The Evolution of an Idea and an Institution:

The Progress of the Army Corps of Engineers on Everglades Ecosystem Restoration and Cultural Change
Outline

Project overview
Methods and data
Results
Discussion/Conclusion
Research Area

• Question: is the Army Corps changing its culture to address environmental challenges as it incorporates ecosystem restoration as a mission?

• Case Study: Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) & Jacksonville District

• Policy Goal: Better environmental outcomes in restoration & water resource decision-making
The Corps & CERP

- Some observers consider the Corps “schizophrenic” (Houck 2006) or “reform-proof” (Grunwald, various)
- Corps: at heart is a structural engineering agency
- Everglades: a large, damaged, complex, politicized ecosystem

Source: SFWMD
Defining Institutional Culture

• “The deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs, or ideologies that members have about their organization or its work” (Peterson & Spencer 1990)

• 6-part framework of organizational culture: external environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy, and leadership (Tierney 1988)

• Advocacy Coalition Framework—actors are primarily motivated by core values (Sabatier 1988, etc.)
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Measuring Culture

• Methods
  – Document research
  – 50 hour-long interviews
  – Data: Interviews (transcripts)
Interview Questions

Q1 What is your vision of success in Everglades restoration?
Q2 What is the Corps’ vision of success in restoration?
Q3 How do you measure progress towards success personally and/or professionally?
Q5 What are some successes the Corps has achieved in restoration so far, either procedurally or on-the-ground?
Q6 ...challenges or failures?
Q7 What is the relationship of restoration to the 404 permitting process?
Quantifying qualitative data

- Interviews: more complex than a survey, but richer

- Hybrid of analysis methods
  1. Manual coding
  2. Topic modeling: automated textual analysis
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Q1: What is your vision of restoration?
A few illustrative interview quotes

“"I think success in the immediate future is starting to build projects, to start seeing what restoration projects will do in this changed environment.""  
—Anon. (Corps)
A few illustrative interview quotes

“They have an engineering solution to most problems. A lot of problems require engineering expertise but not engineering solutions.”

—Anon. (State of Florida)
“When you talk to managers about their issues they see biology as the problem, the obstacle in their way. For example, in a beach renourishment project there might be a ‘turtle problem’...If the Corps had environmental mission as a mature part of their agency, embedded in their soul, that’s not how they would perceive environmental issues—as the counterweight to what they want to do.”

—Anon. (Environmental Org.)
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Cultural lessons of Everglades restoration are not filtering out

• **Regionally:** Restoration Branch is doing yeoman’s work, but separated from other mission areas

• **Nationally:** Constrained by hierarchy, limited $, parochialism

• Expertise in ecosystem restoration ≠ capable of ecosystem management.
Using Culture as a Lever to Influence Outcomes

Option 1: Adapt the Corps and find ways to commit the whole agency to restoration

Option 2: Separate comprehensive adaptive ecosystem governance into a sub-agency or multi-agency effort with independent director (similar to CERP development process)
Thank you.

Questions?

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