Developing Competencies to Implement the Relevancy Roadmap

Creating a Coalition of Relevancy Coaches

2023

Table of Contents

Creating a Coalition of Relevancy Coaches

About the project

The purpose of this project was to begin establishing a national coalition of staff in state fish and wildlife agencies and other Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies member organizations to serve as expert practitioners (coaches) to support implementation of the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap. The project was intended to prepare participants to continue learning from and with each other and support other agency staff engaged in relevancy-related work. Here, "relevancy" means improving conservation outcomes by identifying, engaging, and serving broader constituencies.

Participants were provided training and technical assistance from professionals who have been deeply embedded in conservation relevancy work. They were also provided with customizable materials (e.g., assessment tools, worksheets, guidance documents) for use by their own and other conservation organizations, as well as in-depth reference materials (e.g., journal articles, websites, books, videos). The trainings and materials included guidance on (1) articulating what relevancy means in a given organizational context, (2) assessing why—and to whom—a conservation agency or organization wants to increase relevancy, and (3) developing and implementing plans to engage and serve broader constituencies to enhance conservation.

The project team designed and led nine online sessions and one in-person workshop for more than 50 participants: state and federal conservation agency staff members who were interested in, or already charged with, implementing relevancy-related work. The content focused on identifying and developing foundational competencies needed to engage, develop, and maintain relationships and partnerships with broader constituencies: people or groups who don't already have a strong connection or relationship with the conservation agency or with nature.

Most sessions included a “presentation” portion, which was recorded with the intent that it be shared publicly at the conclusion of the project, as well as a “discussion” portion, which was recorded with the intent that it only be shared with other participants (e.g., those who were unable to attend that session). To maintain confidentiality and build trust within the cohort, the contents of session Zoom™ chats and results of Mentimeter™ polls and brief feedback-and-input surveys were similarly shared only with participants.

A previous project created an online Relevancy Community of Practice platform where members can share ideas and lessons learned. Resources from this project will be posted there and on the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) website.

This project was funded by a 2023 Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies/US Fish and Wildlife Service Multistate Conservation Grant (F23AP00507-00).

Session 1 – Foundations of Conservation Relevancy

Session summary – This introductory session covered the purpose and intent of the project, plus logistics (e.g., schedule, anticipated content). The session also set context by providing a high-level overview of the history, underpinnings, and evolution of conservation and conservation agencies in the United States, and why relevancy work is important at this juncture.

Context

- Distinct eras of conservation and evolving conservation priorities have historically shaped agencies' focus. Ongoing social, cultural, and ecological changes will continue to influence conservation and agencies in the decades to come.
- The public trust doctrine and public trust thinking, the roots of which reach back to ancient Greece and Rome, outline the roles and responsibilities of those in the conservation system and emphasize providing conservation benefits to all.
- More recently, wildlife governance principles have articulated the interdisciplinary, cross-jurisdictional nature of modern conservation, as well as the need to include multiple perspectives and multiple sources of information and insight to inform conservation decision making.

Key takeaways

- The need for relevancy work has emerged from (1) the broadened application of public trust thinking and wildlife governance principles, (2) rapidly changing social, cultural, and ecological conditions, and (3) growing interest in increasingly diverse forms of outdoor recreation by increasingly diverse groups of people.
- Changing human demographics and values will require agencies to adapt programs and services to meet people's needs, interests, and concerns.
- Keys goals of relevancy work include improving conservation outcomes that meet people's expectations, fulfilling agencies' public trust

obligations, helping agencies adapt to changing social conditions, and increasing people's awareness of and support for conservation.

Session videos

Part 1 **https://youtu.be/alyz11Kaces**
Part 2 **https://youtu.be/dgNZjermXOs**
Part 3 **https://youtu.be/a89-xKD1oL8**

Resources

- Fish & Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap (also available as a website here)
- Conservation Relevancy Community of Practice
- Governance Principles for Wildlife Conservation in the 21st Century
- America's Wildlife Values (national and state results)
- The Nature of Americans Study

Session 2 – Relevancy and the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap

Session summary – This session dove deeper into relevancy: its multiple definitions, its evolution, why it is needed now, and examples of related projects. It also covered the development of the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap.

Context

- Conservation is becoming more collaborative, cross-jurisdictional, and trans-disciplinary.
- The emergence and increased application of the conservation social sciences—which can yield insight into traditional and less-familiar constituencies alike—are vital pieces of the relevancy puzzle.
- Many states are currently experimenting with relevancy-related projects. This work is being done at various scales, from whole-agency reorganization to a single project on a wildlife management area.

Key challenges

- The lack of a single, agreed-upon definition of relevancy has caused confusion.
- It helps to be clear and explicit: Are we trying to make the agency more relevant to broader audiences? Are we trying to make conservation more relevant to them? Or are we trying to do both?
- The current models of conservation funding are no longer sufficient and will fall short in the decades to come.
- As agency staff contemplate implementing relevancy projects, it is not uncommon for them to have fears about both real and perceived dangers; these fears need to be identified and addressed.
- There is no one-size-fits-all approach or recipe for doing relevancy work.

Key takeaways

- Relevancy requires understanding the needs, interests, and concerns of people who are not already engaged with the agency as well as those who are.

- Relevancy can also be about increasing awareness and support for conservation among constituencies – even if they don't want to engage with the conservation agency.
- Relevancy is largely about building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships.
- Moving toward relevancy requires both internal work (inside the agency) and external work (outside the agency).
- Relevancy work requires experimentation, learning (evaluation), and continuous improvement.
- Relevancy-related work does not have to mean initiating a new project or programs requiring new resources. It can take other forms, such as delivering existing programs and services in new ways, in new places, or with different groups of people.
- Relevancy is not just about diversity, equity, and inclusion, but advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion is required to achieve conservation relevancy.
- Relevancy is not specifically about increasing license sales or recruiting people into hunting, fishing or trapping, though that may be one outcome.

Session video

https://youtu.be/n1WP91a78K8

Resources

- Fish & Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap (also available as a website here)
- Conservation Relevancy Community of Practice
- Governance Principles for Wildlife Conservation in the 21st Century
- America's Wildlife Values (national and state results)
- The Nature of Americans Study
- The Art of Relevance by Nina Simon

Session 3 – Where to Start?

Session summary – This session began to delve into the scale and nature of the challenge of relevancy work, which suggests a paradigm shift for agencies and conservation. The work asks a lot of agency staff. It asks them to serve as ambassadors for system change at multiple scales. It asks them to experiment and explore, with no guarantee of success.

Context

- The current system is doing exactly what it was designed to do: it provides conservation benefits to some and does not garner support from all.
- State agency relevancy work is still in its infancy.

Key challenges

- Working with new constituencies can feel risky. You have to get out of your comfort zone and sometimes work on the edge of your authority.
- The work of engaging new constituencies often involves adaptive challenges, which requires learning and working with others, and cannot

usually be advanced through technical fixes – using existing skills and knowledge.

- New constituencies' interests and needs may differ from those of the agency's traditional constituents.
- To be viable and sustainable, relevancy work will need to demonstrate the return on investment it delivers and how it advances the agency's mission.

Key takeaways

- It is important to:
    - Consider where the agency, work unit or staff member is already engaging and serving broader constituencies.
    - Clearly articulate why an agency, work unit or staff member is motivated to engage with a specific constituency and what benefits are anticipated, both for the agency and for the constituency group.
    - Develop and use an implementation plan that includes metrics of success to determine and demonstrate progress.
- Wholesale, immediate system change is unrealistic. Incremental change is usually a more helpful goal and expectation.
- Relevancy practitioners need to take the sociopolitical constraints of the conservation system into account. Sometimes it is just not the right time to try to make a specific change.
- Allies and champions to engage broader constituencies are needed both inside and outside the agency.

Session video

https://youtu.be/pAD8A4iNhzY

Resources

- Crucial Conversations by Grenny et al.
- Your Leadership Edge: Lead Anytime, Anywhere - Kansas Leadership Center
- Taking time to think: The tyranny of being "too busy" and the practice of wildlife management

Agency Readiness Assessment Tool

Agency readiness assessment - generic.

Session 4 – Habits and Practices of Highly Effective Conservation Professionals

Summary – The session provided a brief overview of a recent study on the habits and practices of highly effective conservation professionals. Much of the session was devoted to in-depth introductions of participants to one another. Participants also discussed the kinds of relationships and partnerships they hope to build in the context of relevancy work and the types of challenges they have encountered.

Context

- Declining participation in traditional outdoor recreation has drawn agency leadership's attention to the potential value of reaching out to broader constituencies to gain increased support for conservation. In this context support for conservation means participating in outdoor reactional activities, engaging in positive conservation behaviors (e.g., recycling, water conservation), participating in conservation decision-making processes and supporting pro-conservation candidates at multiple levels of government.
- Though trust in government has been declining overall, conservation agencies are often the most trusted of state agencies. This provides conservation professionals with significant opportunities for positive, productive public engagement.

Key challenges

- Effective relevancy work involves building and maintaining new relationships, which requires dedicated time and energy.
- Over time, staff turnover can make it difficult for agencies to maintain relationships with newer external groups and partners.

Key takeaways

- The five general categories of "habits and practices of highly effective conservation professionals"— (1) critically inquisitive and continuously learning, (2) multi-level integrative systems thinking, (3) self-disciplined,

(4) balanced approach, and (5) interactions with others—are all key to conservation relevancy work.

- Relevancy work involves building and maintaining trust, relationships, and partnerships both internally (across agency divisions and work units) and externally (with existing and new constituencies).
- Intra-agency relevancy work includes helping all staff see the broader purposes of the work: conservation benefits for all, support of conservation from all.

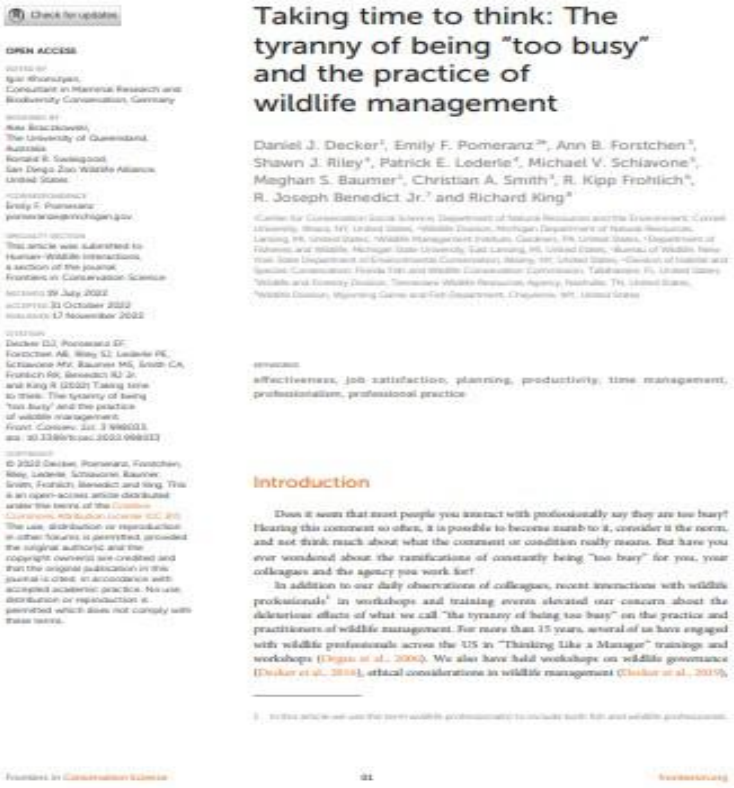
Session video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6n8tGo8Jcsk

Resources

- Accelerating Reasoning and Judgment – This AFWA page includes an overview of the Habits and Practices project (another collaborative Multistate Conservation Grant), a session on tools developed to improve staff improvement at the individual and team level, and a User's Guide.
- What Makes a Wildlifer Stand out from the Rest
- Stakeholder trust in a state wildlife agency

Taking Time to Think



Check for updates

OPEN ACCESS

EDITED BY
Igor Khorozyan,
Consultant in Mammal Research and Biodiversity Conservation, Germany

REVIEWED BY
Alex Braczkowski,
The University of Queensland, Australia
Ronald R. Swaisgood,
San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, United States

*CORRESPONDENCE
Emily F. Pomeranz
pomeranze@michigan.gov

SPECIALTY SECTION
This article was submitted to Human-Wildlife Interactions, a section of the journal Frontiers in Conservation Science

RECEIVED 09 July 2022
ACCEPTED 31 October 2022
PUBLISHED 17 November 2022

CITATION
Decker DJ, Pomeranz EF, Forstchen AB, Riley SJ, Lederle PE, Schiavone MV, Baumer MS, Smith CA, Frohlich RK, Benedict RJ Jr. and King R (2022) Taking time to think: The tyranny of being "too busy" and the practice of wildlife management. Front. Conserv. Sci. 3:998033. doi: 10.3389/fcosc.2022.998033

Taking time to think: The tyranny of being "too busy" and the practice of wildlife management

Daniel J. Decker[1], Emily F. Pomeranz[2]*, Ann B. Forstchen[3], Shawn J. Riley[4], Patrick E. Lederle[4], Michael V. Schiavone[5], Meghan S. Baumer[1], Christian A. Smith[6], R. Kipp Frohlich[6], R. Joseph Benedict Jr.[7] and Richard King[8]

[1]Center for Conservation Social Sciences, Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, United States, [2]Wildlife Division, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Lansing, MI, United States, [3]Wildlife Management Institute, Cazenovia, PA, United States, [4]Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, United States, [5]Bureau of Wildlife, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Albany, NY, United States, [6]Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Tallahassee, FL, United States, [7]Wildlife and Forestry Division, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Nashville, TN, United States, [8]Wildlife Division, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cheyenne, WY, United States

KEYWORDS
effectiveness, job satisfaction, planning, productivity, time management, professionalism, professional practice

Introduction

Does it seem that most people you interact with professionally say they are too busy? Hearing this comment so often, it is possible to become numb to it, consider it the norm, and not think much about what the comment or condition really means. But have you ever wondered about the ramifications of constantly being "too busy" for you, your colleagues and the agency you work for?

In addition to our daily observations of colleagues, recent interactions with wildlife professionals[1] in workshops and training events elevated our concern about the deleterious effects of what we call "the tyranny of being too busy" on the practice and practitioners of wildlife management. For more than 15 years, several of us have engaged with wildlife professionals across the US in "Thinking Like a Manager" trainings and workshops (Degnis et al., 2006). We also have held workshops on wildlife governance (Decker et al., 2014), ethical considerations in wildlife management (Decker et al., 2019),

1 In this article we use the term wildlife professionals to include both fish and wildlife professionals.

PDF

Taking Time to Think - Decker et al 2022.pd

Session 5 – Communicating for Relevancy: Listening to Understand

Session summary – This session focused on how to listen across differences. The session's goals were to help participants recognize the limitations of their own perspectives and understandings, practice setting aside filters and judgments, and strengthen their ability to listen deeply and understand others' perspectives and experiences. Four guideposts for listening—connection, curiosity, context, and courage—were explored, and two short videos were used as opportunities to practice deep listening and interpretation.

Context

- Our ways of speaking and thinking—the words we use and the worldviews that shape our thoughts—are informed by our specific and partial understandings of the world.

Key challenges

- We speak with language; we speak from within our worldviews. Put another way: people not only use different words; people think different thoughts.
- It takes intention and practice to temporarily set aside judgment (moral evaluation), which is always present.
- Stepping outside our own familiar understandings into others' perspectives can be disorienting, making us question our own views, our understandings of the world, even our understandings of ourselves.

Key takeaways

- Listening to people carefully and deeply, with the respectful intention of understanding different perspectives, is one way to build trust and gain insight into how they see and experience the world.
- Seeing and hearing only through the lens of our own views, values, and assumptions makes it impossible to deeply see or hear other perspectives.
- Listening deeply does not mean we have to agree with what we hear, or that we must let go of our values or perspectives. It does mean we have to

recognize our assumptions and intentionally and temporarily set them aside.

- There is a place for "pushing out" information (one way communication). But relevancy requires dialogue and learning about people's needs, interests, and concerns.
- In developing relationships, it's more important to learn than to be right.
- Relevancy work is often framed as external work (outside the agency and outside the self), but the majority of it is internal (within the agency and within the individual), especially at first.

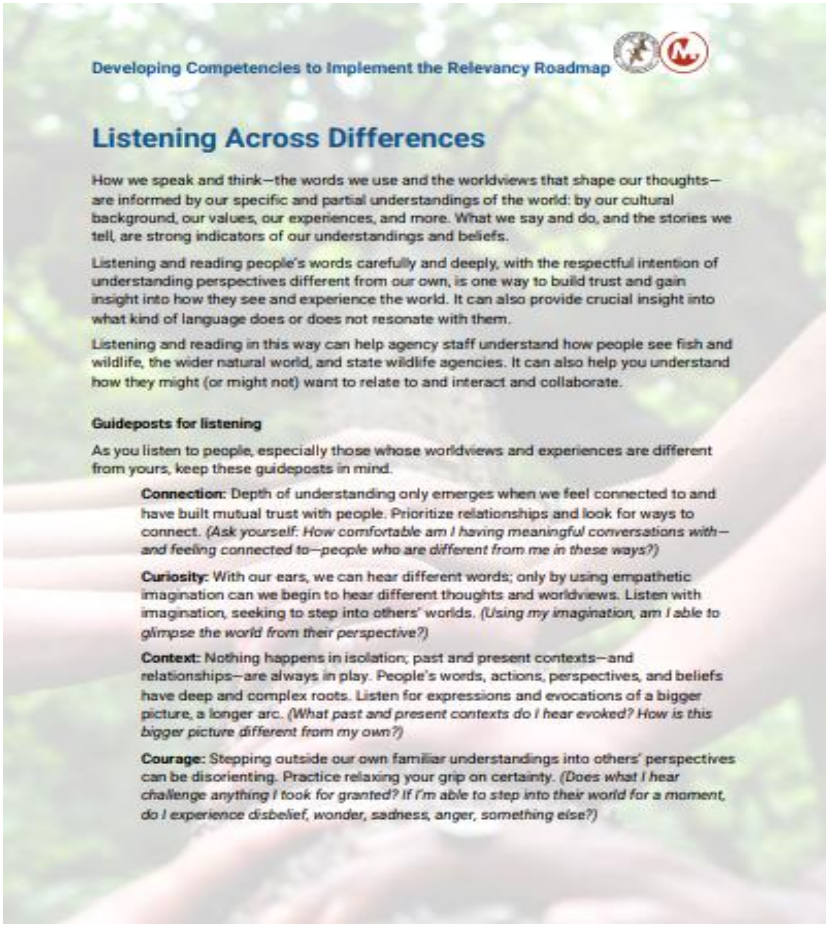
Session video

https://youtu.be/6saMkPxoySs

Resources

- How to Become a Better Listener
- Soul Fire Farm – Ending racism and injustice in the food system
- Rules for the Black Birder with Drew Lanham

Listening Across Differences



Developing Competencies to Implement the Relevancy Roadmap

Listening Across Differences

How we speak and think—the words we use and the worldviews that shape our thoughts—are informed by our specific and partial understandings of the world: by our cultural background, our values, our experiences, and more. What we say and do, and the stories we tell, are strong indicators of our understandings and beliefs.

Listening and reading people's words carefully and deeply, with the respectful intention of understanding perspectives different from our own, is one way to build trust and gain insight into how they see and experience the world. It can also provide crucial insight into what kind of language does or does not resonate with them.

Listening and reading in this way can help agency staff understand how people see fish and wildlife, the wider natural world, and state wildlife agencies. It can also help you understand how they might (or might not) want to relate to and interact and collaborate.

Guideposts for listening

As you listen to people, especially those whose worldviews and experiences are different from yours, keep these guideposts in mind.

Connection: Depth of understanding only emerges when we feel connected to and have built mutual trust with people. Prioritize relationships and look for ways to connect. *(Ask yourself: How comfortable am I having meaningful conversations with—and feeling connected to—people who are different from me in these ways?)*

Curiosity: With our ears, we can hear different words; only by using empathetic imagination can we begin to hear different thoughts and worldviews. Listen with imagination, seeking to step into others' worlds. *(Using my imagination, am I able to glimpse the world from their perspective?)*

Context: Nothing happens in isolation; past and present contexts—and relationships—are always in play. People's words, actions, perspectives, and beliefs have deep and complex roots. Listen for expressions and evocations of a bigger picture, a longer arc. *(What past and present contexts do I hear evoked? How is this bigger picture different from my own?)*

Courage: Stepping outside our own familiar understandings into others' perspectives can be disorienting. Practice relaxing your grip on certainty. *(Does what I hear challenge anything I took for granted? If I'm able to step into their world for a moment, do I experience disbelief, wonder, sadness, anger, something else?)*

PDF

Listening Across Differences_Relevancy

Language of Conservation

PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

FM3 RESEARCH OPINION RESEARCH & STRATEGY

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Lori Weigel, Public Opinion Strategies; David Metz, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

CONTACT: Dharma George (dgeorge@tnc.org), Global Conservation Campaigns; Heather Layman (hlayman@tnc.org), North America Policy Marketing and Communications

RE: The Language of Conservation: Updated Recommendations on How to Communicate Effectively to Build Support for Conservation

DATE: October 1, 2018

The following recommendations for communicating effectively to build support for conservation are based on two representative national surveys of American voters commissioned by The Nature Conservancy in 2018 and conducted by a bi-partisan research team: Democratic polling firm FM3 (Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates) and Republican polling firm Public Opinion Strategies. These findings build on national research in 2004, 2009, and 2012 that informed the initial "Language of Conservation" communications guidelines, as well as significant regional and state research conducted over the last few years on behalf of TNC and its partner organizations to further illuminate the data.

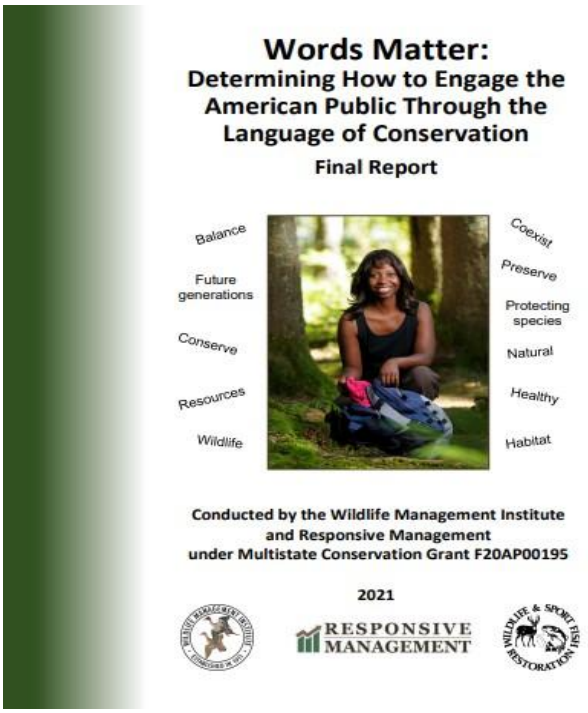
This memo seeks to provide language and messaging recommendations in a list of easy-to-follow, broad "rules" for communication. Some of these rules reinforce long-standing communication guidelines we have tracked over time, while others were tested to reflect today's changed political and economic context. We found few exceptions to the guidelines presented, although we note that it is always prudent to test language and messages to ensure their effectiveness in a specific state or local area prior to investing in public communication.

What to Say First

Three elements continue to be the most critical to communicate regarding conservation; for ease of reference they can be thought of as the three W's of water, wildlife, and way of life.

2018_Language_of_Conservation_Memo -

Words Matter



PDF

WMI-Words-Matter-Report-2021.pdf

Value of Listening

Received: 10 November 2020 | Accepted: 29 April 2021

DOI: 10.1002/pan3.10232

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Multiple Values of Nature

The value of listening and listening for values in conservation

Sam Staddon[1] | Anja Byg[2] | Mollie Chapman[3] | Robert Fish[4] | Alice Hague[5] | Katie Horgan[6]

[1]School of GeoSciences, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK; [2]Independent Researcher, Aberdeen, UK; [3]University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland; [4]School of Anthropology and Conservation, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK; [5]James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, UK and [6]Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, Oxford, UK

Correspondence
Sam Staddon
Email: sam.staddon@ed.ac.uk

Funding information
Rural and Environmental Science and Analytical Services Division (RESAS) of the Scottish Government; NOMIS Foundation; University of Zurich Research Priority Programme Global Change and Biodiversity; University Of Edinburgh

Handling Editor: John O'Neill

Abstract

1. Listening is a pervasive and significant act of conservation research and praxis, mattering greatly for the realisation of conservation agendas, not least its ambitions to be outward looking and inclusive in approach. Yet, the value and role of listening has been barely explored in a sustained and reflexive way.
2. This paper is a preliminary schematic of what it might mean to attend to the act of listening, set within the context of a larger field of listening scholarship as well as more specific manoeuvres to embed relational approaches into the study of people and nature interactions.
3. We explore what it means to 'listen well' within the context of conservation, highlighting the importance of recognising listening as a relationship and our positions and power within those relationships; the need to care for the relationship through respect and empathy; and the building of inclusive relationships of listening by attending to how space and time influences understanding.
4. We offer examples of how researchers and practitioners can create spaces for listening, illustrating our discussion with personal reflections about listening practices gained through our various conservation and research careers.
5. We provide approaches and ideas which help the reader—academic and practitioner—to both understand and articulate the value of listening in conservation and relational values of nature. We hope to inspire the wider use of listening-based approaches in conservation research and practice, and the recognition and support from senior managers and funders of what is needed to promote long-term and meaningful relationships between people and nature.

KEYWORDS
listening, conservation, relational values, relationships, conservation research

1 | LISTENING AS RELATIONAL

AB: "Interviewing villagers in Nepal about the impacts of climate change, I heard many stories about failed crops, hardships, and risks to lives and livelihoods. However, the story of one old man stood out: He talked of the sadness he felt at no longer hearing the song of the birds that used to be in the village."

People and Nature - 2021 - Staddon - The

Session 6 – Conservation: Other Perspectives and Experiences

Session summary – This session focused on understanding the roots, complexity, and coherence of different perspectives and experiences by exploring the intersections of environmental conservation and social justice. As foundational documents to guide discussion, the session drew on (1) a 1990 letter from the Southwest Organizing Project to ten major conservation organizations about the lack of inclusion of people of color in environmental decision-making processes, and (2) a follow-up article published in *High Country News* two decades later.

Context

- Conservation means different things to different people, as does the history of conservation as practiced by government agencies and NGOs.
- Agency culture is heavily shaped by long-standing stories, traditions, and processes, as well as staff members' own connections to nature.
- Figures revered as conservation heroes in the conservation community are sometimes seen in a very different light by other communities (e.g., Theodore Roosevelt as a eugenicist and racist; James Audubon as a slave owner).

Key challenges

- Separation and distance can make it difficult to build alliances and partnerships.
- Good intentions are often not enough; for example, Indigenous land acknowledgments can be heard as hollow if not accompanied by meaningful action and genuine relationship-building.

Key takeaways

- The more dramatic the differences, and the more difficult the histories, the more vital it is to prioritize curiosity and set aside assumptions.
- If we are unaware of a certain set of perspectives on conservation and conservation agencies, it is important to work to understand them.

- Do your homework. It is not “their” responsibility to teach “you” about them.
- This work can be uncomfortable, but we don’t learn in our comfort zone.
- Relevancy requires development of more inclusive, culturally responsive, broad-based approaches to conservation, and agency cultures that test assumptions and encourage dialogue.

Session video

https://youtu.be/Sn2FFOsYY2U

Resources

- Southwest Organizing Project letter to Big 10 environmental groups
- The Shot Heard Round the West - High Country News
- The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege and Environmental Protection by Dr. Dorcetta Taylor
- Environmental Equity as a Lifestyle this Earth Day by Mila Kellen Marshall, PhD

Session 7 – Tools for Engagement: Toward a Case for Relevancy

Session summary – This session focused on building a case for relevancy and garnering support from colleagues and agency leadership. In thinking about how to build a case within their own agencies, participants considered and discussed arguments for relevancy work as well as types of resistance sometimes encountered within agencies.

Context

- The demographics of agency staff members (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity) do not generally reflect a state's overall population; likewise, agency staff psychographics (e.g., lifestyles, interests, preferred activities) often differ from the population at large.
- Relevancy involves considering both demographics (e.g., how to more effectively engage people of color) and psychographics (e.g., how to more effectively engage birdwatchers and mountain bikers).

Key challenges

- Intra-agency resistance to relevancy work can take many forms (e.g., passive inaction; deliberate action; concern about the need for a quick fiscal return-on-investment; comparison of the clear benefits of working with traditional partners with the uncertain benefits of engaging new groups).
- Resistance often stems from (1) a lack of understanding of what relevancy is and what it can achieve, (2) a desire to do conservation in familiar ways with familiar partners, (3) a belief that there is only one way to practice conservation, and/or (4) a belief that state agencies simply need to communicate about their work more effectively.

Key takeaways

- Different arguments for relevancy will carry different weight from agency to agency and will vary over time. What is compelling for one agency may

gain no traction in another; what seems irrelevant today may be a powerful motivator a few years from now.

- Whether communicating within an agency or outside it, consideration of the specific audience is crucial. What matters to them? How do you imagine they will hear your message or argument? How will you evaluate its effectiveness?
- Relevancy work can often be effectively framed in terms of an agency's mission statement and strategic priorities.
- Tangible examples—of how a lack of relevancy has been a barrier to accomplishing agency priorities, and of how relevancy-related adaptations have made a positive contribution—can play an important role in creating a pro-relevancy narrative and counteracting resistance.
- The "third paradigm of diversity," which emphasizes how people and organizations can learn from differences and become more effective as a result, can serve as a compelling argument for relevancy work.

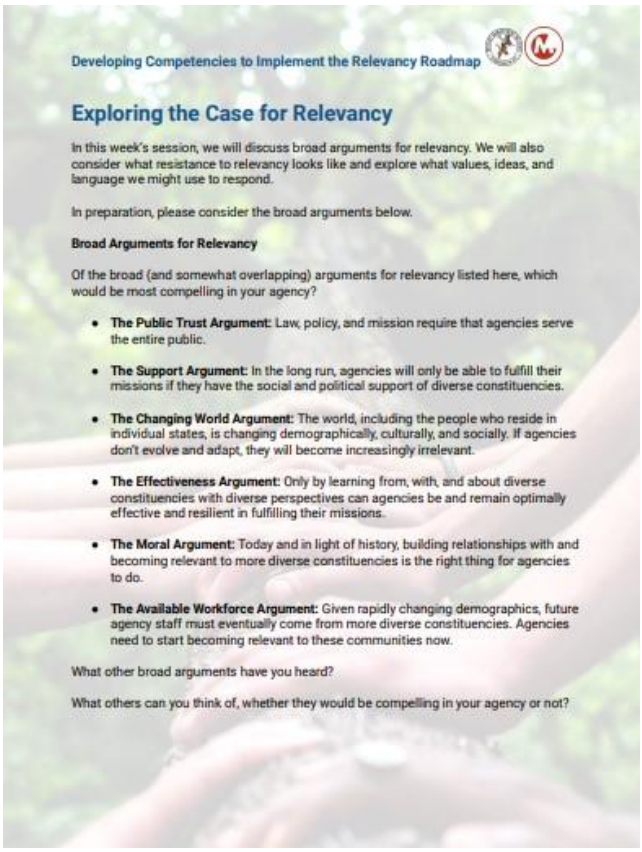
Session video

https://youtu.be/I3gh1Alvsc4

Resources

- Making Differences Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity
- Dahlia Campus for Health — Award-winning mental health services organization, grounded in community engagement and co-creation

Exploring the Case for Relevancy



Developing Competencies to Implement the Relevancy Roadmap

Exploring the Case for Relevancy

In this week's session, we will discuss broad arguments for relevancy. We will also consider what resistance to relevancy looks like and explore what values, ideas, and language we might use to respond.

In preparation, please consider the broad arguments below.

Broad Arguments for Relevancy

Of the broad (and somewhat overlapping) arguments for relevancy listed here, which would be most compelling in your agency?

- **The Public Trust Argument:** Law, policy, and mission require that agencies serve the entire public.
- **The Support Argument:** In the long run, agencies will only be able to fulfill their missions if they have the social and political support of diverse constituencies.
- **The Changing World Argument:** The world, including the people who reside in individual states, is changing demographically, culturally, and socially. If agencies don't evolve and adapt, they will become increasingly irrelevant.
- **The Effectiveness Argument:** Only by learning from, with, and about diverse constituencies with diverse perspectives can agencies be and remain optimally effective and resilient in fulfilling their missions.
- **The Moral Argument:** Today and in light of history, building relationships with and becoming relevant to more diverse constituencies is the right thing for agencies to do.
- **The Available Workforce Argument:** Given rapidly changing demographics, future agency staff must eventually come from more diverse constituencies. Agencies need to start becoming relevant to these communities now.

What other broad arguments have you heard?

What others can you think of, whether they would be compelling in your agency or not?

PDF

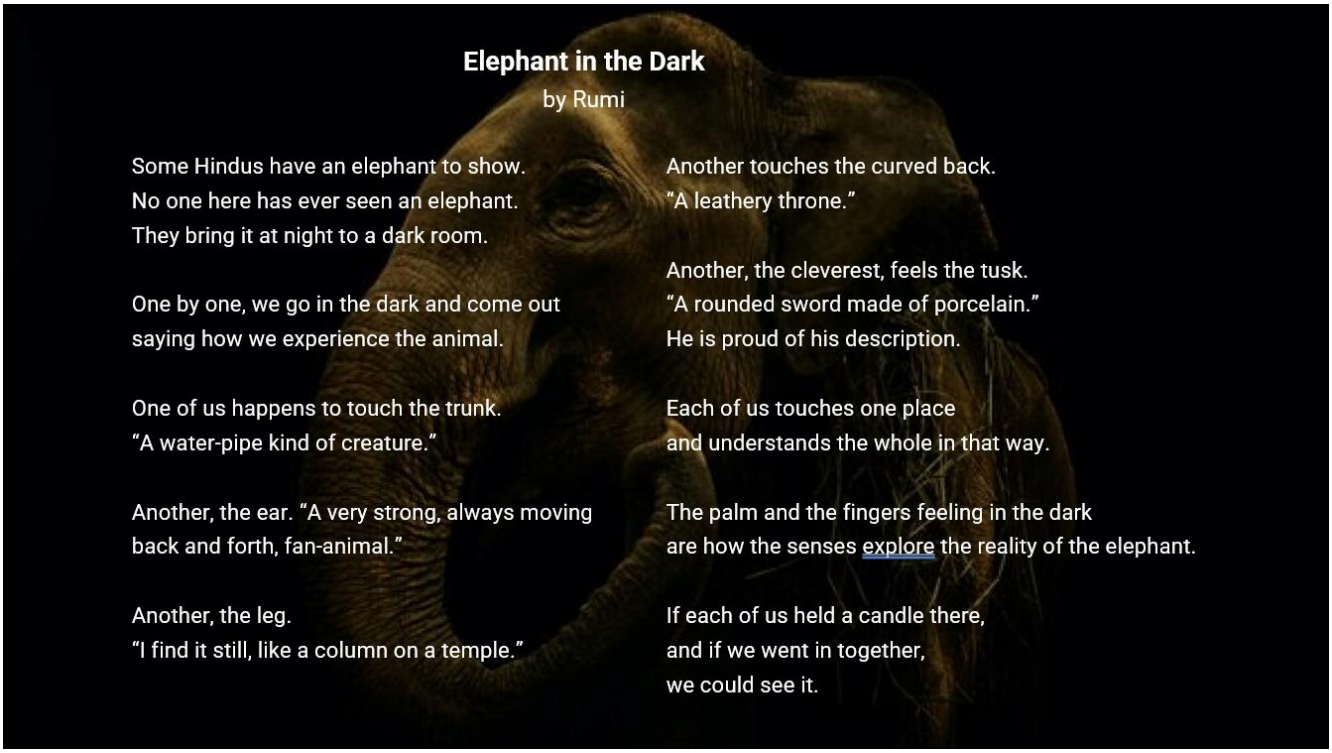
Exploring the Case for Relevancy.pdf

Arguments Against Relevancy

How might you address these?

- We've always done it this way, in this place, this is what we know how to do
- We prioritize those who pay into the system
- "They" don't support us financially
- We already have programs for women (e.g., BOW) and children (1-day fishing clinics)
- I was hired for my wildlife/habitat expertise, not to talk to people
- We can't handle more people on our properties
- More people on our properties will increase user group conflict (and take resources to fix)
- We'll end up like state parks and that's not us

- We have a diversity and inclusion officer
- We welcome diverse perspectives and activities (as long as you do it the way we do it)
- We already live by the North American Model of Conservation
- Our constrained resources can't handle new programs
- We're following our strategic plan
- We know what they want/need
- The constitution guides our priorities (to serve hunters, anglers and trappers)
- Hunters and anglers paid for these properties
- We just need to tell our stories better
- We've been told to "stay in our lane, stick to our core"
- We need to broaden the tent (more people doing things we like to do, the way we like to do them)
- We get our best biologists from (pick your favorite university)



Session 8 – Change Management

Session summary – This session introduced participants to the field of organizational change management, well-known in the corporate sector but not in the conservation community. The session provided a brief history of the field and an overview of several prominent models and invited participants to reflect on organizational change and the tensions and challenges involved.

Context

- The field of change management emerged in the 1960s. At the time, most theories were rooted in psychological studies of grief and loss, due to observed similarities between responses to death and dying and responses to major organizational changes.
- The field was further popularized in the 1980s, when large consulting firms demonstrated the successful application of its core ideas. At this point, the grief framework was largely abandoned.
- More recently, the field has focused on rethinking how teams and organizations operate and how they are structured.

Key challenges

- Organizational change always involves challenges and tensions. Managing or leading change effectively requires thoughtful reflection, clear intentions, and strategic planning and action.
- Organizational change is never "over". Ongoing changes in social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological contexts will push organizations to adapt again and again.

Key takeaways

- Organizational change is often broken down into two general types—incremental and transformational—each of which demands different strategies.

- Many models of change and change management have been developed in recent decades, including a relatively recent one created by Harvard's John Kotter, which posits eight steps in the change cycle.
- The greatest opportunities for an organization to make breakthrough change are internal (related to intra-organizational skills, structure, processes and culture) rather than external.
- Many organizational change efforts fail 1) because there was no explicit desired outcome articulated and 2) because they lacked appropriate metrics or measures of success.
- Of the two general types of change, incremental change is easier to measure.
- Organizational change and change management are central to the challenges of agency relevancy work.

Session video

https://youtu.be/pzndexrNhCA

Resources

- Leading Change by John Kotter
- Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World by John Kotter
- Transformation of State Fish & Wildlife Agencies: Ensuring the Future of Conservation in a Rapidly Changing World
- Systems Practice Toolkit

Agency Change bibliography Transformation bibliography 2018

Note: The articles in this bibliography were annotated by Ann Forstchen (then at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) in support of the Blue Ribbon Panel Relevancy Working Group.

Executive Summary

• Fish and wildlife (hereafter wildlife) is shifting to people and habitat management
• It's all wildlife for all people (not just focus on game or non-game)
• State fish and wildlife agencies (SFWA) are broadening programs and activities to serve more citizens
• SFWAs funding sources are broadening beyond direct and sole support from license/permit sales – albeit it slowly (process can take 10+ years to implement)

- License plates, foundations, sales tax, lottery, residential sales tax, etc.

• All SFWAs are addressing social, political and ecological changes and impacts – in their own way, at their own pace and in their unique social-political environments
• SFWAs need to acquire and apply insight from broad arena of conservation social sciences (see Bennett et al. graphic)
• SFWA transformation is not about changing commission or board structure, selection process or function but is about changing individual staff thinking and actions that seek out, understand and serve more diverse stakeholders and all citizens
• Communication is key. Words matter (e.g., outdoors vs. outside). Communication strategy development is critical (why, when, by who, to whom, through what channels, how often)
• SFWAs face challenges that are adaptive, not technical – we can't engineer our way out of them
• SFWA change needs to be strategic to be successful
• Relevance of wildlife conservation (and thus relevance of SFWAs) is from the perspective and judgement of citizens not SFWAs
• SFWAs can learn how to be relevant from private sector successes and failures
• Successful change efforts focus on the work – corporate "fixes" (strategic plans, mission statements, marketing slogans, modifying formal structures and systems) don't change organizations; people change organizations

• Leadership commitment is essential for creating conditions ripe for change and breaking down obstacles
• Learning will be required
• Resources will need to be acquired or reprioritized
• Evaluation of progress is critical
• Leadership must walk the talk
• Recognize and accept that wildlife conservation is in the outdoor recreation business
• SFWAs need to better market conservation benefits to all citizens
• SFWAs need to focus on short-term but also long-term which is difficult in era of short-term political cycles and increasingly shorter tenure of SFWA directors
• Dedicated change agents are critical for success
• Shift in terminology reflects shift in SFWA focus (Clients (customers)→ Stakeholders → Beneficiaries)
• Transformation/ SFWA relevancy is a journey not an event
• SFWA staff slowly are representing citizenry that don't hunt, trap, fish
• Recent awareness and acceptance of public trust framework for wildlife management supports efforts for SFWA relevance
• Wildlife management is the guidance of decision-making processes and implementation of practices to purposefully influence interactions between people, wildlife and habitats to achieve impacts (benefits) valued by stakeholders (citizens)
• SFWA relevance is a means to wildlife conservation relevance
• SFWAs are moving to become bridging or platform organizations rather than being the sole provider of conservation benefits
• Principle role of SFWA is to provide benefits for people
• Peoples interests in wildlife and their management is changing; expectations for involvement in decision making has increased
• Delivery of conservation benefits includes reducing negative impacts from wildlife
• SFWAs struggle to work well in the political arena (missing skill set)

• Declining %s of participating in traditional outdoor recreation, coupled with increasingly diverse and urbanized society creates the need for SFWAs to adapt to changing societal context
• Need to overcome the historical SFWA financial dependence derived from hunting and fishing without alienating these traditional stakeholders
• Transformation of the actions and practices of SFWA should not diminish the importance of traditional stakeholders and their essential role in wildlife management
• Incremental and radical innovation may be needed depending on SFWA context
• Organizations that chiefly pursue existing competencies (those things we already know how to do) will suffer from obsolescence
• SFWAs need to hire for what they want to become, not what they are
• Deliberative transformative change can be initiated at multiple scales and be done gradually
• Transformation can be done BY you, or TO you
• Continued fragmentation of conservation interests (factions) is certain to result in conservation loss
• Under public trust framework, legislators and commissioners, to whom legislators have delegated specific authorities, are the primary trustees of the publics' wildlife; state wildlife agency professionals are trust managers; all citizens are beneficiaries of the trust
• SFWAs should continually scan social, economic and ecological sectors for emerging issues that could influence wildlife conservation
• SFWAs need to learn from each other
• SFWAs need to acknowledge NGOs and partners are legitimate part of conservation community and have important and significant contributions to conservation
• SFWAs need to find common ground with NGOs and partners and leverage their resources but recognize their constraints
• Shift from wildlife population focus to conservation system focus
• Benefits desired from the wildlife trust may change over time and across generations; flexibility of management strategies is prudent

• Relevance means have a logical connection to or some bearing of importance for real world issues of social significance (e.g., the economy, job creation, energy development, transportation, health care, education, climate change) and being recognized as having such a connection
• Relevance alone is not sufficient, conservation and conservation agencies must be valued and supported
• Principles of a relevant, valued and adaptive agency
    - Contemporary with respect to social values, needs, and interests
    - Wildlife-values focus (rather than wildlife-use focus)
    - External orientation—engage partners, understand stakeholders, form coalitions
    - Good governance (e.g., open, transparent, inclusive, and fair decision-making processes)
    - "Safe haven" work environment where opinions are freely expressed
    - Receptive to new perspectives and alternatives; risk taking within reason
    - Anticipatory, proactive, and responsive
    - Nimble and flexible
    - Evaluative and continually learning, improving
    - Accountable; proactively seeking feedback
    - Strong and broad scale partner relationships
    - Coupled social-ecological systems approach

• Some in the conservation community suggest part of the solution to wildlife management agency financial solvency is to convert the nonpaying consumers to paying customers
    - Attempts to broaden agency funding through this type of conversion generally have not been successful

• Using a public trust framework for wildlife conservation eliminates the need to distinguish between consumers and customers
• SFWAs need to examine their thinking, terminology and behaviors as they shift from an economics-based focus on consumers, customer, clients, etc. to a more inclusive trust-based focus on "conservation

beneficiaries" – these beneficiaries should recognize the benefits they receive from fish and wildlife management, and they value and support conservation even if they don't directly participate in outdoor wildlife-related activities

• Celebrate the rich conservation history over the past century, but recognize that leaning on our history, particularly regarding outdated organizational structure and how we relate to traditional social and cultural interests, may be a barrier for change

• SFWAs need to work on where they want to be in 20-50 years not just in the next budget or strategic planning cycle

• SFWAs need to bring stakeholder groups together by leveraging their common interests

• Shift from reactive problem solving to co-creating the future

• Need effective leaders to make change happen

• Tools and resources are available to help SFWAs change

• Governance = the practices and procedures that determine how decisions are made and implemented and how responsibilities are exercised

Session 9 – Relationship Mapping

Session summary – This final online session focused on the why, who, what, and how of relationship mapping. Participants were introduced to several different approaches to mapping relationships, and Dr. Elizabeth Mabee (Indiana Department of Natural Resources) discussed how she used mapping to broaden the stakeholder pool engaged in the process of revising Indiana DNR's State Wildlife Action Plan.

Context

- Relationship mapping (also called stakeholder or audience mapping) involves identifying the universe of people or groups relevant to your work, project, or organization.
- Relationship mapping can be focused on people and groups within an organization but is often focused on people and groups outside the organization.
- Many stakeholder mapping tools and templates are available online.

Key challenges

- You don't know who you don't know.
- Agencies' relationships with external groups are fragile if they hinge on just one or two people; those relationships may deteriorate or vanish if staff members move on.

Key takeaways

- Thoughtful and thorough stakeholder mapping has multiple benefits for state agencies, including (1) informing allocation of resources and prioritization of efforts, (2) enabling strategic choices about who to reach out to and when, (3) informing design of approaches and messages tailored to specific groups, and (4) identifying the boundaries of an agency's current knowledge base and relationship base.

- Even a set of simple Google searches can reveal in-state organizations that share at least some of an agency's goals, but with which the agency has no direct relationship.
- Individual person-to-person relationships are vital, especially as an agency begins building bridges with new constituencies.
- In the long run, an agency's relationships are more durable when multiple people and work units across the agency are engaged.
- Though many agency programs have traditionally focused on engaging youth and families with children, it is also worth considering opportunities to reach other age groups (e.g., college-age students, young adults, seniors).

Session video

https://youtu.be/ohxK5eIbA_4

Resources

- SOAR Analysis - Focusing on the Positives and Opening up Opportunities (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results)
- Incorporating Social Aspects and Human-Wellbeing in Biodiversity Conservation Projects

WHO Stakeholder Mapping Toolkit stakeholder mapping tool

In-person workshop in Estes Park, CO

Summary – The 1.5-day in-person workshop provided participants with a valuable opportunity to interact face to face. Core topics included cultivating psychological safety, asking strategic questions, understanding different kinds of power and how to leverage them, steps for getting started in relevancy work, and lessons learned from a variety of conservation relevancy projects. The group also experimented with "forum theater," in which audience members can interrupt and alter the course of the scene in exploring how to have courageous conversations related to relevancy.

Key takeaways

- Psychological safety is a crucial ingredient in high-performing teams where diverse perspectives contribute to effectiveness.
- Psychological safety requires creating an environment where people feel safe enough to take interpersonal risks, speak up, disagree openly and respectfully, and raise concerns without the fear of negative repercussions or the pressure to sugarcoat bad news.
- Power plays a role in every relationship, from individual (e.g., peer to peer; supervisor to supervisee) to institutional (e.g., federal to state agency; state agency to local nonprofit).
- Power dynamics are always present in our interactions, though we may not always be aware of them.
- Some facets of our identities place us in "power up" positions, while others place us in "power down" positions.
- Power is context-specific and can shift from place to place, time to time, and situation to situation. The implications of any given aspect of our identity depend on the social and cultural context and the situation we are in.
- As we become more aware of our own power and influence and the related dimensions of our relationships, interactions, and identities, we can navigate and leverage them more intentionally and effectively.
- Strategic questions are essential to relevancy work.

- Strategic questions need to be linked to desired outcomes. It is important to distinguish between these outcomes and the kinds of outputs often used to demonstrate the effectiveness of agency efforts.
- Strategic questions can be asked about any aspect of relevancy work, including (1) what the desired outcomes are and why they matter, (2) barriers within the agency, (3) potential constituent barriers, (4) the effort's intended results-chain, and (5) available resources.
- Though there is no fixed recipe for starting a relevancy effort or initiative, lessons learned in recent agency efforts suggest a number of valuable early steps, including (1) using interviews or listening sessions to identify the type of relevancy effort the agency is interested in and willing to support, (2) using relationship mapping to identify one or more new constituent groups that would be relatively easy for the agency to engage, and (3) finding or creating opportunities to listen to and talk with constituent groups to identify any apparent barriers to engagement, any interaction preferences, and so on.
- Given the nature of this work, any procedural framework should be utilized adaptively.

No part of the in-person workshop was recorded.

Resources

- The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth by Amy C. Edmondson
- Power Up Power Down by Gail Rudolph

Conclusion

This project brought together more than 50 people from state and federal conservation agencies to explore the skills and competencies they might need to implement conservation relevancy projects. Participants came from a wide range of contexts, with diverse levels of knowledge of and experience in relevancy work.

One intention of the project was to begin to forge relationships among participants, setting the stage for ongoing communication, collaboration, and shared learning. The project team also hopes to maintain direct engagement with this participant cohort, through direct communication and future trainings.

The project team took an adaptive approach throughout, polling participants after each session to assess their needs and interests, then adjusting subsequent sessions to address those. In many cases, the delivered content represented a high-level introduction to concepts and materials that participants were invited to explore in more depth, depending on their needs and interests. This summary document includes links to the recorded presentation portions of sessions and to additional resources. PowerPoint presentations are available on request.

When asked, the majority of the participants indicated that they would recommend this program to fellow staff members, even if it was at cost to their agency.

Throughout this project we captured some participants' aspirations and hopes as well as their areas of discomfort and challenge in learning how to engage and serve broader constituencies to improve conservation outcomes.

Sample aspirations and hopes

- "To create a culture in the agency that tests our assumptions and biases and encourages dialogue."
- "To increase the proactivity of our current relevancy work."

- "That our workforce both resembles and represents the diversity of our state population."
- "That I may develop the eyes to see all the ways in which my work perpetuates distance from the constituencies that I serve in my job."
- "[To] do a better job hearing all voices."
- "[That there is] internal or agency buy-in for relevancy work."

Sample areas of discomfort and learning

- "This work is not easy, and it does not come without risk. The level of tolerance for discomfort varies by the individual so you cannot assume that your own level of discomfort matches others—so while you may be on your edge, others may have fallen off the edge and others may not be near the ledge yet."
- "Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable will be a part of learning and a part of success."
- "It will be challenging and therefore likely very rewarding and necessary."
- "My discomfort is in conflict. I know I will need to prepare for conflict/disagreements with internal staff and be prepared to navigate them with curiosity."
- "I need to put myself in the path to hear more about the ways that some segments of the public have been harmed by my agency in my state. And I need to look for the roots of those harms in my own work responsibilities."
- "If we learn through the discomfort of knowing the truth then we are in a better place where we can make changes needed to the underlying systems."

Relevancy Community of Practice (Relevancy Community)

Moderator

Conservation Relevancy Community

A community to learn about and share efforts to enhance conservation through broader engagement

Invite

Cohort members

James (Wally)	Akins	james.akins@tn.gov	Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Scott	Angelo	Scott.Angelo@dnr.ohio.gov	Ohio DNR, Division of Wildlife
Matt	Bartley	mbartley@utah.gov	Utah Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife Resources
Rachel	Bealer	rbealer@pa.gov	Pennsylvania Game Commission
Joe	Benedict	Joe.Benedict@tn.gov	Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Eric	Bergman	eric.bergman@state.co.us	Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Rachel	Blomker	Rachel.Blomker@dfw.wa.gov	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Ryan	Bower	ryan.bower@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Amy	Braun	amy.braun@ncwildlife.org	North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Office of Conservation Policy & Analysis
Sandra (Sandi)	Bridges	sandra.bridges@ncwildlife.org	North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Wildlife Education Division
Jessica (Jess)	Brooks	jdbrooks@ndow.org	Nevada Department of Wildlife
Emily	Buck	Emily.A.Buck@tn.gov	Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Chrisopher	Cain	Christopher.Cain@mdc.mo.gov	Missouri Department of Conservation
Julie	Carter	jcarter@azgfd.gov	Arizona Game and Fish Department
Emily	Cope	CopeE@dnr.sc.gov	South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Sierra	Doherty	sierra.doherty@alaska.gov	Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation
Keaton	Fish	Keaton.Fish@MyFWC.com	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Jake	FitzRoy	Jake.FitzRoy@MyFWC.com	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Warren	Hansen	Warren.Hansen@mt.gov	Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
Makeda	Hanson	makedatrujillo@utah.gov	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Mary	Hayes	MaHayes@dnr.IN.gov	Indiana Dept of Natural Resources, Division of Fish & Wildlife
Elizabeth (Liz)	Herzmann	Elizabeth.Herzmann@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Management
Kathy	Hollar	kathy_hollar@fws.gov	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife & Sportfish, Policy, Programs and Partnerships
Coren	Jagnow	cjagnow@pa.gov	Pennsylvania Game Commission
Camilla	Kennedy	Camilla.M.KENNEDY@odfw.oregon.gov	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Laura	Kintz	Laura.Kintz@maine.gov	Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
David	Klute	david.klute@state.co.us	Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Joelle	Loukmas	Joelle.Loukmas@dec.ny.gov	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Emily	MacCabe	Emily.Maccabe@maine.gov	Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Mark	McBride	Mark.K.McBride@tn.gov	Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Arianne	Messerman	Arianne.Messerman@mdc.mo.gov	Missouri Department of Conservation
Derrick	Miller	dermiller@mt.gov	Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
Samanta (Sam)	Montgomery	Samantha.Montgomery@dfw.wa.gov	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mark	Nelson	mark.nelson@alaska.gov	Alaska Fish and Game

Deandra	Orr	Deandra.Orr@dfw.wa.gov	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Emily	Porter	Emily.Porter@mdc.mo.gov	Missouri Department of Conservation
Elizabeth (Ellie)	Prentice	Ellie.Prentice@mdc.mo.gov	Missouri Department of Conservation
Anne	Reis-Boyle	anne.reis@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Todd	Rinaldi	todd.rinaldi@alaska.gov	Alaska Department of Game and Fish, Division of Wildlife Conservation
Leo	Rosenthal	lrosenthal@mt.gov	Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
Antonio	Salgado	antonio.salgado@odfw.oregon.gov	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Jordan	Sanford	jorsanford@pa.gov	Pennsylvania Game Commission
Cliff	Schleusner	cliff_schleusner@fws.gov	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, WSFR Regional Manager, Southwest Region
Scott	Johnson	Scott.Johnson3@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin State Park System, Statewide Natural Resource Educator
Erin	Shank	Erin.Shank@mdc.mo.gov	Missouri Department of Conservation
Courtney	Sirois	Courtney.Sirois@maine.gov	Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Krista	Spohr	krista.spohr@dec.ny.gov	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Sam	Stewart	Sam.Stewart@mdc.mo.gov	Missouri Dept of Conservation, Conservation Educator
Luis	Suau	luis.suau@ncwildlife.org	North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
Katrina	Talbot	Katrina.Talbot@dec.ny.gov	New York State Department of

			Environmental Conservation
May	Vang	May.Vang@state.mn.us	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Nongame Wildlife Program
Evan	Wills	evan.wills@dec.ny.gov	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Project team members

Wildlife Management Institute

Ann Forstchen AForstchen@wildlifemgt.org
Matt Dunfee MDunfee@wildlifemgt.org
Chris Smith CSmith@wildlifemtg.org

Clearwater Communications

Tovar Cerulli Tovar@tovarcerulli.com

Metropolitan Group

Maria Estrada MEstrada@metgroup.com
Rob Sassor RSassor@metgroup.com

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Elizabeth Mabee EMabee@dnr.IN.gov

Ann Forstchen, WMI's Relevancy Specialist, joined WMI in January 2022 after more than 32 years with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission working in a variety of research and administrative roles. Her current work focuses on helping conservation agencies improve conservation outcomes by identifying, engaging and serving broader constituencies and helping conservation agencies be more relevant, valued and supported by the public. She has collaborated in the development of and co-led training efforts for wildlife conservation agency staff, such as Wildlife Governance Principles, Application of Social Science in Wildlife Management, Public Trust, Integration of Human Dimensions into Fish and Wildlife Management, Basis for Wildlife Governance, Systems Thinking, Habits and Practices of Effective Wildlife Professionals and Ethical Considerations in Fish and Wildlife Conservation. Her work has emphasized how staff can think more inclusively and holistically, how to broaden diversity of perspectives in decision-making processes and how to improve individual staff practices to better serve the increasingly diverse interests, needs and concerns of the public. Ann is a member of the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap Coordination and Implementation Team. Ann has co-authored several book chapters and published in the Journal of Wildlife Management, Wildlife Society Bulletin, Conservation Letters, The Wildlife Professional, Society and Natural Resources, Human Dimensions of Wildlife; and the Transactions of the North American Wildlife Conferences.

Matt Dunfee is the Director of Special Programs for the Wildlife Management Institute. In his past and current positions with WMI, he has served as the Conservation Program Specialist in WMI's

Washington D.C. Headquarters where he worked on numerous projects related to North American wildlife conservation, private lands programs, and hunting heritage. He also serves as the Director of the Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance, the Chair of the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, Co-Chair of the National Hunting and Shooting Sports Action Plan, and Co-developer of the AFWA Relevancy Roadmap. In his current roles, Matt serves on numerous professional committees and boards including the AFWA Fish and Wildlife Health Committee, national and regional AFWA Hunting and Shooting Sports Participation Committees, the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow Advisory Committee, the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Meeting Steering Committee, and the International Hunter Education Association Standards Committee. Following his leadership in developing evaluation toolkits for hunter and target shooter R3 efforts, Matt has conducted dozens of multi-day training and information workshops for state and federal wildlife agency staff and administrators on R3 strategies, strategic program development, evaluation, and best practices. Matt was also a member of the leadership team who coordinated and drafted the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap and has assisted numerous agencies in incorporating the Roadmap into their policies, practices, and strategic plans.

Chris Smith is WMI's Western Field Representative and has over 40 years' experience in planning, management, research, supervision and administration of resource conservation programs in Alaska and Montana. Prior to joining WMI, Chris worked for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for 23 years and served as Deputy Director for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks for 11 years. Chris holds a B.S. Degree in Wildlife Management from the Univ. of Alaska and a M.S. in Wildlife Biology from the Univ. of British Columbia. Chris is well known for his 2011 paper on roles and responsibilities under a public trust framework in the US. He has co-authored papers and delivered workshops on topics such as Public Trust, Wildlife Governance Principles, Reasoning and Judgment, and Ethical Considerations in Conservation Decision-Making. Chris was a member of the leadership team who coordinated and drafted the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap. Chris also co-authored the revised AFWA Commissioners Guidebook. Chris has published in Human Dimensions of Wildlife, Wildlife Society Bulletin, Journal of Wildlife Management, Conservation Letters, The Wildlife Professional, Frontiers in Conservation Science and authored several book chapters.

Tovar Cerulli, Clearwater Communications, has spent more than 15 years focused on bridging disparate views of natural resources policy and management, finding common ground, and cultivating mutual respect and broad-based support. As a collaborative thinking partner and strategic consultant for leaders and teams across sectors, he has helped clients engage diverse stakeholders, discover shared values, understand cultural narratives, craft compelling messages, and find points of actionable alignment. He has delivered keynote talks on relevancy and other sensitive conservation topics for diverse audiences at state, national, and international conferences. A vegan-turned-hunter, Tovar is author of *The Mindful Carnivore*, which has earned praise from hunters, ecologists, and vegetarians alike.

Maria Estrada, Metropolitan Group, has years of experience as a community leader and change maker, a strategic planner and implementer of JEDI initiatives, and an academic and trainer of

trainers to advance equity work in education and the environment. Her focus has been in designing tools and processes to center equity and inclusion and achieve more equitable outcomes in the work. Maria is a highly skilled and trusted facilitator recognized for facilitating difficult dialogues across multiple differences and the complex power dynamics that emerge when our social identities enter into dynamic interaction.

Maria's most recent post was as the deputy director of Global Diversity Equity and Inclusion at The Nature Conservancy. She led the group that built Equity by Design—an interactive tool for conservation practitioners to plan and implement equitable strategies. Previously, she was a faculty member at the University of Utah in the Education, Culture, and Society Department (ECS), one of the top social foundation programs in the country. She taught and mentored hundreds of pre-service and in-service teachers working within highly diverse school districts in Utah. Maria grounded her teaching in her profound respect for diverse communities and the pursuit of social justice in education using cutting-edge frameworks that address class, race, ethnicity, and gender and immigration status in educational policy and practice. She holds a Ph.D. in education from ECS with an emphasis on political theater. In this work she trained under Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theater practitioner, drama theorist and political activist who founded Theater of the Oppressed.

Rob Sassor, Metropolitan Group, is a conservation planner and practitioner by training, Rob served the U.S. Forest Service International Programs while based in Tanzania in 2009 and 2010. Rob is a skilled facilitator who helps organizations build stronger teams, break down silos, and find new ways of collaborating with stakeholders to achieve their mission while embodying shared values. Driven by personal values around the power of voice and the importance of diverse perspectives, and ever attuned to social dynamics in the room, Rob facilitates dialogue that goes deep and invites everyone to bring their fullest and best selves to the conversation. Rob also designs and leads technical assistance trainings in strategic communication. Rob holds a Masters in Conservation Leadership from the University of Cambridge. Relevant clients include the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (in collaboration with the Wildlife Management Institute), USDA Forest Service and NASA.

Elizabeth Mabee is the Conservation Partnership Coordinator for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish & Wildlife. She has worked in a variety of positions with midwestern state fish & wildlife agencies for 13 years. Prior to joining the Missouri Department of Conservation as the Grassland Botanist, she was a post-doctoral associate focused on urban prairie restoration methods and also completed a year-long National Science Foundation-funded teaching fellowship. Designing and implementing effective technical assistance programming has been a through-line in her career. From Grassland Botanist to Stewardship Outreach Coordinator with Indiana DNR, Elizabeth has designed plant identification technical trainings and tools, volunteer management guidance and companion trainings, and most recently volunteer match processes, support documents, and a technical training series.

Elizabeth also led one of the first funded Relevancy Roadmap Pilot Projects and her work in Indiana was recently featured at the North American's special session: Hitch-hiker's guide to relevancy. Throughout Elizabeth's career, she has focused on taking complex ideas or problems and presenting

them in practical and applicable ways so that others may move the field of conservation forward. She holds a Ph.D. in plant community ecology from Indiana University.