

PLANNING/COMMUNICATION

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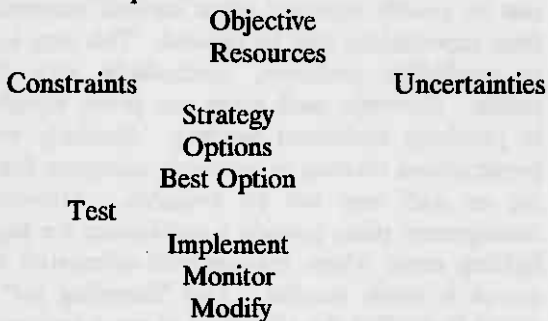
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The workshop was developed around the question "how can planning help managers and researchers achieve successful biological management?" General discussion was preceded by an introduction to the planning framework, the values of planning and communication as a planning tool. The following discussion then focused on planning as a framework for decision-making, the role of planners in biological management, setting priorities and communication. Management plans and planning within the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) dominated the discussion.

INTRODUCTION

The Planning Framework. Planning has been defined as a method by which decision-makers can gather all the facts and consider alternatives before embarking on a course of action (Anderson 1977). The following diagram summarises this process.



These components may be defined as follows.

Objectives. These may range from corporate objectives to specific objectives for management of a particular parcel of land.

Resources. The information required is determined by the objectives. Generally information on natural, social and financial resources is essential.

Constraints. These may be political, physical (capability of the land to support a particular use), social or financial.

Uncertainties. This term refers to environmental uncertainty; for example, epidemics, disease, climatic change.

Options. Options are formulated based on initial objectives and taking account of the resources, constraints and uncertainties. A range of options should be considered.

Best Option. Objective criteria are used to select the best option.

Test. Modelling or "pilot" studies can be used to test the best option.

Implement Communication between the various staff involved is essential to ensure efficient implementation.

Monitor. Implementation should be monitored so that the level of achievement of the objectives can be determined.

Modify. Following monitoring, modification should occur, as necessary, at any of the above stages.

Values of Planning. Planning is a way of recognising the spatial and temporal implications of a management action. Spatially, planning creates a framework which draws on information from numerous sources and then facilitates recognition of the second and third consequences of the action. Temporally, planning encourages the development of a "management vision" - a perception of the preferred, future character of an area.

Management effectiveness is increased by using planning to set priorities and to ensure the efficient allocation of resources.

Accountability can be encouraged by planning, particularly when the public are involved. Such accountability generally encourages management agencies to use methods which can be readily explained and justified. Public involvement in plan-

ning is also generally accepted as resulting in better management.

Planning allows systematic management in the face of uncertainty (a characteristic of most natural environments). In this instance planning provides a framework which can be used to guide decision-making, while still retaining flexibility.

Communication as a Planning Tool. Communication may assist planning by: facilitating the provision and collection of information; enabling decisions to be more readily accepted, particularly if they are discussed prior to implementation; facilitating questioning, which often leads to review, modification and a resultant increase in management efficiency; and allowing recognition of the trade-offs which are an essential part of decision-making. Familiarising all participants and the wider community with the steps involved in planning also encourages a wider understanding of the decisions involved.

Communication is essential in the planning process, both prior to decisions being made and during the process itself, particularly in the evaluation and modification stages.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Much of the following discussion is devoted to management plans. It is based directly on points raised in the group discussion.

Planning as a Framework for Decision-Making. One of the most important functions of planning is to provide a framework within which management decisions can be made and then readily communicated to enable implementation. Planning within such a framework should be flexible enough to cope with changes in demand over time - for example, the recent annual requirement, by Wundowie, for 100,000 tonnes of firewood. Management plans, and particularly regional plans covering such resources, should be flexible enough to cover a reasonable number of such unexpected demands.

Within CALM a hierarchy of plans exist, including the corporate plan, policy statements, regional and area management plans, and operational plans. All plans should be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure that they are being implemented and objectives met. There should be a major review of a given plan when it expires. Planners should remain involved until a plan is running smoothly.

Role of Planners in Biological Management. Planners are part of a triangle, of which researchers and managers are also part.

	Planners	
Managers		Researchers

The degree of interaction between the above three groups is dependent on the amount of information required by, and available from, each group. Through this interaction, plans often provide the first written information for managers.

Planning can offer services other than management plans, e.g. frameworks for evaluating acquisition/management priorities for a reserve system, or for evaluating the environmental impacts of a proposed management action.

Priorities. It is essential for all sections within a conservation agency, whether they be research, management or other specialist staff, to develop and work towards a common set of priorities.

Within CALM, planning priorities should reflect overall management and research priorities. This is best achieved by encouraging management, research and other specialist staff to generate their perceived priorities, based on pre-determined criteria. Departmental priorities can then be determined. If changes to these priorities are necessary, information supporting these changes should be made readily available.

Priorities should be given to prescriptions so that if resources are limited, allocation decisions can be readily made. Priorities may be hierarchical or more generally noted as being of low, medium or high priority.

Often management plans assume a greater dedication of resources to management of a given area than are currently available. If all desired prescriptions are included, as well as those that can be readily achieved given current resources, false expectations may be created. This may lead to credibility problems, particularly with the public. However, such plans can prove valuable in justifying additional funding. Similarly with prescriptions relating to research, adequate funding or staff may not be available. However, management plans provide a mechanism for highlighting areas where management-orientated research is sorely needed. This "shopping list" is useful in guiding the allocation of extra resources if they become available.

Communication. Communication is a two-way process, based on talking and listening. It is a specialist skill requiring specialist staff, plus training for others.

Scientists should be more open about what they know, and more importantly, what they do not know. However, scientists should ensure that the

community remains confident in a research agency's professional abilities. Better communication between scientific colleagues is a good first step.

"Pro-active" communication is advocated, i.e. going out and asking for comments. However, target groups should be carefully selected. Also, communication with the public may be a painful process, with some parts of the community remaining unconvinced, no matter how well scientists communicate with them.

Management plans facilitate communication by getting people from different disciplines together. Those most critical of plan preparation should be invited to become involved in the planning process. This often encourages realisation of the trade-offs and constraints inherent in resource management.

Public participation results in better management, but is expensive in terms of both finance and time. The level of public involvement should be regulated by the level of complexity of the

planning project, with more complex projects requiring more public participation and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

Most of the workshop discussion was general, with some specific discussion directed towards the role of planning in successful biological management. The workshop indicated that planning contributes to successful biological management in a number of ways: by providing a framework for decision-making and providing written information for managers; by setting priorities between areas and setting priorities for management actions; by highlighting areas where management-orientated research is required; and by facilitating better communication.

REFERENCE

- ANDERSON, E.W. (1977). Planning the use and management of renewable resources. *Rangeman's Journal* 4. 99-102, 5, 144-147.