

# A Practical Guide to Collaborative Fisheries Governance

A Guidebook for BC Salmon Fisheries

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Drawn from materials generated by all participants, Integrated Salmon Dialogue Forum

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## Foreword

Salmon are an icon of Canada's Pacific coast and rivers. For Aboriginal people, the connection to salmon is timeless and touches the spirit, providing the basis for both a way of life and making a living. Throughout BC, children and adults share a fascination and concern with communities who are working to protect and sustain the species. For many, fishing is a basis for **livelihood**; it is their identity - who they are. For many others a day on the water is a time of peace and pleasure. The more we know of salmon's mysterious movements from rivers and streams to far flung reaches of the mighty Pacific Ocean, and back again, the more we come to understand what we do not know. They are one of the most studied fish species on the planet, yet uncertainty prevails. Many scientists and managers spend their entire careers working it out. They comprise one of the most complex resource management challenges in the world. Salmon and the people connected to them have shared destinies. People care about salmon.

*This guidebook is about all of us who care about salmon. Its focus is "us", not the salmon - for it is what we do against or with each other that will be critical to the future of the fish.*

The intent of this **Guidebook - A Practical Guide to Collaborative Fisheries Governance** is to deepen our understanding of how we can work more effectively in making decisions that affect salmon, and thereby improve the ways we work together to build a better future with each other, and in doing so build a better future for the species.

*This Guidebook provides principles, key steps, and practical tools to assist managers and users and interests alike in improving decision-making processes associated with salmon, and their roles and responsibilities in these processes. The tools are intended as instruments to help build and support **relationships** – for it is relationships (among people and organizations, and across sectors and scales) that are the engine that drives better processes.*

## **Who Developed This Guidebook?**

This Guidebook was developed with input from the **Integrated Salmon Dialogue Forum (ISDF)**, a BC-wide process that brought diverse participants together to work as partners in a conversation to share information, incubate new ideas and approaches, and start to address some of the big issues impeding progress toward a fully integrated and sustainable salmon fishery. The ISDF ran from January 2007 to March 2011 and was facilitated by Glenn Sigurdson, Barry Stuart and Jessica Bratty. Further information on the ISDF is available at **\*\***.

### **ISDF Descriptor:**

*The Integrated Salmon Dialogue Forum provides a collaborative and inclusive opportunity for all interests to work towards a fully integrated sustainable salmon fishery in ways that respects the Wild Salmon Policy and serve both people and salmon.*

*Participants have agreed to make best efforts to work through their respective processes, agencies and organizations to give effect to any consensus reached in the forum, and to address any differences that emerge. (Existing processes will be respected, and wherever possible, work within the Forum will endeavor to connect with and work through or in tandem with them.)*

*The Forum and its goals have been agreed to by all participants. It has not been prescribed or stipulated by DFO or any other authority.*

*Adopted by Participants, January 2007*

## **Why this Guidebook?**

This Guidebook is a tool to assist managers, users and interests alike in building the understanding, relationships and skills needed for making decisions and resolving conflicts at all levels in the Pacific salmon fishery - from the bank of a river, to the deck of a boat, to the office towers in Vancouver and Ottawa.

It is intended to be a living document that will change with time and new experience.

This Guidebook is a practical summary of important concepts and tools, not a comprehensive manual. More detail is explored in the ***"Making Peace and Decisions" Capacity Building program***<sup>1</sup>, the first pilot of which was delivered in the lower Fraser area in early 2011, with future programs likely.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [glennsigurdson.com/projects/fisheries](http://glennsigurdson.com/projects/fisheries)

It is hoped this Guidebook will help groups design their own **Participant Driven Collaborative (PDC) process** and to understand the differences and similarities between PDCs and the existing advisory/consultative processes used widely in BC.<sup>2</sup> This Guidebook can also serve to determine why a collaborative effort has failed or how it can be improved. **Improvements to making decisions and resolving conflicts may come in different forms, whether through enhancing traditional processes, reaching out for new approaches, or exploring what it takes for the traditional and emerging to be mutually supportive.** A key lesson is that “one size does not fit all”.

A companion piece to this Guidebook is a new or enhanced **Governance Framework** for Pacific salmon fisheries, which is an expression of the overall context for decision making. A Framework needs to explore how processes and activities are linked within and among geographic scales (e.g., local, watershed, regional, national and transnational), in relation to specific authorities, rights and objectives, for the different ‘kinds’ of discussions that take place (e.g., technical, operational, planning, policy). The ISDF developed a “Governance Framework Concept Paper”<sup>3</sup> to support current efforts on this front.

## The Context of Change

Change in how decisions are made and conflicts resolved in Pacific salmon fisheries is here, and the lessons and challenges are many and diverse. The watchwords are many: co-management, collaborative governance, adaptive co-management, to name a few. Many voices are calling for a more integrated approach to decision-making through the development of collaborative structures and partnerships which respect the bilateral obligations DFO have to First Nations.

Change is being driven in part by conservation concerns for many stocks, and the prevailing uncertainty in ecosystem conditions. Accurate forecasting in face of uncertainty is difficult at best, and this is leading to a growing recognition of the need for improved in-season management processes (buttressed by pre-season scenario development and post-season evaluation and adaptation) to respond and adapt to new information as it emerges. Integrated (ie multi-interest) processes, for example targeted at sharing and understanding technical information, have the additional benefits of being more efficient and help groups to “get past fighting over numbers”.

In face of declining stocks, change is also being driven by the obligations and challenges associated with both sustaining fish populations, and ensuring there are adequate numbers of fish available for ‘Section 35.1’ (aka food, social and ceremonial) fisheries in First Nations traditional areas.

Finally, there is a growing recognition of the need to engage broader (ie non-harvest related) watershed interests in some aspects of fisheries management. These interests have an important role to play as stewards of the resource, and their activities can have significant impact on salmon populations.

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<sup>2</sup> A key distinction is between “consultation” and “consensus” processes. Both types of processes will continue to coexist in salmon fisheries management. See pages 7-10 below. DFO generated a Consultation Toolkit in 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Available at [glennsigurdson.com/projects/fisheries](http://glennsigurdson.com/projects/fisheries)

*However much we think we know, or science believes it can tell us, the boundaries of what we do not know stretch ever further out in front of us. If we know anything it is this: we know each other better than we know salmon, and likely ever will. What we do and say, about salmon and to each other, is far more within our ability to control than unlocking the impenetrable mysteries of the species. If we are going to give the salmon a fighting chance, we have to find a way to stop fighting with each other. It is not salmon that needs managing: it is us.*

*ISDF Widening the Circle Symposium,  
January 2010*

### **Why a New Approach to Governance?<sup>4</sup>**

A collaborative fisheries governance model is needed now because:

1. Issues of access and priority are causing increasing divisiveness and unrest between and among governments and stakeholders.
2. Growing public concern about the future of our salmon resource and the on-going conflicts amongst users about access and allocation of harvestable surpluses;
3. Uncertainty exists over the long term effects that climate change will have on ecosystems and communities;
4. Issues are more complex and harder to resolve, with more demands to be met from more elements of society;
5. Governments at all levels do not have the capacity to meet these challenges on their own;
6. First Nations are seeking a key role and greater participation in resource management decision-making; and
7. Fishing sectors and their supporting economic base need better certainty of access over the longer term.

*Collaborative fisheries governance is the process of reaching shared outcomes and resolving differences among all sectors and governmental interests in a manner consistent with the conservation and sustainable management of our salmon resource. Improved collaboration leads to more effective decision-making with a broad basis of support and more enduring outcomes.*

*ISDF Collaborative Fisheries Governance  
Discussion Paper, 2008*

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<sup>4</sup> Based on the ISDF's "Collaborative Fisheries Governance Discussion Paper", December 2008, and accompanying Literature Review, available at [glennsigurdson.com/projects/fisheries](http://glennsigurdson.com/projects/fisheries).

## Building a Culture of Collaboration

Improvements to making decisions and resolving conflicts may come in different forms, whether through enhancing traditional processes, reaching out for new approaches, or exploring what it takes for the **traditional and emerging to be mutually supportive**. Building a culture of collaboration is not about replacing one way of operating (e.g., authority) with another (e.g., participant driven), but about **building processes for problems**. Sometimes knowing when a new approach is NOT appropriate is as important as knowing when to do it, and knowing how to start a process is as important as having a clear exit. Designing good process is about pragmatics and problem solving, and having a good fight can sometimes be the precursor to turning a conflict into an opportunity. The converse is also true that without the conflict there would have been no opportunity.

### Conflict is an Opportunity

*Conflict is an essential element in a dynamic society. Conflict can be an invaluable opportunity to build new relationships and produce innovative solutions to what are often seen as intractable problems. The process chosen to deal with conflict determines the outcomes and the nature of the relationships left behind.*

### Relationships are Assets

*Relationships and conflict are inextricably intertwined, and a good relationship has the capacity to process and withstand a good deal of conflict.*

## Authority vs. Participant Driven Approaches

The conventional means by which decisions are made involving governmental or regulatory bodies in Canada has been **authority based**. While many different mechanisms may be used, the underlying model is that one final authority - a cabinet minister, an independent review board or panel, a judge, or a host of individual administrators - is empowered to listen to what competing stakeholders have to say, impartially review and weigh their claims and relevant technical information, and then decide.

A **participant driven approach** is open to all participants with a stake in the outcome, including governmental authorities. All participants work together to reach mutually acceptable outcomes. The participants begin by exploring the possibility of working together, and how they might do so in the most effective way with clear expectations about the purpose, roles, responsibilities, and procedures.

***The Monitoring and Compliance Panel**, established in 2008 from the Integrated Salmon Dialogue Forum, is a good example of how a participant driven approach can help an authority deliver on its mandate. Before DFO's draft Fisheries Monitoring and Catch Reporting Policy was developed, it was a discussion paper developed by the Panel entitled "Charting Our Course".*

*For more information on the M&C Panel, see \*\*\*.*

Sometimes the intended outcome may be simply to begin talking to get to know each other better, other times it is to share information, or it may be to try to reach explicit agreements that will constitute the ultimate decision. For those with authority-based

mandates, this approach provides an opportunity to explore how best to discharge their responsibilities in ways that will garner support from those affected by the outcome.

The formal authority as a participant can ensure their mandates, policies, regulations, and their other concerns are addressed within the decisions. Participation in a participant driven collaborative (PDC) process **does not fetter their authority or abrogate their responsibilities**. They can accept the outcome only if they - like all other parties - are satisfied their interests are met and that they can recommend the decision for implementation. **If authorities do not believe the agreement is consistent with their responsibilities, it is their duty to say “No”.**



PDC – Participant Driven Collaborative process

### **Collaboration vs. Consultation**

Within authority based processes, participation by those affected often occurs through some form of consultation/ advisory process. Hearings, workshops, public meetings, and a variety of formats create opportunities for consultation within authority-based processes. As the comparison in Table 1 below illustrates, there may be similarities between consultation and PDC, but they are defined by their fundamental difference. **Consultation is designed to inform decision makers who will ultimately make the decision. PDC involves the participants as ‘decision makers’**, while still recognizing the jurisdictional responsibility of the authorities around the table.

This creates a very **different agenda** for stakeholders involved in a consultation process than would be the case in PDC. In consultation, the parties’ overriding goal must be to persuade the relevant authority to make a decision favourable to their own interests. In such a setting, it is not a good strategy to search for the common ground. The more rational strategy is to make the very best case for one’s own interests and to cast doubts and aspersions on the arguments and positions of others.

*The way most of the current advisory processes in fisheries are structured, and how this affects the motivations of the parties involved, is one reason why some groups, particularly First Nations, may sometimes be concerned about participation.*

In PDC, the participants must address and persuade one another and find solutions acceptable to all. **Too often, government is not clear and often overlooks this distinction between consultative and PDC processes.** When PDC is advocated, the response from authorities may often be “*We’re already doing that. We consult with the public all the time.*”



**Table 1:** Similarities and Differences between traditional “consultative” approaches and PDC.

Consultation		Participant Driven Collaboration (PDC)	
Statement of Purpose:		Statement of Purpose:	
“To build consensus as a basis for a decision”		“To build consensus as a basis for a decision”	
“To inform and become informed”		“To inform and become informed”	
“To achieve stakeholder input and buy-in”		“To achieve stakeholder input and buy-in”	
“To meaningfully involve interested parties”		“To meaningfully involve interested parties”	
The Similarity Ends Here			
Participants:	Advocates	Participants:	Decision makers
Objectives:	Hear the voices of many interests	Objectives:	Search for a single voice that speaks for all interests
Activity:	Make representations	Activity:	Find trade-offs, innovative solutions
Approach:	Positional	Approach:	Interest based
Process:	Predetermined by decision maker	Process:	Participant designed
Interaction:	Contact among parties from none to a lot	Interaction:	Relationship builds among the parties through the process
Negotiation:	Implicit – if at all, in the “back room” and consensus is not required	Negotiation:	Explicit – “above board” and includes consultation leading to agreement
Outcomes:	Many inputs to ultimate decision maker	Outcomes:	“One output” – either the actual decision or consensus to ultimate decision maker
Timelines:	Prescribed	Timelines:	Participant driven, sometimes within parameters

## **Authority-based and PDC Processes are Mutually Supportive**

Another common, but misinformed, perception of PDC processes is that seeking “consensus” is an excuse for inaction or maintaining the status quo. The key lesson is that **authority-based approaches are an important ‘backstop’ to PDCs**. For example, if an agreement is not possible within agreed upon time limits (e.g., Principle #9 below), then there must be an agreed upon exit from the process and government should proceed to ‘make their decision’. Too often the failure to work through a clear process to an outcome leads to prolonged and protracted negotiations that are destined to fail, and frustration and cynicism over being “processed to death”, which is an assessment that may be entirely accurate.

**Both Authority-based and Participant-driven processes should and will continue to be used in concurrently in salmon management.** There are many contexts in which a legal requirement or a strong public expectation exists for consultation through hearings and public meetings. The conditions that make possible the use of PDC do not always exist. Moreover, in PDC when an agreement is achieved it may be desirable to hold public meetings or hearings to ensure that the agreement is broadly acceptable and that no interests or constituencies were ignored. Finally, once a PDC agreement is achieved it may be necessary for government, in order to adequately discharge its responsibilities (for example in regards to obligations to First Nations), to then ‘consult’ on the agreement before implementing it. The obvious benefits of having undertaken a PDC prior to this stage however, are **success in implementation and the enduring nature of the agreement**.

## **Guiding Principles**

Establishing appropriate linkages between authority and participant driven approaches will remain a key consideration in resolving sustainability challenges the world over. Responding in part to this challenge, a major national collaborative initiative in the mid 1990’s<sup>5</sup> developed the following Guiding Principles to provide a common platform that both approaches can draw upon. The Principles are as relevant to fisheries management now as ever. In considering them, the following comments apply:

**Every Participant Driven Process is Unique** - Every situation, every organization, every area have differences in approaches, reporting relationships, information management and decision-making procedures. As a result, every such process will be different and needs to be custom-designed to meet the unique factors and particular characteristics present in each area. Experience points to certain characteristics, which are fundamental to PDC - these are referred to as the **“Guiding Principles”**.

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<sup>5</sup> *Building Consensus for a Sustainable Future: Guiding Principles* (1993) describes the initial concepts that have evolved into the foundation of Participant Driven Collaboration. The ground-breaking initiative involved the then thirteen multi-stakeholder Canadian Round Tables and the Canadian Council of the Ministers of Environment.

While others have evolved similar principles and articulated them in different ways, these Guiding Principles are still regarded perhaps the most concise, comprehensive, and authoritative statement of principles relating to the characteristics necessary for any effective collaboration. What distinguishes them is the manner in which they were created, and the range and depth of perspective that was reflected from across the country in the consensus achieved.

### **Principle #1 - Purpose Driven**

*People need a reason to participate in the process.*

*The parties should have a common concern and believe that a consensus process offers the best opportunity for addressing it. This belief requires an informed understanding of consensus processes and a realistic view of available alternatives. If the parties conclude consensus offers a better option to pursue their interest, then a greater commitment to the process and its outcomes will be generated.*

*Business, government, non-governmental organizations, and other groups can apply consensus processes to a wide range of situations including planning and policy development, and regulation, licensing, and site specific development.*

### **Principle #2 - Inclusive not exclusive**

*All parties with a significant interest in the issues should be involved in the consensus process.*

*Care needs to be taken to identify and involve all parties with a significant interest in the outcome. This includes those parties affected by any agreement that may be reached, those needed to successfully implement it, or who could undermine it if not included in the process.*

*It is sometimes appropriate for those representing similar interests to form a caucus or coalition.*

*When decisions require government action, the appropriate authorities should participate.*

*The integrity of a consensus process may be compromised if the parties are not given the opportunity to determine their representatives through their own processes and mechanisms, particularly in circumstances where the direct interests of the parties will be affected by the outcome.*

### **Principle #3 - Voluntary Participation**

*The parties who are affected or interested participate voluntarily.*

*The strength of a consensus process flows from its voluntary nature. All parties must be supportive of the process and willing to invest the time necessary to make it work. The possible departure of any key participant presses all parties to ensure that the process fairly incorporates all interests.*

### **Principle #4 - Self Design**

*The parties design the consensus process.*

*All parties must have an equal opportunity to participate in designing the process. There is no "single" consensus process. Each process is designed to meet the circumstances and needs of the specific situation.*

*An impartial person, acceptable to all parties, can be an important catalyst to suggest options for designing the process, but the ultimate control over the mandate, agenda, and issues should come from the participants themselves.*

*Designing a consensus process enables the participants to become better acquainted before they deal with difficult substantive issues.*

*It is important to take time at the beginning to:*

- *define the issues clearly;*
- *assess the suitability of a consensus process for each issue - as opposed to other decision making processes;*
- *clarify roles and responsibilities for everyone involved;*
- *establish the ground rules for operating.*

*Communications can be helped by establishing ground rules up front, and allocating time for the participants to appreciate each other's values and interests.*

### **Principle #5 - Flexibility**

*Flexibility should be designed into the process.*

*It is impossible to anticipate everything in a consensus process. By designing flexibility into the process, participants can anticipate and better handle change when it faces them.*

*A consensus process involves learning from the perspectives of all participants. Feedback must, therefore, be continually incorporated into the process.*

*Flexibility is important. The initial design may evolve as the parties become more familiar with the issues, the process, and each other.*

### **Principle #6 - Equal Opportunity**

*All parties have equal access to relevant information and the opportunity to participate effectively throughout the process.*

*All parties must be able to participate effectively in the consensus process. Unless the process is open, fair and equitable, agreement may not be reached and, if reached, may not last.*

*Not everyone starts from the same point - particularly in terms of experience, knowledge and resources.*

*For example:*

- *the process involves time and expenses - resources that not all participants may readily afford*
- *the process revolves around the sharing of information on issues and impacts - something to which not all participants have ready access*

*To promote equal opportunity, consideration needs to be given to providing:*

- *training on consensus processes and negotiating skills*
- *adequate and fair access to all relevant information and expertise*
- *resources for all participants to participate meaningfully*

## **Principle #7 - Respect for Diverse Interests**

*Acceptance of the diverse values, interests, and knowledge of the parties involved in the consensus process is essential.*

*A consensus process affords an opportunity for all participants to better understand one another's diverse values, interests, and knowledge. This increased understanding fosters trust and openness which invaluablely assists the participants to move beyond bargaining over positions to explore their underlying interests and needs.*

*Recognizing and addressing all relevant stakeholders' values and interests provides a basis for crafting creative solutions that are more likely to last.*

*Sometimes parties may be deeply entrenched in an intense conflict prior to a consensus process. Reaching a consensus agreement involves exploring and developing common interests despite differences in values.*

## **Principle #8 - Accountability**

*The participants are accountable both to their constituencies and to the process that they have agreed to establish.*

*It is important that the participants representing groups or organizations effectively speak for the interests they represent. Mechanisms and resources for timely feedback and reporting to constituencies are crucial and need to be established. This builds understanding and commitment among the constituencies and minimizes surprises.*

*Given significant public concern about environmental, social and economic issues, keeping the public informed on the development and outcome of any process is important.*

## **Principle #9 - Time Limits**

*Realistic deadlines are necessary throughout the process.*

*Clear and reasonable time limits for working towards a conclusion and reporting on results should be established.*

*Such milestones bring a focus to the process, marshal key resources, and mark progress towards consensus.*

*Sufficient flexibility, however, is necessary to embrace shifts or changes in timing.*

## **Principle #10 - Implementation**

*Commitment to implementation and effective monitoring are essential parts of any agreement.*

*Parties must be satisfied that their agreements will be implemented. As a result, all parties should discuss the goals of the process and how results will be handled. Clarifying a commitment to implementing the outcome of the process is essential.*

*The support and commitment of any party responsible for follow-up is critical. When decisions require government action, the participation of government authorities from the outset is crucial.*

*A post-agreement mechanism should be established to monitor implementation and deal with problems that may arise.*

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## From Principles to Practice

### **Relationships are the “Engine” that Drive Effective Process:**

Relationships that work well are built on a platform of:

- Principles;
- Clear expectations about “who, what, where, when, how” we will “do business together” (aka “Groundrules”);
- Mechanisms to deal with differences, for differences are inevitable, and anticipating them and ways to deal with them when they arise is no less fundamental to ensuring the integrity, continuity, and resiliency of the relationship; and
- Working within a “learn by doing” culture. Adapting and adjusting supports dealing with differences and the principles and their application - building the tools on the back of problems, and then test driving the tools back through the problems to see how they work.

### **Sources of Conflict:**

Our assumptions regarding what causes conflict in general or in a particular dispute have a lot to do with not only how we view conflict but with how we try to settle it. There tend to be three general views of what covers conflict.

**Problems of Communication:** Some tend to view all conflicts as a communications problem. Simply stated, this seems to be based on the assumption that if only we could express ourselves clearly and openly the conflict would disappear.

**Problems of Information and Understanding:** Others view conflict as essentially a problem in understanding, particularly where technical matters are involved. *“If only people understood what I am trying to do and why it is good for them, they wouldn’t be opposed.”* From this perspective what is needed to settle conflict is a combination teacher and sales person—the only problem is to get them to listen.

**Problems of Trade-Offs:** The third general perspective is that everything is a matter of trade-offs. The real question is who gets what—and in its purest form, there is always a limited pie. Some labor negotiations are typical of the approach to dispute settlement that is likely to be followed by those who have this perspective.

**Disputes may well have several causes - each of these perspectives is right - and wrong. Every dispute is likely to have problems of communication, information and understanding, and equity or trade-offs.**

Unfortunately, to focus on one problem exclusively is as likely to make things worse as it is better. Bad communications are likely to be in someone's best interest if they are convinced that they are likely to get the short end of any trade-offs. No one is going to accept more technical information from a source that they suspect is going to do something that hurts them in their backyard.

To further complicate matters, most disputes involve individuals who have different perceptions of what is causing the conflict. This can lead to a new set of disputes over the best way to address the differences that divide them.

The challenge is to approach disputes in a manner that makes it possible to address all of these issues simultaneously. A collaborative process designed and driven by the participants is one such approach.

### **Values and Power:**

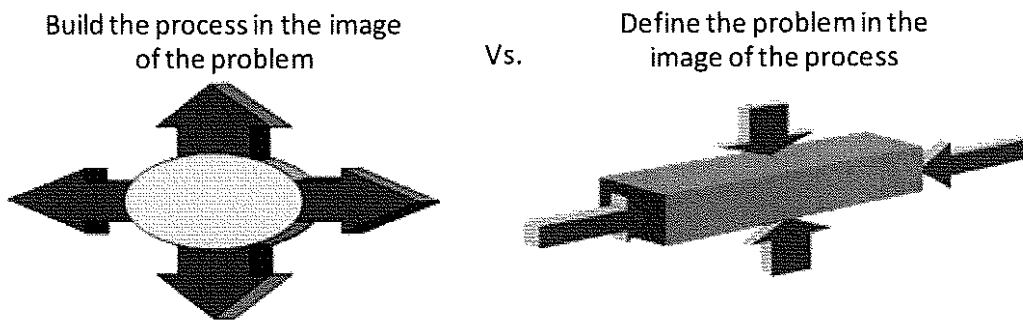
**Values define who we are; power is about what we can do.** We speak of values often in relation to a people and their culture. But values also have a broader application—in contexts as diverse as resources, profession, and scientific, local, national, etc. **Values inform and shape our “views”**—they are both the lenses through which we see others, and the image we project through which they see us.

Achieving agreement is unlikely where more powerful interests dominate the discussion at the expense of weaker parties. In Participant Driven Collaboration, power imbalances are not eliminated but “suspended”. **Power is “parked”** while the process is ongoing. While value differences are always present, power circles around the outside of the room.

*Reaching agreement in the face of value differences is about building bridges, not converting. The goal is not to eliminate differences but to understand and respect them, and explore how people can live and work together in spite of their differences—putting in place bridges across the river, not trying to pull the banks of the river together. Often it is the fact of the difference, and that people share different values, which makes it possible to reach an agreement because what is important to one side may not be as important to the other. Partnerships are not based on eliminating differences, but on accepting them.*

## Process Should Fit the Dispute

PDCs are a tool to build the process in the image of the problem rather than defining the problem in the image of the process. Many attempts to resolve conflicts fail not because of a lack of will to agree or a lack of skills but because the participants have failed to define and agree upon a process that clarifies and embraces mutual expectations, aligns all actions to shared purposes and targets intended outcomes.



## Collaboration Not Compromise

For many the term “compromise” conjures up visions of sacrificing good solutions for expediency and long-term solutions for “quick fixes”. No participant should agree to any outcome that does not enable he or she to discharge their obligations and responsibilities. In every situation there are likely to be interests that cannot and should not be “compromised” as the term is commonly used. These may involve questions of public responsibility and trust, legislation, or scientific and technical matters. **The participant’s duty in the process if such circumstances are to say NO.** Inevitably, failing to do so will rebound for at some point the implementation of the outcome will be frustrated, the integrity of the process impugned, and the conflict re – ignited with even greater intensity.

## Involvement Beyond Immediate Parties

Many conflict resolution training programs focus almost exclusively on “table manners” and reaching agreement between those “at-the-table”. In reality this is often the least difficult area. Far more problematic is the ability of those involved ‘at the table’ to accurately reflect the interests and expectations of their principals, and to shape those expectations in a manner that is conducive to reaching and supporting mutual agreements. Participants in the negotiation must maintain their relationships with their constituents or principals—those whose interests they are seeking to represent.

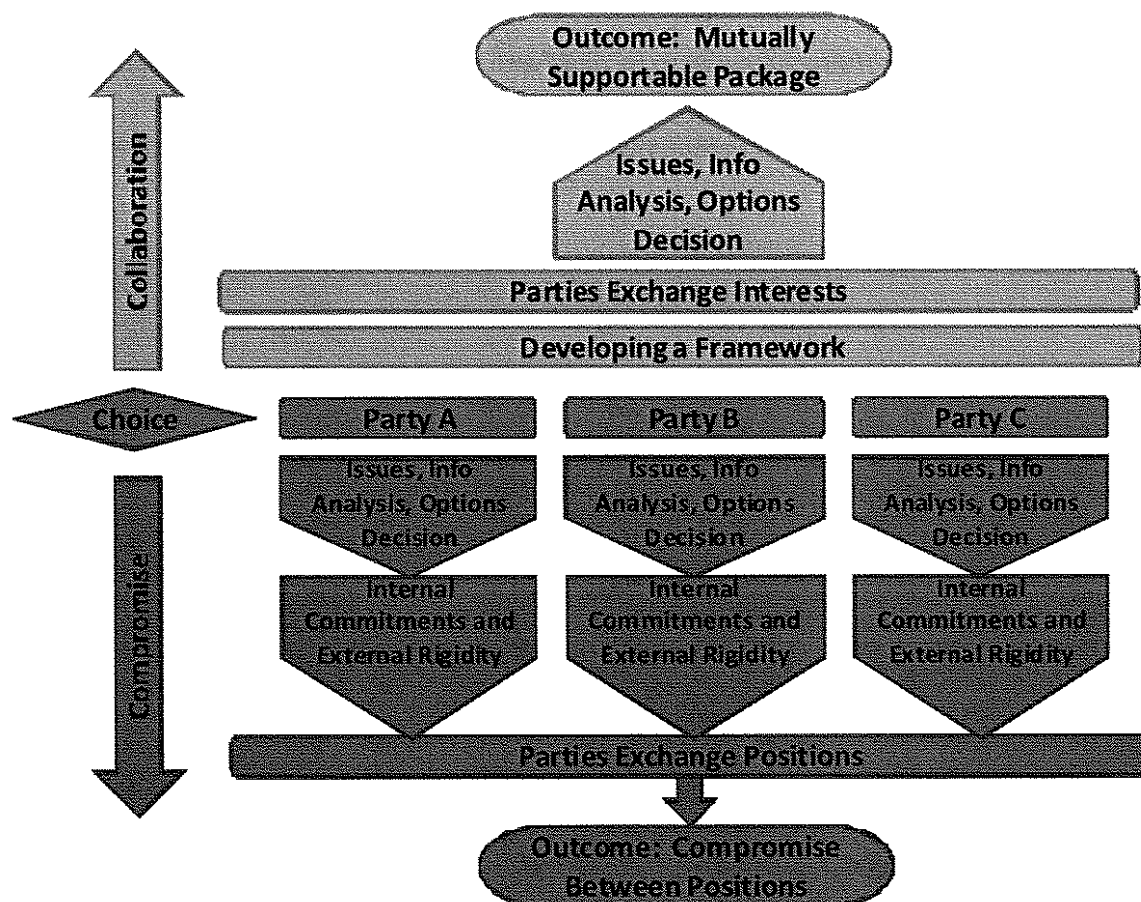
*Critical tools for all representatives ‘at the table’ include the ability to develop a team, and internal support and communication mechanisms to ensure agreements reached externally are supported internally by the organization.*



## Focus on Interests of All Parties

Central to effective collaboration is building agreements between conflicting or competing interests—not to defeat or overpower. A critical participant skill is the ability to focus on the need to find areas of mutual interest and to remember that the real measure of “success” is how well those interests are met. Indeed, it is often in the self-interest of each participant to help ensure that all participants achieve their essential interests if the agreements reached are to be stable. Careful discussion of the issues will often reveal that while interests may not be the same, they are not necessarily contradictory and that there may be means of achieving those interests that are less onerous or even **positive for other parties**.

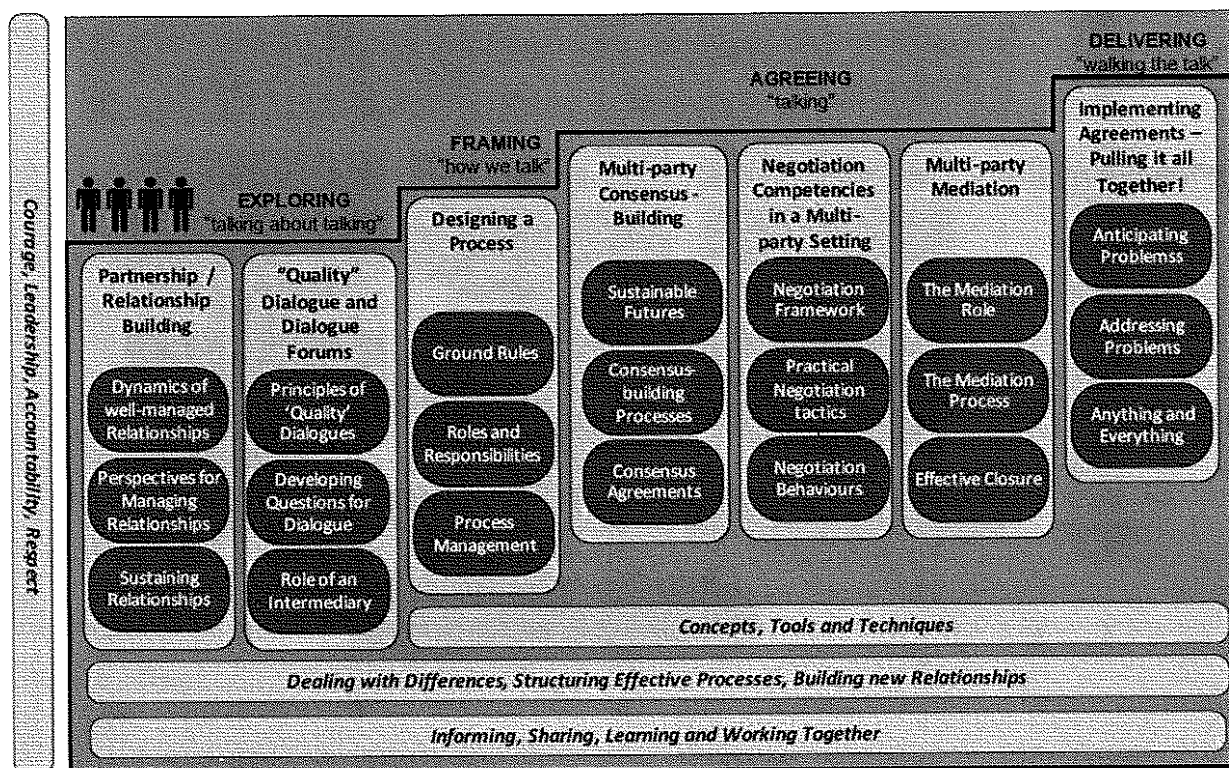
*One of the key tools for reaching agreement is to focus on the “interests” or basic concerns and needs of the parties, rather than the “positions” or the particular means of satisfying those needs that a party may independently devise.*



## Establishing Participant Driven Collaborative Processes

Not all situations are appropriate for using Participant Driven Collaborative process. Experience suggests the following questions should be asked before deciding to proceed:

- Is there a reason to participate in a process?
- Can the subject matter be addressed at this time?
- Can progress be made or issues negotiated?
- Can the major interests be identified?
- Are there representatives who can speak for these interests?
- Can meaningful deadlines be established for reaching agreements?
- Are there incentives for reaching agreement? What are the negative consequences of failing to agree?
- Are the decision makers who will be required to act on the results of this process willing to be involved or act on/respond to any agreement reached during the process?
- Can a viable process be structured? Or, is another decision making process more applicable to resolving these issues?
- Are there preliminary matters that need to be dealt with before the process gets under way (for example, pre-negotiation to get some participants to the table)?
- Are there parallel activities occurring that must be considered (for example, a pending legal action)?



## **The Fours Steps of PDC**

Once these questions are answered, effective collaboration, appropriately employed, should have four distinct stages. Successful completion of the each stage is a necessary precondition to success in the next. Moving from one stage to the next requires the mutual consent of the involved interests and/or parties.

### **Phase 1: Exploring (Assessing) Potential Interest in Participation**

Initial exploratory discussions to determine the interest of prospective parties in participating in collaboration, and to assess whether or not collaboration is appropriate.

### **Phase 2: Developing a Framework - Ensuring Expectations are Clear**

Complex negotiations often fail because the parties never have a clear understanding of “how they will do business together” before they “get down to business “ or they have adopted someone else’s “process” that does not fit their circumstances, or if it does they have never taken the time to understand it. There is a great temptation and pressure to move quickly to “what” - the issues or substance of the conflict - before getting the ‘how’ right. Bending to this pressure commonly causes troublesome and often insurmountable challenges later.

There are other pragmatic reasons to reach agreement on a framework (aka groundrules or TOR):

- It gives each party the opportunity to assess the sincerity of the other’s to work together to reach agreement on the fundamental issues that divide them, and to determine whether investing time, effort, and resources in the initiative is warranted
- If agreement cannot be reached, or reached within a reasonable time period, it provides a reason for the parties to discontinue their efforts, for if it is not possible to reach agreement on “how we are going to do business together’ there are no prospects to “do business”.
- This is a critical point in determining whether there is reason to go forward, or not – and too often the failure to work through this process to an outcome leads to prolonged and protracted negotiations that are destined to fail, but there has been no clear point of exit.
- Or alternatively, parties do embark upon the process of developing the framework and allow it to continue aimlessly until it collapses under the weight of frustration over being “processed to death” ... and typically that assessment may be entirely accurate.

### **A Sample Checklist for establishing Ground Rules**

The expectation is that questions of this nature should be used to design the "ground rules" to suit the problem.

1. What is the degree of support among prospective parties in participating in a negotiation process?
2. Given the issues at hand, is collaboration appropriate?
3. Is the issue in dispute clear? Or does it need to be clarified?
  - a. What interests and parties need to be involved and how will they be represented?
  - b. What issues will be considered?
4. Are there other "stakeholders" - i.e. involved in the dispute, or affected by an outcome? Who are they? Should they be involved? Consulted? Informed?
  - a. How will parties have access to scientific and technical data and expertise?
  - b. When, where and how often will meetings be held? Is the place for the meeting identified? Is it acceptable to both parties - "neutral" and "safe"?
  - c. Will sessions be "open" or "closed"?
5. Is there an explanation of the process to be given at the beginning?
6. Is there background information that can be helpful? What is it? Who will assemble it?
7. Will the process be confidential? Can anyone else be told about the process? Or the outcome?
8. Will the minutes of meetings during collaboration be kept? Recorded? Stored or destroyed?
9. How will the parties deal with external interests?
10. Administrative considerations - is there any needed to give notice to any organization to ensure participants have adequate time to participate?
11. Can either party abandon the process at any time?
12. Do the parties have authority to resolve issues? Or is it clearly understood what the mandate is? Will there be a need to "check-in" or "check back"?
13. What time-lines and deadlines will be established?? What considerations should be taken into account in establishing a timeline?
14. How will agreement or "consensus" be defined? What is the result of a failure to reach consensus?
  - a. What will be the nature or form of any agreement?
  - b. Will a facilitator be required? If so for what purposes and how will the facilitator be selected?
  - c. Who will meet the costs of the process and of participation in the process?
15. Is it agreed that if agreement is reached, it will be binding, and that agreement will be put in writing? But going in is "non-binding" - there is always the option of resorting to alternative processes.
16. May the agreement reached be tentative, subject to confirmation? Confirmed in how many days?

### Phase 3: Managing the Process / Crafting the agreement

If agreement on a framework can be reached on a timely basis, the work of dealing with the substantive issues and attempting to reach outcomes begins. At this stage, there will be a good deal of work completed by the parties between meetings, and it is normal for some of the areas to be hived off to working groups, to report back at a specified time. This would include matters such as:

1. Identify the essential interests of the parties
2. Establish a common data base
3. Make the dispute "bigger" to accommodate the interests of all parties; develop joint proposals and alternatives
4. Recognize the need for discussions "away from the table"
5. Assemble "package proposals"
6. Avoid closure on single issue agreements and focus on the need for agreement on a total package
7. Ensure that constituents are kept informed and support emerging solutions and accommodations
8. Know when to stop agreeing
9. Agree on where there are disagreements -- and what they are
10. Make sure that agreements are "pre-ratified"
11. Find and confirm the agreement - in writing

### Phase 4. Implementing the Agreement and Monitoring Results

Along with attempting to reach agreement, PDC must deal with implementation. It is at this stage the process manager/facilitator needs to help the parties ensure that the understandings and agreements that have been reached survive into the future. Several key features need to be considered:

**The timetable and funding for agreements reached** - The participants should propose a schedule for implementing the results of the process so that it is understood how long an agreed result will take to be put in place and how long it will last. It is necessary to address the costs of implementation and monitoring.

**The monitoring of results** - Given that the agreement will take time to implement, the participants should deal with a process for review and revision which outlines who will be responsible for monitoring, review, and, if necessary, renegotiating parts of the agreement.

## Learning From Doing: Key Lessons from Fisheries Conflicts

In June 2009, the ISDF held a “Governance Think Tank” where participants worked from several ‘vignettes’ that had been developed, fictionalized from real situations each had shared in advance of the session. The goal of the session was to use the vignettes to identify key lessons and questions remaining for improving processes and decision making.

### Vignette #1:

*A local watershed fishery with a history of conflict decides to try a new approach and a roundtable is formed. Participants tackle issues across the table... and they make a lot of progress. The result is a sharing of TAC and fishery implementation rules that everybody can live with, and while each sees itself as having made a compromise, much better relationships and better run fisheries have resulted.*

*A few years go by before a year of very low TACs comes about. The local DFO manager’s interpretation of the Allocation Policy suggests there is not enough TAC for a commercial opportunity by any sector. This is “announced” at a preseason meeting... which riles the others as “not consistent with how the table operates”. Tensions rise. There are demands for alternative arrangements and threats of protest and illegal fishing.*

*The manager feels he is doing his job and that it was time for a tough decision. Conservation comes first. Period. And he doesn’t see any “win”. If he hadn’t closed the fishery everyone would have been on his case for not having done so, and now that he has done so, everyone is on his case for doing it. He is overheard saying “Roundtables are a nice thing but when hard choices need to be made hard decisions need to follow. Doesn’t everyone get that?” His colleague, who is thinking more about the mood he will face when he is out patrolling on the water blurts out: “I wonder whether there may have been a better way to do this that would not have created so much trouble”.*

**Reaching a shared understanding around “purpose” is key to working together effectively.**

- a. What is the nature of the activities and decisions that need to be made, and at what “scale”?
- b. What impact do ‘local’ versus mixed stock fisheries have on decision-making within scales?
- c. How do the decisions at each scale link with decisions at other scales? I.e., how will decisions at a local scale connect to and integrate with regional scales?

### Vignette #2:

*A local fisheries round table had been working fairly well. Relationships were built, catch monitoring improved to the point sectors trust each other's numbers, there was much less poaching, and groups were working together to restore the system. A new fishery manager came in as co-chair of the round table. He calls a meeting billed as "consultation" for planning of an upcoming commercial fishery. This takes the interests by surprise as there was no mention of this at the previous meeting, and an agenda was sent out with no discussion (rather than discussed ahead of time which had been the practice). The non-commercial interests at the table oppose DFO coming to "consult", they demand other fishing opportunities be discussed at the same time, and they eventually "boycott" the meeting. The process breaks down and things go back to rounds of individual meetings, everybody ramping up their "bullshit to outask the other", and when it is "all filtered through DFO nobody will know what's fact or fiction". "However good we thought we were, it sure didn't take much to throw us off track. If that is how this collaborative management thing works, it won't work long. Its like putting up a building without a foundation. It will blow down in the first storm. That's what happened to us".*

### Vignette #3:

*At a recent multi-sector meeting, a lengthy analysis and recommendations package was not made available until the morning of the meeting. When the participants arrived to their complete astonishment they were presented with a twenty page document including several graphs. Apologies were extended with the explanation that due to competing priorities and lack of staff, the work had not been done by Science as quick as expected. It was further explained that the person who had prepared the material was not able to be here as a result of a double booking unknown until late the afternoon before. This left the advisors with no time to understand the information, the implications nor any time to consult with other advisors within their sector. The meeting did not open on a happy note. One of the participants opened up with a sharp attack.*

**Decision making processes, and the different choices and implications, must be clear and understood.** Otherwise, the ability to work collaboratively is compromised.

- a. How do you "get going in a good way?"
- b. What are the different decision-making approaches and the implications of each?
- c. What is consultation? What is consensus? How do they differ?
- d. How should constitutional rights be dealt with in the context of decision-making processes?
- e. What is the role of legislated mandates and responsibilities? Of IHPC/IFMP?

**Inconsistency or the appearance of it generates conflict and compromises the ability to work together collaboratively.**

**When collaboration is working effectively concerns on all sides about the duty to consult diminishes. The opposite is just as true.**

*What are you guys trying to pull here? There is no use having a meeting. We are wasting our time. I am not sure if I would have understood this even if it had been sent beforehand, but this I do know – some of our technicians could have explained it to me. More likely I would have brought him with me*

*Nobody gave us any sense that this meeting was going to involve this technical information. I thought we were coming here to discuss the big picture issues around specific challenges that we are facing around this mixed stock fishery on the coast given the low returns .A lot of guys are going to be off the water this year on the coast, and many won't have their food fish up river. Now all this last minute technical stuff – what are you trying to do? Confuse us all?*

*The response was straightforward. No, that is very much the conversation we want to have. We thought you would find it helpful to have this background, but it is only background, nothing more. There was no intention to confuse, only to inform.*

*Maybe that's the way you see it, but this stuff must be important as far as you are concerned and if some decisions are being made because of this information I want to know what it is all about first before I say anything . This makes me suspicious as hell.*

*Why wasn't this meeting cancelled and rescheduled. I have wasted two hours getting here, for nothing. And I'm not even sure we have the right people here. Let's talk about who needs to be here, and get this thing rescheduled with who we need in the room.*

#### **Vignette #4:**

*Under a multi-stakeholder process, it was made clear by the Department and the Band that FSC planning, results and allocations would not be a topic of discussion but that this would happen bilaterally - government to government. After a few years of multi-stakeholder discussions, the groups become very comfortable with each other, and information on FSC planning was provided by the Band. It was ironic, because the Department had always reminded everyone it was private discussion, but on their own the Band offered to explain it.*

**Information, and how it is developed and used, is another critical factor in working together effectively.**

Information must find its way across layers and circles if everybody who needs to be in the loop and onside is to find their way there. This requires that it be shared in ways that are understandable and accessible, and engaging the different players and participants to facilitate that information sharing.

#### **Understanding “what happens where” is key.**

Working together effectively depends on understanding what happens inside the different sectors, and externally in interactions across sectors.

- b. Who and how is it determined “who should be involved” and “when” and “what”?

#### **Recognizing the importance of reviewing and adjusting and adapting as situations evolve and change is another important factor in building collaborative arrangements.**

- a. An essential challenge is to find the balance between flexibility and consistency.



#### Vignette #5:

*Throughout my career, sectors have been against each other. But after a few years of these groups being at the same table, and talking about issues face to face and most times reaching workable agreements (give and take on both sides), they can form a strange (strange to me) relationship. Once I witnessed a First Nations leader say to a commercial fisherman, "good luck" (this was a genuine remark). Forever etched in my mind, that two groups who's history have been directly opposed to each other (and I have seen groups like these in some vicious arguments), come to a common goal and be congenial and respectful to wish a person good luck. Simply amazing - a career highlight.*

**Recognizing and respecting differences – and understanding them - is critical to moving to a place where people can live together in spite of their differences.**

Developing approaches to resolving disputes that everybody buys into is vital because every relationship inevitably involves the potential for differences and how they are dealt with will determine the durability and resiliency of the relationship.

- a. Why is it important to agree on how a disagreement will be dealt with before it arises?

**Courtesies are important – for small things to some are big things to another.**

#### Vignette #6:

*When the Cowichan Round table was lamenting what the "terminal area of responsibility was" for the terms of reference, most parties had a vague general geographical description. It was the non First Nations groups that suggested a clause be inserted so future Treaty negotiations would not be affected. This type of action assisted greatly to the openness and trust for each group towards each other. It is this type of consideration that leads to more openness, where each group does not have to watch the derriere every second of the meeting. Another note from these series of meetings, was the recreational fishers were adamant on a certain line boundary and did not want to go beyond it. After much discussion and suggestion both operationally and biologically why this was not practical, it was discovered that the extending the boundary outward would impinge on an adjacent recreational area, and one recreational group did not want to cross another groups area. Ironically, the other stakeholders never realized the recreational group had "ownership" areas, and again open everyone eyes to other groups process. We often view just from our own eyes, and not from others, and if you politely try and get to the root of the problem, quite often you can solve it.*

**Maintaining an "institutional memory" of the collaboration is key.**

Over time people and circumstances change, and the collective memory dissipates, sometimes differentially among groups as people and situations change differently over time, but the legacy of this is often tension.

Deepening the understanding of what it takes to ‘collaborate’ across differences internally in an organization or externally among groups requires competency development through training. Perhaps joint training where everyone is in the same room at the same time with the added benefit of having a neutral place to start “listening” (which is at the heart of collaboration) and talking with each other outside of that which most specifically divides them.

Leadership is essential. However leadership within and across sectors in collaborative governance/management will require training. Reaching a level of professionalism is critical if collaborative structures are to work and deliver the expectations being suggested for them.

## CONCLUSION

The impact that decisions involving sustainability have on the quality of life for current and future generations have prompted many people to demand the right to meaningfully participate in decision making processes. The approaches and concepts outlined in this Guidebook ensures the people affected are involved from the start in identifying and agreeing on issues, sharing different perspectives, and making choices with which people can live.

For Pacific salmon fisheries, opportunities for building collaboration exist at all stages of decision making - from the establishment of broad policies, to long range planning, throughout the annual planning cycle (pre, in and post season), to particularly thorny issues such as allocation and monitoring and compliance. The approaches help decision makers and users to be proactive by anticipating and avoiding disputes and problems.

As inspiration to us all on through the rough waters to follow, we conclude with a recent contribution from one of the most well respected and experienced leaders in this field (see following).

***"Choosing Our Common Future: Democracy's True Test"***

**William D. Ruckelshaus**

**JOHN H. CHAFEE MEMORIAL LECTURE ON SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT, 2005**

**National Council for Science and the Environment**

First and Fifth Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency;  
Chairman of the World Resources Institute;  
Chairman of the Meridian Institute;  
Member of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

These are just two examples of the power of collaboration with which I am familiar. There are many more. At last count, there were more than 60 of these processes under way in the Colorado River Basin alone. It is essential to understand that each of these efforts is unique to the issues, the locale, even the personalities involved. This approach is absolutely not something you can stamp out with a cookie cutter. Nevertheless, even at this preliminary stage it is possible to derive some general lessons about how to set up a successful cooperative project.

First, these processes need time to work. People must develop trust in an atmosphere where trust has often badly eroded. Be patient, you don't get interest on your trust account unless you make a deposit.

Second, every important stakeholder must be brought in at the very start of the process. Everyone has to be in the boat rowing. You can't leave anyone on shore, because those are the people most apt to roll rocks off the bridges as the boat goes by. When you include all interests you almost guarantee that the result will transcend the sterile posturing of single-interest politics and that people will learn the habit of listening before passing judgment. Involvement has to be early because, remember, you're operating in an atmosphere of deep distrust. No one wants to feel co-opted by some prior set of assumptions or decisions. The very point of the process is that everyone gets to see the cards dealt to all the players who can affect the outcome; everyone gets to kick the tires on the technical issues.

Third, the sponsor of the process should be a relevant governmental authority and it should signal in unambiguous terms that the process is the only game in town, and that what comes out of the process will more-or-less prevail as public policy. Then everyone must play or risk being left out. The government needs to set the arena — then the process has the best chance to succeed. This is often, but not always, crucial in order to get former opponents around the same table to work together in good faith. If one or another party thinks it can get another bite at the apple in some other forum, they will hold back from the full cooperation necessary for success. Let me note here that these processes are utterly different from the typical public meeting, where people state their positions and afterward are under no obligation to listen to any opposing statements. In collaborative processes you are motivated to listen carefully to the other side — because you need all that information to be able to move forward as a group.

Fourth, it is usually essential that the alternative to collaborative agreement is unacceptable to the parties. There must be a stick along with the carrot. The unknown terrors of the Endangered Species Act drove the parties to the

extraordinary efforts in Puget Sound. There the courts had been tried for years, and while useful, people had come to believe they are ineffective at developing a comprehensive solution that adequately reflects the interests of the parties who have something at stake. So even though many have entered into the collaboration with some trepidation, they have been guided by the advice of Mae West who once said, “Whenever I have been faced with the choice of two evils, I always pick the one I haven’t tried before.”

All of this is not code for no enforcement. In fact, I believe that participation in these processes often sets up the necessary social conditions without which the public will not support enforcement. In the Puget Sound example, the people who have stepped up and committed to taking the right actions for their watersheds are already pressuring the participating government agencies to stomp on the foot draggers. This would absolutely not have happened two years ago.

Fifth, professional facilitation and access to extensive technical advice is essential. We’ve learned that ordinary citizens have an amazing ability to filter through scientific information that may contain contradictions and come up with reasonable findings. Now, there’s a somewhat subtle point about the involvement of government agencies in providing technical support for facilitating these processes. I said you need the backing of government in these things, and you do, but while government can initiate and participate in such processes, it is often best for the actual cooperative decision-making group to operate under the auspices of a nongovernmental, neutral, organization. The point, after all, is that lots of people don’t trust the government. The government has to let go. Let the citizens decide how to get there.

One approach to providing a neutral venue for assistance in collaborative problem solving is the use of major state universities. At the Institute of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Wyoming and the Policy Consensus Center of the University of Washington and Washington State University, efforts are underway to assist governments at all levels and citizens in solving intractable problems through the use of collaborative processes. The universities offer scientific and technical help and knowledge about how collaboration can help. In the interest of full disclosure, I have been involved in the creation of both university centers. I know they are providing a real benefit to both states, and the effort is spreading to other centers of learning nationwide. A recent survey by the Policy Consensus Institute at Portland State University counts more than 60 such programs at some stage of development across the country. I am convinced that every state should have at least one university offering its intellectual assets and process expertise to assist citizens and governments in resolving disputes.

Sixth, you have to confront economics in some detail. What you don’t want is a trivial ‘feel-good’ agreement on vague principles that leads to no action. Make no mistake; these processes are ultimately about who gets what. Their real genius lies in discovering that different sides can each get what they need, that the pie can be artfully cut so as to be bigger than we thought. This is known in the facilitation business as going from OR to AND. We stop saying fish or irrigation, jobs or wildlife, and we start saying fish and irrigation, jobs and wildlife. From that change, everything else flows. For instance, we have a comprehensive funding analysis on the financial needs of Puget Sound if the fish are to recover. It will be part of the recovery plan submitted to NOAA.

Finally, such a process must have as its goal some deep and meaningful solution. It must, in the words of Donald Snow of Montana’s Northern Lights Foundation, “break through the shallow facade of rhetoric and reach to the heart of the issue.” Only then, when people are united despite their differences by hard-earned trust, does the astounding political power of collaboration become effective.

Government officials and employees have to be trained to do and say the right thing or these processes can be strangled in the crib. The government needs to be supportive of a sound outcome. One expression of cynicism or non-support by one well-placed bureaucrat can blow up an otherwise hopeful exercise. They need to have the confidence to live by the old saying, "you gain power by spreading it around."

Even where you have all the elements of success and you have carefully tailored your process to the individuals, the situation, and the hoped for outcome, you can fail. But in the kind of areas I outlined a moment ago — non-point source pollution or salmon recovery, and there are many more — we have not succeeded with any other approach for a very long time.

Also, even where the desired outcome was found to be unreachable, experience shows us that these processes contribute important knowledge, fuel trust building, and enhance problem solving capacity for those who have participated.

If democracy or freedom is to succeed, we must keep trying. We should try collaboration.

This town ought to be sick of its absence by now. We have huge, potentially divisive issues in front of us — from social security to health care, to education, to Iraq. Citizens are utilizing

democratic processes to solve problems in their neighborhoods, their communities, and their states. Like true, small d, democrats, we should actively follow their lead. After all, these democratic principles outlined above have stood the test of time, and can be applied to a host of problems.

By participating in democratic solutions to their problems, citizens will learn more about the process of freedom as well as the complexities their public officials must face. Their experiences should improve their understanding of the duties and skills of citizenship and make them more tolerant and supportive of their politicians.

Having said all that, I should emphasize that cooperative decision-making processes are by no means panaceas for every problem. They are extremely difficult to bring off, frustrating and demanding to participate in, often lengthy and expensive for their members, and they can easily fail. They can fail, for example, when short-term economic interests overwhelm all other factors. Regional land-use planning efforts that call for some property owners to be deprived of a significant fraction of the value of their holdings with no compensation are in this class.

After the last election, some compensation for governmentally caused diminished land value is a right in Oregon and could well spread to Washington state and beyond. And we should also remember that this movement toward collaborative decision-making is growing in poisoned soil. Throughout the nation, among the national environmental groups and industry associations, there are talented, dedicated people who have been trained in a tradition of combat, accustomed to fight for total victory in pursuit of deeply-held beliefs.

They like going to court. They will not easily yield their historic leadership or work in good faith with traditional enemies. This characterizes some parts of the Puget Sound effort. Does this mean that cooperative efforts are doomed? No, for ultimately, in my view, American pragmatism will prevail. If cooperative processes are seen to work over the long run, if they really free us from the tyranny of the either-or, if neither side feels co-opted, if they

continue to yield creative solutions that allow the extraction of livelihood from natural resources while at the same time preserve environmental values, then they will establish a permanent place among our civic institutions.

Meanwhile, late last summer, the President issued Executive Order #13352 (I can see you are all intimately familiar with Executive Order #13352). In it he ordered the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency to implement laws relating to the environment and natural resources in a manner that promotes “cooperative conservation.” By that he means and I quote, “actions that relate to use, enhancement, and enjoyment of natural resources, protection of the environment, or both, and that involve collaborative activity among federal, state, local, and tribal governments, private, for profit and not-for-profit institutions, other non-governmental entities, and individuals.”

The executive order then goes on to spell out how it applies to federal activities and schedules a White House Conference on Cooperative Management this spring. I think the administration is on the right track. I don’t care whether they were politically motivated or not. People often asked me when I was at EPA under Presidents Nixon or Reagan, whether either President really supported the mission of EPA. My answer was always the same: “He’ll support our mission as long as the American people do. As soon as the people forget about it, so will he.”

So what? That’s the way democracy is supposed to work. What the people say they want from their government is usually what they get. If they want systems of restraint that define their freedom within the need to preserve and protect their environment, their government will respond.

The example of America making democracy work in this and other areas will tempt people to come, to learn, to embrace our system, and not to confront it. The environment and natural resource problems we face are worth solving for their own sake. If we can solve them by using the processes and pronouncements of democracy and freedom, we will have done the world, ourselves, and our values a great favor.

Thomas Jefferson once pointed out that if the people appeared not enlightened enough to exercise their control of government, the solution was not to take away the control but to “inform their discretion by education.” The collaborative processes that are springing up around the country are doing just that, giving to large numbers of citizens a new comprehension of the complexity involved in government decisions, out of which has got to come a heightened appreciation of, and tolerance for, the necessary work of government.

If these processes work, if they spread, if they become an indispensable part of government at all levels, it will hold out hope that, once again, America will be ready for self-government and we will continue to show the way for a world desperately in need of democracy’s blessings.  
<http://ncseonline.org/NCSEconference/2005conference/page.cfm?FID798>