

**White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation
Day 2 Breakout Session Compilation**

Topic: Measuring Success of Cooperative Conservation Efforts

Session number: 41

Facilitator: Michael Elliott

Morning

Location: 231

- A. **Major Repeated Themes Raised in the Discussion.** *A grouping of ideas repeated with some frequency in the session and brought up again during the group summation process. Also includes diverging views and/or questions about the topic.*

Environmental changes are long-term. We need to establish intermediate goals because environmental goals long-term and collaboratives need to focus on and measure shorter-term, intermediate progress. Particularly important to intermediate goals is measuring the process outcomes (e.g. development of partnerships and changes in the participants' behavior and attitudes).

Within the context of existing laws and regulations, collaboratives should be bottom-up (grassroots) and not top-down. They should be driven by concern for particular resources in particular places and supported by all stakeholders, including the federal government.

The establishment of goals and the availability of resources need to be considered together. While goals are primary, they need to be achievable. On the other hand, collaboratives need to identify larger goals because often drive resource availability.

An important role of the federal government is to develop and provide toolboxes to help groups set goals and monitor success. These tools should be designed to make it easy to measure and monitor success. Significant resources are needed for measuring and monitoring success. The predictability and availability of resources is often missing.

While data is extremely important in measuring and monitoring progress, it should not limit the goals that are set, but inasmuch as goals can be measured, care should be taken in establishing these measures and a baseline set of data should be considered. Also, for many collaboratives, measuring and monitoring should be kept simple and should take into account the experience of the participants and not just the ultimate environmental impacts (e.g., are they having fun).

All evaluation depends on the integrity of the process and having the right mix of stakeholders involved.

- B. **National-level Practical Actions** *that could be taken by the Federal government, national NGO's, and other national organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

Create an interagency task force to develop protocols for evaluation that local communities can accomplish with resources that they are likely to have. This means at the very least having protocols that someone skilled in environmental evaluation could direct schools, conservation corps, and other local groups to gather data and monitor the progress of the project. The protocols should provide quality assurance so that the data that emerges from the monitoring is considered legitimate by state and federal agencies and funders.

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There is a need for federal agencies to provide seed monies around the monitoring and measuring of success. Monitoring should be considered integral to implementation of the project and resources need to be earmarked for monitoring.

Provide recognition to effective collaboratives and use the criteria for the awards to stimulate more effective monitoring and measuring of success. Use public agency press releases and other forms of recognition to support this goal.

Federal government should provide a toolbox that supports evaluative processes which should include clear measures of effective collaboration processes (building relationships, improving communication, developing partnerships) as well as measures of environmental outcomes (improvements in wildlife density). The toolbox should provide assistance and guidance, but not be required.

Inasmuch as federal agencies can reduce uncertainty in providing future funding, look at the budget process to identify areas where no-year money may be utilized to support collaboration processes.

Protocols and language used for measuring and monitoring collaborative projects should be consistent across federal agencies that provides clarity about what is needed to collaboratives.

C. **Local-level Practical Actions** *that could be taken at the local or community level by Tribes, state and local communities, private citizens, and local organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

Local collaboratives need to define more clearly the existing problems such as the presence of litigation or the absence of effective communication that caused the creation of the collaborative and set goals to enable them to get credit for improvement in those conditions.

Local collaboratives should look beyond the immediate environmental goals to community goals such as sustainability or improvements in public health and incorporate those in their community goals of measuring success.

Recognition of successful collaboratives does not just include the federal government as noted above, but should also be done at the state and local level as well.

Utilize business planning and evaluation processes and the resources of corporations (including employees) to build more effective collaboratives.

Design measures of success with the partners in the collaborative.

Consider replicating a local, citizen-centered program (e.g., Conservation 2000, State of Illinois) that provides funding on specific geographic or land management region basis, and have the local people involved in decision-making.

D. **Particularly insightful quotes from participants** that capture the essence of key points made during the group's discussion.

“bottom up and not top down”

“Look at the common denominator. What kind of steward is inside here? (points to heart)”

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Topic: Measuring Success of Cooperative Conservation Efforts

Session number: 41

Facilitator: Mary Lou Addor

Morning

Location: 232

- A. **Major Repeated Themes Raised in the Discussion.** *A grouping of ideas repeated with some frequency in the session and brought up again during the group summation process. Also includes diverging views and/or questions about the topic.*

Measuring and Monitoring Success in Cooperative Conservation Efforts: Major Themes

- Cooperatives/Collaborations need adequate time, money, resources, and trust internally and externally. Trust: trust between stakeholders and for the process at a national and local level.
- Defining upfront in the effort the problem, approaches, definitions of terms, and desired outcomes – and monitoring for successes along the way both with product and process (relationships, procedural) – and yet when circumstances occur (hurricanes, unrealistic goals, ..) be willing to revisit and revised the process and get agreements on this upfront. Processes remain organic not predetermined. And results are implementable and implemented from the data and measures.
- You need a realistic process to get results: go slow to go fast – process is iterative, “ground truthing” (avoid the train wreck - test the process with those who will implement it). Provide realistic budgets for each stage of the evaluation process and through multi-years.
- Provide rewards, recognition, and positive encouragement throughout the process, for each of the stakeholders, and from respective organizations and agencies (both internally with the stakeholders, and externally; national representatives attend local efforts,...)
- Encourage the use of standardize and quality information; sharing data (shared GIS database); having baseline data, providing a cultural change towards the use and acceptance of qualitative data while continuing to relay upon quantitative – both should go hand in hand to measure and monitor results.
- Encourage the use of citizen and stakeholder monitoring. Establish policies to legitimize.

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- Empowerment – everyone has equal power and input, and inclusive. You need ground rules stating everyone in the group/room are equals with individual empowerment to contribute.
- Processes need leaders, catalysts, and facilitators.
- Constant communication within the group and outside to the community.
- Walk the talk- from leader of the country, middle managers, to the local level – be commitment and provide protection for the commitment to follow through.

B. National-level Practical Actions *that could be taken by the Federal government, national NGO's, and other national organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

- Providing training for capacity building and action.
- Align dollars with actions. Those who are not walking the talk get the cut, those who are should get the funding they need.
- Ensure consistency between agencies, policies, program evaluations
- Provide multi year funding-not annually digging for money
- You need accountability: for results, financial
- Recognition that strong law draws people together to solve problems
- Recognition that policy/laws/ encourages collaboration.

C. Local-level Practical Actions *that could be taken at the local or community level by Tribes, state and local communities, private citizens, and local organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

- Implement train the trainer programs.
- Encourage national presence at local efforts.
- Before making national policy, seek the input from field office.
- You need accountability: and also clearer definitions between local and national levels on what constitutes accountability- programmatic and financial are reported and measured differently. better define how federal money was spent

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**White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation
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Topic: Measuring Success of Cooperative Conservation Efforts

Session number: 41

Morning

Facilitator: Kirk Emerson

Location: 241

This summary cannot be more than two pages; allocate space as needed among the categories.

A. **Major Repeated Themes Raised in the Discussion.** *A grouping of ideas repeated with some frequency in the session and brought up again during the group summation process. Also includes diverging views and/or questions about the topic.*

- Emphasis on how to connect local goals and commitments to national vision and policy
- Importance of flexibility; assure any policy, guidance, programs enable flexibility for local variation and different needs
- Need for interagency and cross-jurisdictional cooperation and consistency with regard to measuring progress and performance and goal-setting (as well as engagement in cooperative conservation projects)
- Understanding and agreement on goals should be followed by criteria to evaluate progress and performance outcomes among all parties
- Monitoring and measuring success require appropriate resources (tools, capacity, funding)
- The sustainability of cooperative conservation efforts can be aided by market approaches
- Permission to play – stretch bureaucratic confines
- Systems theme – assuring conversation on conservation to increase performance
- This is not easy; But it's fun

B. **National-level Practical Actions** *that could be taken by the Federal government, national NGO's, and other national organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

Setting goals and desired outcomes

- Set national vision for cooperative conservation; assure national goals are clearly defined but general and can be translated at the local level
- Any new laws should be facilitative, not dictatorial and the government's role in specific cooperative efforts should be facilitative

Monitoring and evaluating progress

- Establish key indicators at national level and coordinate across agencies

Measuring success/outcomes

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- Federal agencies should be held accountable for achieving conservation results and agencies' staff should be rewarded for successes
- Success takes time and requires appropriate monitoring

C. **Local-level Practical Actions** *that could be taken at the local or community level by Tribes, state and local communities, private citizens, and local organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

Setting goals and desired outcomes

- Local needs should be identified before setting goals
- Assure agreement among all parties on how to evaluate those shared goals
- Align measures for appropriate scale and resources

Monitoring and evaluating progress

- Be sure public sees and understands progress based on monitoring and evaluation
- Public has to trust integrity of data and understand progress
- Monitoring parameters need to be consistent across agencies

Measuring success/outcomes

- Develop indicators for economic benefits, human health and environmental improvement
- Value ecological services to private sector and consider how economic incentives can assist in making cooperative conservation efforts self-perpetuating
- Establish baseline measures at beginning of processes
- Measure impacts outside boundaries of project (avoid leakage); also assess unintended impacts (both positive and negative)

D. **Particularly insightful quotes from participants** that capture the essence of key points made during the group's discussion.

Additional concerns

- Research on how to do cooperative conservation (what works/what doesn't) not organized, not accessible and not in lay terms
- Much too much counting of activities, not results
- Federal government does not have capacity to honor results and products of cooperative conservation efforts (meaning, doesn't then commit to and resource implementation)
- Success is hard to see
- "This is not easy"

Quotes

- Success is in the eye of the beholder
- Partnerships are about people

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**White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation
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Session number: 41

Facilitator: Robert Jones

Morning

Location: 242

A. Major Repeated Themes Raised in the Discussion.

Successful partnerships result from ensuring that local stakeholders are instrumental in defining the problems, creating a common vision, and achieving progress.

Measuring partnership success must be defined both in terms of quantitative (project actions/activities, outputs) and qualitative (such as collaborative processes, social capital gained through the partnership, etc).

There needs to be some flexibility in the process of defining success to allow for incorporating and accounting for unexpected successes or failures throughout the process.

For cooperative conservation to work, it needs to be a learning process, where partners are free to recognize failures and successes.

Promote an adaptive management approach to cooperative conservation and support the necessary monitoring to make this succeed.

Promote locally led, performance-based solutions that look at entire ecological functions.

B. National-level Practical Actions

Develop and disseminate consistent and uniform guidance through engaging partners at all levels for standards and practices in developing goals, monitoring progress, and reporting. In particular, best practices are needed for gathering and supporting the use of qualitative and quantitative measures of success.

Develop and promote the use of a uniform set of indicators to improve consistency, make monitoring/measuring easier, and better utilize trend data.

Promote a more open evaluation process to monitor for progress and adaptation when efforts are failing.

Communicate national goals so that local partnerships can link to those goals as appropriate. Local partnership should review the measures that already exist and determine whether those measures could apply to partnership objectives.

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Establish consistent criteria for monitoring and measuring. Offer flexibility in national programs and grant making to allow local partnerships to achieve their goals.

Develop and establish protocols for enhancing the capacity of citizen-science and fit that into the more formal scientific process.

The grant making processes should be more broadly framed to incorporate overhead and reporting needs, as well as offering and crediting partners for reporting qualitative and quantitative measures.

Seek broadened authority to use mitigation funding to advance cooperative conservation projects including support for monitoring and measuring success.

Simplify the grant making process within and across agencies.

C. Local-level Practical Actions

Initiate the collaborative process with defining the problem, setting a common vision, developing a common language and definitions, and focusing on priorities.

Monitoring and measuring success should be developed, agreed to, incorporated into the entire project, and understood by all partners.

Set clear standards for monitoring with built-in trigger points for projects and partnerships that enable change along the way.

Clarify expectations about the process (timelines, participation, different types of metrics, opportunities for revising measures, etc) at the outset.

Support opportunities to document partnership successes as well as failures to inform the changes necessary to succeed.

Involve as many local people as possible in setting goals and defining success.

Measure both the ecological outcomes, but also the social outcomes generated.

Initiate a dialogue between OMB and the local folks in what is being driven at a national level, outside local control.

Particularly insightful quotes from participants that capture the essence of key points made during the group's discussion.

Plan with people, not for people.

Collaborative processes call for moving from "me" to "we."

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