

M·N·R·G



Partnering for Sustainable Ecosystem Restoration

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Bloomington, MN
March 19, 2008

Report

Meeting Notes

Overview

Sand County Foundation (SCF) and the Midwest Natural Resources Group (MNRG) conducted a workshop on March 19, 2008 at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge to discuss a partnership for sustainable ecosystem restoration. Members from seven federal agencies and two landowner representatives brainstormed several key questions:

- What are the key benefits and obstacles for private landowners to collaborate successfully with local, state and federal agencies?
- What obstacles do federal agencies face in order to collaborate among themselves and others in ecosystem protection?
- How do we identify gatekeepers (shown in the information-sharing model)? Are they specific entities or organizations? What are the characteristics of gatekeepers.
- What would a successful sustainable ecosystem demonstration project look like?

The following notes represent the discussion outcomes and form the foundation for the next steps in the process.

Meeting Attendees:

- Terry Birkenstock, Army Corps of Engineers
- Tom Crump, Army Corps of Engineers
- Joseph Hinson, Northwest Natural Resource Group
- Tom Krapf, Natural Resource Conservation Service
- John Laub, Sand County Foundation
- Tim O'Brien, Bureau of Land Management
- John Perrecone, Environmental Protection Agency
- Jim Ruwaldt, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Brian Smith, Federal Highway Administration
- Jeff Stoner, U.S. Geological Service
- Kevin Vesperman, Alliant Energy
- Dave Vigh, Army Corps of Engineers

Discussion Question: “What are the key BENEFITS for private landowners to collaborate successfully with local, state, federal agencies”?

The discussion produced two main categories of collaborative benefits for landowners: resources and technical assistance and the influence and visibility that the landowner can receive from the Partnership.

Key Benefits for Private Landowners

Resources & Technical Assistance	Power: Influence, visibility & credibility
Landowner can find a more cost effective method/ solution to a problem by working with an agency	Landowner gets to <i>influence</i> the outcome when collaboration takes place
Many resources are available to implement change (e.g. money, access to technical expertise)	Landowner <i>can lobby</i> for projects on behalf of agencies
“Technical assistance” is a large category available to landowner that they can’t do or get alone	Landowner can get “legal” projections from agencies (e.g. protected species; habitat preservation)
Landowners can partner and learn from other landowners through agency assistance and information	Collaboration provides <i>visibility</i> for landowner
Large scale problem solving can result from agency collaboration with landowner	Collaboration increases <i>economic value</i> (of property, etc) for landowner
Agency recommended solutions should meet regulations of other agencies working with landowner project(s)	Collaboration with agencies provides landowner with <i>credibility</i>
Both landowner and agencies share same value of wanting to do what’s best for the land	Agencies provide organization and structure to landowner projects

Discussion Question: “What are the key OBSTACLES for private landowners to collaborate successfully with local, state, federal agencies?”

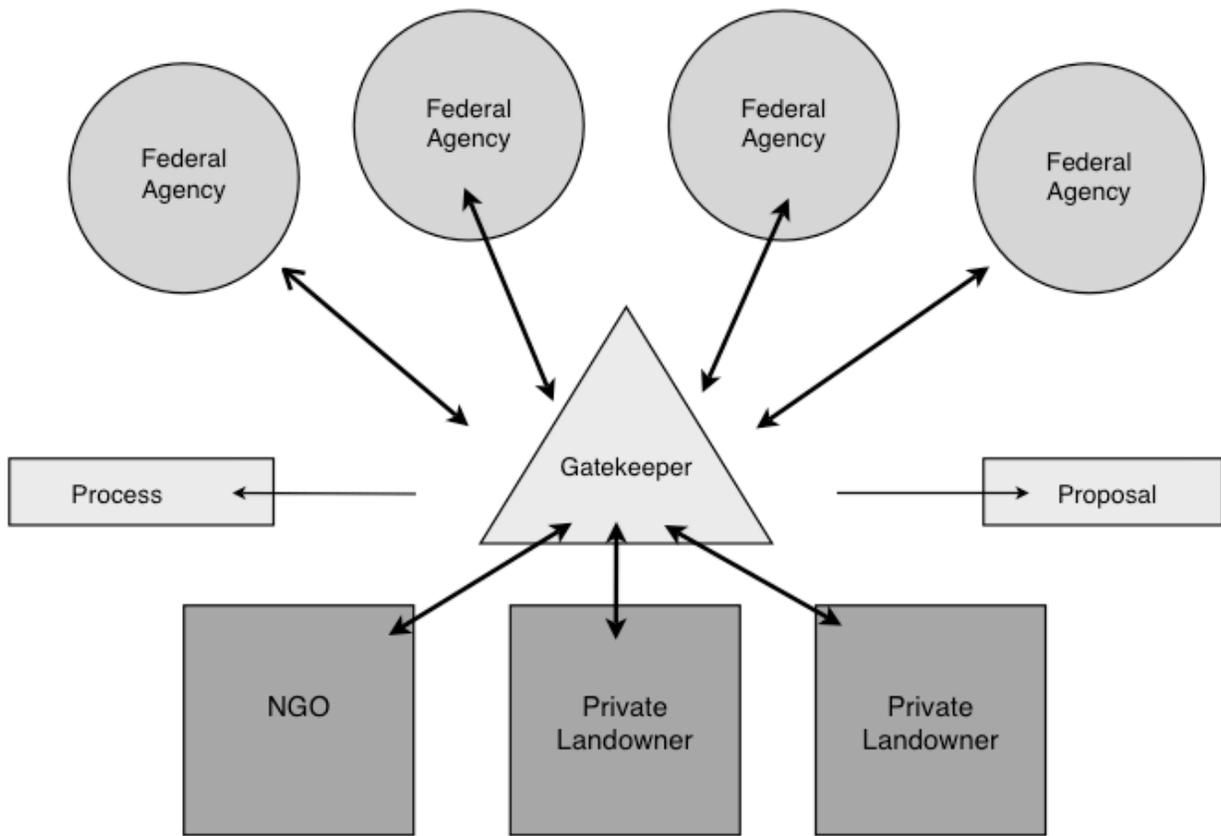
The key topics that emerged from the discussion were are highlighted in the chart below. The number in parentheses represents the number of votes for the item when participants were asked to prioritize their ideas. The highest ranking obstacles were:

- The “scale” of vision between a landowner may differ from that of an agency (individual vs. public benefit).
- Private landowners don’t want projects “sprung” on them without warning.
- Lack of coordination at different levels in agencies affects private landowner involvement.
- The length of time it takes to complete a project can be too long.
- Confusing and contradictory regulations among agencies.
- The “silo” mentality of both landowners and agencies can create missed opportunities
- Different missions and visions of various agencies are part of the “silo” effect.
- The monetary cost for landowners can be high.

Key Obstacles for Private Landowners (Pages 4 & 5)

Complexity: Regulations, Agencies, Science	Information & Communication	Money & Timing	Differing missions, visions & coordination
Science isn’t definitive - it evolves and can be difficult to understand in layman’s terms	Education of leaders in corporations, organizations and agencies is very important	The monetary cost to the private landowner can be high (5)	Agency policy issues can be differ from private landowner agenda/vision(s)
There are confusing and contradictory regulations among agencies (7)	There is often no SINGLE spokesperson for private landowners (unlike agencies)	Rules and regulations can prevent efficient use of landowner monies (often \$ can’t be transferred between agencies)	Landowners and agencies can have differing objectives and expectations
Agencies operate in “silos”. Diverse regulations across agencies can compromise good ideas	History of private landowner with agencies (often bad) is hard to overcome	Landowners lack funds to participate in planning meetings (lodging & travel) whereas for agency participants it is part of their “job”.	The “scale” of vision between a landowner (individual benefit) may differ from that of agency (larger public benefit) (8)

Complexity: Regulations, Agencies, Science	Information & Communication	Money & Timing	Differing missions, visions & coordination
“Silo” mentality with Private Landowners and with Agencies creates missed opportunities - need more flexibility and “win-win” efforts. (7)	Meeting Schedules: private landowners need to meet evenings and weekends (vs. agency day meetings is part of their job)	Timing and funds for projects may not coincide or may conflict	Is a lack of coordination at different levels in agencies that affects private landowner involvement/satisfaction (7)
Different missions among the various agencies - “silo views” (6)	Lack of trust of Federal regulators	The length of time it takes to complete a project can be too long (7)	
	Private landowners don’t want projects/ ideas “sprung” on them - need upfront involvement and information (8)		
	Private landowners don’t have information and resources available to help them; don’t know “where to start”		
	Existing private landowner/agency “client” relationships can cause conflicts with other agencies		



Information-Sharing Collaboration Model

Information sharing Model

A model for sharing information with landowners was developed and discussed. The model and following discussion illustrated the importance of a “*gatekeeper*” as a method of successfully sharing information and building relationships with private landowners. The model is shown below along with potential characteristics of gatekeepers:

Discussion question: How to identify gatekeepers. Are they specific entities or individuals?

Following are suggested identifiable characteristics of gatekeepers, along with other observations:

- They are networkers (usually have reputation as person who knows “where to start” to get specific information)
- People trust them
- They are good communicators
- Usually are initiators, self-starters; may be early adopters
- Have planning skills (conservation); have process skills
- They are “naturals” at networking
- Usually have/should have same values as those they represent
- Question: Should an organization/agency incent or reward this type of person for their networking skills/responsibilities?
- Gatekeepers require cultivation; are not easy to find
- Agencies should write scientific papers, newsletters, etc at a level that others (public, landowners, NGOs) can readily understand.

Discussion Question: What OBSTACLES do Federal agencies face in order to collaborate among themselves and others in ecosystem protection?

- Major problem is the lack of project manager cross-training across agencies. Could MNRG help initiate cross-training around specific topics or themes?
- Agencies need to educate each other and get information to trusted gatekeepers to share with private landowners, NGOs.
- Could use Web site to inform gatekeepers, others.
- Focus groups with landowners could be one way to:
 - Share agency information/get input
 - Build trust
 - Close the information gap
- Cycle funding timeline synchronization needed: e.g. DOT has 10 year funding cycle. Need synchronization to use funds for joint agency projects (especially to involve DOT).

What would a sustainable demonstration ecosystem project look like? What would be key criteria and major obstacles?

The following criteria and obstacles were not ranked but suggested as potential ideas for future planning.

Sustainable Ecosystem Demonstration Project Criteria and Obstacles (Pages 8 & 9)

Locations	Time	Success/Potential	Type of Project/Partners	Potential Obstacles
Link with existing groups - Gathering Waters; The Nature Conservancy	Enough time to measure ecosystem benefit	Be replicable	Sustainable water resources	Money (funding)
MNRG Area - St. Paul District (WI, MN, IA)	Doable 2008 - 2009	Have potential for success	Sub-watershed ecosystem restoration project	Funding for long-term maintenance/monitoring
Midwest Location (Great Lakes, Upper Mississippi)	No more than two years to complete	Can clearly articulate the problem and the solution	Sediment reduction project	Some agencies aren't involved with MNRG
	Desired time frame for completion?	Large enough to make impact, small enough to be implementable	Deals with identified key obstacles	Shrinking budgets, tighter goals, reduced collaboration
	Definable - start to finish; objective(s)	Should lead to cross-training	Meets Sand County/NGO needs	No individual employee has "goal" of collaboration in job description
		Needs to be private landowner benefit	Consistent with other restoration efforts	Differences in how agencies try to enforce regulations: e.g. range of "stick" method vs. "carrot" or combo.
		High potential for success with visible, tangible benefits	Scope of resource benefits?	"Getting going" obstacles in short-term?

Locations	Time	Success/ Potential	Type of Project/ Partners	Potential Ob- stacles
		Wide range of possible solutions	Multi-purpose	Federal laws
		Provides sustainable ecosystem functions; establish an ecosystem corridor	Multi-partner; multi-agency participation	Conflicts with DOT STIP
		Manageable size	Minimum of two federal agencies involved	Agency regulations
			Requires ecosystem thought process (more than one federal agency)	Competing priorities
			Fills a gap: between agencies; not covered by current laws/programs	
			Broad constituency and support	
			High likelihood of strong landowner interest, support and participation	

Meeting facilitation and report summarization by Mary Cole Laub, MCL Group