

THE INITIATION OF RESEARCH AND CARRYING IT THROUGH TO MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

This workshop examined two questions:

1. What initiates and determines the direction or emphasis of a research program? and

2. how are the results of this research communicated most effectively to management levels of an organization charged with the management of land and its associated biological resources?

While the conduct of research is not exclusive to an organization involved with managing biological resources, the effective communication of research findings to the operational or management arm of such an organization is essential if it is to manage efficiently. The integration of results from the various disciplines or studies is usually carried out at the management level, but when management plans are being prepared the interdisciplinary integration occurs within the planning team. In some research into the management of individual species, the integrated approach is not always appropriate and the work should stand alone. This is particularly so in the management of endangered species.

DISCUSSION

Factors affecting initiation of research projects
It is important to have research frameworks that are adequate to handle the problems which arise. It is necessary to employ competent staff and to have sufficient funds to ensure that research direction is responsive to unforeseen management problems and which includes both short term problem oriented research and longer term studies. Efficient research needs an ad-

ministrative structure that can assess priorities and reallocate resources accordingly. It also needs a process that can integrate multi-disciplinary studies so that they may be applied to management.

In order to initiate research, it is first necessary to identify problems and then place them in priorities.

A list of potential projects compiled by resource managers is one method for identifying research areas. Such lists need to be comprehensive and detailed enough to allow proper evaluation. This approach can involve bodies external to the managing organization as well as the organization's staff. This may act as a stimulus for outside research workers to focus on problems that the resource managing organization is interested in solving.

Regular consultation between manager and researcher is necessary during all stages of a research program and this is the hallmark of well targeted research programs.

The opportunity frequently exists for managers to gather, in an ordered way, long term data that provide an extremely useful background for a research study. The existence of such data will sometimes influence a research worker to choose a particular project.

Although some of the finest research comes from work carried out on a very limited budget, the provision or non-provision of funds is probably the most seductive agent in determining the course of research proposals. An often neglected factor in this matter of funding, and one which is

very pertinent of the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), is the capacity of some organizations to provide facilities and other assistance. Although such assistance may not be financial it often influences outside agencies deciding on a particular study.

Communication of research results to managers

This subject was discussed at length but did not generate any definite conclusion, rather a series of approaches were suggested. In an organization like CALM, with large areas of land to manage and these scattered over a large state, decentralizing research activities is essential. The benefits of decentralization were seen to be the creative impetus brought about through exposure of researchers to regional problems. Decentralization can result in isolation and it is necessary to ensure that research is subject to the critical review process normally associated with good research and that publication is part of the product of the research. This approach is essential to ensure that the scientific competence of the research staff is monitored and is seen to be monitored.

Departments of Agriculture use extension officers to provide liaison between their research workers and the farmers who use the results of the research. This approach is one which an organization like CALM could follow. The validity of this approach within CALM is evident in the way that the Silviculture and Environmental Protection branches provide information to managers. As a counter to this point of view, the "single mission" character of the activities of the Silviculture and Environmental Protection functions was highlighted and the breadth of scope of research activities underlined. A practical answer was seen to be a liaison function for the

program leaders in the Research Division who would be conversant with activity in their respective areas. Managers should use the program leaders as sounding boards for management actions and also assist in identifying potential research needs.

The process of development of a management plan for a natural resource area or for a particular species was seen to be the most definitive process by which research results could be carried through to management. Good planning is a vehicle of singular importance in the communication process because it provides the stage where there is a conscious step of drawing out the management implications from any number of research studies. Planning is the integration of sometimes conflicting information into a set of coherent guidelines for management.

Communications between research workers, management and the public are often hindered by the use of jargon and simple English is preferable.

CONCLUSION

The main difficulty associated with the initiation of research and carrying it through to management arose through the separation of the research role from the management role. The action of exploring a problem should be a joint exercise by both parties and in CALM there is already extensive co-operation in defining the matter to be researched and assistance in collecting data. Joint studies involving workers and managers would lead to procedures and solutions that are realistic and could be implemented. If compromises are necessary in the face of operational realities, the research worker should be involved with the manager in making such compromises.