

Stakeholder Engagement



Wildlife Management Institute

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MSCG Project Intent

- Not to replicate or create conservation social scientists in state agencies
- Provide basic information to increase awareness of and about the acquisition and application of conservation social science in agency decision making
- For the purposes of these modules, we'll use the more modern and broader terminology of conservation social sciences rather than human dimensions of wildlife management
- Our use of the term wildlife includes mammals, fish, birds, insects, reptiles, etc.
- WMI deeply appreciates the contributions of Dr. Daniel J. Decker and Dr. Lou Cornicelli to this project

Stakeholder Engagement

- Process of involving and interacting with stakeholders in the making, understanding, implementing, or evaluating wildlife management decisions
- Stakeholder = anyone who significantly affects or is significantly affected by wildlife or wildlife management actions
- Is a 2-way dialogue, not just information delivery
- Provides the foundation for successful wildlife management

Why do Stakeholder Engagement?

- Engage people in wildlife management decision making
- Improve information that goes into decision-making process (e.g., local landowner knowledge)
- Helps reveal stakeholder needs, interests and concerns about wildlife and wildlife management
- Helps move controversy to collaboration
- Help people understand the complexities of wildlife management and decision-making process

Why do Stakeholder Engagement?

- Can improve relationships among stakeholders or between stakeholders and agencies (e.g., increase appreciation of others needs and constraints)
- Build support for wildlife management actions
- Improve evaluation of wildlife management actions
- Increased laws and/or policies to include public in decision making
- Increased demand for transparency in decision making

Evolution of Stakeholder Engagement

Citizen participation → Stakeholder involvement → Stakeholder engagement

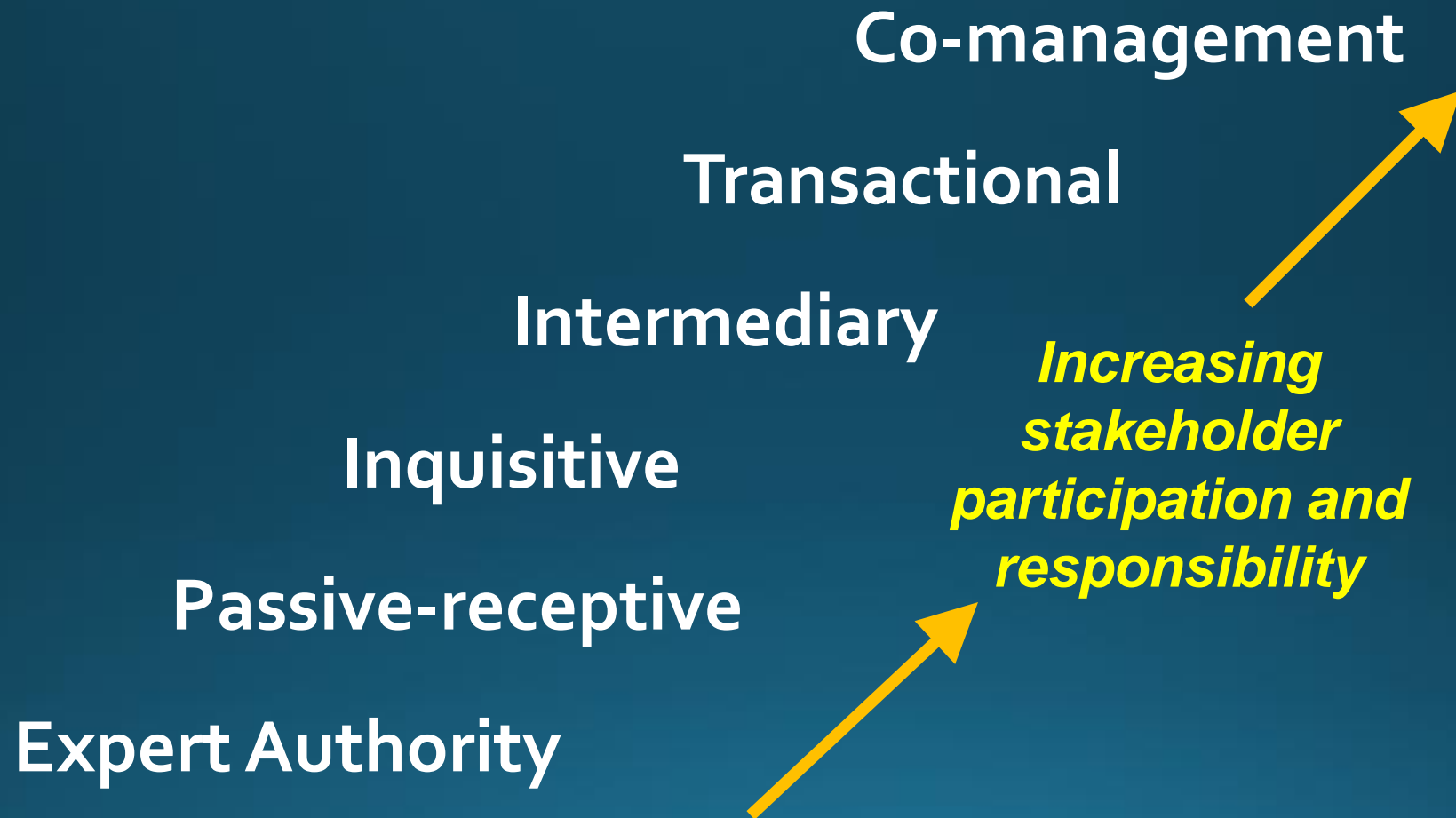
- Increased staff awareness of public trust responsibilities to all people
- Increased public agency transparency expectations
- Changing demographics and values towards wildlife results in agency staff are no longer “just like their stakeholders”

Approaches of Stakeholder Engagement

- Expert authority
- Passive-receptive
- Inquisitive
- Intermediary
- Transactional
- Co-management

Approach depends on type of decision and context of decision (e.g., long-term issue vs. temporary emergency closure of property to protect people, wildlife or habitat)

Approaches to Stakeholder Engagement



Expert Authority Approach

Professionals have all the answers and essentially know what's best for “the resource” and for stakeholders. Once the dominant model, this approach is less often used or tolerated today.

- **Strengths** – works well when there are few stakeholder groups and managers share values of stakeholders; can be implemented quickly; use in emergency situations
- **Weaknesses** – can potentially alienate stakeholders and may cause them to seek their policy goals through other avenues

Passive-Receptive Approach

Managers listen, but stakeholders take the initiative to make their needs, interests and concerns known

- **Strengths** – demands little time, effort, or money for agency; works when there are relatively few stakeholders with similar interests
- **Weaknesses** – organized interest groups and “squeaky wheels” will have the greatest influence

Inquisitive Approach

Agency takes the initiative to learn more about needs, interests and concerns of the public about an issue

- **Strengths** – can lead to better understanding of stakeholders, reflecting a broader range of interests; can improve reputation of agency
- **Weaknesses** – difficult to weigh the perspectives of various interest groups

Transactional Approach

Stakeholders convene to reveal relevant stakes or perspectives on an issue; they collaborate with wildlife managers to identify acceptable goals and strategies.

- **Strengths** – may lead to better understanding and reduced conflict among stakeholders – *social learning*
- **Weaknesses** – high-cost requirements, time commitments; angry participants may still seek go to Legislature

Co-managerial Approach

Partners (e.g., stakeholder groups, other government agencies) work with an agency to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate a wildlife management program. They may even share the costs for the management activity.

- **Strengths** – results in social learning; stakeholders have vested interest in the process; tailored to individual situations
- **Weaknesses** – high-cost requirements, time commitments; requires continual, active participation among managers and stakeholders

Who Does Stakeholder Engagement?

- Everyone in agency engages with stakeholders in some way – some more formal than others
- One on one conversation at gas station to formal meetings
- Align skills of working with public and partners to issue
- Public wants a subject matter expert rather than spokesperson
- Sometimes professional facilitation is warranted, especially if issue is controversial and to increase objectivity

When to Engage Stakeholders

Depends on issue and context

- Continuous (e.g., deer management in MI)
- New or significant change in regulation (e.g., 2015 bear hunt in FL)
- Emerging issue (e.g., wildlife disease detection)
- As early and frequent as possible

When to Engage Stakeholders

- Emergency (e.g., human-wildlife conflict)
- Routine maintenance that impacts stakeholders (e.g., trail repair)
- New information (e.g., population trend research impacting use of wildlife or habitat)
- Call to action (e.g., volunteer program, support for agency budget)

Methods of Stakeholder Engagement

- 1-way information dissemination (e.g., press release, website)
- Open house – interactive, informal listening sessions
- Public meetings – learn about issue, provide formal input
- Active solicitation of information – social science inquiry
- Active solicitation of information – on-line comment period
- Webinars or virtual open meetings

Methods of Stakeholder Engagement

- Letters from the public
- Focus groups
- Topic-specific workshops – shorter, task oriented
- Task force – longer term group
- Advisory committee (but not decision makers)
- Formal Commission meetings

Which Method to Chose?

- What decisions need to be made?
- Who are the interested stakeholders?
- What kind of information is needed?
- How precise does the information need to be?
- From whom should information be obtained?
- What is the urgency of the decision?

Guidelines for Stakeholder Engagement

- Set clear objectives for participation
- Set clear expectations of desired outcomes and who is the decider
- Set clear expectations of engagement (e.g., equitable participation, respectful, no grandstanding)
- Choose methods that will help achieve the objectives
- Provide the resources for effective citizen participation
- Include a diverse set of stakeholders representing multiple perspectives

Challenges in Stakeholder Engagement

- General resistance to change (agency and stakeholders)
- Agency culture, structure and processes that discourage public input (e.g., “we know what they want”)
- Capacity (e.g., time, money, skills)
- Decision timeline constrains adequate input gathering and analysis
- Inability to reach impacted stakeholders
- Weighting stakeholder input (e.g., favoring one perspective above others)
- Poor relationships with stakeholder groups (agency or individuals)

Challenges in Stakeholder Engagement

- Relying on one method (e.g., public meetings)
- Not having a stakeholder engagement strategy
- Using inappropriate method to achieve desired results
- Some withdraw from process if their perspectives don't influence decision or if they are not taken seriously
- Agency doesn't take engagement input into consideration ("check the box" exercise)
- Agency draws out stakeholder engagement to avoid making sound, timely and durable decisions

Why is There Increasing Interest in Stakeholder Engagement?

- Desire to include diverse perspectives
- Desire for fairness
- Lack of trust in government
- Lack of trust in science and experts (agency and academics)
- Increasing ease of access to information, disinformation and misinformation

Resources

- International Association for Public Participation [International Association for Public Participation \(iap2.org\)](http://iap2.org)
- Stakeholder Engagement Best Practice Guide simplystakeholders.com
- Stakeholder Engagement: A Good Practice Handbook for Companies Doing Business in Emerging Markets ifc.org
- 10 Principles Of Stakeholder Engagement | APM
- How to Create a Stakeholder Strategy hbr.org