What the Decision Process Is All About

Decision Process Guidebook

U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

SPRING 2002

Overview Contents

When you first learned to drive, you thought about minor actions: putting in the clutch, pushing on the accelerator, and shifting gears. Now the process is automatic. But when you take a defensive driving class, you revisit the basic steps. Decisionmaking is much the same. You can practice "defensive planning" by working through each step of the process and communicating those steps to others. Then you can use the process almost automatically.

How Do You Define Success?

How Do You Define Success?

One of the biggest challenges of decisionmaking is to keep focused on the real goal: developing workable solutions. Studies which produce data and reports and meet schedules may not actually solve the problem. Pro-posed solutions which cannot be implemented or that fall apart after being implemented are not successful solutions.

A successful solution solves the problem. The decision process identifies underlying needs, and the solution addresses these needs. The solution will not address every participant's need or desire, but it will at least address the identified objective. Note that the process may not provide the only or complete solution.

Recognize success any place you can. Recognizing and celebrating small successes during the process will mark your progress, help indicate where you are going, and develop motivation (see "Milestones" later in this *Overview*).

Sometimes, a successful process will conclude that no actions need to be taken. This can be a frightening prospect as it may appear that you have wasted time and money. However, documenting the process to show why no action is the best solution can provide a good data base for future needs or related actions in the area. This documentation will not only provide insights into similar problems but also build your confidence in the process.

Solving the problem sometimes means leaving it alone. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Successes

ACHIEVING SUCCESS

Some of the key ingredients for a successful decision process are listed below. It may be impossible to include every ingredient on a given project; but keep in mind that the fewer ingredients you have, the lower your chances of success.

- **A fair, open, and honest process.**—If participants see the process is fair, open, and honest, the solution will more likely survive challenges and get commitment. An open process considers and makes known the concerns and agendas of all participants. A fair process ensures that everyone has an equal opportunity to be involved. An honest process avoids pre-formed decisions and acknowledges the political as well as the technical influences.

COMMUNITIES:

These are any groups affected by or capable of supporting the solution.

- **Participation from the community.**—Without a voice in the process, **communities** will probably not accept or support the solution. This will lead to apathy or resentment so that, at best, the solution is neglected. At worst, it is sabotaged. After the community has helped provide a solution, local participants will probably help support that solution and adapt it to meet future needs. Local involvement may also provide more insights into the underlying needs, find out what requires consideration, avoid unnecessary analysis, and create more options.

- **Flexibility to respond to changes.**—Be willing to change as the study progresses; otherwise, someone else will change things for you. The process needs to consciously provide for needs, objectives, participants, and data which will evolve as the study moves toward a solution.

A quick band-aid will not satisfy long-term needs.

- **The solution will continue to work.**—Make sure the community continues to use the solution to meet the need after you are gone. Defining a reasonable length of time for the solution to function and planning for future operations is essential to measuring the solution's success. If the end solution is physical, then people must be in place to maintain and operate facilities. If the end solution is institutional, then organizations, partnerships, or other groups must be willing to continue the institutional solution and to ensure that it still meets the needs. Building flexibility into the solution will allow it to be adapted to meet the changing future needs.

***Consensus Building*—Getting everyone to support a solution and unanimously work toward implementing it.**

***Consent Building*—Making sure no one actively opposes or tries to stop the project.**

- **Everyone has consented to the solution.**—While consensus is great, sometimes consenting (agreeing not to fight) is all you can do and is enough for a workable solution. Build consent by ensuring that everyone can live with the solution and no one will bitterly oppose it. This crucial step will involve negotiating, listening, and making tradeoffs. Often people will agree to a solution they don't like if it has been arrived at fairly.

- **It is documented.**—Document the process and solution so that you can:
  - > Quickly see who decided what
  - > Build on the analyses and solution when the needs change
  - > Clearly record commitments made by all participants
  - > Apply the lessons gained from the process elsewhere
  - > Answer challenges to the process
  - > Accumulate a track record that builds credibility and points the way to future successes

HANDLING SUCCESS

Once you have successfully set up an ongoing solution, don't just walk away! Integrate the solution into other programs and processes. Each problem will incorporate successful elements differently.

Analyze your success and other successes to see what elements you can carry to the next project. What worked? What didn't? Why? Share the gift of your lessons throughout the process—it will save others time and money. They will return the favor and save you time and money in your next process.

SUCCESS:

You may need to change the status quo or the current mindset before you can solve the problem.

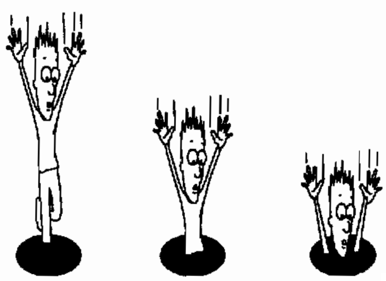
CAUTION:

Don't assume that your success will automatically transfer to the next problem.

Failures

AVOIDING FAILURE

At times, you may find the decisionmaking process blurred by political demands, unexpected conflicts, environmental issues, the desire for a quick fix, and sometimes just plain inexperience. (See "Hurdles" later in this *Overview*.) Arguably, however, some of the greatest pits a process can fall into are:



PITFALL:

Forgetting that you and everyone else are there to solve a problem is the biggest pitfall of all.

- **Losing focus.**—This usually happens if you let your own or someone else's personal agenda replace or interfere with identified and verified needs. Dangers here are creating a too costly solution by overestimating the need or falling short of an acceptable solution by underestimating the need. *You must focus on meeting the need!*

- **Cart before the horse.**—An old problem is developing or anticipating a solution before the facts are considered and the data are analyzed. Through knowledge, experience, and expertise, a probable solution may be seen very early, but such a decision will likely fail if challenged—often after considerable time and money have been spent. *Shortcuts produce holes in supporting data!*

- **Relying on "textbook" rules.**—Developing alternatives is more than a "cause and effect" or "if–then" relationship; it is a creative and dynamic process that often results in iterative actions. Activities within each step may uncover a justifiable reason for repeating some previous action. You and the team must be flexible and adaptive; workable tools, methodologies, or techniques may well vary from one situation to another. *There are no universal rules in solving problems!*

- **Forgetting Reclamation's role.**—To manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public. *To fulfill this role, Reclamation must serve as an open, fair, and honest broker for all those who have an interest in water resources—regardless of their values.*

- **Level of detail.**—Reclamation studies encompass many levels of detail. It is vital that you and the rest of the team work on similar or complementary levels appropriate to the situation. This ensures that all aspects of a study are congruent. *Detail must be appropriate to the situation!*

- **Biased attitudes.**—Biases inhibit impartial judgment. Any display of such an attitude will give credence to the idea long held by many publics that "Reclamation has already made up its mind." *Prove that you are openminded!*

- **Superiority thinking (intellectual, experienced, or otherwise).**—The sense of superiority creates blinders that shield us from the sensitivity needed to understand others. Without this understanding, there is no support for the solution or process. *Believe that others can contribute!*

HANDLING FAILURE

Failures should be used as a guide toward successes.

- Respond as early as possible.

- Be realistic—recognize when something isn't working.

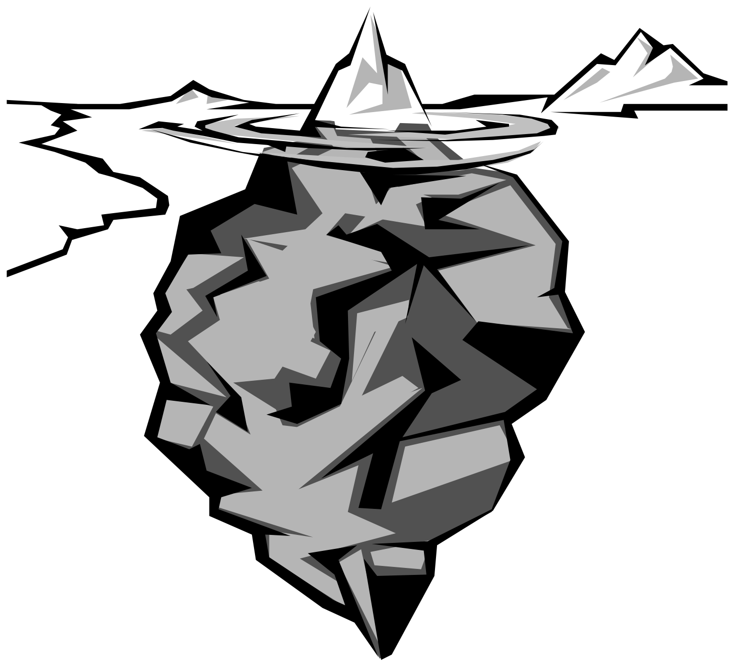
- Recognize that you may have to go back to the drawing board—only now you have more knowledge to deal with the problem.

- If you can't fix the problem, end the process as quickly as possible—both politically and technically.

- Examine why something hasn't worked (figuring this out counts as a success).

- Apply the lessons you've gained to other projects.

What Is the Context?



What Is the Context?

Understanding the backdrop of government operations and appropriations will help participants understand the context for Reclamation decisions.

The Constitutional Setting

Power ultimately rests with the people under our Constitution. People elect the Congress and President to represent them. People may seek satisfaction through the judicial system if they believe that the laws are not being carried out in accordance with the Constitution.

Important checks and balances operate between the three branches of government.

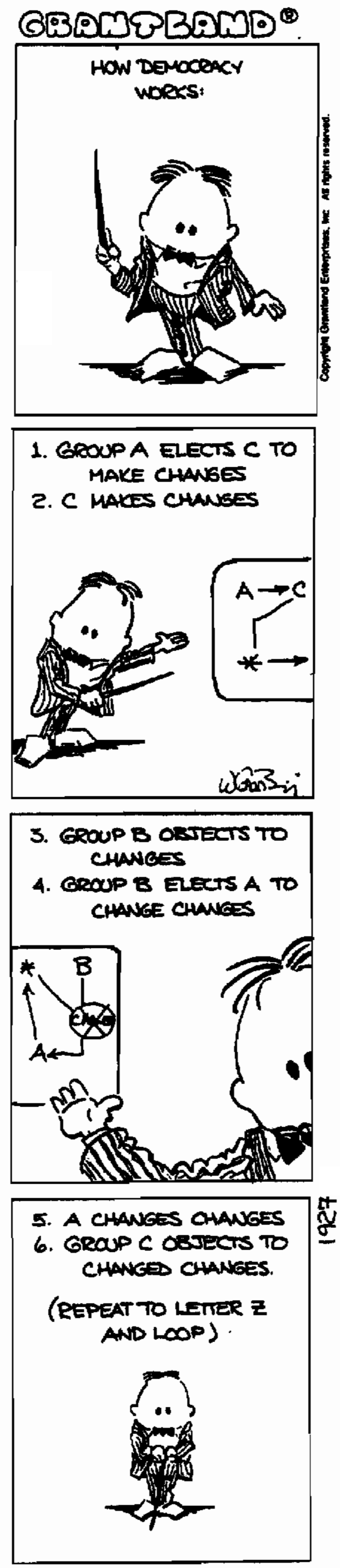
- Within the **legislative** branch, the House and Senate pass bills for the President to sign. These laws grant authority and appropriate funds for Reclamation to undertake resource management activities.

- Within the **executive** branch, the President signs the bills. Reclamation is an agency of the executive branch and carries out the laws of the land concerned with water and related resources in the West on behalf of the President.

- Within the **judicial** branch, interested private parties may use the courts to seek clarification of the law's application of the law when specific programs or projects are perceived to be in conflict with other, more general laws.

Laws authorizing activities can originate from Reclamation, which works with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), to include initiatives in the President's program. These are then presented to the Congress. The Congress can also initiate authorizations, usually in response to an interest group working with members of the Congress to implement a general policy or achieve a specific purpose.

Through this system, the people play a pivotal role in resource allocation and management decisions. Individuals and organizations that think we should be doing something differently can challenge our processes through the courts, lobby the Congress to change the laws, or write the President about his policies.



The Federal Budget

The U.S. Constitution specifies that all spending authority originates in the Congress. However, the President traditionally develops a budget and proposes it to the Congress. The Congress then modifies these requests and develops an annual Federal budget. When a majority in both the House and Senate pass the budget and the President signs it, it becomes the Federal budget.

Without funding, you don't have a decision.

The Congress can change anything in the President's proposed budget. However, Congressmen usually add or delete items in response to policy goals, local constituents, or interest groups. After the Congress has passed the budget and the President has signed it, Reclamation uses the funds to carry out the authorized activities.

Reclamation's Budget

The budget cycle takes at least 2 years. Start early and keep communicating with partners.

Proposed activities to solve water resource problems stem from various sources: the public, Reclamation field staff, local governments, etc.

During the agency's budget formulation process, proposed actions and budgets are defined and ranked according to regional and administrative priorities.

Reclamation's budget now goes through eight steps:

1. The public asks for help to address water resource management problems and needs—through local governments, private organizations, or other avenues. Reclamation's field staff translates those needs and other identified problems into proposed activities leading to workable solutions.

2. Two years before the fiscal year the budget goes into effect, Reclamation sorts through these proposals and develops the Commissioner's proposed budget.

OMB

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is part of the executive branch.

3. The Department of the Interior (DOI) considers budgets for all the departmental agencies and develops the Secretary of the Interior's proposed budget to submit to **OMB**, which is part of the Executive Branch.

4. OMB considers the proposed budgets from all the departments and develops the President's budget.

5. The President presents this budget to the Congress about 9 months before the fiscal year will start.

6. Congress considers the President's budget in subcommittees and committees and holds hearings on key budget items. Each subcommittee and committee has an appropriations ceiling; thus, they have a limited amount of dollars to spend on the programs under their purview. These committees consider the public's input and requests, modify the President's budget, and develop a series of appropriation bills.

7. Congress votes on these bills. If the House of Representatives and Senate bills differ, then a conference committee is set up to resolve the differences. The passed bills are then sent to the President to sign.

8. The President can either sign or veto these bills. Vetoed bills are sent back to the Congress for reconsideration and revisions.

After the budget is adopted, Reclamation uses the funds to carry out authorized activities.

SUCCESS:

Redefine accomplishments in the budget—look at accomplishments in terms of managing a complex environment rather than building a project.

Program and Activity Budgets

Within the approved Federal budget, each funded activity is treated as a line item with a specified amount of money. Each office or activity leader develops a program or project budget to plan how these funds will be spent. Formulation of the Federal budget may be driven by some unconscious **assumptions or misconceptions** that need to be overcome when developing activity budgets, such as:

- **The solution is already known.**—Line items in the budget are sometimes interpreted as pre-assuming specific physical solutions. For example, calling a line item allocation "Green Apple Dam Study" may lead someone to presuppose that building or improving Green Apple Dam is the only (or best) way to provide a water supply. Looking beyond the line item name can open up other solutions (e.g., water conservation).

ASSUMPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS:

Examine what you think about the budget process—you may find surprising ways to be more effective.

Budgets and authority may be coming from multiple sources (Federal, State, partners, etc.).

Ensure that everyone (the Congress, supervisors, team members, and partners) understands why and how Reclamation funds are being spent. Partners can help Reclamation supervisors and team members understand how the partnership is working, what they have to offer, and what Reclamation can offer to more effectively address problems.

- **Each agency acts alone to solve problems.**—Money set aside for a single agency planning effort is sometimes better spent working with partners rather than attempting to work in a vacuum. Meeting with groups and helping build partnerships can:

  > Address current and future problems

  > Save funds (other participants may already have the data you need)

  > Build constituencies which, in turn, can ask the Congress for funding and support

- **The problem is static.**—An activity takes at least 2 years to get funded—requests go through a lengthy decision process at various levels of government. In the meantime, problems and contexts may have changed. Although conditions may differ, managers are often evaluated on how closely estimates and expenditures match. Comparing these conditions may help managers form more flexible and effective estimates and explain changes in spending priorities.

National Environmental Policy Act

Much, if not all, of what Reclamation does requires some form of compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and associated Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations. Thus, it is important to be aware of NEPA requirements. Considerable time and expense will be saved in solving problems if along the way you frequently ask "How does NEPA fit here?" or "Will this action (or data) also help fulfill NEPA requirements?"

NEPA is designed to foster excellent decisions, based on considering the human environment. NEPA/CEQ encourages public participation by requiring notices of intent, review periods, and public hearings for environmental impact statements. This provides a good starting place for balanced decisions. However, simply following the letter of NEPA/CEQ requirements will not be enough for an effective problem-solving effort.

The decision process we describe here fits well within actions required by NEPA/CEQ. In fact, documents and actions required by NEPA/CEQ are good tools for problem solving even if your problem-solving effort does not require NEPA/CEQ compliance. Scoping (described in the next section) helps determine needs, objectives, resources and constraints, potential options, and requirements for screening criteria. Public participation also helps find and develop alternatives.

The decision steps provide a framework for the NEPA process—to help explain how alternatives were formulated, what impacts were analyzed, and how and why alternatives were evaluated.

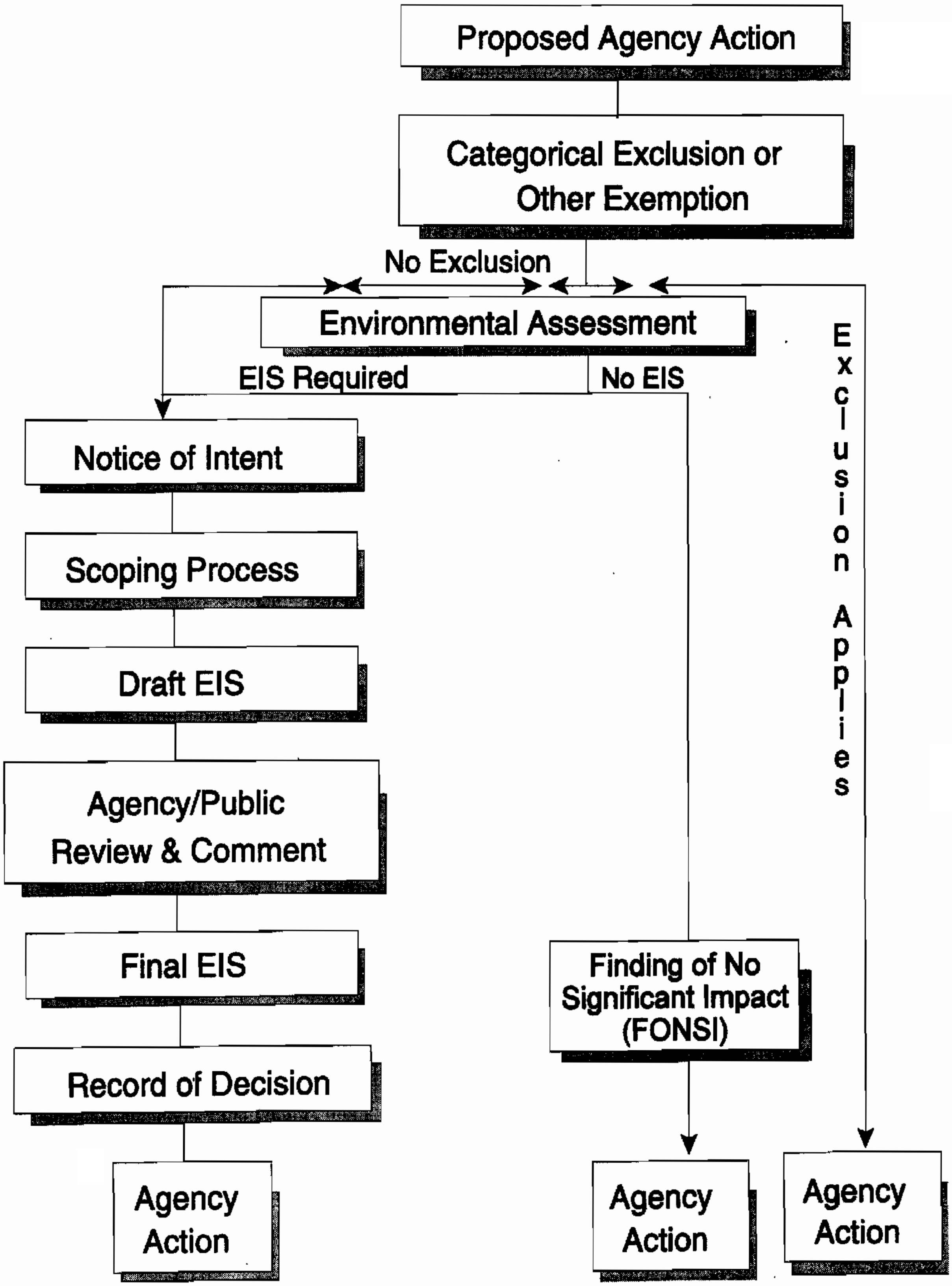
The NEPA process requires various documents to help ensure a thorough, well thought out process. The figure on the next page presents a capsulized overview of the NEPA documents and process. Categorical exclusions are the first step in the process—to decide whether or not the action is significant enough to warrant a full scale environmental assessment (EA). The EA process then helps determine if an action will have a significant impact. If so, then an environmental impact statement (EIS) helps decisionmakers weigh those impacts for a balanced decision. Notices of intent, scoping processes, and periods for review and comment help order public participation.

An EA or an EIS can reflect the results of the decision process very easily. The format assigns different tasks or steps to various chapters so the reader can understand the analysis. The following table compares the format of an EA and EIS.

The Record of Decision (ROD) documents the decision and rationale from Step 8 (Select). Steps 9 and 10 (Implementation and Follow Up) cover the agency action.

Knowledge of environmental integrity (either through you or someone on your team) and concern for a sustainable environment will enable you to proceed with the responsible decisionmaking. You may also be able to influence others regarding the principles of sustainable resource management and development.

See Reclamation's NEPA handbook for further information about NEPA/CEQ.


Proposed Agency Action
Categorical Exclusion or Other Exemption
No Exclusion
Environmental Assessment
EIS Required
No EIS
Exclusion Applies
Notice of Intent
Scoping Process
Draft EIS
Agency/Public Review & Comment
Final EIS
Record of Decision
Agency Action
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
Agency Action
Agency Action

Process in an EA/EIS	Corresponding decision process steps
Chapter 1: Purpose and Need	Steps 1 and 2, defining the needs and objectives
Chapter 2: Alternatives	The results of Steps 4-6, developing and screening alternatives.
Chapter 3: Affected Environment	Resources and constraints identified in Step 3 that the evaluation in Step 7 found would be affected.
Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences	The results of the evaluation in Step 7
Chapter 5: Consultation and Coordination	Public participation and consultation done in each step.
Decision (ROD)	Documentation from Step 8, Selection.
Mitigation and environmental commitments	Part of Step 10, Monitor and Followup

Scoping

Scoping is an ongoing process that lets you determine the problemshed and the areas you will address by communicating with participants, core team members, and decisionmakers. Scoping looks at various perspectives to define the critical elements in your study, critical resources, and how the resources and solution interrelate.

Using specific scoping activities throughout the process will help you stay on the right track. Remember, everyone associated with your study should participate in the scoping process. Scoping activities can be formal or informal. Put up notices for public meetings and send letters to request input from government agencies and partners. Talk to a wide variety of participants: technical experts, other agencies, those on other projects, etc., to get as broad a perspective as possible. The more they share, the fewer the chances of overlooking critical information. Local

SCOPING:

Scoping is the process of identifying issues, participants, areas to cover, available resources, and constraints. Usually associated with NEPA processes, this term applies to all decision processes.

An area could be a:

- **Set of ideas**
- **Range of desires or needs**
- **Range of issues or concerns**
- **Geographic area**
- **Ecosystem**

participation uncovers the unique, local aspects of the action, while national and expert participation uncovers how the action fits into an overall picture.

Consider national and local interests, direct and indirect impacts, and causes and effects when determining if your study boundaries extend far enough to solve the problem.

When you meet with these groups, ask questions that avoid bias to get as accurate and comprehensive a picture as possible, such as:

- Who do you think would be affected?
- Who do you think would be interested or might have information/data relevant to this study?
- Are there key or influential individuals or groups that should be contacted?
- What other activities could be affected by or affect this study?
- Are we overlooking any concerns or issues?
- Does our proposed study boundary address the problemshed? Is it too large? Too small? Why?
- Who are the **decisionmakers**? What are their roles and involvement going to be?

DECISIONMAKERS:

Be sure to include the decision-makers—communicate early and often!

Shape the decision process by categorizing all the data. Your public involvement specialist could serve as a data coordinator. He or she can categorize the scoping data, prioritize what seems to be important, and present the findings to the team. Cultivate core team members who can ask the needed questions and put the answer into context. Often, what seemed at first to be narrowly focused may take on new, broader meanings when relationships are explored. This process will help identify issues which are significant and those which can be safely eliminated.

Public Involvement

Scoping provides a base map, and public involvement puts the roads on it. Public involvement means public participation in the decision process. It centers around effective two-way communication among the partners, agencies, organizations, and all the various stakeholders and interested publics. Enough information is provided so that all parties can reach informed conclusions and implement positive solutions. *Remember, public involvement means involving the affected publics in the solution.* It is different from public relations; it is different from public information; it is different from public education.

Needs, values, and beliefs drive what people do and feel. Be aware of these underlying attitudes.

Basic Components

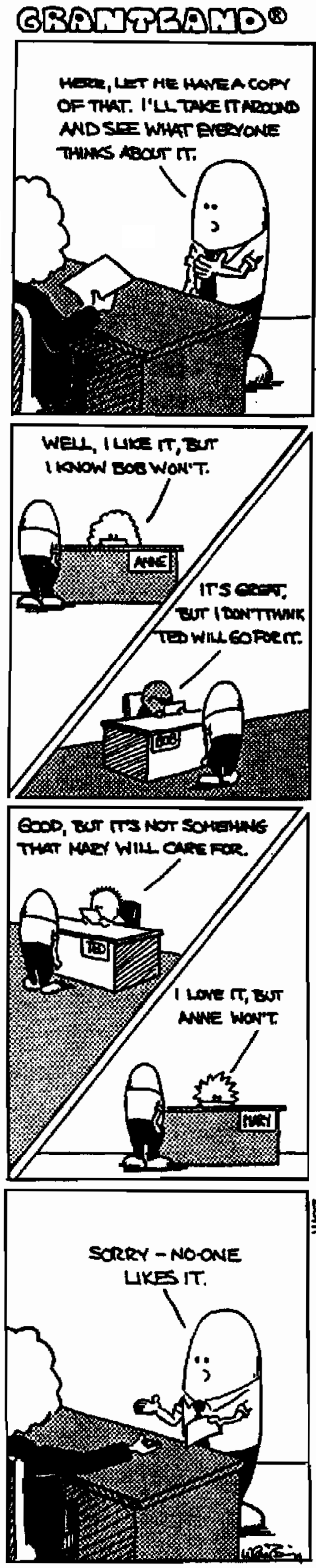
Use the five basic components of your public involvement plan to help get a handle on the real needs, their importance, and priority:

- **Perspective identification.**—Concerns or issues and the values placed upon them may vary considerably. Public involvement provides a mechanism for understanding different points of view. Understanding the range of issues will help the team identify those which can be included in the focus of the study and, equally important, explain why others can't be considered.

Develop a clear, well focused purpose and need (Step 1) with the team, team leader, and decisionmakers before going out to the public.

- **Internal communication.**—All of your efforts to make elaborate plans to communicate with and involve those outside Reclamation will do little good if you can't communicate and involve those within! Don't assume anything. Make sure all team members, management, and any other Reclamation employee associated with your study knows what's going on. Tell them what's going to happen. Tell them how and when you're going to do it and what you expect to accomplish by doing it. Do it! Report the results—if things change, *tell* them.

- **Affected publics.**—Affected publics are those people and organizations who believe they might be impacted by a decision. The size and composition of the public will be different for each decision and will increase with



Listening is the most important part of communication.

controversy. There are a number of ways people may see themselves affected or impacted, including: proximity, economics, use, and values.

- **Level of awareness.**—The decision process will provoke different levels of awareness and interest with diverse publics (see "Participants" later in this *Overview*). It is essential to understand the level of interest to effectively involve the right public at the right time.

- **Conflict resolution.**—A public involvement program will identify potential cooperating and opposing publics through issue identification. Conflicting issues will become apparent. The public involvement plan should provide the means to identify common ground where adversarial groups can work together to resolve as many conflicts as possible. The team must develop strong supportable bases for any decision made in a conflict arena.

Effective methods of communication include:

- ***Informal contacts.***—Individuals are far more candid when contacted in an informal way. For example: a technician taking soil or water samples chances to meet a farmer; an engineer telephones a State or Federal agency counterpart to obtain data or discuss some concept; or a biologist asks permission to cross or survey private land. These informal contacts are often vital to ascertaining the real values or issues. Specialists can discuss technical material informally and educate as well as be educated.

- ***Formal meetings.***—Large formal meetings can provide good, official comments but can also generate important informal data if you have team members or others familiar with your study in the audience. Team members' first priority should be to listen to the discussions going on around them. When deemed appropriate, it's OK for them to acknowledge who they are; but when they do, it should be followed with sincere questioning to obtain clarification or other information. When people respond to questioning, take notes for future consideration, thank them, and ask about further involvement (mailing lists, speaking to team members, etc.). Plan out how you will conduct the meeting and list what you hope to accomplish.

Meetings

Public meetings are places to exchange information and work on problems. They are interactive to allow everyone to participate. They can be either informal and formal, There is a general record of events.

Public hearings are highly structured, formal meetings designed only to receive comments. They have a verbatim record as required by laws such as NEPA. Please note these are not to be confused with scoping meetings or the scoping process.

Talk to your local public affairs/ public involvement specialists to find out more about specifics.

Tailor communication methods to what you are trying to do. Decide if a meeting is appropriate. Do you want to:

- Get information or advice
- Get participants involved in solving a problem
- Broadcast and explain information
- Clarify an issue
- Address several groups

The Technical Service Center's *Public Involvement Manual*, 2001, explains how to integrate public involvement within an overall decision process.

If so, a meeting might be an effective tool. Meetings are not appropriate when:

- The decision has already been made. (Announce decisions in news releases or press conferences—not public meetings. Hearings may be required to get comments on a decision for the record.)
- You don't have enough information to provide participants with an understanding of the problem.
- There isn't enough time to deal with comments.
- Emotions and conflict are too high.
- Public meetings are most effective when early in the process to get input and to communicate to a wide variety of people. Be honest about timeframes—if it will take a few years, explain why. Later on in the process, meetings serve as reality checks.

Planning Your Meeting

The more you plan your meeting, the smoother the meeting will go. Meetings are expensive and time consuming, so make sure that your meeting uses time and money wisely. People appreciate well run, professional meetings, and this will go a long way toward building credibility, consent, and support for your actions.

Take some time to answer some basic questions about the meeting before you hold it:

- **Why are you having this meeting?** What are the objectives? What kind of input are you looking for? What will you do with the results of this meeting—what do you hope to walk away with?

- **Who are the participants?** Who is attending? Why? What do they know about the topic? What is their attitude toward the process, your agency, and the problem? Are all sides represented?

- **How will they be involved?** Will they be giving input or reactions to plans? Planning actions to take? Developing decisions?

Answers to these questions will help you plan your:

- **Format.** This depends on who the participants are, how many there are, and what they will be doing in the meeting.

- **Place, time, and duration.** This may depend on how available the participants are, rather than the meeting objectives. Be flexible.

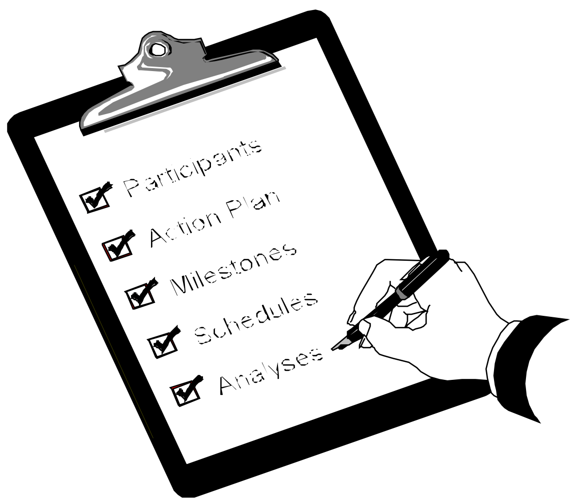
- **Agenda.** You need a written and displayed agenda with times and schedule.

- **Presentation.** Make an outline and decide on the best way to present information.

- **Players.** Who will do what and when?

Once the meeting is over, you should evaluate the results of the meeting and how well the process worked and plan out how you will use the information you have gathered.

What Do We Need?



What Do We Need?

This section lists the basic ingredients needed for a successful decision process: participants, action plans, milestones, schedules, and analyses. Don't leave home without them!

Participants

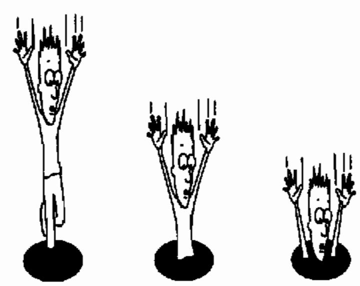
An effective decision process includes many other players besides those in Reclamation and other government agencies. Participants are:

- Those who believe they might be impacted by a decision (project is within the community, resources are valued, etc.)
- Those who are required to be involved in a decision (by jurisdiction or employment)
- Those who advise and influence the decision (either technically or politically)
- Those who facilitate the decision process

Participants can be:

- Individuals
- Groups
- Organizations
- Partnerships
- Government entities and personnel (Federal, State, local, etc.)

Participants make or break the decision process. The process completely depends on the participants. If no one cares enough to solve the problem, then the problem won't be solved, no matter how pressing it is.



PITFALL:

The revenge of the uninvited player can be fierce. In *Sleeping Beauty*, the fairy who wasn't invited to the christening wreaks vengeance by putting the princess to sleep for 100 years. In government processes, uninvited individuals, organizations, or governmental entities can wreak vengeance by putting your solution to sleep or killing it altogether.

Accepting and fulfilling roles are up to the group or individual. If a role is not fulfilled by one person, another person may take that role.

LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

Participants determine their level of participation by considering how worthwhile they believe the project is. The measure of "worthwhile" stems from many sources: making a difference, fulfilling a position, accomplishing a task, serving a cause, or doing a job.

Sometimes, individuals or entities will sacrifice a great deal for the process if they believe it is worthwhile to do so.

A core team is usually formed to handle the bulk of the data gathering and analysis, while other participants may have a more irregular role—commenting at certain key points, providing data, etc. The core team needs to maintain contact with other participants, particularly decisionmakers, to ensure that everyone is kept fully informed and that everyone's concerns are heard.

LEVELS OF AWARENESS

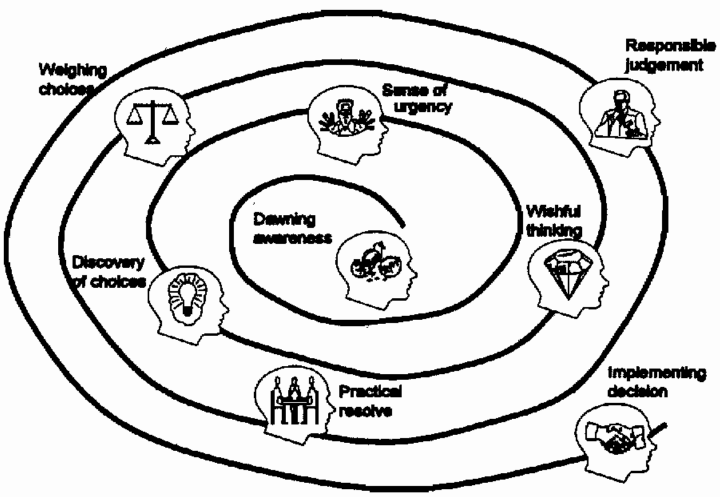
Each participant will go through various stages of awareness throughout the process. Again, this is a spiral—people may hit the same stage but with a broader understanding.

- **Dawning awareness.**—Beginning to understand the problem and the situation
- **Sense of urgency.**—Rushing to solve the problem right now!
- **Wishful thinking.**—Thinking of all the options available
- **Discovery of choices.**—Narrowing the options to what is possible
- **Weighing choices.**—Finding the need to make tradeoffs and to balance interests
- **Practical resolve.**—Evaluating and weighing the alternatives for the best workable solution
- **Responsible judgment.**—Deciding on a solution
- **Implementing solutions.**—Actually solving the problem

Naturally, people will be at different stages at any given time. To keep the process on track, be aware of where people are in this process and guide them to the next step. Moving ahead before most participants are ready may cause conflict and delays by making it more difficult for people to reach the next stage.

Throughout the process, keep track of where people are. Remember that they may be dealing with prior baggage, too!

Where are the participants?



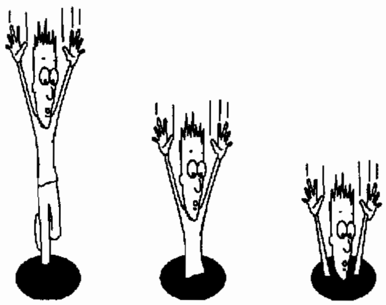
SUPPORTERS

No one will accept absolutely everything that you do. However, people will support your efforts if you fall in line with their agendas or if you can convince them that you are doing something worthwhile. Communicate with your supporters frequently to:

- Keep track of any changes
- Make sure that they understand **what** you are doing and **why**
- Help them explain to others why you think the process and solution are worth investing in
- Find out if they can help with data, analysis, or ideas

SUCCESS:

Work with and respect everyone—supporters, vetoers, and those on the fence.



PITFALL:

Manipulating or ignoring vetoers is at best naive and at worst suicidal. If they suspect any machinations, you will probably lose your credibility and ability to implement solutions on this or future projects.

Ignoring vetoers lays the groundwork for costly court battles.

VETOERS

Government actions supported by everyone are extremely rare. Some people may be directly or indirectly harmed by the action, some people may think they will be harmed, others have been burned by previous government actions, and still others are opposed to any action–governmental or private. Today, anyone can delay or even stop your process by lobbying Congress, initiating court action, or rallying a grassroots effort to oppose your action. You cannot take away their right to fight. Thus, you need to pay attention to their issues and actively seek their participation and consent–no matter how grudgingly it may be given.

Providing vetoers with an active, substantive role within your process will do far more than stave off resistance.

It will:

- Bring new ideas and perspectives
- Uncover fatal flaws in your proposed solutions
- Point out areas that need to be considered
- Find watchdogs to ensure your actions follow your words
- Bring credibility to your process

Thus, identifying all potential vetoers and making them a part of the process is essential. Identify the vetoers, research their networks, and involve all vetoers in the process. If you have a group that holds out, try to enlist the participation of groups that are close to them. Also, keep that group informed and give them regular opportunities to participate.

You can involve them by:

- Finding out what their real issues are (don't rely on rumors or superficial statements)
- Communicating informally as well as formally
- Consider giving them materials (even drafts) when you give them to core team members–plan and discuss this ahead of time
- Addressing their comments

- Respecting their position
- Recognizing their issues
- Negotiating aspects of the process (e.g., timing, definitions, or analyses)
- Providing opportunities for them to speak

At times, vetoers will still refuse to participate. You need to convince them that participating is more attractive than not participating—that their concerns will be better addressed within the process than outside the process because:

- If they participate, their needs may be met.
- Even if the study doesn't lead to their preferred outcome, their participation may make the results less harmful to their interests through compromises and tradeoffs.
- If they don't participate, they'll miss the opportunity to mitigate impacts and tell others about their concerns.

Some groups may refuse to participate and may actually seek to subvert the process. Take the time to figure out why. Some parties don't want to be at the table because it preserves their options for going outside the process. For example, groups with little political power may not feel that the process will result in recommendations they can support. Outlining the steps and showing the process as open and equitable may provide a foundation to resolve differences.

Vetoers may be trying to maintain an image of being against the project or solution. Giving them the leeway to posture for their cause and talking informally will make it easier for them to participate in the process. Find a way to reach an understanding (formal or informal) if you possibly can. If vetoers have too much of a stake in the outcome, or if they are willing to spend a lot of resources to stop the process, then you need to reconsider your position.

Can you resolve the impasse (e.g., redefine the problem, consider additional needs, make tradeoffs, or add analyses)? Are you willing to spend the resources that will be necessary to continue the process?

PITFALL:

You may be tempted to term anyone sufficiently motivated to stop your project as "the opposition" or "the enemy." These terms preclude the possibility that you can work with them to develop a more comprehensive solution. Instead, think in terms of human beings whom you need to work with in order to solve the problem. Manage the situation to fold them into the process rather than separating them into a true opposition.

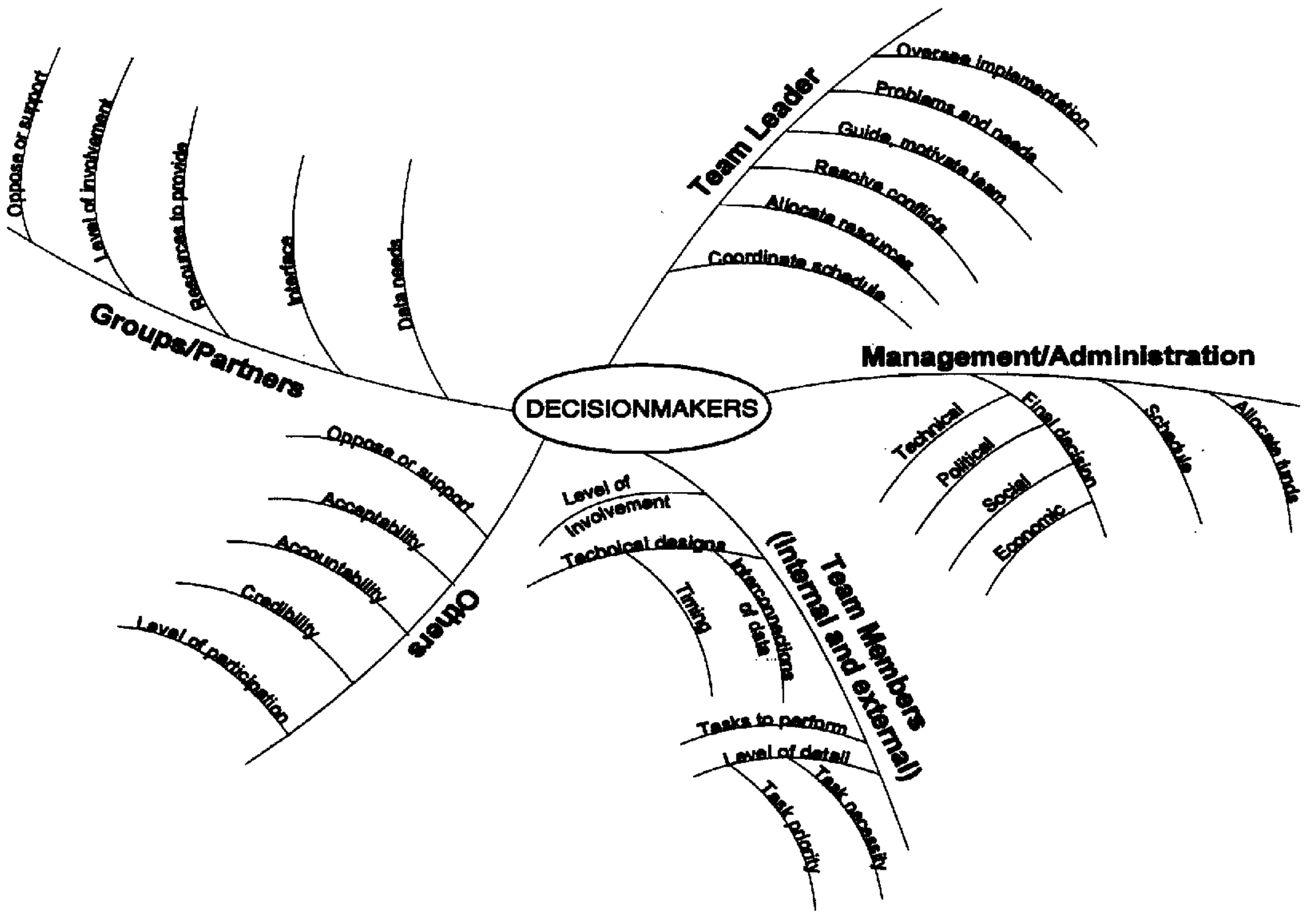
Everyone has to make tactical decisions about which dragons to fight. Discover how vetoers have allocated their resources. They may decide that your dragon is too costly or that they have more significant dragons to fight. Try to reach an agreement not to fight. If you can't, then see if your dragon is really worth protecting.

INFLUENCE DIAGRAM:

Influence diagrams show relationships between ideas. Start with a focal point. Use main ideas as branches and subideas as twigs.

DECISIONMAKERS

Decisionmakers are those participants who decide on a course of action. In a sense, every participant is also a decisionmaker—the types of decisions made by different participants are illustrated in the **influence diagram** below.



Types of decisions made by various decisionmakers

Adapting the influence diagram of decisionmakers to your project early in the process will help everyone understand their roles and responsibilities. List all decisions that need to be made and who will make them. This may help prevent decision delays—the decisionmaker will know that you are waiting and what the decision is about. Who the final decisionmaker is depends on the question and the participants. Within Reclamation, this may be the Area Office Managers, Regional Directors, the Commissioner, the Secretary of the Interior, Congress, or the President. Identifying all the decisionmakers early and agreeing on who will make what decision will help keep your process on track.

Responsibility and authority go hand in hand. However, you may be given responsibility without the corresponding authority. If this happens, see if you can work with others to discharge that responsibility. If not, see if you can explain to those who have authority what you think needs to be done—and why.

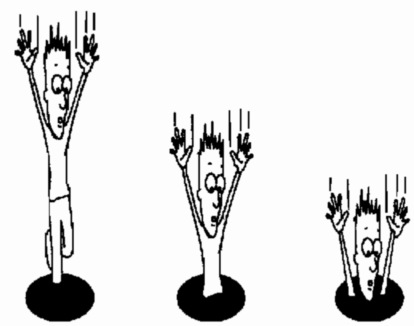
NEW PLAYERS

Every decision process grapples with constantly changing publics, new core and technical team members, and new decisionmakers.

Take a moment to look at the process through new players' eyes. They see a project that affects them and yet they haven't been able to influence it. They will probably suspect everything that has been done so far and want to go back to the beginning to re-address issues that everyone else believes are already solved.

It is up to you to take the first step. Keep a packet that explains your process and the decisions you have already reached (remember to keep updating the last page). Be willing to spend the time to communicate and negotiate with new players. Let them know what is going on so they can:

- Understand the history of the process
- Identify where they fit in and how they can help implement solutions



PITFALL:

Since anyone can delay or halt a project, you CANNOT ignore new players.

SUCCESS:

New players can help ensure that issues aren't overlooked and the process is rational.

AGREE:

Players do not have to wholeheartedly support decisions. They merely need to grudgingly admit that there are (or were) no fatal flaws in the process and that the solution will meet the needs. The goal is to work together toward a workable solution.

- **Agree** that the process has been legitimate and reasonable
- Understand where the process is now and where it is going
- Agree that the future course is appropriate and reasonable (or propose changes)
- Negotiate changes in the process

Demonstrating that you made a good effort to invite new players on board and to inform and involve them in the process will:

- Show others in the community that the process is open and credible
- Erode the credibility of anyone who refuses to get involved and who attempts to derail the process.
- Force those who expect to delay the process to provide reasonable arguments.

Action Plan

ACTION PLAN:

This is a documented strategy for achieving an implementable solution. Action plans come under various names and forms: statement of work, study plan, etc.

Some kind of **action plan** is needed before you can apply any of the steps in the decision process. See *Foundation,* Part 2, Action 5, for further details. The action plan forms the backbone of the study by providing organization and direction. The action plan describes how each of the key study elements will be achieved so everyone can keep track of the study steps and where the study is going. Answering the seven suggested questions below provides a basic outline of what a thorough action plan will cover:

- What is the authority and source of funding?
- What is the purpose?
- What is the need for action?
- How will the publics and participants be involved?
- What are the existing relationships and constraints?

- What outcomes do participants expect?
- How do the participants perceive the expectations for the study?
- Who are the players and what are their roles? (Note: this may include other entities and individuals as well as the core team.)
- What will documents cover? (For example: making decisions, formulating agreements, and documenting the progress of the decision process.)

After establishing the plan, examine it regularly to determine if any element has changed or needs to change. The action plan is also a good tool for determining whether or not to proceed—changes in funding, authority, or the need for action are strong "go/no-go" indicators.

SUCCESS:

Since changes are inevitable, plan for them from the start. Build flexibility into your action plan. Separating the actions into phases can provide convenient "breaks" to let you change course or decide whether or not to continue the study. Participants can join or opt out at these breaks. You can then manage change rather than letting change manage the process.

Milestones

You can measure progress by agreeing on meaningful milestones at the beginning of the study and revisiting those definitions periodically throughout the study. Good milestones center around reaching agreements or completing tasks. You can define milestones in an action plan, list them in a checklist printed with all of the study documents, and flag them in a schedule.

amount of time, but they indicate progress toward a successful solution. If these goals seem impossible, carefully consider the odds of getting a workable solution. Keep in mind that many problems are not really ready to be solved—no matter how unpleasant or politically problematic that reality may be. It may be wiser to suspend a study and wait for a better time or approach than to proceed and waste time and money. If you decide not to act, be sure that you explain why you are not acting at this time. Otherwise, you may lose credibility, and participants may not be willing to work with you when you return to the problem.

It may take some creative sweat to create good milestones. However, this is creative sweat well spent—good milestones are crucial to good solutions.

SUCCESS:

Keep milestones in their proper order.

It is seldom useful, for example, to put out even draft decision documents until you develop broad support for a workable alternative.

Examples of specific milestones:

- Decision points and decisionmakers are identified.
- Key parties in the process are identified and included (decisionmakers, political and agency leaders, environmental evaluation and compliance, technical analysts, stakeholders, etc.).
- Key parties have consented to participate in the process and help it succeed.
- A process to inform new participants and get them up to speed is in place.
- A study schedule is agreed upon that reflects:
  - > The availability of resources or scientific information and the time required to collect and analyze credible data
  - > The level of social and political conflict surrounding the issues
- Actions are taken to include whoever will implement the solution.
- Needs and issues are identified and agreed upon so that:
  - > Participants understand and consent to the definition
  - > A wide variety of approaches can be used to address each need
  - > The needs addressed correspond with Reclamation's mission
- A basic agreement among all key parties is written that outlines the problem and the objectives. This agreement should state that the problem must be addressed.
- A broad range of alternatives that meet the needs is developed through negotiations and public input.
- An analysis to ensure that alternatives do not have fatal flaws is completed.

- A sound concept is developed to show how the various types of alternatives will be funded.

- Procedures to develop and review scientific data are agreed upon. (These procedures can enhance credibility with key parties and appropriate institutions.)

- Enough data is collected for the decisions needed at each point in the process.

- A decision is made, announced, and understood.

- A solution is put in place and maintained.

The decision process is a dynamic beast, changing almost daily. To make sure that you are progressing toward a successful solution, you need to do some periodic reality checks:

- With the **decisionmakers** to see if they understand where the process is. Are you proceeding on the right track?

- With all **participants** to see if they are informed and have ample opportunities to be involved. Are they being heard?

- With the **community** to see if the needs you are addressing are still the needs that need to be met. Are you keeping up with the changes?

- With the **core team members** to see if they have the tools and data they need for the analysis. Are there other avenues you need to explore? Are desires in tune with the budget?

Look at the "Take Stock" section (the yellow pages in the beginning of *Decision Process Steps*) for details on things to check periodically.

PITFALL:

Arbitrary assumptions without reality checks are doomed to failure both in court and in practice.

Schedules

SUCCESS:

Go slow to go fast. Often, adding more time to the schedule to do it right saves time in the long run.

Build your schedule around elements of success. Establishing and attempting to meet deadlines without considering the "meat of the matter" (building partnerships, establishing trust and credibility, and working to solve problems) risks creating roadblocks and delays. Plan your schedule carefully and make sure it is realistic so that participants can stay on track toward a solution. Computers are very useful to plan a schedule and keep track of where you are.

Staying on schedule:

- Shows progress (if milestones have substance)
- Demonstrates the agency's dedication to the study
- Demonstrates accomplishments to study participants
- Builds momentum and morale
- Keeps study activities predictable
- Facilitates participation
- Simplifies budgeting
- Eliminates an easy target for negative media ("Study Delayed Again!")

"Science is only orderly after the fact; in process, it is chaotic and fiercely controversial."

Ruckelshouse, *Risk, Science, and Democracy*

Keep in mind, though, that the schedule is a tool—not an absolute dictator—in the decision process. A realistic schedule will be flexible enough to accommodate various stages of public awareness and involvement, diverse points of view, changes in study scope, alternatives, etc. Make sure that the schedule can handle delays, re-analyses, or other surprises along the way.

A flexible schedule:

- Helps coordinate the many participants and their interdependent activities
- Ensures that the study is coordinated with external events

- Defines participants' commitments and "due diligence"
- Clarifies where additional resources may be necessary
- Helps formulate budgets and evaluate the cost of delays
- Provides a communication tool for managers and the general public
- Can be used to establish commitment from decisionmakers and participants

Artificial or unrealistic deadlines may indicate that schedulers are out of touch with reality or are rushing through the process to get to a predetermined action. Sticking to a schedule no matter what will probably lose more than it will gain. Most importantly, you risk losing the opportunity to address rifts and conflicts between parties as early as possible. If these are left to fester, they can cause problems later—your solution may not get the support it needs to be implemented and maintained.

A rigid schedule:

- Speeds up analyses—which may cause inaccuracies or invite challenges
- Skips analyses—which may need to be done later or which may have revealed opportunities or fatal flaws
- Rushes the process onto the next step when participants may not be ready
- Creates an impression of arbitrary decisions—which may invite challenges or drop vital parties from the process

Analyses

A decision without analyses is akin to a trip without roadmaps. You need to use analyses and professional judgment to determine which solution can best meet the identified needs within a particular physical and social context.

Determining what analyses are needed will save money and prevent clouding the issues. When you decide which city to live in, for example, you look at an overall picture of schools and employment rather than detailed house blueprints.

Analyses provide the information necessary to:

- Determine how other actions and issues affect the problem
- Define the problem
- Develop and compare alternatives
- Identify fatal flaws
- Build consent for alternatives
- Determine the best way to implement an alternative

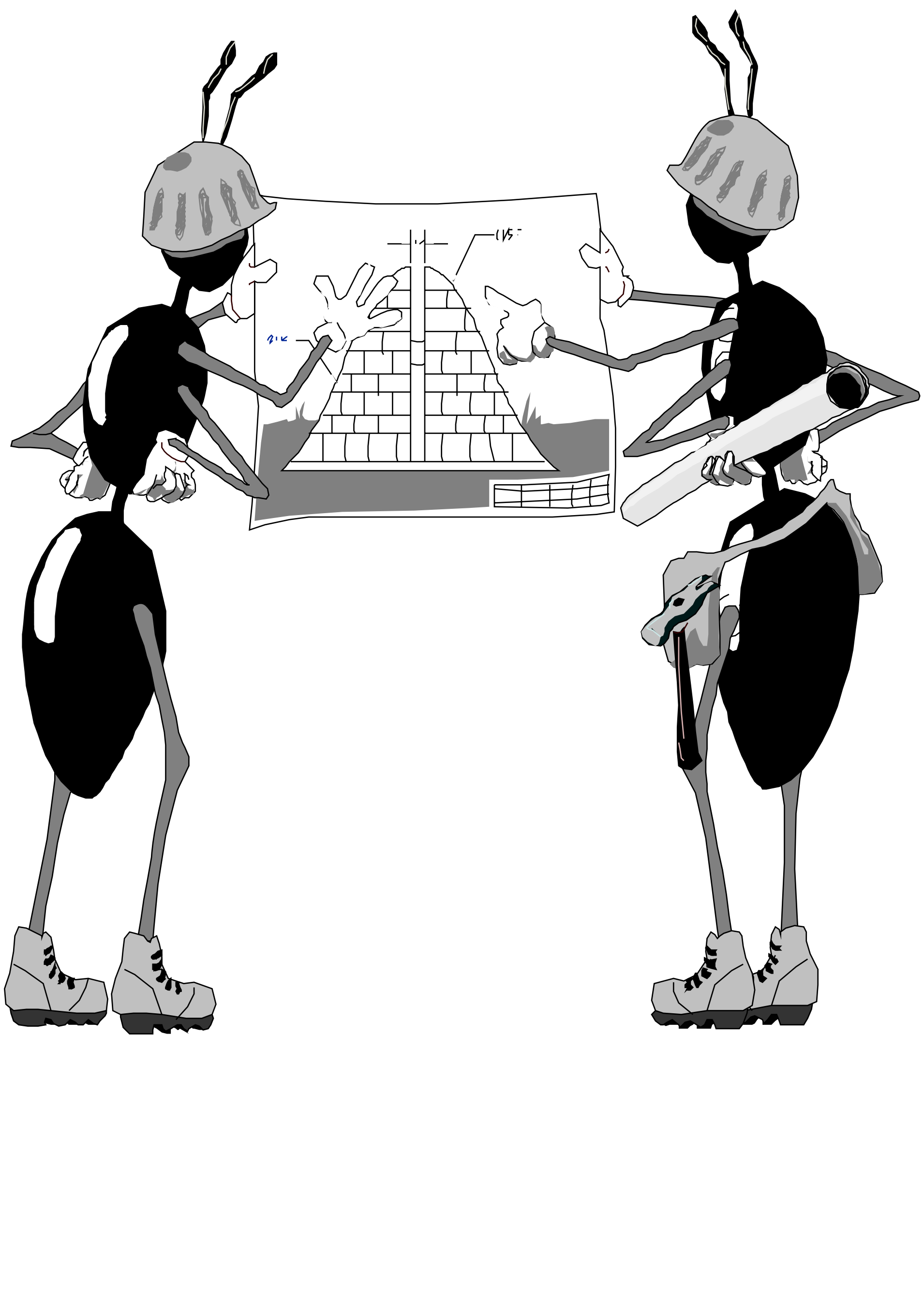
Agree on what analyses you need and what methodology you will use. This will help resolve conflicts with data and analyses before they tear the process apart. Find out whether the real issue is data reliability or an underlying agenda by asking at what threshold the decision changes. (Will the decision change if the fish mortality data are 5 percent off? What about 50 percent?)

Reports consolidate the analyses and participants' input to:

- Provide something for participants to react to
- Communicate and evaluate your progress
- Document actions, findings, and decisions
- Document the decision process
- Explain the analysis

Determine at which steps reports will be needed and how those reports will be used. Lay out ground rules for how the reports will be developed and how comments will be addressed.

Pathbuilders



The relationships among a diverse group of people trying to reach a solution can be quite complex—even counter-productive at times. Building paths through the decision process is essential for getting people to work together to identify and address needs. This section discusses strategies and components for building these pathways.

Credibility

Without credibility, no one is going to take you seriously. People will not participate—or they may attempt to sabotage your process. An open, honest process builds trust and acceptability for your actions.

Credibility means that participants:

- Take your word at face value
- Understand your role in the decision process
- Believe that you will do what you say you will do
- Understand how you got your data

Create and maintain credibility by:

- Involving others to find answers.
- Being willing to consider all questions.
- Being an equal opportunity data handler (share information with everyone).
- Being the most complete and reliable source of information.
- Not limiting information access unless *absolutely necessary*. Release information on request. (At the very least, explain what is confidential and why. The public automatically assumes the worst—an assumption nearly impossible to dislodge.)
- Telling people quickly when things change.

THE PRIMARY RULES FOR SUCCESS:

- **Avoid surprises!**
- **Respect other positions.**
- **Focus on what you are trying to accomplish.**

PITFALLS:

Losing credibility is easy; getting it back is difficult. The fastest ways to lose credibility include:

- **Ignoring need for analysis**
- **Keeping to a rigid schedule instead of resolving conflicts**
- **Assuming you understand issues and needs**
- **Excluding publics and not responding to comments**
- **Being arbitrary about anything**
- **Ignoring cultural differences**

SUCCESS:

Put your money in your mouth. If you are serious about a solution, spend your resources on communication and talk to everyone early, often, and honestly. Without communication, no one will understand why you are doing the study—and no one will support it.

Methods of communication include:

- Face to face conversation
- Formal and informal meetings
- Field trips and presentations
- Slide shows and displays
- Telephone (messages while on hold, 1-800 lines)
- E-mail and Internet (news-groups, list servers, and World Wide Web)
- TV, radio, and newspapers
- Video and audio tapes
- Pamphlets and brochures
- Reports and newsletters
- Letters and memos
- Information packets
- Business cards
- Restaurant napkins

Communication

When all participants listen to everyone else and clearly share their points of view, problems and potential misunderstandings or trip wires are identified early. Communication (both inside and outside organizations and the team) is the major means of avoiding arbitrary assumptions and adversarial relationships from creeping into your process. Communicating also provides a foundation for dealing with problems and a basis for decisionmaking.

All participants must communicate. The biologist who consults under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, for example, has as much a part in fostering communication as the team leader. However, you may choose to designate a team member to coordinate and facilitate communication with groups outside of the team. Don't hesitate to consult with public affairs, public involvement, conflict management, or social analysis specialists.

The public can communicate more effectively if they can react to your proposals or phrasing of the problem. Think about the format of your message. Reports, for example, help decisionmakers reach a balanced, informed decision. However, people tend to shy away from thick tomes.

Summarizing the same information in another format would reach more participants. You might publish a summary as a newspaper supplement, a separate newsletter, or even as a bookmark for the larger report. Consider video and audio tapes to show the project area and explain the problem. People get most of their information from TV and are used to this format. Internet and E-mail may also be appropriate.

When you present information:

- Always set the stage. Don't assume the audience knows what you are talking about. (Don't let them assume that you know what they are thinking, either!)
- Be concise and in context.
- Make sure that the information is relevant to your audience.

- Avoid jargon—use expressions everyone can understand.
- Mark fact as fact and opinion as opinion.
- Check to make sure that the audience understands.
- Answer questions—and if you can't, then make a note to get back with answers.
- Ask questions to elicit responses.
- Provide the context for your remarks—define terms and be upfront about agendas.
- Clarify possible **myth-truths**.

When anyone communicates:

- Listen.
- Repeat back what was said in your own words to confirm that you understand.
- Don't dismiss an idea just because some of it seems ridiculous or the person cannot articulate ideas well or is unversed in technical matters. There may be something valuable buried in there.
- Assess the context—what do the terms mean to the speaker? What is the speaker's agenda?

INFORMAL

The system works through personalities. You need to talk with people on all levels face to face, not merely through formal channels. You can work formally with someone and yet not accomplish anything because the rapport that informal contact brings is missing. It's the same in the decision process. People will be more willing to listen and to send information to you because they know you on a first name basis. Informal communication also helps to:

- Identify who to talk to
- Foster an honest atmosphere
- Gather information

MYTH-TRUTHS:

Myth-truths are rumors, reputations, half-truths, second guesses, and unsupportable facts. Myth-truths appear in various guises: (We can't take this action because people will see it in the wrong light; I saw a dead fish, so all the fish must be dying.)

Not all myth-truths are false; in fact, some may be justified. But you need to identify what is supportable and what is a myth-truth. Question your beliefs, ferret out the myth-truths, and find out what is really there.

You may not be able to shake others from their myth-truths, but you do have a responsibility to show reasoned, supported arguments if you believe their myth-truths are false.

PITFALL:

Any statements you make may be used against your agency.

Your statements must be consistent with your actions.

- Identify problems
- Develop respect for each other's perspectives
- Communicate changes
- Work with participants to solve common problems

Make it a point to provide opportunities for informal discussions. Get core team members involved with other groups on an informal basis. Attend meetings with organizations—people will probably appreciate your efforts. (They may kid you a little, but this also establishes rapport.) Have meals with representatives from different groups or adjourn to a restaurant after a formal meeting.

Sincerity is hard to fake.

If your heart isn't in going to Trout Unlimited meetings or getting to know people informally, find a way that you can interact or let those who want to do so. An insincere gesture may be worse than no gesture at all.

Informal contact can help even in confrontational situations:

- *You remove the battle gear.*—This allows participants to let down their guard far enough to see that personal views may not be that far apart after all.

- *You can be seen as a human being.*—This provides a way to respect each other's viewpoints. (I understand your position; I just can't say that before my constituents.)

CULTURES

PITFALL:

The formal process outlined in NEPA, Section 404 permits, and other mandated decision processes does not describe the needed informal contacts that allow people to work together to solve problems.

It is up to you to tailor the process to the situation.

☑ Local

Communication techniques, language, and even actions will vary from place to place. A conservative in San Francisco can be very different from a conservative in North Dakota. A Native American tribe's way of reaching solutions and understanding issues will differ from a water district's. Be sensitive not only to varying needs but to varying cultures. Understand these different ways of doing business to be effective.

Be aware of local conditions and issues. Think about the context of the data and its relevance for the local participants. Instream flows and salmon passage create issues in the Northwest, while flat meandering streams create other issues in the Southwest.

Local people and communities may feel that you are an outsider and may not be willing to deal with you. Acknowledge that you are an outsider even if you live in the area (your perspective is not the same as theirs). Explain what you bring with you. If you have worked on similar problems, say so. Your most important credential is your willingness to listen and acknowledge that their concerns are unique.

Show how your project and process benefit your constituencies. Talking to farmers about internal organization may not answer their questions about the availability of water for their crops.

☑ Organizational

Various institutions and organizations develop unique styles of communication and buzzwords. You may need to use certain terms to fit into the jargon (bureauspeak) or avoid terms which have acquired different meanings than the one you intend.

HUMOR

Couching things in a positive rather than a threatening light can garner more support. For example, you may want to discuss benefits accruing from flood control rather than the potential damage from a flood.

Participants may become so wrapped up in their position that they forget to listen to others or find it impossible to negotiate or make necessary tradeoffs. Humor can diffuse difficult situations and lighten a serious atmosphere. Laughing at some aspect of the process provides a fresh perspective. Humor also lets everyone relax enough to uncover creative solutions and form bases for agreement.

Collect comics and display them at your next meeting.

You can find something comical in almost any situation. You may want to clip an apt comic strip; brainstorm a team name or mascot; or redesign popular commercials, lyrics, or TV shows to fit your process. Use humor to add a little life to the process, not to offend or tear down.

Consent

Players do not have to wholeheartedly support decisions. They merely need to grudgingly agree:

- The problem is significant and must be addressed.
- The process was fair and did not contain fatal flaws.
- The solution will work to meet the needs.
- The goal is to work together to actually solve the problem now and in the future.

BUILD CONSENT

Ways to help build consent:

- Discuss and agree on:
  - Purpose and need
  - Analysis methods and assumptions
  - Boundaries of the action
  - Ground rules
  - Who will make the decision and when
- Analyze tradeoffs
- Address underlying agendas
- Communicate early and often to avoid myth conceptions
- Check on:
  - Participant's level of awareness
  - Changes
- Make a special effort to ensure that new players and politicians are informed so they can understand the situation

If people understand that some action must be taken, they will be more likely to participate and ensure that actions taken will work. Ensure everyone understands that:

- The problem is significant
- Given your roles and responsibilities, you must deal with it

- You are dealing with it in a fair, responsible manner
- While your action will harm someone, it is a fair way to address what must be done

Working with you is better than working against you to solve the problem.

These four points are based on the works of Han Bleiker.

BUILD UNDERSTANDING

Use Decision Process Worksheets to keep everyone on track and show where you have been and where you are going. Document and share to show the rationale your process took.

When you cannot reach an agreement:

- Identify areas where agreement has been reached and go on with those areas if possible.
- Identify areas where participants "agree to disagree" and leave those for another process.
- Address conflict

Focus on the detractors and vetoers—you need to work with the people who can stop you.

Facilitators

Today, you cannot waltz in and say "We are going to do this, and that is the end of the matter." Someone will stop you. The only way to survive and to solve problems is to work with a wide variety of Federal and non-Federal groups. With all the varying values, concerns, and interests, conflict is almost inevitable.

Facilitators work like oil between steel gears. They do not lead, nor do they have a vested interest in one particular answer. Rather, they see the overall picture and act as impartial mediators. Good facilitators must be:

- Objective
- Trusted by all or most parties—or considered impartial
- Able to listen carefully to what is said and not said

SUCCESS:

Who the facilitators are doesn't matter. What matters is that they keep everyone focused on solving the problem.

Even the most caustic, impossible person may have good points and issues that participants need to consider.

ALL THE CARDS:

Each participant has both personal and organizational concerns, issues, and needs. Making sure that concerns are heard and that underlying needs and interests are understood will prevent misunderstandings and roadblocks. This takes work, but it will go a long way towards getting a workable solution.

SUCCESS:

Reclamation's role is to be an honest facilitator.

REMEMBER:

The fundamental premise is we are all in this together.

- Able to communicate formally and informally
- Flexible enough to adapt to change

Ideally, every participant is also a facilitator. This does not mean that each participant is neutral—rather that each participant is genuinely interested in working with others to solve the problem through:

- Moderating meetings and facilitating discussions
- Enforcing ground rules and changing them if necessary
- Helping lay **all the cards** on the table
- Identifying misunderstandings
- Helping to resolve personal, technical, and political conflicts
- Building consent to reach agreements
- Asking the tough questions without fear when necessary

You don't need to be an *official* facilitator to do these things.

Part of Reclamation's role is to work with others to facilitate the decision process. If no one is facilitating in your project, volunteer to facilitate. If Reclamation has too much of a stake in the outcome or cannot be viewed as an objective facilitator, propose that the group find a neutral facilitator. At times, this might be seen as an attempt to take over and control the process. If so, help others in the group reach the conclusion that a neutral facilitator is needed for themselves.

Steps to becoming a facilitator are:

1. Realize you need a facilitator in the situation.
2. Realize you could be the facilitator.
3. Find out if there is any training available.
4. Describe your job so that everyone understands your bias.
5. Explain your role objectively. (I'm here to find out what the problem is; I'm here to help try to find a solution.)

6. Listen to ALL sides. (Check to make sure you hear what people are saying.)

7. Do a reality check to ensure everyone understands what is going on. (See the "Take Stock" section for specific questions to ask.)

Partnerships

To accomplish Reclamation's mission, we need to build partnerships–even where they do not directly or obviously benefit Reclamation's mission.

Partnerships are a useful tool in most situations to help build connections of trust and communication. Addressing the problem within the broader contexts provided by partnerships helps determine what influences need to be examined. Perhaps most importantly, partnerships evolve beyond the immediate problem to address long-term solutions.

When you consider the advantages and disadvantages of partnerships, think about things other than cost and time. For example, it may cost less and take less time now to do the work yourself than to initiate a partnership effort. However, a partnership may save money in the long run by ensuring that your solution will be supported through active participation.

Reclamation can bring technical knowledge and expertise that the locals may not be able to afford; locals bring in the social support and local cultural expertise that Reclamation may not have. Thus, local partnerships bring together essential elements of solving problems–the local support and the technical expertise.

WHAT PARTNERSHIPS ARE

Partnerships are simply groups of interested people, organizations, agencies, and others working together to address a problem. They may be loosely associated or they may have formal charters with formal mission statements and organizational structures. Rarely will these groups

Build on the strengths of potential partners—divide the labor.

Without participation, there is no ownership— without ownership, there is no commitment.

If you feel comfortable with the partnership, you probably don't have enough partners.

Places to find out about partnerships include:

- **Reclamation Ecosystem Partnership Coordinator**
- **National Partnership Council**
- **Federal, State, and local agencies**
- **International organizations**
- **Department of Local Affairs, State Planning Coordination**
- **Environmental groups**
- **Water districts**
- **Agricultural, mining, and commercial groups**
- **Neighborhood groups**
- **Consultants**
- **Partnership guides (e.g., Colorado Ecosystem Partnership's notebook of all ongoing activities)**
- **The Internet**

The group is stronger than the sum of the participants.

have the same expectations, agendas, or values—in fact, unless all the different perspectives are involved in the partnership, your process is doomed.

Partnerships:

- Identify common ground to form agreements
- Build the foundation for agreements
- Identify future or present problems and opportunities
- Determine what problems are worth working on
- Define and work toward common goals
- Pool resources to more effectively address problems
- Get the consent necessary to solve problems
- Educate everyone
- Exert pressure on other members for an open, fair, and effective process

HOW TO FORM A PARTNERSHIP

First, investigate existing partnerships (research organizational directories, similar projects, etc.). If you cannot find a partnership that deals directly with the area in which you are working in, then use existing groups that would be willing to form a partnership.

Once you have found or founded a partnership, invite others to join you. Explain the importance of inviting everyone; then ask for help to identify potential partners.

Make sure, however, that there is a reason for partners to be involved. Forcing groups to work together when it will not help solve the problem will merely destroy the process.

People will become involved and form partnerships to:

- **Respond to a proposed change.**—This change might threaten enough common values that people will band together to address it. Many times, this threat is seen as more serious than any other disagreements people might have.

- **Address common goals, interests, or beliefs.**—These partnerships help address serious problems or a complex series of interrelated problems before options become too narrow.

- **Leverage power.**—Pooling resources can increase options. For example, one person may only have enough capital to invest in one venture, but a group may invest in many ventures.

HOW TO WORK WITHIN A PARTNERSHIP

No one runs or controls a partnership—everyone works together. Don't insist on providing the technical knowledge—the partnership identifies and agrees upon areas where Reclamation can provide expertise or resources. Working in partnerships isn't always easy, but establishing operating parameters or agreements can make things run a bit more smoothly.

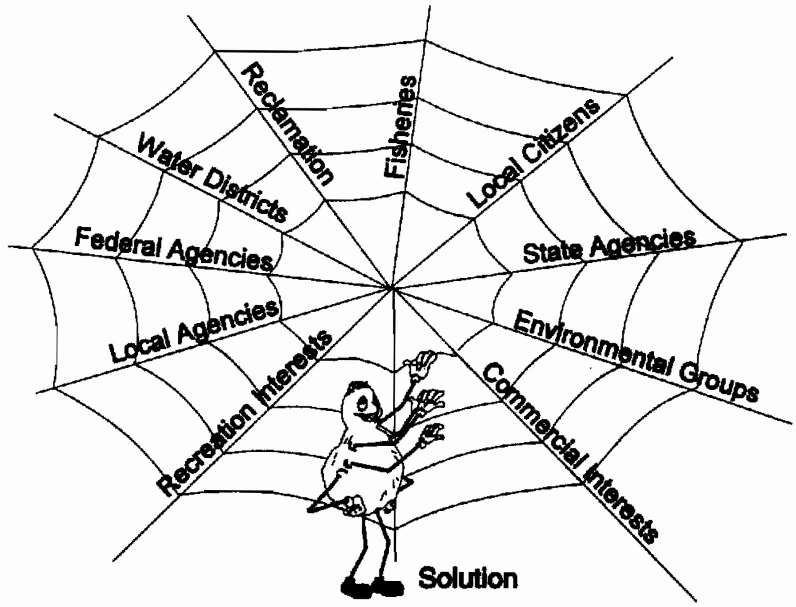
In partnerships, Reclamation's role changes from a leader and all-knowing expert to an advisor and catalyst to help determine what the needs are and what Reclamation can offer to help address those needs.

Form and agree on ground rules to:

- Establish a procedure to hear and evaluate every opinion
- Make sure everyone can choose how to participate
- Agree on times for involvement (e.g., define phases of the effort and agree that groups can leave or join the partnership only at the beginning of each phase)
- Develop ways to work together
- Determine when you will all review the guidelines and how you will agree to change them
- Get a broad statement of why you are doing what you are doing
- Communicate within the partnership to find out who has data—or who knows where to get data to reduce costs and needless repetition

At first, nobody has all the answers—nobody even knows what the problems are! Yet we all believe we know exactly what the problem and solution are. Be willing to set aside any preconceived notions and work together to assess resources, identify and define problems, and develop and implement solutions.

Partnership Interactions



Partnering can't succeed unless each partner's top management fully supports the effort. Presentations to top management for partnership approvals might include:

- The specific problem or project
- Its current status
- Goals and objectives of partnering
- Anticipated benefits vs. risks
- Costs associated with partnering
- Schedules

☑ Request for Decision

Obtain this decision from top management before agreeing to work in a partnership. Controversy surrounds working together—particularly at first. People will be suspicious (Why are they collaborating? What are their agendas?).

Combinations that mix the power to solve problems and address needs, issues, and concerns are suspect because some might be left out of the process or their voices might be ignored. Thus, you must investigate and publish the motives and purpose for forming the partnership. Show that:

- It is in everyone's best interest.
- The process is fair and open.
- You all are searching for a responsible solution to a significant problem.

Start an action plan to document agreements. For example:

Clean Air Partnership

Why?

A regional approach is needed to deal with new and existing air pollution sources and protect air quality on Federal and Tribal land. This partnership will promote coordination and education for air quality protection among agencies, tribes, regulators, and the public.

Who?

Natural resource specialists and managers responsible for air quality protection on Federal and Tribal land.

Where?

The biologic region of the Jade Crystal Desert.

How?

Develop an interagency Memorandum of Understanding with formal commitment from senior managers

Work with local and regional groups

Determine needs and ways to address needs

Develop cost-share agreements

Recognizing Risk

SUCCESS:

Define everyone's perceptions of risk and version of reality.

People take risks whether or not they take action. To gather support for your process, understand the risks that participants will be taking. Lay out the advantages and disadvantages of addressing the problem. Be as frank and as open as possible. The chance for an effective solution, an enhanced reputation or credibility, and cooperation on other projects may be enough to outweigh the risks.

Working on a project requires taking a stand on an issue—even if the stand is merely that it would be worthwhile to find a solution. People invest their political influence, professional expertise, resources, or social standing when they agree to work on a project and, thus, weigh the risks before committing themselves. Decisionmakers and internal participants may also hesitate to act or to adopt innovative approaches to solve the problem. Internal participants or teams may be afraid of:

- Change (We have never done it that way.)
- Disagreements (Mr. Y may not like that.)
- Losing control (The data might be interpreted or used in a different context.)
- Credibility (We may be held accountable for preliminary data that may be incorrect.)
- Commitment (We might be held to promises that later may be infeasible.)

PITFALL:

You cannot hide from, avoid, or deny risk.

The easiest way to avoid risk is to do and say nothing. Unfortunately, this may simply invite other risks and may compound the problem. Bringing a particular risk out in the open and exploring the possibilities may help avoid or lessen the risk. The methods listed below are only a few measures that you can take to acknowledge and work with risk for both external and internal participants.

- Be as open, upfront, and honest about the risk as possible.
- Assess the value of the action. (Is it worth taking the risk?)
- Quantify the risk—weigh the positives and negatives.
- Recognize who is taking the risk.

CONSEQUENCES:

If no one does it, then everyone is to blame.

- Consider the **consequences** of NOT taking the action—you may lose credibility, and participants may lose faith in the process.
- Explain why you are taking the action—or why you are not taking the action.
- Explain the need to take the risk. (Others might not see what you see as obvious.)
- Build flexibility into plans and schedules to adapt to changes.
- Recognize that various groups have differing agendas and that people will disagree.

Have the courage to take risks when you think it is worthwhile and appropriate to do so.

Have the courage to explain why you are not taking the risk if you think it isn't worthwhile or appropriate.

Hurdles

Hurdles Chart	
Hurdles	**Ways to jump over them**
Loss of funding	Determine if the project warrants further support. If not, revisit the problem; if so, explain the situation. If the project is actively supported, participants can ask Congress for funding and seek other funding sources.
Locked into a solution before analysis	Go back and clearly establish the basis for the study (e.g., is the action to build a dam or to provide a water supply?)
More than one vision of the objective	Unify the participants around one or more objectives. Clearly communicate what each participant sees as the objective. Remember that you can't address every need.
Multiple agencies with conflicting policies and priorities	Communicate. Make sure everyone understands other issues and perspectives. Reach agreements on basic objectives and ground rules. See if politics and priorities can change.
Unfocused management or leadership	Request clarification from leadership by drafting a statement of goals and actions for leaders to revise.
Different groups at different stages of understanding	Communicate with each group to assess the level of understanding. Spend time to educate all groups and let them participate in the process so that the majority is brought to the same level.
Parties entering in at different stages in the study	Be prepared to bring each group or individual up to speed as they become involved. Keep a basic information packet current throughout the study and provide it to everyone involved.
Unrealistic constraints	Propose changing the constraints (e.g., propose changing regulations or laws). Explain why constraints are unrealistic and benefits that may arise from lifting constraints. Get "buy in" from participants.
Unavailable resources	Request resources from decisionmakers—explain why you need them. Obtain resources through leadership/management or by adding other groups. Think about partnerships or groups addressing similar issues.
Unrealistic objectives	Redefine objectives to be meaningful and realistic within the problem's context. Go to the decisionmakers, team members, and other participants to confirm the modified objectives.
Uncertain directions for the study	Propose a direction for the study. Ask participants to revise it. Get agreement on the modified proposal. Make sure the authority and mission allow for proposed directions.
Conflicting priorities	Write out what you see as the priorities and ask management/leadership/other partners to clarify these priorities.
Uncertain priorities and motivation	Set a schedule for completion of tasks and confirm it with all participants.
Conflicting definitions of terms	Create a glossary of terms for all participants. Use interactive meetings to revise and agree on these definitions.
Loss of morale or purpose among participants	Employ team building techniques. Clarify objectives. Celebrate successes so far. Break the tasks down into doable parts. Use innovation (bring donuts, informal appreciative awards, "round tuits," etc.)
Nonparticipation	Communicate—figure out why people are not participating. Briefly explain where we are, where we are going, and why. Request participation. Replace nonparticipants if possible. Communicate with the supervisors of internal nonparticipants to ascertain the difficulty. Clarify consequences of nonparticipation for both core team members and external players. Make it clear that the process will continue.

Hurdles

Often, processes can lose momentum, get mired in controversy, or just plain stall out. Recognize and avoid or jump over potential hurdles so the process can continue.

Potential Hurdles

Periodic checks to make sure the process is continuing on track will help prevent problems and address them before they become too big to handle. We have provided a short, handy reference chart of the major trouble spots and possible routes around them on the back of the divider page. You might tear this out and hang it up as a reminder.

Don't tell me I'm setting myself up. Tell me how to avoid problems in the first place.

Myth-conceptions are probably the largest hurdles in the decision process. Myth-conceptions are unspoken concepts that participants hold as obvious but that may or may not stand up to reality. Myth-conceptions about the decision process include:

- "Change is only temporary, and we can return to our old ways soon."
- "All agendas are detrimental and secretive."
- "Power politics control decision processes and ignore technical realities."

Participants may not get involved because they may think that their participation won't matter. They may attempt to skew analyses because they believe this is the way to counter (or support) politics or agendas. This section discusses potential myth-conceptions such as change, policy, agendas, and politics so that participants can examine their definitions and assumptions. Discussing these concepts openly will help foster the foundation of understanding needed for an effective decision process.

CHANGE = OPPORTUNITY

"When things don't work out as promised, it is all too easy to suspect that someone intended they should not."

Peter Drucker,
Management Consultant

Change

Unless your project can be thought of, agreed upon, and finished in a day, then at some point something about your project will change. Being prepared for these changes throughout the process will help keep the process running smoothly, avoid conflicts, and address the problems that need to be addressed.

DEFINE CHANGE

Don't assume that something is cast in concrete. Anything (goals, objectives, schedules) can change at any moment—and often does. Keep your thumb on the pulse of the process so you can identify and define change.

Potential changes include:

- **Values.**— Society's values have changed a great deal in the last half century. Claiming that these are momentary shifts and trying to hold on to your previous way of doing things is a myth-truth. Carefully distinguish between watershed events and momentary fads. Solving problems according to the changed values will help solve problems quickly and avoid protracted litigation.

- **Policies.**—Administrations and Congress may change during the decision process, thus changing policy. Throughout the study, explain what our policy is and where it comes from to build a basis for understanding policy changes. Explain that public input and actions (e.g., voting or lobbying) can and do change policy. (See "Policy.")

- **Decisionmakers.**—Leadership establishes a consistent policy to maintain standards throughout Reclamation. Decisionmakers use their expectations and standards to shape the organization. When leaders change, explain the leadership change and adapt to the resulting organizational changes.

- **Team leadership.**—A well-functioning team can inform new leaders about the current activities, the history of the project, and the implications of all the decisions. If the process is already working well, imposing a new way of doing business may create unnecessary confusion, wasted efforts, and even resentment from the continuing participants. New leaders need to use existing institutional structures to explain and work toward their new policies. If the team has not been functioning well, new leaders may need to regroup and revisit the previous actions.

If a team has encountered difficulties in the past, the new leader will also grapple with loaded expectations that problems won't be resolved. Establish that leadership has changed and explain how the process will go forward.

- **Publics.**—Ten years ago, Reclamation devoted 90 percent of its efforts to agricultural water user entities, which account for 30 percent of our efforts now. This reflects a continuing, long-term trend toward a broader based customer community. Changes are needed to respond to the wider range of needs.

MANAGE CHANGE

"The best way to predict the future is to create it."

Peter Drucker, Management Consultant

You can clear the hurdle of change by:

- Seeing change as an opportunity
- Knowing where you are going
- Planning for change
- Incorporating change into the process
- Taking risks

The trick is to get the process to manage change, rather than to let change control the process. If you ignore changes, they can:

- Sidetrack a study
- Undermine your credibility
- Cause lost trust
- Foster misunderstandings
- Derail communication

Unaddressed changes confuse participants—who no longer know *what* to expect. Recognized potential problems do not have the extreme impact that unexpected problems have.

Communication is again the key to managing change. Stay informed and keep participants informed. Rather than creating expectations that a particular feature or issue is

Don't get too discouraged. Change can enhance rather than destroy what you've done so far.

locked in, explain that things change rapidly and that you can't assure that every nut and bolt will be in place. Keep in touch with the most likely sources of change and communicate openly about both the sources and outcome of change with everyone throughout the study.

Treat unexpected changes like any other constraint upon the study. Discover the underlying, fundamental changes and address those rather than reacting to superficial changes. If real change renders a problem unaddressable or an alternative unfeasible, then re-evaluate the problem or reformulate alternatives.

Also, openly plan for change. Use contingency planning to be as prepared as possible. Create windows of opportunity for change by defining set times when you will re-evaluate the process and incorporate changes. Set these windows close enough together to keep track of changes, yet far enough apart to get some work done.

Make sure everyone understands the decision process so that you can show where you are when things change.

POLICY:

Policy is composed of the overall values we use to determine courses of action within Reclamation.

Policy

The decision process turns administrative policy into working policy, implementation guidance, and actions.

Policy is the stage upon which the decision process is played out. It determines the parameters and ground rules for making decisions. The more we understand public policy, the more we can ensure that the decisions made in individual processes are in line with that overall policy.

Priorities are not set up to be executed in a lock-step fashion. Instead, work on various activities with varying degrees of priority at the same time—simply put more energy and effort into the higher priority items than the lower ones.

Policy is the philosophy behind an organization's actions. Policies (Reclamation's, partners', etc.) state the priorities that decisionmakers will use to decide which problems need to be addressed. Policies state preferences regarding how solutions will be decided upon and implemented. Implementation guidance goes hand in hand with policy to explain how to follow policy for various activities and decision processes. For example, administrative policy states a commitment to dam safety, and implementation guidance provides specific details on how to ensure dams are safe.

Reclamation's policy represents the public interest or public will as expressed by the three branches of government:

Executive.—The people elect the President who then appoints the Secretary of the Interior and the Commissioner of Reclamation to carry out the administration's policy within their areas of responsibility.

Legislative.—The people elect congressional representatives who shape Reclamation's priorities and policies by passing legislation which determines funding and authority.

Judicial.—The people bring cases to court so that judicial decisions can interpret legislation—further establishing policy.

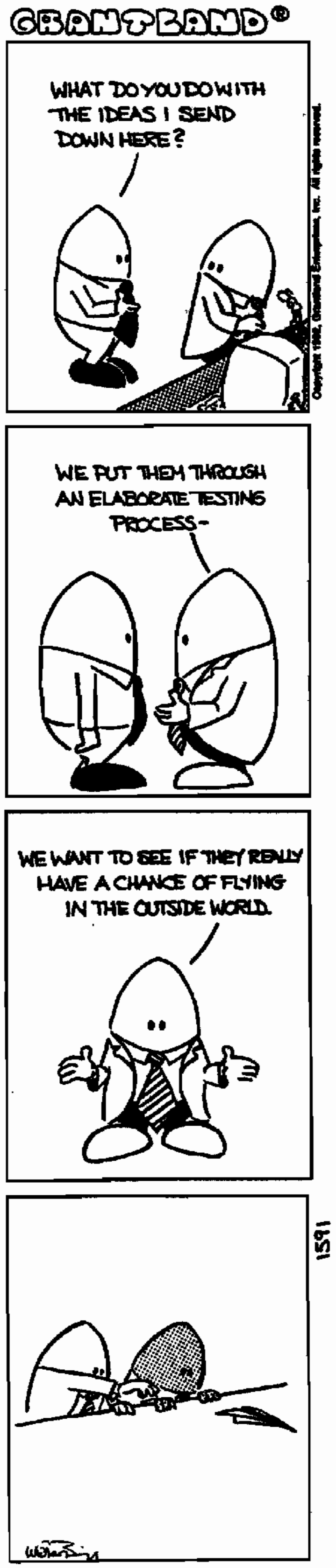
Policy can often be a moving target as administrations and Congress change. Policy letters and call letters for budget formulation are good indicators of these changes. Make your process flexible enough to accommodate these changes.

Use professional judgment in determining how to comply with changing policies and how to accommodate the corresponding changes in funding. Fundamental issues, such as anadromous fish survival, water supplies, and dam safety, will still need to be addressed under any policy. However, different priorities, aspects, and approaches may need to be incorporated into your existing processes.

Policymakers should be well versed in political realities. You may need to provide data about physical, economic, and social realities to the policymaker to help him or her set workable policy. Understanding the complex technical aspects of Reclamation helps to project policy implications. If you view a particular policy as counterproductive, you may need to informally talk with the policymaker, explain your rationale, and suggest other policies that would better fit his or her overall goal.

SUCCESS:

Develop a single, overall policy and treat each issue and each case on an individual basis using that policy. This will ensure a fair approach for all publics. If the policy changes, tell people that it has changed and explain why it has changed.



Agendas

An agenda is the sum of participants' values, purposes, and goals. At times, you may be able to treat an agenda as another need or concern. Sometimes, the given parameters of an agenda (e.g., meet all water demands on a particular river, provide fish flows, and ensure safe drinking water) are impossible to reach. You need to show that the impacts of that agenda (e.g., environmental costs, funding difficulties, lack of public acceptance) are too costly. If your study takes all the participants' concerns into consideration and responds in some manner to these concerns, then agendas will probably not prevent the process from carrying out a workable solution.

Meeting informally may allow people to see each other as human beings rather than as promoters of the "wrong" agenda.

Meeting with all of the participants at once may provide an open, productive way to show participants the overall picture of agendas. A facilitator can make sure that everyone has a chance to speak and to address conflicts.

If the participants comprise too large a group to make this approach feasible, meeting with various representatives or asking everyone for a written statement and then distributing these statements may accomplish the same thing. Meeting with key representatives in a confidential setting (formally or informally) may also help.

HIDDEN AGENDAS

If an agenda is never brought out openly, it is a hidden agenda. Hidden agendas which cannot stand the test of public scrutiny or are counter to a professed agenda pose problems for the decision process as they embody the antithesis of public policy and open decisionmaking. Hidden agendas can:

- Disrupt the decision process
- Thwart or skew analyses
- Preselect an alternative without a thorough evaluation

- Redirect the decision process after the decision has been made
- Create loss of credibility
- Sow mistrust among key parties
- Result in lawsuits, funding withdrawals, and public conflict
- Risk nonacceptance or even noncompliance with other agencies, policy, legislation, and regulations

Keep checking for hidden agendas by watching for counterproductive actions, unexplained inactions, or conflicts and reversals in policy, actions, or statements. If you suspect a hidden agenda, first validate that perception. Then examine past and current actions to see if results diverge from the professed agenda. These explanations will probably reveal the real concerns, and you can then address those concerns as you would any other agenda.

If you still feel that someone is refusing to provide a rational explanation and continuing to hide an agenda, you may need to speculate on what that agenda might be and work around it. You may be able to:

- **Bring the agenda out.**—Some tools, such as devil's advocate, trading cards, ranking techniques, Pareto charts, and issue maps, may be useful in bringing agendas into the open.
- **Show the implications.**—It might be possible to show the inherent dangers within a hidden agenda and, thus, lead participants into an open process.
- **Develop broad-based support.**—If the hidden agenda centers around a special, specific interest group, developing broad-based support for the study process and the solution may diffuse the agenda's impact.
- **Meet the underlying need.**—Sometimes, hidden agendas themselves hide deeper, more basic objectives, which may be met in other ways. If you or the agenda maker can express these deeper objectives, then ways to meet these objectives might be developed.

MYTH-TRUTHS:

Sometimes, participants may be convinced that there is a hidden agenda when everything IS actually open and above board. Others may be sure that something sinister is afoot because they can't accept or don't understand internal and external changes in the process.

To dispel these myth-truths, you may need to clarify actions and decision factors, explain the analysis, or re-evaluate the process.

Hidden agendas are the lurking mines of the decision process.

- **Plan around it.**—Determine how many resources (time, energy, money) the individual is willing to invest in the hidden agenda and plan your actions accordingly. Be careful, however. This may lead to second-guessing the process and may confuse issues even more than the original hidden agenda did.

Politics

To deny that politics has a role in decision processes is to deny reality. Politics plays an integral role, but it is not the only influence on a decision.

WHAT POLITICS IS AND DOES

Politics is a catch-all term for the interactions of people and institutions (e.g., voters, special interest groups, elected representatives, and government). Take a bunch of diverse viewpoints and priorities, mix in persuasion, consent, and power, and you have the game of politics.

You can't escape politics—nor do you want to.

Every group involved in the decision process plays politics: the professional politicians (e.g., Administration and Congress), Reclamation decisionmakers (e.g., Commissioner, Regional Directors, and Area Managers), technical experts (both internal and external), and the public (e.g., interest groups and organizations.) Each group or organization plays external politics to promote its agenda and mission. And within each group, individuals and subgroups play internal politics to get what they want or what they see as vital to improve their organization or the human condition.

Yet this game is far more than a simple game of control and power. Politics channels the values and priorities of every group so that the solution is workable—**not only technically, but socially**. Political realities form a reality check by asking:

Complaining about politics is like complaining about the weather—it adds nothing and overlooks vital aspects. Putting on your coat keeps you from getting wet; considering political factors lets you recognize all the influences on the decision.

- Will people consent to and continue to use the solution when it is implemented?

- Will anyone object so strenuously that the process becomes stymied?

- Will this process support or undermine other processes?
- Is the problem great enough and the solution viable enough to risk investing in?

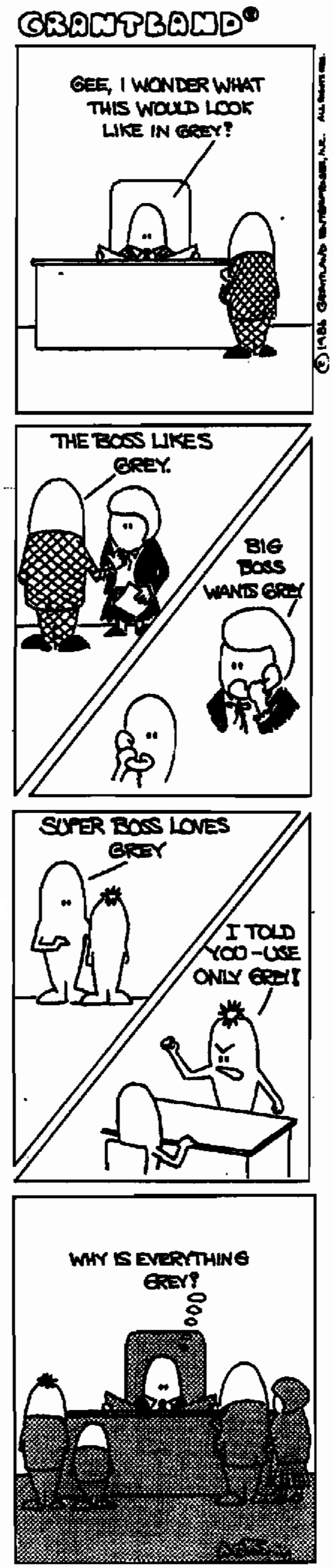
HOW TO WORK WITH POLITICS

The best technical solution will fail if people do not support it. Thus, support must be considered to develop a workable solution. The decisionmakers and political players consider the acceptability or public support factors along with the technical information and analyses to:

- Communicate with their constituents and supporters
- Determine if a politically acceptable solution is workable
- Determine if a technically workable solution is supportable

Communicating with political players to determine what their concerns are and working with those issues as you would any other issue is essential. Continuous, interactive communication will open up the "black box" of political games and help prevent power plays based on misunderstandings and second guessing. For example, an elected official may not be as likely to side with the first constituent that walks in the door if he or she already understands the problem, its context, and the actions being taken to reach a solution. Conversely, if a technical team knows why an elected official favors an alternative, they will be more likely to examine that alternative or suggest other means of achieving the same underlying goal.

Political factors can place constraints on defining a problem and finding a solution in much the same way as technical factors. Funding and authorization shape the scope of your study. The difficulty comes when people ignore or second-guess what a political player wants. If people perceive that a certain player is placing constraints on a study that actually are not there, then the process can quickly go off track. Be sure that you communicate directly with all levels of politicians from the highest to the lowest and understand their perspectives. Directly involve the highest levels at appropriate points in the decision process.



At times, decision processes may overlook political or technical factors. This omission may cause you to miss solutions, skip analyses, and lose credibility or support. Determine what factors are missing by communicating with everyone involved. Communicate with everyone involved to make sure that the imbalance is real rather than a myth-truth or false perception.

Political players are the same as every other participant. Keep them informed and consider their constraints and concerns as you would anyone else's.

☑ Technical Approaches

Technical experts approach the problem logically. They determine what would be the best technical solution using a methodological, data-oriented, scientific approach. Personal, professional integrity is often seen as the highest value of Reclamation employees. Technical experts exercise this integrity by:

Performing objective analyses.—Technical experts are not expected to skew analyses to support a political decision. Doing this would ultimately undermine professional and agency credibility because someone out there will know what is really going on—and challenge the process.

Getting comprehensive analyses.—Include diverse viewpoints and technical disciplines. Ensure that related and affected issues are examined at an appropriate level of detail. You may need to include information relevant to the study which might be politically unpopular. The interrelationship between disciplines and interdependencies of analyses are often more important than the individual analyses.

NEPA/CEQ and the Administrative Procedures Act are examples of requirements to document the rationale for a decision.

Exercising professional judgment.—Technical experts use experience and education to go beyond set formulas and create meaningful ways of looking at problems. Subjectively modifying the methodology may be needed to make it relevant to the analysis at hand. Technical experts consider social, political, and technical factors in determining what needs to study and what methodologies to use. These considerations must be clearly and carefully documented.

Decisionmaker Approaches

Decisionmakers approach the problem from an overall perspective, waiting until all the data is in before deciding on what solution to implement. They take the overall mission and agenda into consideration to determine what would be the most workable and supportable solution. Decisionmakers exercise their integrity and support Reclamation's mission by:

Seeking objective analyses.—Objective analyses are the only way to ensure that a solution will actually work. Suggesting or even hinting that you would prefer a skewed analysis will only lessen the chances of the solution's success and increase your personal risk of failure and lost credibility.

Making balanced decisions.—Weighing the input from all sides and ensuring that you have heard from everyone helps avoid surprises later. Exercise professional and political judgment to determine which alternative best fits the needs and is the most doable. Providing and documenting the rationales for your decision will help the community deal with the decision. It may be tempting to ignore certain factors or decide "in favor" of certain groups for nonobjective reasons. However, this will eventually erode trust and support in both keeping the solution functioning and future decision processes.

Withholding prejudgments.—Decisionmakers have a lot of clout, so a tiny favorable breath for one alternative may get blown into an absolute view that the alternative is the only one you will support as a decisionmaker. Try not to influence the analyses. Clamping down on your assumptions and preferences will promote objective analyses and uncover effective solutions.

A legitimate mission does not bestow the right to shoot down anyone who impedes that mission. Rather, it carries the obligation to listen to opposing points of view.

Technical Analyses

+

Political Influence

Decision