

## *Freshwater Initiative Workshop Proceedings:*

### **Working with Communities - Building Long-Term Support for Freshwater Conservation December 8 – 10, 1998 (Amado, Arizona)**

#### *Introduction*

Community-based conservation now receives broad support within the Conservancy. At the sites participating in Strategy Two of the Freshwater Initiative, working with communities may be a necessary prerequisite to building long-term support for freshwater conservation. Strategies to abate threats at these sites will be more successful if developed with an understanding of community values, and implementing most strategies will be more productive if based on solid knowledge about the community.

The staff and partners engaged at Freshwater Initiative sites have recognized the importance of this topic to their work and requested training in this area. The resulting workshop, entitled *Working with Communities: Building Long-Term Support for Freshwater Conservation*, was held on December 8–10, 1998 at the Rex Ranch in Amado, Arizona. Experienced site-based practitioners within the Conservancy and from other organizations, together with experts from the Conservancy and other institutions (including the U.S. EPA, Resolve, and California's Coyote Creek Riparian Station) presented their knowledge. Thirty-eight participants representing 22 sites, six countries, 15 states, and both the water quality and hydrologic alteration networks attended this workshop. Please see Appendix One for a complete list of participants.

This workshop was designed to provide participants with an overview of tools for assessing communities, community relations skills, techniques or strategies for engaging stakeholders, conflict assessment skills, and tips for communicating messages to stakeholders and community members. This workshop also included an examination of the meaning of "community" and "stakeholder," and a reaffirmation of the need for strategic conservation planning repeatedly during the life of a project and the Conservancy's involvement at a particular site - we must always examine our actions with regard to the conservation goals and threats to be abated at a particular site. Please find the workshop agenda in Appendix Two. This document serves as a written record of this workshop for participants and other interested parties. However, this document does not capture presentations on individual sites and cannot capture the often fertile conversations amongst participants that occurred within small break-out groups, role-playing scenarios, and during unstructured times of the workshop.

## *Context*

This is the fourth skill building and collaboration workshop offered by the Freshwater Initiative through the Freshwater Learning Center since the site selection conference held in Orlando, Florida in December of 1997. As with the others, this workshop attempts to provide participants with new skills in a specific area, and expose participants to other sites within the Freshwater Initiative addressing similar issues. We hope that the relationships established and strengthened at these workshops will form the basis for further collaboration and exchange beyond these workshops and formal Freshwater Initiative gatherings. In many ways, the Freshwater Initiative is trying to build a community for the purpose of organizational learning and finding solutions to common causes of freshwater biodiversity decline.

This workshop also builds from the foundation of knowledge established at the three other skill building and collaboration workshops held during 1998. These workshops focused on strategic conservation planning to abate either hydrologic alteration or water quality threats to freshwater biodiversity (April and May, 1998) and on monitoring changes within freshwater ecosystems associated with strategy implementation, followed by adaptive management to improve conservation efficacy (July, 1998). This workshop again focuses on threats to freshwater biodiversity and strategies to abate these threats: Community-based conservation must be related back to threat abatement.

Certainly, the connection between community interactions and our conservation activities may be direct, as with establishing a volunteer network to accomplish monitoring needs or building a local advisory committee to engage broader community support for conservation within an area. However, the connection may also appear quite diffuse, as with sites where staff and partners spend precious time building relationships within a community and engaging in activities that appear unrelated to conservation (e.g., attending church, participating in community work days, volunteering for the fire department, etc.). Yet, these activities too can be quite strategic and relevant to either learning more information about the community or building relationships with individuals whose support for our activities and strategy implementation is key to their success. When in doubt, revisit the strategic conservation planning process (see Appendix Three for reference) and consider threats, strategies to abate threats, and what you know (and do not know) about the community and stakeholders affecting, or potentially affecting, a site.

### *What does “Community” and “Stakeholder” Mean?*

Ironically, one of the most perplexing questions for many folks engaged in “community-based conservation” is what exactly does “community” mean? Community has many definitions. These definitions all include some concept of people united or connected due to some common place, value, outlook, or identity. Within community-based conservation, most definitions of community refer to people living within a certain geographic area. However, within any geographic place there may be several identifiable subgroups or smaller communities. Hence, the people living within any one place may be part of multiple, and often over-lapping, communities, which can be quite fluid in nature. Community can also be defined in terms of

sense of place and sense of community. Sense of place includes geographic setting or landscape features, economic systems, administrative boundaries and political systems, physical infrastructure (such as highways and solid waste facilities), or an area defined by a specific resource, such as those sharing a common water supply. Sense of community includes how people associate themselves with others due to similar values, attitudes, beliefs, and/or interests about themselves and others. Informal gatherings in neighborhoods, key local activities (such as football games and county fairs), religious groups, volunteer activities and neighborhood councils often provide clues to this sense of community in a particular place.

Stakeholders are members of communities. More specifically, they are people who are affected by strategies to abate particular threats at a site, or could possibly affect or influence the implementation of such strategies. Potential stakeholders include community members, local, State, and Federal governments, industrial and commercial businesses, citizen and environmental groups, and academic institutions, among others. Consider a conservation site focusing on freshwater biodiversity in a particular stream. A gravel mining operation operates within the stream channel itself, impeding upstream migration of critical fish species and contributing to downstream water quality degradation due to sediment added to the stream due to the mining activities. Some of the stakeholders here might be the company that owns the gravel mining operation, the state fish and game agency that is trying to maintain adequate habitat for the critical fish species, the state environmental protection agency that monitors water quality in the stream, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (or state agency) who issued the permits for the gravel mining operation, and local environmental advocacy group that wants to stop the gravel mining activities from harming the fish and the stream.

Developing adequate knowledge of community and stakeholders is very important to creating and implementing successful conservation strategies. How well do you know your community and stakeholders affecting your site? Can you identify the local natural features or landmarks known to the people that live in a certain area? Is there any local civic, social, or professional organization (Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, NAACP, etc.) that has a large following? Do you know when that organization meets and who its recognized leaders are? Have you considered who will be either positively or negatively affected due to implementation of specific strategies to abate threats at your site? Are there any individuals who can block or impede the implementation of specific strategies at your site? Appendix Four includes a list of questions to help you gain a better understanding of your community. The information below on ***Tools for Assessing Community*** can help you fill information gaps in your knowledge about community and stakeholders at your site.

### ***Tools for Assessing Community***

A number of tools exist for assessing community. These tools can help practitioners gain a better understanding of the people that live in a certain place (their education, land-ownership patterns, and economy), their sense of place (geographic setting or landscape features, economic systems, and political systems) and sense of community (shared history, shared values or culture, common concerns about environmental and other issues), and the means for communication and

connectivity among these individuals. The following list provides a brief overview of these tools<sup>1</sup>:

**Census Data Research** provides a basic outline of the demographic and economic makeup of a community and can provide a solid foundation for a community profile. Census data cover 200 subject specific areas, such as demographic information, economic conditions and trends, employment and education information. Census data help define the geographic boundaries of the community in terms of population size, whether the community is rural, urban or suburban, and the different ethnic groups that make-up the community's population, among other things. This information can be important to defining a "community." In the context of community-based efforts, understanding this information provides practitioners with baseline demographic information about a community.

**Content Analysis** is a method used to analyze the text of written or spoken messages. It can provide insight into cultural themes that dominate a community's thinking and talking about the natural environment or environmental protection. It can reveal social and cultural symbols a community uses to illustrate and talk about different issues, provide insight into the social context of different activities, and reveal patterns of communication. This type of information can be useful in determining the attitudes, perceptions and other characteristics of individuals or groups in a community.

**Environmental Values Typology** is a tool to help you distinguish among the different types of environmental values present within a community. Environmental values are those values that structure how people and groups relate specifically to the natural environment. The Environment Values Typology is a set of nine "basic" environmental values that can be used to categorize different environmental values held by individuals or groups. The Typology can also provide you with insight into how these values are likely to motivate certain community behaviors. The Typology can be used as a data collection or data analysis tool.

**Focus Groups** provide in-depth exploration of community members' feelings, beliefs and attitudes about the environment. Focus groups are a structured group process whereby individuals discuss issues selected by the focus group sponsor and facilitated by a moderator. Information collected by focus groups can be used to identify how participants feel and think about a particular issue(s) and to gain a deeper understanding of their views, experiences, beliefs, knowledge and attitudes about the topic(s) you are investigating. The results can help design other profiling or strategic planning efforts, validate other profiling findings, can aid in collaborative environmental problem solving, and can be used when developing ballot initiatives. Focus groups can also provide information about language (e.g., words and phrases used by people to describe the area and their relationship to it) useful when crafting polling questions and ballot initiatives which have meaning to area residents.

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information, please see the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Community Cultural Profiling: Understanding a Community's Sense of Place* (1999). Workshop participants will receive a copy of this document upon publication in early 1999.

**Interviewing** is the process of asking individuals questions, listening to and recording their responses. The questions may be asked of individuals within a community, or of a small group of community members. Interviewing can be used to gather descriptive data about community life and the lives of its members. It can focus on community members' thoughts, feelings and experiences about issues and their relationships with others. The results of the interview effort can be analyzed by looking for patterns or themes in the responses and comparing them to other data and analysis. Interviews can reveal individual perceptions and opinions about the issues or topics in which you are interested.

**Library/Data Research** is the collection of information from published, or existing, written and electronic sources. If information you seek is in a book, a current or past issue of a magazine, newspaper, journal, or in any kind of manuscript or electronic database, library research may be an appropriate profiling tool for your needs. Information obtained through library research may include historical accounts of local events, opinions about certain issues, and/or previous research on the same topic. Library data research can be a useful resource for preparing environmental education materials, collecting information on environmental issues, gathering ideas and learning more about a specific community.

**Maps and Geographic Research** define the physical boundaries of the community and show the many different elements of the community that are contained within those boundaries (e.g., where people live, where businesses are located, roads, and natural features). Maps and geographic research are also useful for showing how the community fits within the larger context of its surroundings (e.g., the community's geographic relationship to other communities or where it is located within a watershed) and how it has changed over time (e.g., road construction, residential and commercial development).

**Meetings** provide an excellent way to assemble groups of people, representing a variety of interests, to discuss community issues. Meetings can be large or small, and can be structured in many different ways depending on issues like meeting location, time frame, and most importantly, purpose. Meetings provide a relatively cost-effective method to assess public opinion and local concerns, values, viewpoints, priorities, and interests. Meetings can be used to solicit input from various groups of people on community values, attitudes, and beliefs, identify and describe the community, define overall environmental protection goal(s), provide a forum for getting people together to establish a vision and action plan for their community, and to identify and coordinate with potential collaborators. Much of the information in this section can also be used to structure parts of a profiling project as well.

**Observation** is a method that collects data by purposefully and selectively watching and tracking the behavior of community members or other phenomena. Observation can be a valuable profiling method for understanding characteristics of a community and its members that may not be revealed through other methods (e.g., interviews). Observation can also confirm and complement the results of other profiling methods and inform the sampling techniques and questionnaire design of other methods, such as surveys and focus groups.

**Regional Economic Data Research** provides useful information regarding jobs, employers, revenue, per capita income, total personal income and other data that can help provide an

overview of the economic conditions and trends of a community. Specific information about industries within a county. is organized by sector (e.g., manufacturing, services, mining) and include the number of employees for that industry, and their total wages. In the context of community-based efforts, regional economic data may provide an indication of how and what natural resources are used to support the economic base of a community. An objective of a community-based effort might be to protect the long-term sustainability of those resources.

**Social Maps** are tools that can collect, organize and analyze social data about a community. They illustrate different types of relationships and connections in a community in general and those related to efforts to conserve and protect the environment. These connections may be between issues and problems, causes and effects, and/or relationships between organizations, institutions and individuals, and between perceptions and realities. The creation of social maps can involve actual community members, or they can be used as tools to design a profiling project and/or analyze the data collected by other profiling methods.

Depending on the goal of your profile and your information needs, there are four different social maps from which to choose:

**Asset Map:** This type of map focuses on identifying a community's capacities and assets. It can help community members recognize the value of certain aspects of their community (e.g., individuals, organizations, institutions) of which they were not previously aware.

**Cognitive Map:** This type of map consists of graphical creations of community based on people's personal perceptions and experiences.

**Concept Map:** This type of map identifies the causes and effects of an idea, belief, concept or problem that exists within a community.

**Social Network Map:** This type of map describes patterns of communication or relationships within a community<sup>2</sup>.

**Surveys and Polls** collect information directly from people, usually through the use of a written questionnaire or an in-person or telephone interview that is guided by a written questionnaire. The results of the survey can be used to document various aspects of the community, such as the community's values and feelings about its natural surroundings and/or its awareness of specific environmental issues in the community. One of the advantages of surveys is that they can link the characteristics (e.g., race, occupation, age, income, education, community residence) of the survey respondents with the questionnaire responses about particular behaviors and beliefs that relate to the local environment and community-based efforts.

**Visual Methods** can capture social, cultural, economic, and ecological features and evoke valuable information from community members who view those images. Captured through

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<sup>2</sup> An additional suggestion was to take this information and place it within a database of contacts and people interested in particular resource issues at a site. This technique is applied at the Roanoke River, NC.

photographs, video, or illustrations, images depict the appearance of a watershed or other land area, spatial relationships, land use patterns and historical changes. They can include images of streets, houses, stores, open spaces, civic features, and the people that inhabit these places. Visual methods can help community members describe and analyze their relationships with others and with their surroundings, and may stir up community members' thoughts and feelings about a particular place. This information can assist in the protection of existing features, or provide a tangible vision for the future of the community.

These tools can be used when beginning a project or for mature projects where information gaps exist, and using two or more of these tools will paint a more complete picture about a particular community. Factors to consider when deciding which tool or tools to apply include (1) what type of information you desire to learn about the community, since different tools may yield different information, (2) the cost of applying each tool given the questions you seek answers for, since some tools may be beyond the financial resources available to you for data collection, and (3) the availability of technical assistance to apply these tools from local colleges and universities and social marketing firms, since capacity to conduct this type of research may not be available within your program. Finally, some of the tools may also be useful as public participation tools to be used in visioning and other community development exercises.

### *Skills for Community Relations*

Working with communities and leading a community-based conservation effort requires a certain set of skills. The Conservancy's recently published *Competencies for Community-Based Conservation Leaders – A Hiring Guide* lists the following 11 competencies or skill sets for community-based conservation leaders:

- Composure
- Dealing with Ambiguity
- Drive for Results
- Interpersonal Savvy
- Learning on the Fly
- Partnering
- Patience
- Perseverance
- Political Savvy
- Sizing Up People
- Strategic Thinking

Please see the Hiring Guide for more information about these skill sets.

Workshop participants felt that these 11 competencies provided a starting point for community-based positions, but that additional skills were often just as important. These additional skills or characteristics of successful community-based staff include:

- Listen first and listen often – An amazing amount of knowledge can be gained by listening to others, reading body language, and observing different cultures. Small nuances and life experiences create different cultures that can lead to misunderstandings and false perceptions
- Forge personal relationships with members of the community – they can be a wellspring of information about the community
- Respect people of diverse backgrounds, education, and values

- Demonstrate humility and integrity beyond reproach as a person and with respect to the Conservancy's mission
- Possess a passion for community work/commitment to the "community" through personal life and interest in the community's interests and issues
- Always follow-through on promises/never promise what you can't deliver
- Give something back to the community – Give credit to others
- Have good facilitation skills
- Use appropriate language – Avoid use of scientific and conservation words and phrases with audiences that may not be familiar with this language.
- Have a good sense of humor/don't lose your ability to laugh

Community-based conservation projects, particularly one-person operations, are not always easy, and often feel isolating. Although perseverance is key to the success of these efforts, individuals placed in communities have a relatively high turnover rate, whether they work for the Conservancy, government agencies, or other national (or international) non-governmental organizations. The organization or agency that supports the placement of people in these remote locations must recognize the sacrifices these people make. For instance, staff might be more willing to stay in places longer if there was an incentive structure within the Conservancy to support continuity, including financial remuneration, and a mentoring network established among community-based staff working in different places. Additionally, where staff transition is imminent, there should be a sizable overlap (e.g., a few weeks) of outgoing with incoming staff. People in these positions are often heroes of sacrifice and on the ground (or in the watershed) success.

### *Strategies for Engaging Stakeholders*

Numerous strategies exist for engaging stakeholders. Some strategies may be directly related to threat abatement whereas others may have more to do with establishing community identity related to a particular natural resource or area, and helping communities consciously direct their future development. As stated in the introduction of this document, even those activities not directly related to threat abatement can be quite strategic and relevant to either learning more about the community or building relations with individuals whose support for our activities and strategy implementation is key to conservation success. When in doubt revisit the strategic conservation planning process and the reasons for your engagement at a particular site. Examples of strategies for engaging stakeholders include:

**Working with Local Government** – Local government may often be an important ally in community work. They may have goals that overlap with your work at a site, and may also have access to funding for community polling and meetings. They also often have



information about local elected officials (donor records, districts, constituencies) available through the county clerk or county board of elections, city clerk, and secretary of state.

**Establishing a Volunteer Monitoring Network** – Monitoring rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands takes considerable time and resources. Although some sites have adequate capacity or partnerships to engage in biological and hydrologic monitoring, many have more limited capacity. One technique for expanding capacity and leveraging available resources to conduct such monitoring is by establishing a volunteer monitoring network. Establishing a volunteer monitoring network also provides a positive way to engage the community, form local and regional partnerships, and provide community environmental education. This type of community engagement also often leads to long-term watershed stewardship and management. However, establishing such a project is time intensive. You must develop clear data collection directions that produce replicable results from different individuals; establish clear goals and expectations for volunteer leaders and data collectors; provide adequate information to volunteers so that they understand what the collection effort is for; and analyze the data collected (or supervise this analysis). You should also address liability issues before accidents occur. Finally, incentives and recognition programs (money or vests, certification, sunglasses, etc.), go a long way towards building long-term volunteer interest and enthusiasm.

**Creating a Local Advisory Board** – Establishing a local advisory board for a project is often a savvy political move. Local people have better knowledge of local attitudes, customs, concerns, history, etc. They may be able to help you decide which threat abatement and community engagement strategies will be most acceptable to other local people and even devise strategies you may not have considered. They may also help insulate you from local criticism of having secret intentions or agendas within the community. But, establishing a local advisory board or steering committee is not always problem free. New members unfamiliar with the project may be distrustful of your intentions, may take over certain decisions, and may represent issues of importance to the community but not necessarily of importance to biodiversity (e.g., benign littering v. water quality degradation from agricultural run-off) . To minimize these problems, carefully select board members, establish clear expectations, and communicate often.

**Small Investments in Community Projects** – Engaging community support for conservation can be challenging, particularly if the person seeking such engagement is new to an area and the community members have not yet developed trust with either that person or with the organization they work with. One way to develop such trust is by contributing to community projects by either helping a community group raise funding or contributing other time and resources to the project. For example, the conversion of an abandoned structure to a community center, etc.

**Building Local Leadership** – Building long-term support for conservation often means empowering local leaders. These sparkplugs may be traditional leaders that are often easy to spot (e.g., church pastors, active city council members, the director of the chamber of commerce, etc.) or non-traditional leaders such as the person everyone goes to for advice, the area mechanic, etc. These sparkplugs can often be encouraged and empowered to take on

more responsibilities regarding the future of their community and conservation of resources within the site. Having a relationship with this person and building trust with them is usually a necessary prerequisite to them becoming a conservation practitioner and motivator for the community. Yet, they may be a far better motivator for the community than a new face in the neighborhood.

**Engaging Community Members in Site Conservation Planning** - The site conservation planning process has been used in Mexico as a tool for community engagement. The key to the success of this process is involving people who live at or manage resources contained within a specific area, including government staff, and engage them in an open and productive dialogue which uses terms they understand (e.g., instead of “strategies for threat abatement” talk about solutions, etc.) and does not conclude until reaching consensus. As these processes are on-going, make sure to identify any community members who are not at the table but need to be present next time.

**Helping Communities Engage in Visioning for the Future** – A number of institutions now help communities engage in such visioning. The Nature Conservancy’s Center for Compatible Economic Development (CCED) helps communities engage in such visioning for a compatible future that includes economy, community and environment. The process developed by CCED, entitled Pathways<sup>3</sup>, involves the following steps: getting started (recruiting leaders, defining the process and budget, securing sponsorship, naming the initiative, forming committees and working groups, selecting a consultant or facilitator, encouraging broad public participation); conducting rapid community, economy, and environment assessments; defining the most critical threats to the economy, environment, and community and identifying the community’s greatest strengths and potential opportunities; drafting a vision statement for the future; review work to date, select strategies to abate threats and identify strategies requiring immediate action; draft short action plans and assignments, monitor progress, and plan community celebrations.

**Other Strategies for Engaging Stakeholders:**

- Establishment of another entity to pursue community interests (e.g., to pursue environmental advocacy, open space acquisition, or cooperative housing goals)
- Community oral history project (e.g., San Luis Valley, Colorado)
- Annual river clean-up (e.g., Conasauga River in Georgia and Tennessee)

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<sup>3</sup> For more information, please see The Nature Conservancy (Center for Compatible Economic Development), *A Citizen’s Guide to Achieving a Healthy Community, Economy and Environment* (1996) or The Nature Conservancy (Center for Compatible Economic Development), *Pathways – Building a Local Initiative for Compatible Economic Development* (1997).

- Contests at local fairs to describe the future of a particular place and among local high schools (e.g., Adams County, Ohio)
- Engage in an environmental education campaign that:
  - (a) Includes the development of a watershed guide written in plain English that describes the environmental processes and systems at work within and around the places people live (e.g., Kenai River, AK).
  - (b) Uses video screenings among communities and community subgroups to increase people's awareness of resource issues in a particular area (e.g., Condor Bioreserve, Ecuador). In Ecuador, people living in Quito had no idea where their water came from or that it was a limited resource. They had the perception that water is always available, abundant, and free. A video and printed materials were produced that educated people about this limited resources and the need to provide protection for the watersheds that supply this water to Quito. This effort created adequate public support to establish water user fees which, in turn, funds conservation of the area's freshwater resources. This model is now being transferred to six other countries across South America.
  - (c) Engages citizens of all ages to contribute to an ecological almanac project to assess a particular resource in an area and help community develop an identity related to a particular resource (an idea for the Upper San Pedro) (disposable cameras can be given to community members for them to take pictures of what is important to them in the area, etc., little kids can draw pictures, etc.)

### ***Conflict Assessment and Management***

Community-based conservation brings with it notions of community engagement in conservation wherein consensus and easily reached decisions are the modus operandi. The Conservancy's image is also based on a "non-confrontational" approach to conservation and most people within the Conservancy are diplomatic by nature. However, community-based efforts, and our site-based work often involve conflict or differences of opinion and perspective. Conflict is not bad or necessarily a problem, yet we fear it and often avoid it. Certainly, it can be uncomfortable. The key to proactively addressing conflict is dialogue.

Dialogue has many meanings including negotiation, conversation, discussion, and agreement seeking. Dialogue occurs during meetings, symposia, and workshops. It can involve consensus building and collaborative problem solving. However it always is a voluntary process wherein two or more people engage in meaningful communication to improve understanding and ideas or make decisions and agreements. In fact, dialogue is still possible even when conflict exists.

Descriptions of successful dialogues presented by workshop participants included a meeting of the minds, mutual respect, equal power, working from something upon which all parties agree, ability to de-personalize the problem, open minds, good information exchange – not just one-sided, and focus on the solution.

Conflict assessment and management practitioners describe the characteristics of a successful dialogue in terms of substance, process, and relationship.

- **Substance:** Participants must be apprised of the substance of the decision or problem and concur in the definition of the problem and relevant information to consider
- **Process:** The parties must understand and concur in the goal and structure of the process for decision-making. The process must be inclusive of those who can influence or add value to the desired outcome, as well as transparent and well-structured.
- **Relationship:** Everyone must also understand their relationship to the decision or problem and the other parties engaged in the dialogue and the interests each party represents.

Conflict assessment and management practitioners also describe dialogue as containing three states: Convening, substantive dialogue, and implementation.

- **Stage One – Convening:** Stage one of the process involves conceptualizing the project (what is the problem or unmet need), conducting interviews (whose ideas would add value or perspective in shaping the process and the desired outcome, who might participate in the process or might be needed for support), and designing the process (clarify the purpose and product – why are we here, identify who should be invited, define the scope of issues and agenda organization).
- **Stage Two – Substantive Dialogue:** Substantive dialogue includes three consecutive phases: opening where parties develop a shared understanding of the problem, middle where they fully explore possible outcomes, and closure where they concur on recommended solutions. The opening portion of this dialogue includes confirming ground rules, testing assumptions, defining the problem, understanding the interests represented, and jointly identifying data needs and strategy for collection and analysis. The middle portion of the dialogue includes developing creative options and evaluating options against criteria. The closure portion of this dialogue includes narrowing options, solving problems, making tradeoffs, and consulting formal decision makers, the public and others, drafting agreements, and establishing a plan for implementation.
- **Stage Three – Implementation:** Implementation includes ratifying agreements, monitoring progress, meeting commitments, solving new problems and renegotiating agreements, and celebrating success.

Focusing on the characteristics of successful dialogue and on the stages of dialogue to resolve a conflict can help the participants deal with differences and resolve conflict. However, these improved processes are not a panacea. They do not replace the need for sound technical, legal, economic, and political analysis. Furthermore, not all conflict can be successfully mediated or resolved even with good facilitation and improved processes. Conservation practitioners engaged in conflicts must prepare for this inevitable occurrence. But trying to find a solution is better than avoiding conflict all together.

## *Getting the Word Out: Communications Planning and Working with the Media*

If you decide to engage specific stakeholders or community members in specific strategies (e.g., removing trash from a stream) or activities (e.g., volunteer monitoring to measure progress towards threat abatement and achievement of conservation goals, a river festival to increase community awareness of the river, etc.) at your site<sup>4</sup>, you must then get your message out to these folks. But, how do you reach them? Again, you must be strategic in your approach. Consider the following guidelines:

- **ARTICULATE YOUR GOAL** for engaging specific stakeholders or community members (e.g., to get the largest landowner at your site to implement best management practices at his farm, to develop biological monitoring capacity for freshwater biological diversity by establishing a volunteer monitoring network, to reduce illegal trash dumping at Harrison Bridge by building community support for conservation, etc.).
- **DEFINE THE AUDIENCE** for engagement – identify the specific stakeholders or community members you are trying to reach (e.g., senior citizens, local business people, high school students, the general public, etc.).
- **DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGE** and be sensitive to the needs of specific audiences (e.g., a message to motivate senior citizens<sup>5</sup> verses high school students<sup>6</sup> might read very differently).
- **IDENTIFY THE RIGHT FORUM OR VEHICLE(S)** to reach target audiences with your message. Samples include flyers posted in local restaurants, presentations at senior citizen centers and high school social club meetings, slide shows at community events and Chambers of Commerce, articles in local newspapers, interviews on radio talk shows, appearances on local television programming, public service announcements or radio or television, editorials in local newspapers, etc.
- **EVALUATE THE RESULTS** of your efforts. Did you achieve your goal? If you didn't, was it due to a problem with the message? Did the vehicle fail to work as anticipated?

You may want to work with others in your program to address these points. Jim Peterson, Director of Media Relations (303-444-1060), and David Williamson, Director of Communications (703-841-8741) are other Conservancy resources available to you should you need additional feedback.

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<sup>4</sup> This also assumes that you have conducted a strategic conservation planning exercise for the site. Any such planning exercise must include asking and answering the basic questions of site conservation planning – articulating the conservation target and goals, providing a rudimentary explanation of the ecological system and processes that these targets depend upon for maintenance and survival, explaining the human communities at and affecting the site, examining threats to these systems and targets, and presenting strategies for threat abatement.

<sup>5</sup> The message to senior citizens might be: “Find out what’s going on in your backyard. Have some free time? Make a difference. No training necessary. Work with your community to save Lake George”.

<sup>6</sup> The message to high school students might be: “What’s bugging Lake George? Skip school and have your teachers thank you. Earn high school credit and get a tan at the same time”.

## Why Should You Use the News Media?

The news media (radio, television, newspapers and magazines) are particularly useful for educating targeted and general audiences about environmental problems and solutions, building support for projects, and generating awareness and interest. And, the news media is largely FREE!

News reporters are always looking for news – stories that they can turn into informative articles, features, and columns – to fill their pages and broadcasts. But, you may have to convince these reporters that your issue or what you are engaged in at your site is a “newsworthy” story. You must demonstrate to them that what you are doing is somehow directly related to the lives and concerns of the area’s citizens, that local folks are interested in the project, that the project or story has unique or unusual attributes, that innovative or interesting or approachable solutions exist to solve a specific problem (or abate a specific threat), and by exposing controversy or strong emotions.

When considering using the news media for your communication needs, consider this rule of thumb:

**REACH x FREQUENCY = RESULTS** (the number of people receiving your message multiplied by the number of times they receive it determines the results of your effort)

and the following fact: most people are consumers of at least one form of news media daily.

## How Do You Use the News Media to Get Your Message Out?

**Personal relationships** with news media reporters, editorial staff, talk show hosts and television programmers may be the most important aspect of getting your message covered and adequately delivered by the news media. Remember, the news media tends to be filled with men and women who take a sincere interest in the places in which they live and work and the events and happenings in those places. Develop a relationship with these individuals before you submit anything for coverage.

Once you have developed such personal relationships, communicate with your contacts periodically by mail, e-mail, or telephone to determine their interest in particular topics and inform them about upcoming events.

**Press releases** are a standard mechanism for engaging news media and delivering to them the news nuggets for a story. Most news releases follow a common format which news media staff have become familiar with:

- Letterhead or logo
- Date of issue/date of release
- Contact name and telephone number
- Headline – short, to the point, and interesting
- News nugget – one to two paragraphs
- Background information – one to two pages

**Other techniques** for getting messages out include providing information for community calendars, public service announcements, talk show interviews, television broadcasts, letters to the editor, and news conferences. Within each of these techniques, a tremendous amount of variation exists. Examine the use of these techniques among news media which reach your site or the human communities near your site, capitalize on your relationships with members of the media, and use news conferences sparingly for important events and controversies and only when well planned.

## **How Should You Respond To Reporters That Contact You?**

Reporters may also contact you directly. Sometimes, this may be to obtain your reaction to an environmental problem or controversy in the area. Other times, they may seek your feedback on stories related to conservation. In these situations, reporters are often working under the pressure of a deadline, and may not exhibit the patience and objectivity you expect from them. Hopefully, you already have a relationship with this reporter and you are comfortable speaking with them. These tips may also help you respond to reporters' questions:

- Welcome the opportunity to comment
- Find out what they want to know
- Take time to collect your thoughts
- Call back later with responses, if possible
- Avoid criticism or "no comment" responses
- Never comment on personnel or legal issues
- Don't speculate on "what if" scenarios
- Develop and repeat key messages
- Provide information
- Respect deadlines
- Explain scientific and regulatory issues, if you are competent
- Be honest
- Treat all reporters equally
- Always assume that you're on record, even if engaged in casual conversation

Reporters from outside your immediate community may also contact you for a particular story. Although well-intentioned, such reporter's attempts to paint local color or develop quaint stories may offend area residents and result in difficulty for you down the road. Where possible, try to educate such reporters on local culture and direct them to local sources of information. Also, remember to inform other staff and constituents within your program when you respond to the media, particularly if you suspect that the story is controversial in nature.

## **Finally, Consider Your Audience**

Always consider your audience – this is particularly important when communicating with people beyond your immediate project staff. Many people are guilty of describing events and using words and phrases that may be perfectly appropriate for one audience (e.g., scientists, conservation professionals, and project staff), but not suitable for another audience (e.g., the general public, etc.), yet we fail to adapt our communication style accordingly. In speaking to your audience consider the following suggestions:

- Use simple to understand imagery with real life examples whenever possible
- Emphasize the significance of what you are speaking about to the lives of an area's residents

- Make the relationships within and interdependence of nature clear – expand ecological literacy whenever possible
- Describe how humans are part of the solution (even if you’ve described how they are part of the problem)
- Deliver a hopeful message
- Speak in plain language – avoid the use of scientific and organizational jargon<sup>7</sup>

## *Conclusion*

A prerequisite for long-term conservation success at many freshwater sites is community involvement and support. Strategies to abate threats at these sites will be more successful if developed with an understanding of community values, and implementing most strategies will be more productive if based on solid knowledge about the community. Consequently, the integration of site-based staff or partners with the community is of critical importance in these places.

The process of involving a community in conservation work and gaining community support for conservation may take years of relationship-building and not necessarily exist without conflict. It will usually take considerable time and resources. This challenge is even greater at freshwater sites that contain long stretches of rivers and watersheds covering sometimes a hundred or more square miles and more than one “community”. At large sites, one person cannot actively work with communities at the bottom and top of this watershed, or with both water managers in often distant cities and local citizenry effectively. Sometimes local capacity can be built to fill this void, but this too takes time. Adequate capacity and resources must be available for this work to be successful.

Community-based freshwater conservation will often require dedication, perseverance, and additional capacity to build support within a community and among the communities that relate to a particular site. Yet, the success possible through effective community-based conservation is well worth the challenges implicit in this work.

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<sup>7</sup> Avoid using language like elements of biodiversity, threats, threat abatement strategies, non-point source pollution, hydrologic alteration, site or bioserve, and best management practices. Consider replacing each of these words and phrases with: plants and animals, problems, solutions, polluted run-off, changes to a river’s flow, place, and innovative (or simple) pollution controls.



*Appendix One*  
**LIST OF ATTENDEES**

**SITE REPRESENTATIVES**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Network</i>
Mark Stern	Upper Klamath Basin, OR*	Water Quality
Wil Maheia	Maya Mountain (Belize)*	Water Quality
Brent Lathrop	Platte River, NE	Water Quality
George Ivey	Conasauga River, GA/TN	Water Quality
Cristina Lasch	La Encrucijada (Mexico)	Water Quality
Salvador Rodriquez	La Encrucijada (Mexico)	Water Quality
Susan Anderson	La Encrucijada (Mexico)	Water Quality
Leslie Colley	Clinch River	Water Quality
Mary Droege	Poultney River, VT	Water Quality
Jeff Parrish	Madre de las Aguas (D.R.)	Water Quality
Francisco Nunez	Madre de las Aguas (D.R.)	Water Quality
Leslee Spraggins	Cache/Bayou deView, AR	Water Quality
Jorge Cardona	Bocas del Polochic (Guatemala)	Water Quality
Kyla Lawson	Altamaha River, GA*	Hydrologic Alteration
Rick Studemund	Apalachicola River, FL*	Hydrologic Alteration
Ruth Mathews	Apalachicola River, FL*	Hydrologic Alteration
Douglas Blodgett	Illinois River, IL*	Hydrologic Alteration
George Schuler	Neversink River, NY*	Hydrologic Alteration
Holly Richter	Upper San Pedro River, AZ*	Hydrologic Alteration
Jeff Horton	Roanoke River, NC	Hydrologic Alteration
Roberto Troya	Condor Bioreserve (Ecuador)	Hydrologic Alteration
Marta Echavarría	Condor Bioreserve (Ecuador)	Hydrologic Alteration
Judy Dunscomb	Mattaponi/Pamunkey Rivers, VA	Hydrologic Alteration
Robert Wigington	Upper Colorado River, CO	Hydrologic Alteration
Bill Burford	Santa Margarita River, CA	Hydrologic Alteration

**INSTRUCTORS AND FACILITATORS**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Role</i>
Nicole Silk	TNC - FWI	Organizer/facilitator
Brian Richter	TNC - FWI	Facilitator
Michele Leslie	TNC - FWI	Facilitator
Gloria Fauss	TNC - GR	Instructor/facilitator
Megan Gallagher	TNC - CCED	Instructor/facilitator
Charlie Gregg	USEPA	Support

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\* indicates currently designated demonstration site within either the Water Quality or Hydrologic Alteration Threat Network.

Theresa Trainor	USEPA	Instructor
Michael Rigney	Coyote Creek Riparian Station	Instructor
Gail Bingham	Resolve	Instructor

### **ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Martha Hodgkins Green	TNC Magazine
Allen Culp	TNC - S. Rivers Conservation Program
Ed Smith	TNC - Verde River, AZ
Michele Brown	TNC - Kenai River, AK

## *Appendix Two* **WORKSHOP AGENDA**

### **Day 1 - Tuesday, December 8**

Goal: To provide participants with context for engaging community support for freshwater conservation and familiarize them with tools for assessing the nature of this community.

9:00 - 10:00am	Introduction
10:00 - 10:40am	What does “community” mean – Facilitated discussion
10:40 - 11:00am	Introductory Exercise: How well do you know your community? (Gloria Fauss)
11:00 - 11:15am	Break
11:15 - 12:15pm	Working with Communities: The Altamaha Experience (Kyla Lawson)
12:15 - 1:15pm	Lunch
1:15 - 2:50pm	Tools for Assessing your Community (Theresa Trainor, Gloria Fauss, Megan Gallagher, Roberto Troya, Cristina Lasch, and Susan Anderson)
2:50 - 3:05pm	Break
3:05 - 4:45pm	Application of Tools - Small group activity focusing on Roanoke River (NC), Upper San Pedro River (AZ), Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect (Belize), and Apalachicola river (FL)
4:45 - 5:20pm	Small group presentations
5:20 - 5:30pm	Wrap-up
5:30 - 6:30pm	Break
6:45 - 8:30pm	Dinner followed by presentation on non-FWI freshwater site

### **Day Two - Wednesday, December 9**

Goal: Provide participants with an understanding of the skills needed for community relations and to familiarize them with various techniques for community engagement.

8:30 - 9:00am	How do we communicate – Participatory activity (Theresa Trainor)
9:00 - 9:45am	Facilitated discussion amongst larger group: Skills for community relations/community based staff (Theresa Trainor with contributions from other instructors)
9:45 - 10:00am	Break
10:00 - 10:15am	Introduction - Overview of Strategies for Engaging Stakeholders (Nicole Silk)
10:15 - 10:45am	Engaging Stakeholders - Working with Local Government (Gloria Fauss)
10:45 - 11:30am	Engaging Stakeholders - Establishing a Volunteer Network Monitoring California Streams (Mike Rigney, Coyote Creek)
11:30 - 12:20pm	Engaging Stakeholders - Creating a Local Advisory Board (George Schuler (Neversink River)/George Ivey (Conasauga River))
12:20 - 1:05pm	Engaging Stakeholders - From Small Investments in Community Projects to Community-Wide Strategic Planning (Megan Gallagher, CCED)
1:05 - 1:15pm	Pick up bag lunches
1:15 - 6:00pm	Orientation and Field Trip to Upper San Pedro River (Holly Richter)

6:00 - 9:00pm Dinner on your own

**Day Three - Thursday, December 10**

Goal: Provide participants with information on dealing with conflict and working with the media. Conclude workshop with discussion of conflict resolution, additional topics, etc.

8:30 - 10:30am Conflict assessment (Gail Bingham – Resolve)  
10:30 - 11:30am Working with the media – Facilitated discussion (Nicole Silk, Gloria Fauss, Michelle Brown, and participants)  
11:30 - 12:00pm Remaining questions from throughout workshop  
12:00 - 12:30pm Articulation of lessons from workshop  
12:30 - 1:00pm Evaluation, wrap-up, and lunch distribution  
1:00pm Departures

## *Appendix Three*

### **SITE CONSERVATION PLANNING**

Site conservation planning is a method for strategic thinking and strategy formulation to direct conservation activities at specific conservation sites. This process, developed by The Nature Conservancy, is visually depicted in Figure 1.

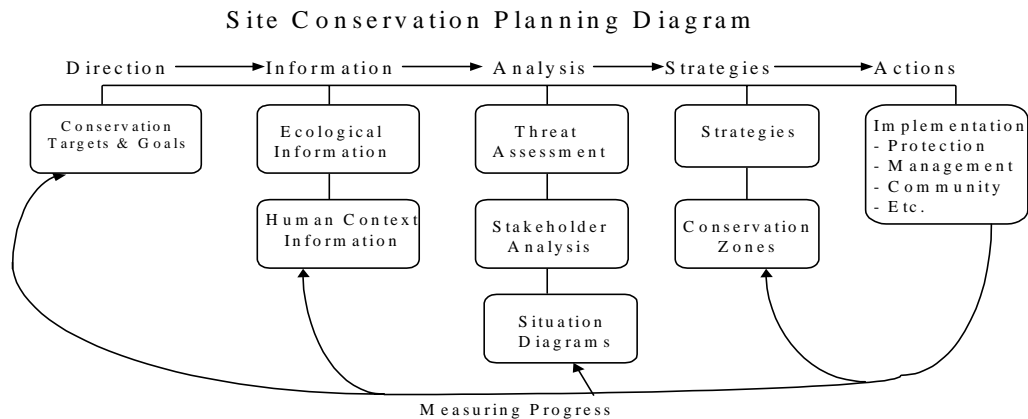


Figure 1

Site Conservation Planning is a scale-independent process that defines the landscape within which conservation targets (i.e., species and communities of concern) can persist. The process identifies the ecological and human context for conservation, analyzes threats to the conservation targets, outlines strategies and actions to protect those targets and their functional landscape, and indicates measures to assess progress towards conservation at the site. Site conservation planning is the process of asking and answering the following questions:

- ◆ What are the conservation targets and long-term goals for the targets?
- ◆ What ecological attributes define the functional ecological system?
- ◆ What economic activities and land uses, laws and policies, cultural attitudes, and constituencies are relevant to conservation at the site?
- ◆ What disorders affect the ecological system and what human activities or policies cause or promote these disorders?
- ◆ Which individuals, groups, or institutions are likely to affect or be affected by efforts to conserve the ecological system?
- ◆ What can be done to prevent or abate threatening activities, maintain the ecological system, or address stakeholders?
- ◆ Where are the areas on the ground to which specific conservation objectives and strategies apply?
- ◆ What actions are necessary to implement the conservation strategies?
- ◆ Who will do them, when will they be done, how long will they take, and how much will it cost?

- ◆ Can the conservation strategies be implemented and goals met, given the situation for conservation, program capacity to accomplish actions, and other programmatic commitments?
- ◆ Are the actions having the intended effect, and is progress being made toward meeting the site-based conservation goals? The process is as important, if not more so, than the product.

A number of tools apply to the site conservation planning process. These include conceptual ecological models (often depicted as a flow diagram showing a species life cycle or community patch dynamics, and the relationship of processes to the survival of this species or community), threats assessments (usually a table or matrix displaying the relationship between stresses and sources of stress), and situation diagrams (also usually a flow diagram, showing human factors contributing to or mitigating sources of stress, and sources of stress contributing to stresses and threats). Situation diagrams can also be used to direct threat abatement strategies and measures of progress.

**Appendix Four**  
**HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY?**  
**WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS AT YOUR SITE?**

**GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES, CULTURAL LANDMARKS, AND POLITICAL BOUNDARIES THAT DEFINE A COMMUNITY'S "SENSE OF PLACE":**

1. Political boundaries: What cities and counties does your site fall within? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Administrative boundaries: What are the school districts, soil and water conservation districts, and other administrative units at your site? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Natural boundaries: What are the parks, rivers and streams, and other landscape features at your site? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
4. Sensitive areas and resources: Does your site contain historic features, provide drinking water supplies, or provide wildlife habitat? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. Key landmarks: What are the cultural, historical, and natural features at your site considered by the community as landmarks (e.g., a statue of a president, waterfall, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
6. Physical/municipal infrastructure boundaries: Where are the sewer sheds, solid waste facilities and sewage treatment plants, and transportation networks at your site? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
7. Nearby areas: Are there other features near your site which may influence or be affected by decision making by one of the communities at your site? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
8. Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT DEFINE A COMMUNITY'S "SENSE OF COMMUNITY"**

1. Religious organizations: What are the churches and religious organizations that people living within your site frequent? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
What are the names of individual leaders within these groups and churches? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Political organizations: Are there any political organizations at your site that are particularly active or that people living within your site identify themselves with? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
What are the names of individual leaders within these groups? \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Civic groups/social organizations: What are the civic groups or social organizations that folks are engaged with at your site? Is there a rotary club, NAACP, or other similar organization? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 What are the names of individual leaders within these groups? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Environmental grassroots/interest groups: Are there any environmental or other interest or advocacy groups that people are part of at your site? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Outdoor recreation organizations: What outdoor recreation organizations are active at your site? Are there organized hikes or outfitter associations? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
6. Ethnic groups: What is the ethnicity of people living at and utilizing resources at the site? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
7. Parent-teacher organizations and children's groups (e.g., Girl Scouts, 4-H, etc.): What organizations are parents active in on behalf of their children? What about their children? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
8. Historical societies: Are there any historical societies at your site? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
9. Homeowners associations and neighborhood councils: What are the property owner associations or councils at the site? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
10. Labor unions: Are people living within the communities at your site involved in labor unions? If yes, then which ones? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
11. Government agencies (federal, state, county, and local): What government agencies have responsibility for natural resource management at your site? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 What are the names of the specific staff working at your site? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 What are the names of the local government elected officials among the communities included at your site? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Who is/are the county commissioners in the counties at your site? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Who are the state government representatives who represent the area your site falls within? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 What are the fundraising sources for their campaigns? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 What is the name of the Senator from your state and the House of Representative member who represent your state in the legislative branch of your national government? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



12. Business associations and interests: What are the business associations and interests at the site? Are there any Chambers of Commerce? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the names of individual business leaders within these groups? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Senior citizen groups: What are the senior citizen groups at your site? Do they meet regularly? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What are the media exists for information at the site (radio, local newspapers, national newspapers, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the editorial slant of any of the local newspapers distrubed at the site? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the names of the local reporters and editorial staff of any newspapers distributed at the site? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**LOCAL ACTIVITIES** - Local activities are also important for community cohesion and are often where people exchange information. These take different shapes in different communities (e.g., he annual fishing competition, community potluck, and even crop harvesting). List those important within the communities at your site here: \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION ROLES** - Community leadership and participation is very important to building and maintaining community cohesion. Can you think of leadership roles and ways to participate in community life among any other communities at your site? \_\_\_\_\_

**BASIC SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION** – What are the land use and land ownership patterns, ethnic groups, education levels, average income, jobs, economic trends, and population figures for the communities within and reasonably near the site? \_\_\_\_\_