives to move into a role where they provide credible and trusted information to state agencies
- Begin each meeting with a minute of silence to contemplate how they will conduct themselves during the meeting
- Small working groups are created around different issues made of folks with relevant expertise
- The language used by the Council is carefully chosen, for example, rather than doing “research” the group utilizes “science and technology”

Nils Chrisoffersen – Wallowa Resources

This non-profit in northeast Oregon was created to be a catalyst for rural economic opportunities while conserving and restoring ecosystems. The group has collaborated with the Forest Service and other partners pre and post NEPA process to successfully implement sustainable forestry projects in the Wallowa – Whitman National Forest. Through this work WR has demonstrated to the Forest Service that they are a good partner, while demonstrating to the community that they create jobs and get things done, and also helping forest contractors realize that there are other jobs in the forest besides commercial logging. For some of the decision making processes pre-NEPA, it was very useful to engage in joint fact finding, even doing field work together in project locations so that everyone involved in the discussions was on the same page.

Maximizing Impact:

- Move forward where agreement exists – if the group still has some contention and some areas of disagreement, pass on that information to those who can carry out the action.
- Collaboration is not just one thing or relationship; it consists of a multiplicity of relationships
- Maintain consistent communication with agency decision makers, even if personnel frequently change
- Participate in joint fact finding so that everyone is in agreement about on the ground conditions of a watershed or forest
- Focus on the “socio-ecological” system, not just one or the other.



8. Learning and Resilience

Shawn Johnson from the University of Montana shared his thoughts on “monitoring and evaluation” of collaborative community-based projects. He first asked the question; “Collaboration is complicated. Should we simplify?” To which he answered, “No, we would lose the richness and miss the things that make this process what it is.”

He referenced the concept of “**mindful organizing**” which is stepping back from what it means to be an organization and thinking about what the term “organizing” really means. There are five principles of mindful organizing:

1. Preoccupied with failure
2. Reluctance to simplify: take time to reflect on complexity
3. Be sensitive to operations: Are you doing your business well?
4. Commitment to resilience: Are you investing in your staff? Are you ready for transitions?
5. Showing deference to expertise: the value of a collaborative is not in its sameness, but in its differences. Do you know where to go to get the answers that you need?

Think “**dashboard in your car**” when you think of monitoring. What’s working and what isn’t. Evaluation is taking a deeper dive. Make sure that your evaluation process will meet its intended need. That is, that it is:

- A). Results focused
- B). Designed in a way that is inclusive and not divisive



9. Popcorn Panel – Bill Milton, Kristin Troy, Michael Whitfield, Pat Flowers

Topic – Ensuring Inclusiveness and Legitimacy of Representation

Discussion: How to work effectively with tribes and tribal members

We can learn a lot from tribal perspectives on issues but need an in depth understanding of cultural issues to have the most successful interaction. Historical relevance is important in order to be authentic and genuine in our approaches to working with tribes.

- Find an opportunity and go to them rather than expecting them to come to us. Should be someone with authority going to authority out of respect for their position
- Keep in mind scale of the request: tribes receive a lot of requests and their interests might be broader than the scope of your collaboration
- Integrate tribal members into NGO staffing and the structure of the collaborative
- Be prepared and embrace that diversity might complicate discussion but ultimately will enrich it

Discussion: –Advice for outsiders entering a community

- When working with diverse people on issues, respect that these issues are about their home
- Always bring something to the table that you can give
- Trust is of critical importance. You may leave after three years, but citizens you have worked with are staying
- Collaborative groups need to work on their ability to gracefully accept outsiders into their process

Topic – Funding

How to deal with competing funding and avoiding duplicative efforts

- Choose projects based on funding availability to guarantee success
- Transparency and trust between “competing” organizations are critically important
- Need to be “formal” in commitment to work together
- Need to maintain “situational awareness” that is, understanding what is best for the common good
- Create a shared strategy for shared funding between partners
- Know how to effectively tell your story

Topic – Adaption, Coping, Change

When is the time right to end a collaborative process?

- If a collaborative can adapt to change and new issues, and if people are still passionate about the issue, it's worth continuing
- “Where does a landscape end?”



10. Looking Ahead: Integration and Application

Workshop participants broke up into small groups made of collaboration partners or others to consider how they might apply the “Best Practices” and other ideas that they gleaned from the workshop into their current or future collaborative initiatives.

Below is a list of observations and ideas discussed or mentioned by these groups:

- Deal with geographic dispersion by visiting people more on their turf and having more informal interactions than just formal meetings because not everyone can make the formal meetings
- Follow-up on networking after meetings
- The issue of growth is a challenge in our community: Need to figure out if our collaborative is going to be in or out of this issue and if so, how? Maybe we need to work hard at the “convening” stage and figure out who needs to be at the table. City-county tensions can be hard to deal with and many are looking to non-profits to fill this space.
- The West has a lot of people with capacity but also a lot of conflicting issues.
- Need to determine at what point is it too late to bring someone into a conversation. Is here a point at which it is too late?
- Need to be more comfortable about meeting with decision makers outside of the collaborative format: the perception is that this feels *under the table*, but perhaps it’s ok.
- Need to create space for identifying conflicts of interest or tense feelings; allow people to do this anonymously so they can speak about something before it becomes an issue (a facilitator could help with this).

Lingering questions:

- How do you stay engaged with people in the long term? How do you hold yourself accountable to follow-up and implementing what was gained at this workshop? – Put a two hour block on your calendar to reflect on the workshop – don’t move it!
- How do we translate this experience with our colleagues?
- What is the right scale for a collaboration and how do you organize around it? At what point does it become too scattered?
- How do you get started bringing people to the table? Especially those uninterested in collaborating. Which person do you talk to/how do you figure out who has influence?
- One needs an “egoless” commitment to work with people
- Need to figure out how to bring agencies into the process
- Figure out the qualitative assessment of the process and how participants are feeling about it, especially when people are at a low point.
- Our collaborative has been focusing heavily on science and outcomes: we should try to focus more on the “art” side and bring in people’s stories etc. have a better art/science balance.

- We do all agree that:
 - **We are inspired by the amount of good collaborative work that is happening**
 - **Need to be aware of what others are already doing as to not reinvent the wheel**
 - **Need to create a safe place for people to share concerns or speak their mind**
 - **The issue of “what scale to work” is a really hard one – it could be the focus of an entire workshop**
 - **Celebrate success! Give thanks to partners**
 - **Bring humor and fun to the collaborative process. Build friendships with partners**
 - **“If you’ve seen one collaborative, you’ve seen one collaborative**
 - **How do you create recognition and acknowledgement without creating division?**
 - **Know the “place!”**
 - **The keys are “Listening, understanding, humility. The payoff of collaboration is, “You Matter”**

11. Overall Workshop Reflections

- Collaboration is hard!
- This workshop has been inspiring and the framework used for the workshop was helpful
- Humility is a really important, critical value for convening and setting the tone of collaborative meetings
- It would be helpful to have a visualization of collaborative efforts in the Northern Rockies (would also show where overlaps are)
 - “State of Watershed” report might help id the watershed collaborative
 - The Idaho Forest restoration Project would id Idaho forest cooperatives
 - The Great Northern landscape Conservation Cooperative would be another source of information on collaborative
 - The High Divide website could be a place where this could be displayed

12. Workshop Follow-up

Dennis Glick from Future West reported that a summary of the workshop will be produced in and disseminated to workshop participants, supporters and others. Also, the rich harvest of community-based collaboration best practices, pitfalls, gleaned from workshop participants will be assembled into some form of a community-based collaborative manual. Also being considered is a follow-up webinar on these best practices that will be open to all workshop participants and others.

Participant List

COMMUNITY-BASED COLLABORATION WORKSHOP

<u>Name</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Adam Lieberg	Conservation Practitioner	Swan Valley Connections
Alice Buckley	Program Manager	Future West
Amber Datta	Graduate Student	University of Montana
Amy Robinson	NW Montana Field Director	Montana Wilderness Association
Amy McNamara	Conservation Vision Project Manager	The Trust for Public Land
Ann McCauley	Associate Director	Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana
Barb Cestero	Principal	Common Ground Solutions
Bill Milton	Principal	Milton Mediation and Facilitation
Brad Smith	North Idaho Director	Idaho Conservation League
Brandon Hoffner	Executive Director	Henry's Fork Foundation
Brendan Conboy	Program and Development Associate	Valley Advocates for Responsible Development
Brittany Trushel	Executive Director	Big Hole River Foundation
Dede Taylor	Director	Mountain Time Arts
Dennis Glick	Director	Future west
Don Elder	Senior Associate	Training Resources for the Environmental Community
EJ Porth	Program Director	Gallatin Valley Land Trust
Elizabeth Bell	Program Officer-Y2Y Priority Region	Wilburforce Foundation
Erika Scofield	Student	University of Montana
Executive Director	Executive Director	Big Hole River Foundation
Gabriel Murray	EIT-Water Resources Engineering	Confluence Consulting Inc.
Gary Burnett	executive director	Blackfoot Challenge
Hannah Specht	Graduate Student	University of Montana
Heather Barber	Executive Director	Bitter Root Water Forum
Jamie Cottom	Beaverhead Watershed Coordinator	Beaverhead Watershed Committee
Jesse Tufte	Program Officer - Sustainable Ranching Initiative	World Wildlife Fund
Jessica Eller	Graduate Student	University of Montana
Jim Madden	Director	Mountain Time Arts
JoAnn Grant	Program Associate	Heart of the Rockies Initiative
Jordan Reeves	Conservation Specialist	The Wilderness Society
Josh Holmes	Land Protection Specialist	Teton Regional Land Trust
Julian Griggs	Principal	Dovetail Consulting
Julie McLaughlin	High Divide Headwaters Land Steward and Preserve Manager	The Nature Conservancy
Kali Orton	Graduate Student	UM Natural Resources Conflict Resolution Program
Kate Salomon	Membership and Outreach Coordinator	Teton Regional Land Trust
Kimberley Trotter	US Program Director	Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative
Kirsa Shelkey	Graduate Student	University of Montana
Kristin Troy	Executive Director	Lemhi Regional Land Trust
Kyle Barber	Conservation Director	Bitter Root Land Trust
Lee Nellis	none	not organized
Lily Haines	Outreach	Clark Fork Coalition
Lindsay Wancour	Graduate Student	University of Montana
Madison Boone	Big Sky Watershed Corps	One Montana
Mary Ellen Strom	Director	Mountain Time Arts
Michael Whitfield	Executive Director	Heart of the Rockies Conservation Initiative
Michelle Anderson	Professor of Biology	The University of Montana Western
Michelle Uberuaga	Executive Director	Park County Environmental Council

Mike Miller	Flint Creek Technical Advisory Committee	Granite Headwaters Watershed Group
Mindy Crowell	Collaboration Specialist/NRCR Grad Student	Salmon Valley Stewardship/NRCR Program
Pat Flowers	Region 3 Director, Retired	Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Retired
Peter Gurche	Graduate Student	University of Montana
Rachel Layman	Director of Operations and Outreach	Salmon Valley Stewardship
Randy Carpenter	Program Associate	Future West
Rebecca Ramsey	Ruby Watershed Coordinator	Ruby Valley Conservation District; Ruby Watershed Council
Renee Hiebert	Conservation Specialist	Teton Regional Land Trust
Richard Hotaling	Western Montana District Manager	Bureau of Land Management
Rob Mason	Central Idaho Representative	The Wilderness Society
Sally Cathey	Southwest Montana Field Director	Montana Wilderness Association
Sara Halm	Education Program Associate	Swan Valley Connections
Sara Schmidt	Outreach, Conservation Strategies; BCCA Coordinator	Blackfoot Challenge
Shawn Johnson	Managing Director	Center for Natural Resources & Environmental Policy, University of Montana
Sunni Heikes-Knapton	Watershed Coordinator	Madison Conservation District
Teagan Hayes	Coalition chair	Bitterroot Sapphire Corridor Coalition & NRCR program
Toni Ruth	Executive Director	Salmon Valley Stewardship
Wendy Weaver	Executive Director	Montana Aquatic Resources Services
Whitney Tilt	Director	Conservation Benchmarks
Yvette Converse	Coordinator	Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative

WORKSHOP PRIMER
COMMUNITY-BASED COLLABORATION WORKSHOP
Maximizing Success | Avoiding Pitfalls
FAIRMONT HOT SPRINGS, NOV 30 – DEC 1, 2016

Compiled and written by Mindy Crowell, Shawn Johnson, Michael Whitfield

Collaborative approaches to community-based conservation are not always well defined, and many of the terms and concepts used to describe community-based conservation are applied loosely. Moreover, there are relatively few places to look for case studies, best practices, or guiding principles. As a result, efforts generally described as “community-based collaboratives” vary widely in terms of what they do and how they do it.

Recognizing the wealth of knowledge and experience from individuals and organizations in the Northern Rockies region, and drawing on available research and expertise from academics and conservation practitioners, this workshop provides an opportunity to share and discuss what we know and what we’re learning. It will include insights from community based collaboration leaders, partners, and others. Together, participants will review and refine definitions and principles, identify best practices and common elements of success, and otherwise explore ways to maximize conservation impact while avoiding pitfalls.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY-BASED COLLABORATION OR COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION?

There are a variety of definitions in the research literature (two are shared below), that attempt to describe the core elements of community-based collaboration:

“Collaboration is a process through which multiple stakeholders work together to solve a common problem or achieve a common objective.” (Moote and Lowe, 2005).

“The seminal definition of community-based conservation ... ‘includes natural resources or biodiversity protection by, for, and with the local community.’ Defining it more precisely would be futile ... because community-based conservation includes a range of activities practiced in various parts of the world, but that the central idea in the concept is ‘the coexistence of people and nature, as distinct from protectionism and the segregation of people and nature.’” (Berkes 2007)

At its core, community-based collaboration is a practical endeavor, perhaps best described by the people who engage in it. The following definition of “collaboration” is provided by a public agency official. It describes the essence of collaborative, community-based problem-solving:

“Collaboration is when everybody brings something to the table (expertise, money, ability to grant permission). They put it on the table, take their hands off and then the team creates from there.”

- Public agency official (in Bryson, Crosby, Stone, 2006)

WHY IS COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION IMPORTANT? Community-based organizations (both in the conservation arena and beyond) are critical to delivering on-the-ground outcomes for several reasons. First and foremost, they tend to be viewed as trusted and respected community institutions, run by friends and neighbors. This increases their approachability and credibility, particularly in communities where people are reluctant to engage with large public agencies. Additionally, community-based organizations tend to have a better pulse on the specific needs and unique barriers that play out at community and regional scales; they are also embedded in local cultures and norms that will influence the way those needs and barriers are addressed.

While there is great promise in collaborative, community-based approaches to conservation and community development, significant institutional, organizational, and practical challenges remain. This workshop provides an opportunity to share and discuss what we are learning, capture best practices and lessons learned, and take advantage of our collective experience and expertise to maximize our chances for success while avoiding known pitfalls along the way.

WHY NOW?

Political parties and positions aside, there is change in the air and it is more important now than ever to unify our community voices. Community-based collaboration seeks to bring communities together around difficult conversations to create a space for discussions that build trust and promote an environment for consensus. It is time to create a space for civil dialog. We are seeking to develop resources that will empower our fellow organizations to learn from best practices, to learn from each other, and to make a difference. Right now, we have the opportunity to work together to decide our future.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION?

As anything on the leading edge of theory and practice, our knowledge of community-based conservation is evolving. The references and resources listed below provide a solid grounding in collaboration and multi-sector partnership processes with a focus on community and conservation-based efforts. They emphasize that community-based conservation is as much about the process of working together effectively as it is about the substance of achieving community or conservation-based outcomes.

One of the important lessons from the field is that “it depends.” It depends on who participates, what issues partners are focused on, social and financial capacity, resource constraints, and on and on. Instead of focusing on specific practices or lessons from other places, this workshop is focused on capturing the lessons and experiences from the High Divide region and surrounding communities. Collaboration among community based organizations can also deliver regional conservation impact. There is increasing recognition among conservation practitioners of the necessity for consideration of landscape-scaled social, cultural and ecological connectedness in today’s rapidly changing human and natural environment. Community based stakeholders in the High Divide and beyond are discovering the lasting value of working together across geographic and sectoral boundaries at regional scales for greater impact. Application of community based collaborative approaches to landscape scale conservation issues can provide opportunities for more comprehensive and durable conservation outcomes to the benefit of both local and regional communities (e.g. Labich et al. 2013).

During the workshop, we’ll be utilizing a framework that captures the full scope of community-based collaboration, from the context and/or issue(s) that catalyzed community-based action to the functional aspects focused on delivering effective processes and successful outcomes. We’ll be focusing specifically on the topics of “Getting Together,” “Working Together,” “Delivering Results”, and “Learning and Resilience.” Along the way, we’ll be capturing your thoughts and input and producing a record of our shared experience in this important field. As a result of our shared effort, we’ll have a product that’s as good or better than anything in the research literature -- a record of practical lessons and best practices that captures the specific context and geography of communities across the region.

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Framework: Conditions Facilitating Community-Based Collaboration

The framework below provides an overview of common aspects of community based collaboration, loosely presented as steps or stages, drawn from recent literature and practitioner experience. The framework is not intended an exhaustive summary of each and every aspect of community based collaboration, and it does not imply that all of the conditions listed need to be fulfilled in all situations. (In some instances, a group of interested individuals might simply engage in shared visioning, for example). Furthermore, the framework does not dictate who should do what at any given stage.

The agenda for the Nov 30-Dec 1 workshop was structured to reflect this framework, with different presentations, case studies and small group discussions exploring conditions in greater detail. During the first morning of the workshop, participants ‘crowd-sourced’ issues and challenges, which then shaped the scope of discussion for the rest of the event.

Conditions Facilitating Community Based Collaboration																	
Generic Outline	Triggering Event(s) or Issue(s)	Shared Vision or Purpose		Getting Together			Working Together						Delivering Results			Learning and Resilience	
		Clarifying Shared	Clarifying Scope	Convening	Ensuring Inclusiveness and Legitimacy	Leadership	Funding	Planning / Shared Agenda	Operational Groundrules &	Decision	Coordinating	Building & Sustaining Constituency	Securing Technical	Generating	Engaging with Opponents	Engaging with Decision	Monitoring &
Issues, Challenges & Questions																	
Strategies to Maximize Impact																	
Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them																	