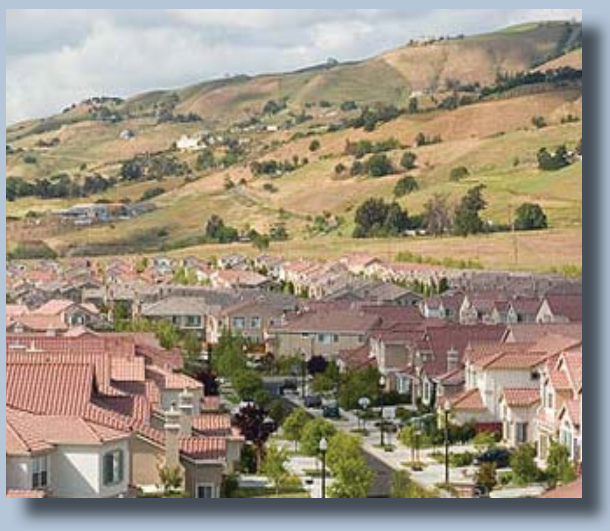
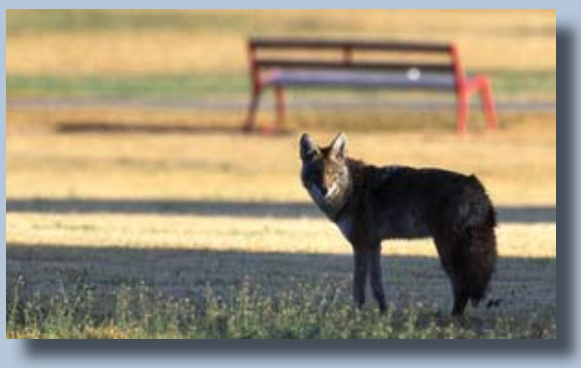
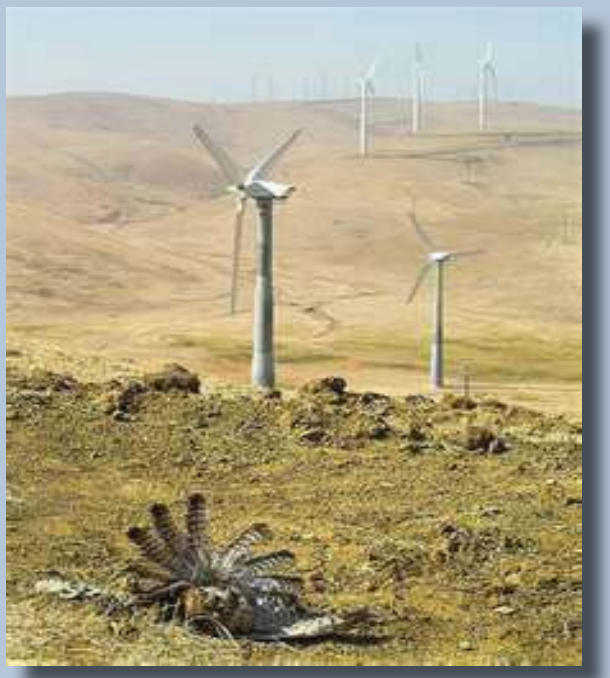
Leaders' Guide

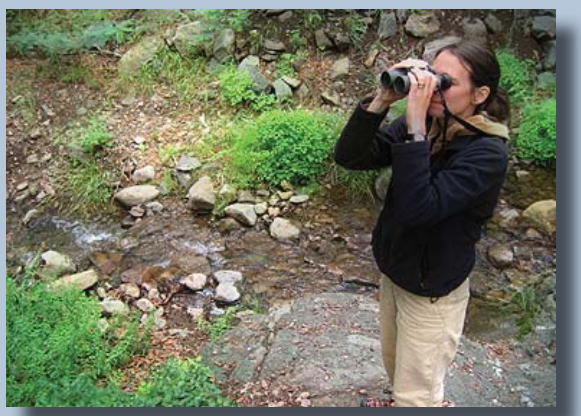
Transformation of State Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Ensuring the Future of Conservation in a Rapidly Changing World









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Introduction

Fish and wildlife conservation in North America has a history of seemingly insurmountable challenges. From the market-borne exploitation of wildlife in the 19th century, to the Dust Bowl of the "Dirty Thirties," to DDT in the 60s, to urban sprawl and habitat fragmentation in recent years, we have faced considerable obstacles. Today, our profession is facing challenges of a different nature – unprecedented social changes coupled with global-scale environmental effects. These include long-term declines in number of hunters and anglers, our traditional stakeholder base and source of funding; declining funds and growing demands on state fish and wildlife agencies to provide services to a diverse array of stakeholders that we are just beginning to understand; increasing urbanization and development combined with growing apathy toward the natural world; and the unknown implications of climate change to our physical environment and the species inhabiting it. Like any entity, our state fish and wildlife agencies must adapt strategically to meet these challenges.

The thought of large-scale transformation can be daunting, and even if we agree it is necessary, how do you begin, where will the resources come from, and who will lead? None of us have spare time and resources, but we all must become actively engaged in transformation. The choice is simple: continue to do what we always have done and suffer the fate of the passenger pigeon, or strategically transform to gain increasing relevancy and sustainability.

The purpose of this guide is to provide practical information and guidance for fish and wildlife practitioners interested in pursuing transformation in their state. Our intent is to focus on how state fish and wildlife agencies can build on their strengths to move forward and evolve their culture to ensure that we include all of the elements necessary to conserve the diversity of our fish and wildlife resources into the future.

This guide was developed because of interest expressed at a workshop titled "Transformation of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies: Challenges and Opportunities for Leaders" held at the 2010 North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. The day-long workshop, attended by more than 150 wildlife professionals, featured presentations and an afternoon work session. At the end of the work session, participants were asked for their verbal and written feedback. In summary, the participants were relieved to learn that they were not alone in their belief that fish and wildlife agency transformation was needed, and they were eager for additional guidance to facilitate transformation initiatives in their states. This guide was prepared as a partial response to the needs identified by workshop participants.

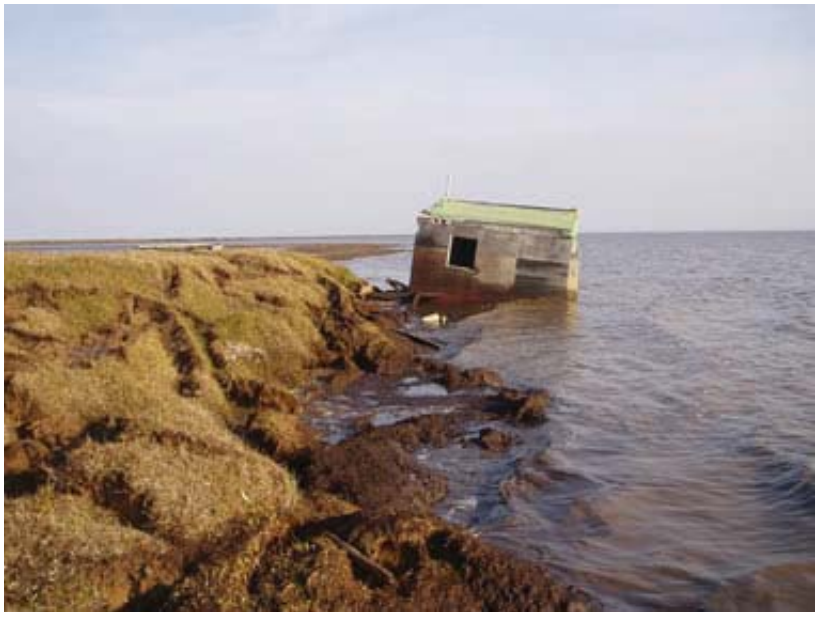
The editors and contributors to this guide have diverse backgrounds and expertise in fish and wildlife conservation. We seek to offer some guidance and encouragement to facilitate institutional transformation that we believe is imperative to the future of fish and wildlife conservation.

The guide is organized into four sections. Part I presents a conceptual framework for understanding agency transformation focusing on broadening goals, boundaries and activities. Part II offers perspectives on transformation offered by fish and wildlife agency professionals from six states. Part III synthesizes the experiences from state agencies, relevant literature and authors' collective insight to suggest best practices to facilitate transformation of state fish and wildlife agencies. Part IV delivers concluding thoughts to help fish and wildlife professionals initiate transformative change within their agencies. ❖

Organizational Transformation: What the Experts Tell Us

The context for fish and wildlife conservation in the United States has changed considerably since the emergence of the state fish and wildlife institution (Manfredo et al. 2003, Patterson et al. 2003, Jacobson et al. 2010a), but the core principals as described in the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation (NAMWC) remain largely intact as applied to wildlife management today (Geist et al. 2001). This situation presents a problem, as critics (Gill 2004, Nie 2004) of the current system of wildlife management point out. They are concerned that the NAMWC as typically applied in state wildlife management is not adequately robust to reflect the diversity of wildlife-related interests that exist in society (Decker et al. 2009). Contemporary challenges include, climate change, resource development, impacts of urban sprawl and human population growth on wildlife; declining national interest in hunting and trapping (Duda et al. 1998); and an overall lack of connectedness to the natural environment (Patterson et al. 2003, Pergams and Zaradic 2008). Likely indicators of a shift in public perception regarding the state wildlife conservation and management institution (i.e., the people, processes, and rules as well as the norms, values, and behaviors associated with state wildlife conservation and management) (Jacobson and Decker 2008, Jacobson et al. 2010a) are increasing numbers of wildlife-related ballot initiatives and popular referenda, wildlife organizations with nonconsumptive orientations (e.g., environmental, humane), state and national efforts to find alternative funding sources for wildlife management (i.e., funds not generated directly or indirectly by hunters or trappers), and campaigns to change the composition of wildlife boards and commissions.

As one of the primary organizational actors within the state wildlife conservation and management institution (Institution), we focus this guide about organizational change on state fish and wildlife management agencies (SFWAs). SFWAs have primary responsibility for management of most wildlife species, reflecting legal trust mandates that emerged from early conservationists' advocacy in the late 1800s. By the early 1900s, rural agrarian communities and hunters and trappers became the primary groups concerned with wildlife management, and the focus of most SFWAs (Patterson et al. 2003). The clear and enduring relationship between



Impacts of coastal erosion, USFWS, Alaska Region

SFWAs and hunters can be characterized as being highly path dependent (Putnam 1993, Greener 2002). Path dependency stresses the influences of historical circumstances on existing organizations and subsequent organizational behavior, including resistance

to reform. Further reinforcing the relationship between consumptive users (i.e., hunters and trappers), SFWAs, and policy makers is an historical dependency of SFWAs on these stakeholders to fund state wildlife management via revenue from hunting and trapping license sales and federal excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment (Trefethen 1961, Anderson and Loomis 2006). Because of their dependence on a "single source" for funding, SFWAs are regarded as "captive organizations" (Anderson and Loomis 2006). The resource dependency perspective on wildlife management posits that managers ensure organizational survival by aligning their organization with other organizations that provide them with resources and support (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 2003). Captive organizations have fewer options to exert control of their own destinies and are more constrained in their attempts to modify dependent relationships. As the number of hunters and trappers decline (Duda et al. 1998), SFWAs are seeking funds from new sources. Securing nontraditional funding sources presents challenges to traditional state wildlife management. In addition to creating or expanding programs, agencies with new funding sources need to be accountable to a larger and more diverse constituency that will be contributing financially to wildlife management.

Most SFWAs identify the need for transformation to break from historical path and resource dependencies and to expand programs and services to meet the diverse needs of society (Jacobson et al. 2007), and many have made considerable progress towards achieving this goal. Change usually is slow, however, and often met with resistance, both from SFWAs and other organizations with which they interact (e.g., policy makers, NGOs). Putnam (1993: 179) notes that tensions emerge as institutions "bearing the imprint of the past" try to address current and future problems. Continued resistance to reform may result in SFWAs losing legitimacy with society. The degree to which organizations are considered legitimate to society depends on their consonance with societal laws, norms and cultures (Scott 2001). Legitimacy refers to the extent to which organizations are connected to a broad normative and cultural framework, and it is necessary for organizations to survive in the long term.

Transformation Theory

Aldrich (1999) defines organizational transformation as a major change that occurs along three possible dimensions: *goals, activities, and boundaries*. According to Aldrich (1999), organizational research has identified two primary elements of goal transformations: (1) changes in the breadth of organizational goals, particularly evolution from specialism to generalism; and (2) changes in the domain served by an organization. These elements are often correlated.

The second dimension of transformation includes changes in activities that have a significant effect on organizational knowledge (Aldrich 1999). Transformation might involve changes in products and services as well as changes in the availability of resources. Expansion and contraction of boundaries is another way organizations change. Organizational boundaries are delineated by membership, both of individuals and organizations (Aldrich 1999). Consistent with resource dependency theory, diversification is a strategy to minimize dependence on critical exchange relationships.

Small-scale change occurs often within organizations, but organizational transformation is uncommon. Aldrich and Ruef (2006:134) stress that transformation is, "a major or substantial change in organizations involving a break with existing routines and a shift to new kinds of competencies that challenge organizational knowledge." Organizational transformation is typically met with resistance in an established bureaucracy, and is further impeded when historical dependencies, especially resource dependencies, serve as barriers to change (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003).

Institutional change theory has focused on two perspectives (Aldrich 1999). One considers change to be an outcome determined largely by external or "environmental" forces. The other perspective attributes organizational change to internal factors or qualities of organizations. Environmental determinism refers to the extent to which outside influences control an organization's abilities to make choices about their futures

(Astley and Van de Ven 1983). In general, this deterministic perspective holds that organizations are highly influenced by or dependent on those organizations or individuals that control the resources necessary for survival (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003). The internal control, "voluntaristic" perspective posits that organizations are autonomous, proactive, and self-directing; they are able to make strategic choices about their futures (Astley and Van de Ven 1983). Blending both viewpoints, Oliver (1991) contends that although exogenous factors influence organizational behavior, organizational self-interest is a powerful force driving organizational change. Further, taking this view, organizations have the ability to respond to pressures for change in a strategic manner. In other words, according to Oliver and other of like mind, change is considered an outcome determined by the give and take of environmental versus internal factors.

Jacobson (2008) explored how SFWAs have responded to pressures to change, specifically pressure to develop alternative funding mechanisms. Were SFWAs impeded from securing new funding sources by external constraints or were they able to lead strategic change efforts, and if so, how? Interviews with SFWA leaders revealed that most agencies face powerful external factors that impede change; strategic choice did not appear to be an option for many of them. This sense of inefficacy is particularly characteristic of governmental agencies that are strongly influenced by external forces (Wilson 2000) such as policy-makers who have budgetary and other oversight authority (e.g., a commission). Nevertheless, some SFWAs have overcome internal and external obstacles with innovations to secure nontraditional funding. They have transformed strategically in response to changing societal conditions, even under challenging circumstances.

Like many examples of institutional change, transformation from the traditional to a new model for SFWAs should be expected to meet resistance (Tolbert 1985). Nonetheless, transformative change has occurred in SFWAs where: (1) leadership promoted cultural change conducive to broadening goals; (2) strategies to expand organizational boundaries and grow coalitions included traditional and nontraditional groups; (3) public interest was assessed and accountability was demonstrated; and (4) expansion of programs and services was promised, for example, as part of funding campaigns (Jacobson et al. 2010b). Thus, SFWAs have exhibited change along three dimensions: goals, activities, and boundaries (Aldrich 1999 and Aldrich and Ruef 2006). These dimensions of change are adjustments that enable or indicate transformative change, but they are not the *transformative force* behind such change. It seems to us that changes in all three dimensions are predicated on ***a change in vision for the organization***. Fundamentally, that is the real transformative force.

Envisioning a New Future is Necessary for Fundamental Change

Jacobson (2008) suggests that it would benefit SFWAs in the long term to promote a vision of the future, first internally and then with external groups and policy makers, that is robust to the needs and interests of many kinds of stakeholders. If such a vision gains widespread support, then internal and external acceptance of the need to diversify programs and services to meet broad societal needs, regardless of the agency's dominant funding source, might be achieved. By creating a vision that embraces a broader suite of public interests, reaches out to a diversity of partners, and leads to a strategy for change, SFWAs are more likely to increase their conservation capacity via more funding, expertise, etc., and maintain legitimacy with society.

A transformative vision addresses who, what and how of an agency's mission. This is another way of thinking about Aldrich and Ruef's (2006) three components of change.

- *Who* are stakeholders and partners? *(major change in boundary domain and depth)*
- *What* are the desired future conditions and outcomes sought through fish and wildlife conservation that are more encompassing of diverse public values vis-à-vis these resources? *(major change in goals)*

- *How* are goals set, decisions made, actions implemented, etc? *(major changes in services and products)*

Although Aldrich and Ruef (2006) developed their ideas about transformative change in an entirely different context, the framework was applied to SFWAs by Jacobson's (2008) who found that those agencies that had obtained secure, alternative funding had gone to great lengths to change their organizational cultures (*WHAT*—broadened their organizational goals) prior to, not after, gaining the diverse funding. Part of that change was building political capacity by partnering with a diversity of groups, both traditional and nontraditional (*WHO*—broadened boundaries), and offering diverse programs and services (*HOW*—broadening activity systems). Conversely, those SFWAs without secure, alternative funding had difficulty addressing the growing demands for programs and services. They also were unable to garner the political capital necessary for successful funding campaigns.

Habitat fragmentation due to residential development in the Catskills, New York, Credit Meridith Gore.

Certainly implementing change in goals, activities, and boundaries is more easily said than done. It requires traversing new terrain for many SFWAs. At this point in time we may not have many specific SFWA examples to turn to for guidance, but other areas of human endeavor provide insight to help understand organizational transformation. In that vein, we refer to the work of John Kotter, a Harvard professor who wrote "Leading Change" in 1996; this book has application to SFWAs.

Challenges to Organizational Transformation

Observant fish and wildlife professionals have witnessed many challenges to organizational change. These sometimes appear daunting. Kotter (1996:20) asserts that change in an organization can be thwarted by:

1. Inwardly focused cultures
2. Paralyzing bureaucracy
3. Parochial politics
4. A low level of trust
5. Lack of teamwork
6. Arrogant attitudes
7. Lack of leadership in middle management
8. Common human fear of the unknown

In addition to these eight barriers, we add from our experience three more characteristic of many SFWAs: (a) resource dependency, (b) politically connected stakeholders who are not supportive of broadening, and (c) governance structure where a politically appointed board representing narrow interests or a short-term political appointee makes policy decisions. The extent to which these unique traits impede transformative change in SFWAs has not been fully assessed, but we believe they add to the difficulties SFWAs encounter when attempting significant change.

Kotter (1996:16) identifies eight common errors to avoid when spearheading a strategic change process:

1. Allowing too much complacency
2. Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition
3. Underestimating the power of vision
4. Under communicating the vision
5. Permitting obstacles to block the new vision
6. Failing to create short-term wins
7. Declaring victory too soon
8. Neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture

These impediments and errors are familiar to anyone working in or closely with a SFWA. But we need not dwell on familiar problems. Instead, how does one avoid or address them? Fortunately, they are avoidable or at least surmountable, as evidenced by examples of strategic transformative change in SFWAs reported later in this guide.

Organizational Transformation: Process and Leadership

Kotter (1996:21) offers an eight-stage process for transformative change in an organization. We have adapted his wording to align better with the SFWA situation, but the base concepts are Kotter's. You'll note these are essentially "fixes" for the eight errors or mistakes.

Eight-stage Process:

1. *Establishing a sense of urgency*
   a. Conducting a market assessment (i.e., who are your current stakeholders and what do they want or need?)
   b. Communicating the need/opportunity to transform to maintain relevancy and legitimacy with society.
2. *Creating the guiding coalition*
   a. Putting together a group with enough power to lead change
   b. Getting the group to work together as a team
3. *Developing a vision and strategy*
   a. Creating a vision to help direct the change effort
   b. Developing strategies for achieving that vision
4. *Communicating the change vision*
   a. Constantly communicating the new vision and strategies
   b. Having the guiding coalition role model the behavior expected of employees
5. *Empowering broad-based action*
   a. Getting rid of obstacles
   b. Changing systems or structures that undermine the change vision
   c. Encouraging risk taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions
6. *Generating short-term wins*
   a. Planning for visible improvements—wins
   b. Visibly recognizing and rewarding people who made wins possible
7. *Consolidating change and producing more change*
   a. Using increased credibility for change ideas to align the entire organization (e.g., programs, policies) under the new vision for transformation
   b. Hiring, promoting and developing people who can implement the change vision
   c. Reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes and change agents
8. *Anchoring new approaches in the culture*
   a. Creating better performance with respect to stakeholder-oriented behavior, more and better leadership, and more effective management
   b. Articulating the connections between new behaviors and organizational success
   c. Developing means to ensure leadership development and succession

Pitfalls notwithstanding, change is happening within SFWAs (Jacobson et al. 2010). The key may lie in commitment to change and ability to convince stakeholders and policy makers that transformation is in everyone's best interests in the long run.

Management v. Leadership v. Transformative Leadership

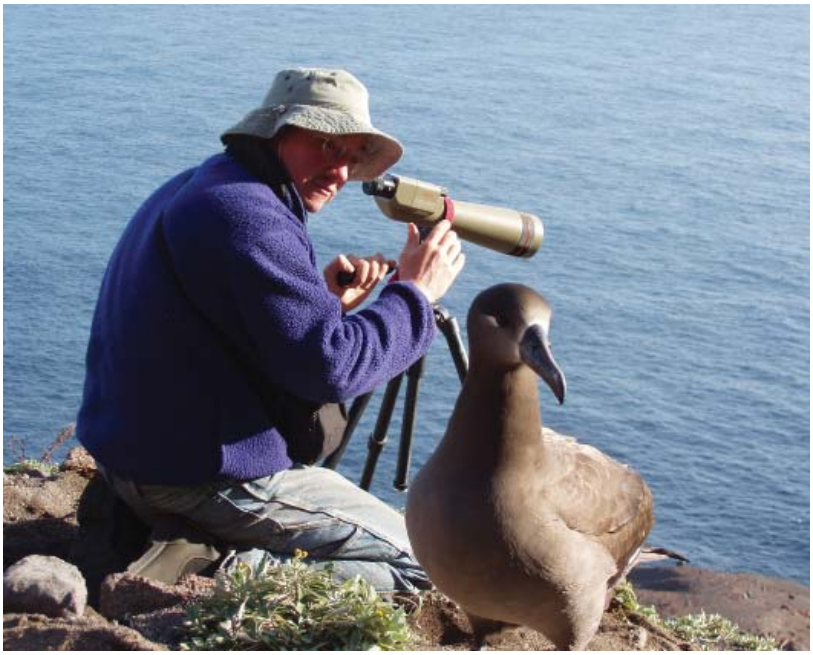
The driving force behind transformative change is leadership. Fundamentally, leaders and particularly those in senior leadership positions, have the authority to make agency transformation a top priority and guide development of a vision leading to goal expansion. Leaders are critical components of successful organizational transformation. A leader can take either of two approaches to leading change in an organization—they can be responsive (i.e., iterative and incrementally adaptive) or strategic (i.e., innovative and transformational). We can

turn to Kotter again to shed some light on why this may be the case.

Management versus leadership

Kotter, like many others who have studied ingredients for organizational effectiveness, distinguishes between management and leadership as follows (Kotter 1996:25-26):

> *Management:* planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, controlling and problem solving. Produces a degree of predictability and order that is comfortable for many people in a bureaucracy; produces short-term results expected by various stakeholders.
>
> *Leadership:* establishing direction, aligning people, motivating and inspiring. Produces change, often to a dramatic degree, and has potential to produce extremely useful change for ensuring future of an organization.



Credit: Greg Balogh

Kotter (1996) asserts that many organizations have more management than leadership capacity. As a consequence, many people in decision-making roles frame the problem of "pressures to change" as the need to "manage change." Kotter (1996:29) concludes that, "The combination of cultures that resist change and managers who have not been taught how to lead change is lethal."

SFWAs face many impediments to transformation, including significant political interference and strong traditional ties to consumptive stakeholders who may be concerned with implications of change. To overcome these, SFWAs must have effective leaders as well as competent managers. That is, SFWAs need courageous leaders who: (a) are not afraid to challenge long-standing elements of an institution, (b) can weather heavy criticism, (c) accept risk, including potential termination, and (d) will accept probability of failure in pursuit of major beneficial change. This type of leader approaches change as an intellectual activity more than as an action (i.e., empowers others who can lead and manage the specific changes that enable transformation). This type of leader is effective at garnering the support needed to be successful. A transformative leader possesses knowledge and technical skills, *plus* the wisdom and talent needed to envision and lead large change.

Leading change versus managing change

Purposeful transformation of an organization can happen incrementally or abruptly. Incrementalism, though common, is minimally adequate in times when the context necessitating transformation is evolving slowly. Incrementalism is *inadequate*, however, when (a) the context is changing very quickly or (b) the rate of organization change has been lagging behind the rate of context change to the point that the organization has fallen considerably behind expectations. Depending on many factors, a SFWA may be in either situation "a" or "b." Regardless, one doesn't *manage* an agency out of the situation—one *leads* an agency into a desired future condition. If the chasm has been allowed to grow too long and has become too wide, a giant leap—a transformative change—may be required. (*"Don't be afraid to take a big step. You can't cross a chasm in two small steps."* [David Lloyd George, former British prime minister].) Competent management and normal leadership may be called upon to achieve the change, but transformative leadership is vital to identify what the agency is going to *transform into*. Someone has to catalyze or create and guide the coalition that will provide a vision leading

to goal, boundary and activity transformation. But leaders do not make transformative change by themselves; other people are needed to make the vision a reality.

Management, normal leadership and transformative leadership are all necessary to achieve agency transformation. None are sufficient by themselves or in couplets. The roles are complementary:

Management is an action-oriented practice, involving processes, resources and technology to execute well. Some people are trained and skilled at it. Good management involves consistent application of processes and progressively more efficient work. *Management is focused on doing things right.*

Normal leadership is an outcome-oriented activity, with the most significant aspects being analysis, decision making and communication. It is less about ever-more efficient processes and more about better outcomes. *Normal leadership is focused on doing the right things.*

Transformative leadership is largely an applied intellectual exercise, focused on helping people envision a desired future, articulating that vision, gaining a broad coalition of support for it, engaging that coalition to work toward that vision as a shared goal, and empowering other leaders and managers in the organization to focus on the vision. It is about overcoming the inertia of dependency on historical rationales and premises, relationships and understandings, methods and outcomes. It is focused on creating a vision that is so compelling and attractive that it becomes a movement powerful enough to break the shackles of the past and surmount the barriers of the present. *Transformative leadership, therefore, is focused on encouraging others to imagine what might be an unimaginable future to them at first, and then helping them embrace, commit to and work toward that future.*

Thinking of organizational transformation as a voyage, our view of the relationship of management, normal leadership and transformative leadership goes like this: management continually works to improve how the ship runs; normal leadership steers the ship with an eye on the compass, and transformative leadership defines the destination and then keeps people motivated and enthused about the rewards of making the trip. Transformative change needs all three components, but will not occur with just the first two components, or with just the last one. As DeGenring (2005:2) put it: "The question is no longer, 'How to manage change?' The question now is, 'How to *lead adaptive change*?'" DeGenring (2005:4,7) describes adaptive leadership as:

- Reframing the leader's job from that of problem-solver to that of development of problem solvers
- Leading the examination, testing, and changing of assumptions
- Asking the important, tough questions while not having all the answers
- Fostering appreciation of different points of view
- Fostering reflection and big picture thinking
- Allowing awareness, visibility and reflection of each other's thinking and reasoning
- Encouraging more innovation and learning
- Slowing down to move the action forward
- Demonstrating and modeling courage

Note that key traits of adaptive leadership are coaching and empowering others.

Taking the First Step: Assessment of Agency and Leadership Capacity

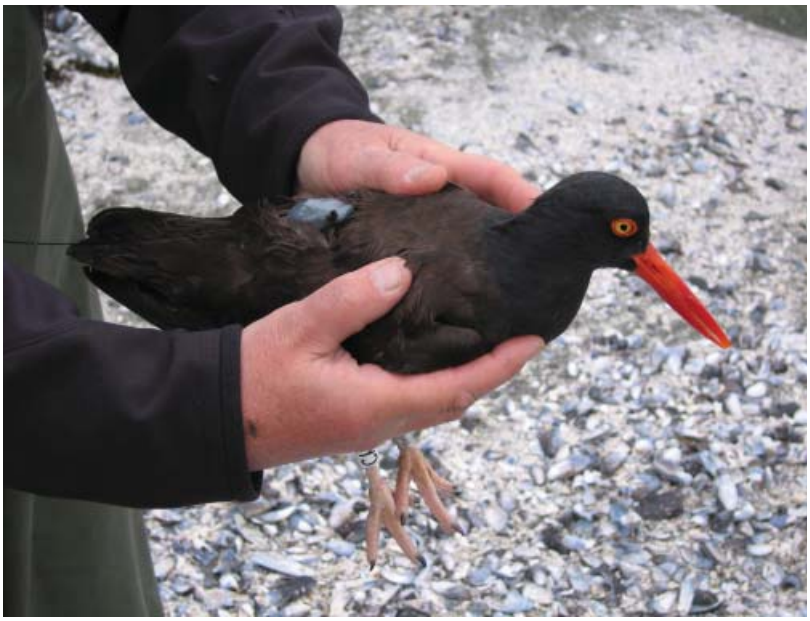
We and many others (Heberlein 1991; Manfredo et al. 2003; Patterson et al. 2003; Gill 2004) have argued that because the social context (i.e., particular values, interests, needs, etc. at a particular time) has changed significantly since the state fish and wildlife conservation and management institution emerged, if SFWAs do not change to reflect the broad societal norms and values of contemporary society, it is likely that their legitimacy will be questioned by society, and their long-term viability will be uncertain (Scott 2001).

SFWA leaders who recognize the gap is growing between what their SFWAs are now versus what they need to be in the future, must wonder, is my agency ready for transformation, and am I ready to initiate

it? By way of review and summary, Kotter (1996) offers two sets of traits to consider; one set refers to the "change-ready" agency and one to the "change-making" leader (or leadership team).

Traits of a Change-ready Organization (Kotter 1996:161-173)

- A persistent sense of urgency
- Teamwork at the top
- People who can create and communicate vision
- Broad-based empowerment
- Delegated management for excellent short-term performance
- No unnecessary interdependence
- An adaptive organizational culture



Credit Dave Tessler, ADF&G

Obviously, it takes skilled leadership to create the conditions indicated in the change-ready agency and to execute the eight-stage process of transformative change.

Traits of a Change-making Leader (adapted from Kotter 1996:183)

- Risk taking—willingness to push oneself out of comfort zone
- Humble self-reflection—honest assessment of preparedness and performance
- Solicitation of opinion (inquisitiveness)—Active collection of information and ideas from others
- Careful listening (receptivity)—propensity to listen to others
- Openness to new ideas—willingness to view situations with an open mind and to consider alternate paths to achieve desired future condition

We need large-scale mobilization of expertise for transformative change and continual adaptation to emerging challenges and opportunities. In the National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI) training program they refer to this as leadership for adaptive problems, similar to DeGenring's (2005) notions of adaptive challenges and the adaptive leader.

As DeGenring (2005) noted, leaders initiating transformative change and adaptive leadership are likely to encounter pitfalls. For a variety of reasons, leaders today in SFWAs may encounter risks if they pursue certain directions for change. We feel this is especially probable given the governance structure, external politics and internal cultures of many SFWAs. Jacobson (2008) found that it is essential that SFWAs first promote understanding and acceptance of the need for organizational transformation internally and with traditional partners. It is this critical yet challenging first step that can impede agency leaders with the best intentions from moving forward. Of course, policy makers, including governing commissions/boards, must be supportive before setting transformative change efforts into motion. In Part II, SFWA leaders in various roles explore how their agencies addressed this and other challenges as they initiated transformative change. ❖

State Fish and Wildlife Agency Case Studies

Transformative change looks different for every SFWA. While many of the general features of transformation are evident, every case is idiosyncratic. Every SFWA starts at a different place in terms of its sense of urgency and capacity for change, as well as the internal and external politics that influence the shape and rate of change. And yes, transformative change is difficult, yet some states are doing it, in their own particular ways and with different degrees of comprehensiveness. Several state SFWA staff involved in change have authored brief descriptions of their agencies' experiences. These case studies provide both insight about the practical aspects of transformative change and evidence that change is possible.

Expert Authority to Participatory Management in Maine: Culture Change in a Traditional Fish and Wildlife Agency

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Introduction

The Wildlife Division (Division) of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (Department) has transformed from its origins as the expert authority-driven Game Research and Management Division in 1938 to its current model of participatory management where public stakeholder groups establish management goals and objectives. This transformation required an organizational culture change whereby Division personnel no longer viewed themselves as responsible for determining what wildlife population goals were in the public's best interest, but rather as facilitators who guide the public towards articulating goals and objectives and then use that input to guide management decision making. This transformation took several years to become ingrained, and required the development and implementation of an adaptive, comprehensive species planning process before Division staff could truly appreciate the merits of this approach. Ultimately, this led to the development of an adaptive and efficient organizational structure to facilitate a new way of doing business.

Development of an Adaptive, Comprehensive Species Planning Process

Since 1968, the Department has aggressively pursued strategic planning for Maine's inland fisheries and wildlife. Developing our initial plan (1975-80) was a monumental task completed by following the steps of Anderson and Hurley's (1980) model planning process. For the initial

KEY POINTS

- The role of a change agent/catalyst was essential in advancing the vision.
- Leadership made change a priority, and allowed routine work to be placed on the back-burner to accommodate change.
- Lack of capacity can hinder progress.
- Approach to management changed and became ingrained in the agency prior to changing organizational structure.

plan and the first update (1980-85), Department biologists developed species assessments and alternative goals and objectives for major species, or species groups, based upon estimates of available habitat, expected animal densities, and anticipated human demands for the resource. A nine member steering committee representing numerous public viewpoints, the Department's division chiefs, regional biologists, and research project leaders reviewed the alternate goals and objectives and discussed their preferences with the Department's Advisory Council, a gubernatorial-appointed body representing geographical areas of the state. The council recommended their preferred species management goals and objectives to the Commissioner, who ultimately decided the course of action.

The transformative change process was initiated in 1985 when the Department's Chief Planner attended the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference in Hartford, Connecticut, and listened to a presentation on the benefits of citizen participation, and had an epiphany about how we should change our planning process (Cavanaugh 1985). He suggested that in lieu of tasking biologists with developing alternative goals and objectives for a steering committee, we should enlist members of the public to develop candidate management goals and objectives, much to the consternation and resistance of some biologists who were leery about relinquishing control over a critical part of the planning process.

Initially, we launched into our new endeavor by developing more advanced species assessments, user-meaningful summaries of our current knowledge of species' habitat availability, population status, and use and demand for the species, including historic, current, and anticipated future needs. Refinements included a natural history section, which highlighted biological characteristics important to management of the species, and a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) model (when adequate data were available) to assist in measuring habitat quality and carrying capacity.

We immersed ourselves in the new planning process, and placed many of our regular duties on hold while we wrote species assessments, assembled special review teams, and gathered public working groups tasked with developing management goals and objectives. We strived to include balanced stakeholder representation, including members from sportsmen's groups and other NGOs, landowner organizations, tourism groups, concerned citizens, outspoken critics, and others in each working group. We were impressed with the dedication and focus of the public working group participants, who served without remuneration.

After the smoke had cleared, the Department had publically derived goals and objectives for many of Maine's fish and wildlife species. Importantly, the Department had internal support and advocated for those publically derived goals and objectives. While initially there had been resistance among many in the Department, after the process unfolded and the results were on the table, many of the skeptics felt empowered because the goals and objectives were biologically sound and had public support. The commitment of upper-level management to this vision was key; they were able to convince the political leadership in the Commissioner's office of the long-term benefits of having publically derived goals and objectives, and they mobilized project leaders throughout the process. They also got agreement from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for short-term relief from reporting requirements for Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration funded work in order to develop the planning documents and engage the public. Ultimately, the concept of the public establishing Department management goals and objectives became the foundation of the agency's culture.

But the changes did not end there. Following completion of the planning process, Division leaders were concerned that we really had only addressed half of the planning cycle. We knew where we were, we knew where we wanted to go, but had no plan on how we were going to get there and how we would know when we arrived. At that point, we rediscovered an article by Fraser (1985), which we fondly refer to as the "Piggery

Paper." The Piggery Paper describes how pig farmers make management decisions. They have management goals, collect data, analyze data, and develop rules-of-thumb to make management decisions. Based on this concept, we fleshed out our current management system concept, which we now apply to all species, or group of species, for which management goals and objectives were developed.

A management system, essentially standard operating procedures for the biologists' annual management cycle, initially examines the species' management goals and objectives to ensure clarity and the intent of the public working group. It also carefully documents data inputs and analyses, decision points, rules-of thumb that drive decisions, and resulting management actions needed to accomplish the management goals and objectives. The process includes: (1) documenting the current system, (2) evaluating the current system, (3) revising the current system (as needed), (4) developing new jobs to implement the revised management system and address research needs, and (5) monitoring the revised system and modifying as needed. The Wildlife and Fisheries divisions vet each appropriate management system, and management systems serve as the basis for management recommendations to the Department's administration, Commissioner, and Advisory Council. We review each system annually for relevance and effectiveness.

The management systems approach has proven so successful in defining decision criteria and focusing our work program that preparation of a system is a mandatory step in our planning process. The result has been longer planning horizons and management that is highly adaptive. The whole planning process is a core element of Maine's Wildlife Action Plan, which makes the plan nimble and adaptive.

Developing an Adaptive and Efficient Organizational Structure

Developing an adaptive and efficient organizational structure began with the passing of Maine's Endangered Species Act in 1975 and the subsequent renaming of the Maine Fish and Game to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to reflect its new responsibilities. The Division at that time consisted of the Management Section with several biologists distributed among seven regions throughout the state, and a Research Section of species specialists assigned to the Waterfowl, Big Game, or Furbearer Projects.

In 1984, the Department established a one-person, Endangered Species and Nongame Wildlife Project (ESNWP) in the Research Section, which eventually grew to four individuals responsible for all nongame and listed species. Their tasks included maintaining the state list of Endangered and Threatened species, administering a grants program, designing and disseminating educational materials, fundraising, and environmental review of projects affecting nongame and listed wildlife species.

In the late 1980s, several factors coalesced to catalyze change in the Division. Essential Habitats became a major demand on ESNWP, when in 1990 the Department established 119 Essential Habitats for bald eagle nesting sites. The process entailed surveying for eagle nests, mapping nest locations, documenting nesting success; notifying affected landowners and governmental agencies; holding public hearings; producing maps; developing informational materials; and distributing final packages to affected landowners. The effort continued to grow exponentially over the years. Meanwhile, the ESNWP was reintroducing peregrine falcons to the state, listing new species, producing books and posters, and fundraising. The group became overwhelmed, and it became apparent we needed to make major changes if the Division's commitment to nongame and endangered species was to remain viable.

We discussed the need for change among the staff, supervisors, administration, and outside entities, including the USFWS. In time, two major paradigms emerged. One was to emulate the organizational model of some states and establish a nongame and endangered species division. The other was to integrate nongame and endangered species conservation throughout the fabric of the

Division. Unfortunately, the two paradigms galvanized the Division into two major camps of supporters.

Those supporting the total integration paradigm were concerned that if the agency established a separate division:

1. There would be a need to duplicate biological expertise and administrative staff (e.g., the need to have bird and mammal specialists in both divisions);
2. There would not be a smooth transition between divisions when a species was listed or delisted;
3. It would exacerbate the "us and them" syndrome – the "bunny huggers" versus the "hook and bullet club;"
4. It would lead to conflicting habitat management strategies between divisions; and
5. Both groups would only be concerned with "their" species and mission, which could lead to funding feuds, political maneuvering, warring constituents, and a lack of cohesive management action by the agency.

Those who supported the separate division/bureau paradigm were concerned that if the ESNWP was integrated throughout the Division and Agency:

1. Nongame and endangered species would lose their identity and visibility within the agency, and there would not be anyone to champion conservation of these species;
2. Nongame and endangered species would not be able to compete with game species within the Agency for funding and other resources
3. Some biologists would be unable to assume the new responsibilities and deal with the intricacies and complexities of managing endangered species;
4. Some biologists would balk at assuming new responsibilities without substantial increases in funding and personnel;
5. Regional biologists would not be prepared or capable of dealing with on-the-ground management decisions involving nongame and endangered species; and
6. Maine Audubon and others would view the Agency as not being committed to endangered species conservation, and thus we would lose their support.

As we weighed our options, some other factors began to influence our decision. In 1992, we noted other state fish and wildlife agencies were finding it difficult to integrate bird management into their state's habitat management decisions, and were dealing with a divide, and sometimes antagonism, between game and nongame entities in their agencies. Also, we were facing periodic budget cuts or flat funding. It became apparent that expanding the Wildlife Division or adding another division was not an option. Thus, after innumerable internal discussions, the Bureau Director decided to begin integrating the ESNWP throughout the Wildlife Division. We accomplished this by consolidating the Furbearer Project, Bear Project, and Deer, Moose and Caribou Studies into one Mammal Group. The Waterfowl Project was renamed the Bird Group and assumed responsibility for all game birds, including wild turkeys. We later formed the Habitat Group in response to needing a place to put an oil spill biologist and provide spatial data analysis capabilities within the agency.

By then the reorganization plan had polarized supporters of the two paradigms, primarily internally, but also among some NGOs who expressed concern that nongame and endangered species would lose standing in the agency if total integration proceeded, so we hired a professional mediator to help resolve the conflicts. The outcome was the Mammal and Bird Groups assumed responsibility for all mammals and birds except listed species. The former ESNWP became the Endangered Species Group responsible for all Endangered and Threatened species plus amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates.

The final step was consummated when the Wildlife Division Director dissolved the Endangered Species Group and directed the Mammal and Bird Groups to assume responsibility for all mammals and birds; formed a new Reptile, Amphibian, and

Invertebrate (RAI) Group; and established a new Endangered Species Coordinator and Wildlife Planner position to ensure endangered species issues are handled in a consistent and coordinated manner.

Has the reorganization worked? Regional biologists within the Wildlife Management Section have embraced the concept, and are sensitive to the needs of endangered and nongame species and willing to take strong positions to ensure their continued existence in Maine. The Mammal and Bird Groups have also embraced their added responsibilities and have worked hard to address those responsibilities effectively. The RAI and Habitat Groups have settled into their roles and have become very effective. All four groups have forged partnerships with other agencies, educational institutions, and NGOS, and have competed successfully for outside funding to keep their programs functioning.

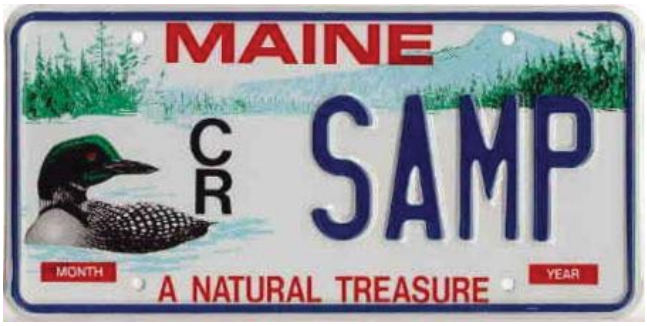
Have we reached nirvana? Absolutely not! We still deal with some major issues.

1. ***The capacity issue.*** We do not have adequate personnel and funding to meet increased demands for our services. We attempted to meet the demand at a minimal level by assigning new tasks to existing positions and using freed positions to populate the RAI and Habitat Groups.
2. ***The neglected species issue.*** Lack of capacity has led to consolidation, and many game species do not receive the level of attention they once enjoyed and still require. We are trying to rectify this by focusing State Wildlife Grant (SWG) funds on nongame and endangered species and PR funds on game species.
3. ***The diluted endangered species coordinator's position.*** Another byproduct of lack of capacity is the Endangered Species Coordinator/Wildlife Planner has two major responsibilities. It now appears that endangered species coordination requires more attention than initially believed; we should excise wildlife planning from the position.

Conclusion

Although the road to integration was not smooth and hasn't resolved all problems we face with endangered and nongame species management, we are convinced it was the right thing for us to do. It is a logical step in an agency whose culture embraces the recognition that its purpose is to fulfill the wildlife trust interests of a broad public, as opposed to dictating what is in the best interests of that public.

This road would likely have not been travelled were it not for catalysts and change agents within the agency. Our wildlife planner, whose epiphany in 1985 as described earlier motivated him to catalyze division leaders, who in turn altered the priorities of the agency field staff so they could become immersed in a participatory management approach. They took risks by putting routine work on hold, but if it were not for their leadership and support, the process of culture change would not have taken hold.



Adapting to Changing Times in New Hampshire

Stephen Perry
New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

Introduction

The fast pace of change in today's world presents many challenges to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (Department) as it seeks to carry out its stewardship responsibilities for the state's wildlife resources in the 21st century. Rising operational costs and decreasing participation in traditional outdoor recreational activities (hunting and fishing) propelled the Department to look for ways to diversify its primary base of support. To address this challenge the Department began an effort it coined *Adapting to Changing Times*. This initiative is grounded in a vision that outdoor recreationists and conservation-minded citizens will join together with long-term supporters--hunters and anglers--to sustain the Department's work to maintain healthy wildlife resources.

KEY POINTS

- A sense of urgency is important for initiating change.
- Strengthen relationships with partners and other stakeholders.
- Diversify communication methods.
- Engage all staff in change process.
- Commitment from leadership is essential.
- Create a guiding coalition.

Two principal forces served as catalysts for *Adapting to Changing Times*: (1) budget cuts over a four-year time frame that eliminated 10percent of the agency's full-time positions; and (2) a principal finding from a legislatively mandated performance audit stressing that the Department should identify members of its expanded constituency so their needs would be considered when priorities were established and programs and services delivered. The combined effect of these forces created enough internal tensions that they served to raise the heat on the need for change. However, even with these catalysts, *Adapting to Changing Times* would have had a difficult time gaining traction if the Department's Executive Director and the agency's eleven-member Commission had not provided visible support and transformative leadership for this effort. The Executive Director was actively involved through all phases of the *Adapting to Changing Times* processes, while the Commission launched this initiative through passage of a resolution that provided policy guidance.

The Process

Concurrent with the development of the forces driving the need for change was the Department's decision to use adaptive leadership (Heiftz and Linsky 2002) along with Kotter's (1996) process for creating major change and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Management Assistance Team's (MAT) Helicopter View Model (2007), which looks at the alignment of all parts of an agency. Adaptive leadership is the practice of addressing challenges that do not have readily available solutions. It provides a means for managing disruptions to an organization at rates that people can absorb. Adaptive leadership also produces a better understanding of the perspectives being voiced among factions, thereby allowing the positive energy that can be generated from differences, passions and conflict to be harnessed. Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process is focused on negating the sources of change-related inertia. The first four stages of this transformation process help soften an organization's hardened status quo. Stages five to seven introduce new practices and the last stage grounds the changes into the organization's culture. The Helicopter View Model is useful because it is a systematic way to address internal changes needed to achieve desired results. This model entails a seven step process that begins with a stakeholder needs assessment. This assessment is followed by a gap analysis between the stakeholder needs and the organization's current outputs (programs and services). If

different outputs are required, then the next step involves looking at the organizations systems, structures, and processes to determine if they are properly aligned to produce new outputs. An organization's methods, strategies, and purpose must also be reviewed in an effort to determine whether changes are necessary. The last step consists of looking at the views, beliefs, and attitudes of the organization's employees in order to establish whether they support achieving new outputs.

A critical facet the Department used from adaptive leadership was the nurturing of a network of people from every level of the agency who were actively engaged in all aspects of the *Adapting to Changing Times* initiative. The nature and quality of the connections made within this alliance of Department staff was vital to the development of process outcomes. Another crucial factor was allowing Department staff to drive the initiative by having them identify the priorities during each stage of the *Adapting to Changing Times* processes.

The most important component of the eight-stage process for creating major change was the establishment of a "Guiding Coalition" that provided leadership as facilitators for *Adapting to Changing Times*. The internal group of facilitators gained sufficient levels of trust to effectively guide the change effort. The essential step in the Helicopter Model was an assessment of the wildlife resource-related needs and expectations of New Hampshire's broad suite of outdoor recreationists (Responsive Management 2010). The outcomes of the assessment served as the foundation for developing strategies targeted at enhancing the Department's relations with this group of stakeholders. Survey results demonstrated two central links between the Department's core mission and New Hampshire's outdoor recreationists; first is their strong desire to view wildlife while participating in their primary outdoor recreational activity and the other is their expectation that sufficient access to these activities will be provided.

Development

The fundamental lesson we learned as a result of the *Adapting to Changing Times* processes was the need for the Department to gain a sharper focus on strengthening relationships and diversifying its methods of communication. Department strategies aimed at building high levels of support

from New Hampshire's outdoor recreationists are grounded in both of these elements. Examples of efforts to strengthen the Department's relations with New Hampshire's outdoor recreational community include working with recreational clubs, organizations, and other state and federal agencies to produce and promote best management practices for a variety of outdoor activities; using local initiatives to encourage stewardship of outdoor recreation areas; building coalitions between landowners and people who recreate on private lands; promoting volunteerism in communities developing and maintaining local outdoor recreation projects; encouraging Regional Planning Commissions to coordinate and develop multi-community outdoor recreation plans; and, facilitating interagency coordination to address outdoor recreational needs. Communication strategies that were developed from this effort focused on reaching a more diverse audience using social media to increase the Department's networking capabilities; implementing a branding campaign that more clearly establishes the Department's identity with outdoor enthusiasts; improving the public's access to outdoor recreational information, especially via the web; establishing a statewide clearinghouse of outdoor recreation-based education information; building capacity within outdoor recreational organizations to provide peer education; developing programs geared towards building awareness of the linkages between outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation; and promoting the health and wellness messages associated with outdoor recreational activities.


Credit: Science Daily, bat with white-nose syndrome

The endpoint of the initial developmental phase of *Adapting to Changing Times* was the unanimous Commission endorsement of the action plan that resulted from the 18-month process. The next phase is focused on fully implementing the action plan strategies, which will be guided by an Implementation Team. This team consists of senior management staff from each of the Department's seven divisions, members of the Commission, and the agency's Executive Director. The primary charge for the Implementation Team is to determine who needs to do what by when and then to track progress of implementing the action plan strategies.

Challenges and Benefits of Transformation

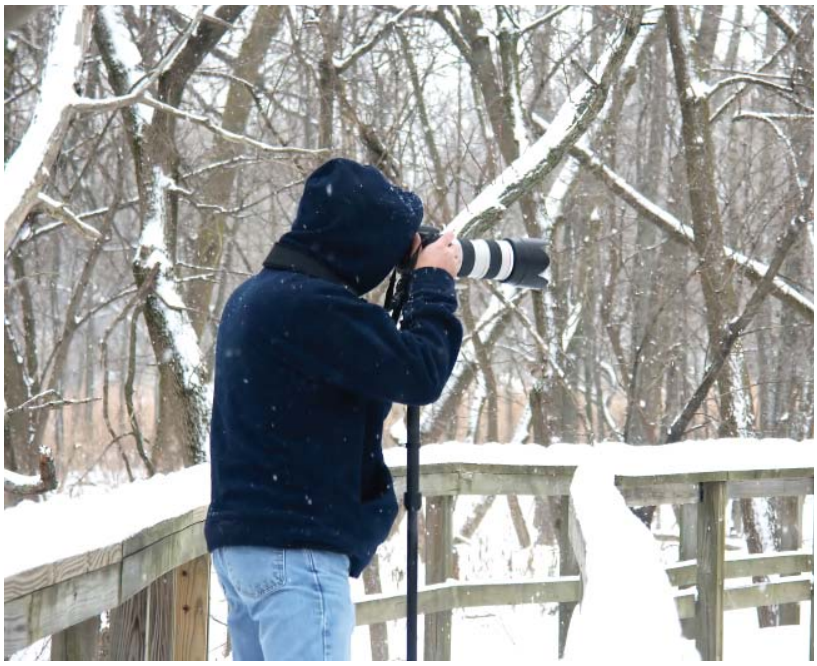
As with any transformative initiative, *Adapting to Changing Times* had its share of obstacles to overcome. Probably the most significant barrier was a desire by many within the agency to maintain the status quo. Much of this desire was fueled by the ingrained notion of the "user pay" model that most state fish and wildlife agencies rely on for funding. This concern was voiced during much of the *Adapting to Changing Times* processes where the prevailing attitude of some participants was that constituents needed to pay upfront in order to gain more access to Department programs and services. The counter response to this notion was grounded in what Cialdini (2001) identifies as the most potent weapon of influence - the rule of reciprocation. This rule states we should try to repay, in kind, what another has provided us. In following this rule, the Department better positions itself to gain support (financial or otherwise) from new constituents if it provides valued programs and services at the front end of the relationship rather than taking the approach that they should pay first. Additionally, while many State Fish and Wildlife Agencies believe that agency transformation cannot occur until they have new or increased funding, the findings of Jacobson et al (2010a) suggest increased funding is unlikely prior to agency's transformation. This conclusion is based on the need for organizational cultures to embrace diversification upfront; so that agencies can be better positioned to effectively garner the public and political capital necessary to meet their funding needs. A secondary rationale that had some resonance is the precept that New Hampshire wildlife is a public trust and therefore the Department should be more inclusive with the public at large. Lastly, it's also understood the Department

will be seeking ways to minimize costs as it initiates its *Adapting to Changing Times* action plan strategies.

Another major obstacle was the fact that expanding organizational boundaries and diversifying funding is what Heifetz and Linsky (2002) label as an adaptive challenge; there are no prescriptive solutions. Adaptive challenges such as this require experimentation and adjustments throughout the organization. A segment of the Department staff resisted active participation in *Adapting to Changing Times* because of the uncertainties associated with the processes being used in this effort, which required them to operate outside of their normal realms. Nevertheless, a core of Department staff (20 percent of the total number of permanent employees), were actively engaged in moving through the processes. With the completion of each step, the outcomes of *Adapting to Changing Times* became clearer, uncertainty was reduced, and resistance to the initiative lessened.

The third hurdle to clear was a widely held feeling that this was just another effort that would not endure, despite the dire need. This added to the disengagement by some Department staff. To address this concern it was important to generate positive outcomes periodically throughout the development phase of *Adapting to Changing Times*. A few of the more visible outcomes were the regular use of cross-divisional teams to complete a variety of tasks; the use of social media through the launching of the Department's Facebook page; and, completion of a survey aimed at collecting internal attitudes and opinions that are to be used in refining the Department's brand. Even though these are considered to be relatively small changes, they are being viewed by many as good signs that *Adapting to Changing Times* is something more than just going through the motions.

While *Adapting to Changing Times* passed an initial milestone with the Commission's formal endorsement of the action plan, execution of the strategies in the action plan remains an over-arching challenge. Integrating the *Adapting to Changing Times* action plan strategies into core Department functions represents the heart and soul of this change initiative and likely will result in Department staff gaining a more complete understanding of what it all means. This is apt to result in a broader sense of disequilibrium, which could trigger a consolidated attempt to return to the status quo. While attempting to preserve stability is known to be a typical organizational response to change (Wheatley 2006), successful organizations respond to the forces and demands beyond



their boundaries rather than continue to focus efforts on maintaining the strongest defensive structure possible. Therefore, anchoring the *Adapting to Changing Times* vision into the Department's culture is a crucial step for long-term success and may only be achieved after the action plan strategies produce substantial benefits and the connections between the *Adapting to Changing Times* action plan and enhanced support from a broader constituency base are solidly set. Wheatley (2006) contends these types of positive feedback are essential ingredients to an organization's ability to adapt.

Conclusions and Implications

Several key lessons were learned as the Department moved through the *Adapting to Changing Times* processes. First was the need to initiate *Adapting to Changing Times* during a time when the level of urgency for change was compelling. Without this high sense of urgency, the Department would

not have supported the type of extra effort required by a successful change initiative. The leadership commitments made by the Department's Executive Director, the Commission, and the Guiding Coalition were instrumental in creating a force powerful enough to sustain the *Adapting to Changing Times* processes. If this leadership commitment were lacking, the Department would have had a difficult time overcoming the sources of inertia that stifle change. Empowering Department staff to drive the outcomes from the *Adapting to Changing Times* processes built the necessary buy-in that the initiative was headed in the right direction. It also strengthened the working relationships among the active participants and opened new lines of communication. Wheatley (2006) asserts that the power in an organization is capacity generated by relationships and when power is shared through participative management and self-managed teams, positive creative power abounds. The Department's *Adapting to Changing Times* initiative confirmed this assertion.

Key Factors in Agency Transformation: An Early Perspective from Michigan

Patrick E. Lederle and Ann LeClaire-Mitchell
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Introduction

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division took a strategic planning approach to help guide transformative change. Our experience suggests there are key factors that contributed to the success of the plan development process. Currently, we are in the implementation phase, and we expect some of those same key factors will contribute to implementation success and eventual transformation. We describe two major components of the process: the plan for actual transformation and plan for implementing it.

KEY POINTS

- Recognize the need for change.
- Find the right process and stay the course – be patient.
- Communicate – keep the process open and transparent.
- Be adaptive – learn from your efforts.
- Align your resources appropriately.

Developing a Plan

Recognizing the Need for Change—The Wildlife Division (WLD) of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources is a 140-person wildlife agency with offices across the state. The agency is responsible for direct management of 400,000 acres of state wildlife areas, co-manages nearly four million acres of state forest land, and administers programs for wildlife research, endangered species, private lands, and captive cervids, among others.

Like other wildlife agencies, our situation is characterized by a citizenry whose values toward wildlife and expectations for participation in decision making have changed over time (e.g., see Peyton 2000, Manfredo et al. 2003); declining numbers of our traditional constituency (USFWS 2006); an increase in the sophistication and pace of work (e.g., "helped" by new technologies); increased scrutiny from the media and public; and a dedicated workforce sometimes resisting change, even in light of existing funding and staff shortages. Our traditional funding sources are in decline, and alternative sources of funding have not emerged in a substantive way (Jacobson et al. 2007). More demands and more work with fewer resources—resulting in an unsustainable situation for an agency with a public trust mandate of maintaining the sustainability of wildlife populations and habitats.

Deciding to Act—Recognition of the need for change came slowly and was not universally accepted by WLD employees. Several themes emerged from meetings that discussed program efficiencies and long-standing issues or concerns, and a workshop

on the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. These included inadequate direction, lack of supervision, lack of monitoring of management efforts, lack of effective strategies, and lack of trust with constituents. Consensus was reached that these concerns and issues potentially could be addressed through a strategic planning process, and an official effort to plan for the future was initiated in March 2009.

Our fundamental objectives for undertaking the planning effort were to: (1) transform the Division into a more proactive, effective and cost-efficient agency; (2) identify major priorities, and (3) determine how to address these priorities through enhanced engagement with the public and other affected stakeholders. Further, WLD hoped to rebuild trust with stakeholders, increase accountability, and place our work into an adaptive framework to the extent possible. We realized that to accomplish this sort of transformation a break with the status quo, fundamental shifts in how we do business, and higher competencies in communications and stakeholder relations would be necessary.

To jump start the process, a planning team was formed (i.e., the guiding coalition, Kotter 1996), and consultants were hired. This mirrored a similar planning process conducted in Idaho, and we feel that utilizing the Idaho model and bringing in external consultants were key to catalyzing and moving the planning process forward.

The Right Process—The plan was developed by using a stakeholder engagement and communication process that was open, transparent, and involved hundreds of individuals and groups across the state and extensive input from WLD staff. To address the issues already raised that led to the decision to develop a strategic plan, those issues first needed to be defined and clarified through an engagement process. We gathered more information and identified additional issues through internal and external stakeholder meetings, an on-line survey, focus groups and personal interviews. We prioritized the issues in a formal way and teams of WLD staff met to research and describe the issues in depth, develop goals and objectives to address the issues, and finally to outline strategies to meet those goals and objectives. Drafts of the plan were presented to stakeholders during meetings to solicit additional input on direction and progress. The draft plan was presented to WLD staff at an all-hands meeting and to the Natural Resources Commission to initiate a public review period. The plan was approved by the Director in November 2010.

The development of the plan was essentially an engagement and communication process and not a writing exercise. Gathering information from affected stakeholders, taking that information seriously, and communicating regularly with participants resulted in broad ownership of the plan.

Communicating Intentions—A key factor for successful completion and approval of the plan was frequent and effective communication. We developed a communication strategy to help ensure that everyone involved was kept informed of opportunities for input and review, progress toward completion, and our evaluation of success.

Trust the Process and Stay the Course—During the development and early implementation of the plan, internal and external forces were exerted that easily could have derailed or stopped our process.

The political climate and poor fiscal condition of Michigan suggested in advance that many external changes were likely and we could not control the outcomes. To address these upcoming changes, consistent messages from Division leadership emphasized that external changes represented an excellent opportunity for us to improve our agency, and our strategic planning effort would allow us to "help direct change, rather than be directed by change." Many long-time employees remained skeptical. We noted tension within the Division between those that perceived the need for change and desired change, and those satisfied with the status quo and the existing culture.

External forces also included combining the departments of Natural Resources (DNR) and Environmental Quality (DEQ) into the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) in January 2010, and transferring authority for hiring the Director from the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to the Governor. In addition, the

long-time chair of the NRC retired and the Governor appointed a newer member of the Commission as chair, and the 2010 elections resulted in a new Republican Governor, a Republican House of Representatives, and a Republican Senate.

An early retirement incentive, included as part of the budget negotiations for fiscal year 2011, resulted in the loss of 19 full-time employees (about 15 percent of the Division workforce) just prior to the end of 2010. The new Governor announced the DNRE would be split back into the old DNR and DEQ in March 2011 after only one year.

Despite these internal and external forces, we trusted the process we had established and stayed the course.

Implementing the Plan

Start Early and Be Patient—We expected challenges with implementation (e.g., Porter and Harper 2003), so we started discussing topics specific to implementation five months prior to plan approval. While the development of the strategic plan could be described as linear or step-wise and having a discrete endpoint, successful implementation requires fundamental changes in how we approach our work, and this type of change in culture takes time and patience. There is a need to set realistic expectations, yet there is a fine line between going too fast and not going fast enough. The challenge is to make progress fast enough to maintain momentum, yet not too fast that affected stakeholders don't have appropriate time for feedback or opportunities to develop ownership in the effort.

Use What You've Learned From Plan Development—For implementation, a team was assigned to develop a process to carry out the strategic plan, communicate progress, identify barriers to implementation, and find the necessary resources to remove the barriers. In addition, the team was tasked with facilitating a process to translate the plan into day-to-day work. We modified and continued the same sort of engagement and communication process used during plan development; internal and external support and ownership of desired outcomes is even more important during implementation. Our strategy called for frequent communication with affected stakeholders of the long-term changes resulting from implementation and our evaluation of success as we moved forward. We hope that continuing to let internal and external stakeholders know what we are doing and why we are doing it throughout the process will increase ownership of implementation outcomes. You must dedicate time and effort on communication, and while phone calls and meetings with managers, staff, and stakeholders are very time consuming, in our experience, those methods have been very effective.

Several processes must be managed simultaneously when implementing the plan, making it more challenging than plan development. During WLD staff meetings, implementation was discussed as having a far greater number of uncertainties than plan development. Depending on the implementation issue, it is not always clear what course of action may be needed to resolve the issue and this adds to employee and external stakeholder unease. In addition to proposed changes, during our transition from the old way of doing business to the new, our "regular" work still needed to occur in order to continue meeting our public trust responsibilities.

Internal and external factors don't go away through time. When a course of action is decided upon, enough time and energy must be devoted to help ensure it is successful. As with plan development, staying the course is critical.

Open Process and Ownership—The implementation team met regularly around the state and staff could attend if desired. Initially, there were few attendees, yet as staff began to realize they could contribute during the meetings, and have specific questions answered during direct interaction, attendance increased. Our intent of open

implementation meetings was to allow for informal collection and consideration of recommendations, concerns, or barriers from staff on implementation and operational details. In addition, the intent is to maintain engagement and ownership of the implementation outcomes; a technique that proved successful during plan development. Additional engagement efforts with stakeholder groups also are underway. Because our fundamental objectives include changing the way we do business, our relationships with stakeholders would change accordingly. As one conservation leader stated, "You need to learn how to educate your partners so they can change with you."

Align Resources to the Plan—It was assumed successful implementation required a realignment of available resources. These resources include people, finances, infrastructure, equipment, training, technology, administrative support functions, and partnerships. Do we have the right staff in the right places? Are we structured effectively to carry out our plan? Do we have the appropriate training? Will our partners change along with us? This sort of language, while deemed necessary to inform staff of potential next steps, resulted in additional anxiety to already stressed personnel.

The WLD leadership formally reviewed the draft strategic plan several times, particularly in light of internal ownership and timing of work to accomplish the many strategies designed to meet our goals and objectives. During these meetings, leadership concluded the first step of resource realignment was to address staffing issues. Several facilitated meetings to discuss potential realignment scenarios were held prior to completing the plan and a realignment plan was drafted. Additional meetings were held during September to prioritize what positions we could afford given our budget situation. This process took several iterations.

When the strategic plan was finalized, we considered the rollout of a proposed realignment plan to be an early victory; demonstrating commitment to change, reducing some of the uncertainty about future direction for some staff, and providing opportunities for promotions and changing job duties. The proposed realignment plan was based on direction detailed in the strategic plan, was designed to help meet our fundamental objectives, and included the following desired outcomes: a regional approach to management, reduction of supervisor to staff ratios, increased biologist capacity in field units, increased communication capacity, relieving administrative burdens, monitoring and evaluating our work, an improved regulations process, and improved relations with the Natural Resources Commission.

Communication of the vision for change becomes even more critical during implementation, particularly when personnel actions are involved (Kotter, 1996:9). Ownership of the proposed changes by staff requires they know and understand the rationale behind the realignment plan. Regardless, it is human nature to resist change, and it is reasonable to expect confusion and chaos no matter how well you communicate the intentions and desired outcomes.

Evaluating our Success

During plan development, we worked toward ensuring that our goals, objectives and strategies were measurable, yet some components of the plan are more difficult to measure than others. If our goals, objectives and strategies were formulated correctly, evaluation and reporting will be an easy task and modifications of our management schemes can flow out of these evaluations. However, for our fundamental objectives of transforming the Division into a more proactive, effective and cost-efficient agency, metrics are difficult to establish and evaluation is far more difficult. How do we measure whether we are more proactive today than we were five years ago? How do we determine whether we are more effective? Are we building trust with stakeholders? How do we change our approaches to these issues? These questions need answers, and a goal of our long-term implementation effort is to provide them.

Next Steps

As of this writing, the implementation of the overall plan and realignment is proceeding. Recently, the regional field structure was put in place and for the most part, regional managers now have twice as many

direct reports as before. This situation will be rectified when supervisory biologists are put in place, yet that will take several months.

Translating the goals, objectives, and strategies into operational details that will be used to build work plans for the upcoming fiscal year has been a challenge for all managers and not just the new regional managers. As a first step, the implementation team conducted a workshop with managers to help create lists of specific tasks to be conducted by their staff to carry out the strategies in the plan (we called it "making the plan real"). The second step involves a facilitated discussion between managers and their staff to review progress so far and add more details. Feedback at the end of the workshop was positive, yet one of the implementation team members wondered "whether we were all gravitating to the status quo?" simply listing all the tasks we have done in the past rather than focusing on what we should be doing in the future. It was a sobering comment, yet one we can evaluate by analyzing the information from the workshop and making adjustments if needed. We will continue to remain patient, communicate, and stay the course.

Assessing and Integrating Diverse Public Interests in Decision-Making: Montana's Experience

Christian A. Smith, Michael S. Lewis, Charlie Sperry and Rob Brooks
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Introduction

A key component of state fish and wildlife agency transformation is identification of interests of the broader public in fish and wildlife conservation and incorporating that information into decision making (Jacobson et al. 2010b). In this paper we describe Montana's effort to develop capacity to assess public interest and incorporate stakeholder input into management decision making.

KEY POINTS

- Recognize the need for change.
- Build capacity.
- Establish a vision.
- Senior staff leadership and support is essential.
- Demonstrate value.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) was founded in 1901, and charged with the protection, restoration and allocation of the state's fish and wildlife resources. Like most state wildlife agencies, FWP's fish and wildlife programs are funded almost exclusively with angler and hunter license fees and excise taxes on fishing and archery equipment, firearms, and ammunition. Historically, FWP focused resources on species pursued by anglers and hunters, though many other species benefitted from extensive habitat conservation efforts. Consistent with the development of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, much of FWP's success through the early and mid 1900s can be attributed to the agency's close relationship with anglers and hunters. Most other public interests, including private landowners and non-hunters, were viewed through the lens of their impact on, or importance to, meeting the needs of Montana's anglers and hunters.

The successful recovery of fish and wildlife populations, changing demographic and economic conditions, and Montanan's changing values regarding fish and wildlife led to a new set of challenges for FWP as the new millennium approached. Abundant ungulate populations residing on private land generated conflicts with agricultural interests as well as issues related to public access to wildlife on private land. As fish and wildlife increased, and economic prosperity provided more people with leisure time and disposable income, the popularity of fishing and hunting in Montana grew, resulting in competition between users. Advocates for predators, endangered species and non-game animals emerged as part of the environmental movement of the 1960s, adding a new dynamic to management.

By the mid-1980s, FWP was no longer serving a homogeneous public narrowly interested in hunting and fishing. Importantly, the broadening constituent base was demanding a more effective voice in decision-making.

This historic pattern is certainly not unique to Montana. Fish and wildlife management across the country has become increasingly complex in recent decades in response to a broad range of social, political, economic, cultural, environmental and human demographic changes (Duda et al. 1998, Decker et al. 2001). The range of public interests involved in these increasingly complex issues has expanded dramatically. In addition, the human values and social context within which fish and wildlife management decisions are made has been continuously evolving in Montana and elsewhere (Teel et al. 2005; see also The Montana Challenge website available online at: http://fwp.mt.gov/doingBusiness/reference/montanaChallenge/).

By the early 1990s, FWP leadership recognized that existing staff, information sources, and decision-making processes were not adequate to address the challenges the agency faced. FWP had two alternatives: (1) ignore the ongoing changes and risk losing influence as decision-making shifted from the agency to the legislature, ballot measures and federal agencies; or (2) embrace the future by developing the capacity to assess and understand the expanding scope of public interests and engage stakeholders in decision-making in meaningful ways. FWP chose the latter course. They chose to initiate transformative change.

This case study discusses how FWP developed the capacity to assess and integrate diverse interests in decision-making and the importance of agency leadership in making this transition. It also describes some of the challenges that lie ahead in sustaining this course.

Building Capacity

FWP's first step along this new path was to establish a Responsive Management Unit (RMU) in 1991, that included expertise in economics, human dimensions, and strategic planning. As staff to the Director's Office, the RMU provided services to all FWP programs and divisions. Some of the early research completed by the RMU included placing an economic value on hunting and fishing in Montana and assessing the public's perception of the success of agency programs.

FWP also engaged social scientists and economists outside the agency to augment the work done by agency personnel. For example, FWP worked with University of Montana professors to determine hunter and angler willingness to pay higher license fees.

Between 1991 and 2005, FWP adopted an increasingly inclusive approach to decision-making. Initially, FWP mainly contracted with private facilitators to manage these processes. As demand grew and new issues emerged, FWP trained some existing staff and hired new specialists with the necessary skills to support complex and controversial programs such as river recreation management, wolf management, and comprehensive planning.

In addition to these staff commitments, FWP actively engaged with the Human Dimensions Committee of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) and the Organization of Wildlife Planners. These entities provide vital links between FWP and other agencies and academic institutions, and augment FWP's internal capacity to assess and integrate public interests in decision-making. For example, FWP is currently involved in a multi-state project funded through a USFWS grant to the WAFWA Human Dimensions Committee to assess wildlife-related values and interest in Montana households in programs designed to reconnect children and families to nature. Results will be used to provide direction to future education and outreach programs.

The Importance of Leadership

Charting a new course that broadened FWP's programs - as well as its view of the agency's constituency - required visionary leadership by several former FWP directors, support from the FWP Commission and senior staff, and tolerance of controversy by a number of governors. Biologists, wardens and managers, as well as some anglers and

hunters, all of whom were accustomed to operating under the historic paradigm of so-called "biologically-based" management, were not universally supportive of this transition. The redirection of agency funding from traditional fish and wildlife management activities and the commitment of staff to "social science" was perceived by some as inappropriate or unnecessary. Bringing new parties to the table and granting them equal status as stakeholders with anglers and hunters was threatening to some staff and some traditional constituents.

From the outset, staff in the RMU strove to be responsive to FWP's needs for human dimensions data and to communicate results both internally and to constituents. As those data began to demonstrate value as a supplement to biological information, resistance waned. Still, it took an impasse produced by 13 competing draft bills related to the conflict between resident hunters, landowners and outfitters in the 1995 legislative session before FWP could clearly demonstrate the importance of inclusive decision-making. Bringing diverse parties together to find a solution that met all their needs generated an outcome that won nearly unanimous approval in the next legislature (Guynn 1997).

FWP applied the lessons learned from resolving the conflict between hunters, landowners and outfitters to other complex issues including development of management strategies for wolves, grizzly bears, upland birds, and prairie dogs as well as competition over recreational use of Montana's popular rivers and streams. Anticipating the potential for gridlock, FWP took the lead in organizing, supporting and facilitating broad-based councils that worked through complex issues using consensus whenever possible for decision-making. Many of these groups also turned to the RMU for support including public opinion or values surveys, and economic analysis or assistance with generating alternative scenarios and outcomes to help in their deliberations. The value of this approach for dealing with the controversy over wolf recovery in Montana was discussed by Smith and Sime (2007).

The Importance of Accountability

As valuable as the capacity to gather and analyze human dimensions data and incorporate diverse interests into decision-making are, the benefits of FWP's investment in this approach could not be sustained without some means of holding both the agency, and other parties, accountable to use and integrate this type of information in decision-making. A number of different feedback loops designed to assure accountability have evolved, depending on such things as the level of trust among the parties and the significance of the final decision.

For example, a river recreation planning process that addressed crowding and competition between resident and non-resident anglers and fishing outfitters and guides, resulted in adoption of formal planning rules by the FWP Commission in 2004. These rules define the circumstances under which FWP will consider restricting access to certain waters and establish a requirement for an inclusive process by which river recreation management plans are developed. This level of accountability was necessary given the limited trust among the parties and the potential economic impact of planning outcomes on diverse stakeholder groups, including fishing outfitters and guides.

For many other issues, FWP conducts regular public opinion or user surveys and reports on satisfaction levels to the FWP Commission, legislature and public. In 2009 alone, FWP human dimensions staff completed a dozen different projects ranging from surveying private landowners statewide to gain their input regarding hunting access management, to assessing the quality of river anglers' and recreationists' experiences on Montana's renowned Madison River.

The Challenges Ahead

As with any institutional change, sustaining the relatively new processes that assess and involve diverse interests in decision-making will be challenging for FWP. Although human dimensions data have increasingly become part of program development and evaluation, consideration of social, economic, and political information remains "optional" for most FWP program managers. Those who see value in this type of information often request support from

the human dimensions and decision-support specialists. However, FWP has not yet fully institutionalized this approach.

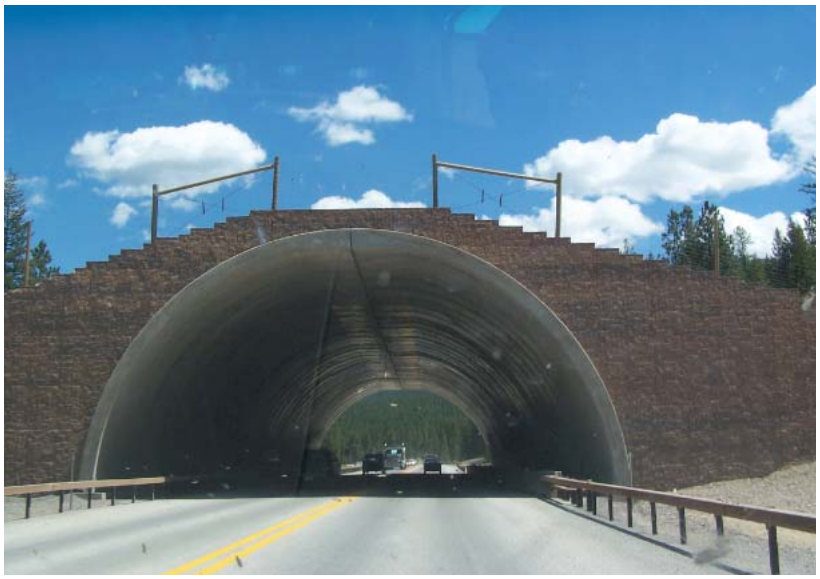
Similarly, use of inclusive processes for decision-making remains a choice, as opposed to the default approach. A major agency reorganization in 2009, intended to segregate the Parks Division from the Fish and Wildlife Division, resulted in reassignment of numerous staff, including those with human dimensions and decision-support roles. The consequences of staff realignment on FWP's assessment and involvement of diverse interests in decision-making are not yet fully evident.

FWP may face significant funding shortfalls within a few years. Whether future administrations continue to place equal value on social and biological information, and allocate resources accordingly, remains to be seen. Whether the relatively high cost and political risk associated with lengthy, inclusive processes remains an acceptable alternative to more expedient, but less collaborative, decision-making is also unpredictable.

Finally, the increasingly partisan and divisive nature of politics in recent years has affected FWP's ability to sustain civil dialog on certain topics, such as wolf management. This atmosphere makes it increasingly difficult for FWP to strike the proper balance between providing special interests a meaningful role in decision-making, fulfilling the agency's responsibility to the public at large, and exercising its legally mandated decision authority.

We would argue that FWP chose wisely two decades ago. Attempting to turn the clock back and limit the degree to which the agency assesses and involves diverse interests in decision-making would be self-defeating and futile. The knowledge FWP has gained about the values, opinions and desires of the plethora of interests to which it is legally responsible is indispensible to informed decision-making. Biological information is no longer enough, and probably never was.

Having been invited to participate in inclusive processes in the past, diverse interests will not accept exclusion in the future. They have alternatives ways to affect management decisions and will certainly take advantage of them if FWP is no longer seen as open to their points of view.



Animals are free to walk over the highway undisturbed.

Conclusion

The operating environment for state fish and wildlife agencies has fundamentally changed in the past 30 years or so. Jacobson et al. (2010b) argued for equally fundamental transformation in the "Institution" of fish and wildlife management. Along with other changes, state fish and wildlife agencies need to develop the capacity to assess and engage the full range of public interests in the decision-making processes that are part of the institution.

FWP recognized this need in the early 1990s and took steps to add staff with the knowledge and skills to assess public values and opinions and to support more inclusive decision-making processes. The transformation from a traditional, "biologically-based" management paradigm to a more holistic approach required a sustained commitment to change by agency leadership, was not accomplished without costs or difficulty, and, while relatively embedded in the agency culture is not irreversible. Nevertheless, FWP and the people of Montana have been well-served by this approach, as reflected in the ability to resolve numerous complex and controversial resource management dilemmas in constructive ways.

Agency Transformation—Sustaining the Legacy in Missouri

Dan Zekor
Missouri Department of Conservation

Transformation Part One: The Commission and Mandate - 1936

Missouri has often been looked to as the model for state fish and wildlife agency (SFWA) transformation. Many factors contributed to the establishment of a culture embracing broad-based wildlife conservation, and towards securing the funding to implement MDC's mandate. It is easy to assume that once an agency has successfully transformed, the hard work is mostly done, but sustaining the legacy can be as challenging as securing it.

The basic road-map for state fish and wildlife agency transformation has been in our hands for 80 years. The American Game Policy, adopted at the 17th Annual American Game Conference in 1930 described the pathway and important milestones necessary for success. Key elements of the Policy included the need for trained professionals; recognition of the value of broad thinking and cooperation among and between relevant interest groups, including the need for multi-disciplinary work; and the importance of adequate funding. The Policy placed heavy emphasis on the need for agencies to have freedom from "political overturns" and influence, enough authority to govern its own work (and to assess and ultimately achieve the desired outcomes of conservation), and that costs should be carried by everyone because the work of conservation results in "public betterments" (Leopold 1930).

KEY POINTS

- Having a legal mandate and governance structure that facilitates transformation is important.
- Create a vision prior to seeking funding.
- Connect public with programs and funding.
- Sustain the trust through action and communication.
- Be accountable.

The state of Missouri took this message to heart, and created the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). In essence, what might be considered steps toward transformation for many SFWAs today was actually the basis for the genesis of the MDC.

The constitutional amendment creating the Missouri Conservation Commission (MCC), the politically appointed body that oversees the MDC and its broad-reaching mandate, was a clear expression of the will of the people that underscored the principles of the Public Trust Doctrine; that is, fish and wildlife resources belong to all people and are held in trust by the state, and this trust is manifested in governance (i.e., the constitutional mandate and all that it infers). Key words of the constitutional mandate passed in 1936 are as follows: "The control, management, restoration, conservation and regulation of the bird, fish, game, forestry, and all wildlife resources of the State…" This interesting assemblage of terms collectively gives the MCC broad, far reaching authority and responsibility over the fish, wildlife, and forest resources of the state.

Transformation Part Two: The Missouri Conservation Program Report - 1970

The Missouri Conservation Program Report (MCPR) was the official document generated by a panel of experts charged with conducting an independent review of the Department (Leopold et al. 1970). The significance of this report was that it laid a foundation for future discussions about program expansions and the need for additional funding. The report specifically addressed a number of important future needs and growth areas, including the need "To provide a complete spectrum of recreational opportunities relating to fish and wildlife." While the discussion of this goal mentions "providing specifically for a maximum variety of outdoor pleasures" and "fulfilling a broad spectrum of recreational uses" the context of this discussion lies in the phrase "relating to fish and wildlife." Urban areas were especially highlighted in the report when the committee suggested that the Department has a responsibility to provide

opportunities for urban people to escape the "teeming urban center" to "enjoy fishing, hunting, and outdoor pleasures" and that the Department can contribute by developing "outdoor recreational facilities - however simple they might seem - within easy reach of the mass of city dwellers." Even when thinking beyond the traditional values and roles of the Department, the Committee underscored the Department's primary mission: "Above all the Commission should view its role as being the leading defender and exponent for the preservation and enhancement of the physical and biological environment in the State of Missouri."

The Committee, however, reminded us that the people "went to the polls and when they were finished, there was a new Conservation Commission, not dependent on the vagaries of politics, and dedicated to the reclamation of the state's natural world." Moreover, "The Department of Conservation must always remain conscious of the confines of Constitutional authority in redefining its programs and giving them the depth and breadth the future demands."

Transformation Part Three: Dedicated Funding – 1976

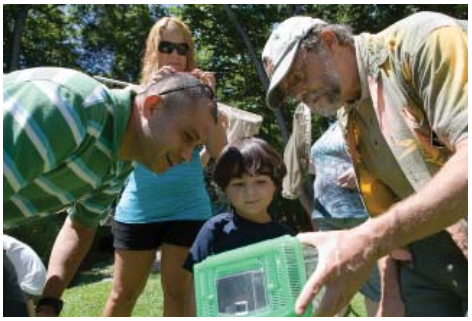
The story of Missouri's Conservation Sales Tax has been well documented (Brohn 1977, Keefe 1987, Griffee 1999, McKinney et al. 2005) and continues to be referenced and researched today as SFWAs seek resolution to their individual funding woes. Prior to 1977, the MDC was funded in a manner similar to many other SFWAs; however, the level of funding was inadequate, revenue showed little growth, hiring quality employees was difficult, demand for services was growing, and the agency was anxious to implement the recommendations of the MCPR (Leopold et al. 1970, Nagel 1970). Eventually, through the hard work of interested citizens, dedicated funding to support the constitutional authority of the MCC, and the projected program growth outlined in the agency's strategic plan, Design for Conservation (Missouri Department of Conservation 1971) would be achieved.

Anecdotal accounts confirm conservation tax supporters were not just anglers and hunters, the "traditional" constituency of game and fish agencies. In describing the collection of signatures necessary to place the proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot, the MDC Assistant Director commented, "Hunting and fishing clubs did well getting signatures, but the best petition carriers often were college students, birders and hikers" (Brohn 1977).

The importance of this dedicated funding cannot be overstated; combined with designated federal funds and hunting and fishing permits fees, a solid basis for comprehensive fish, forest, and wildlife conservation in Missouri has been provided (Witter et al. 1993). Take away the sales tax funding and the Department becomes a state game and fish agency, tied to a gradually eroding funding base (i.e., declining hunting and fishing permits). However, prior to obtaining expanded funding, the MDC demonstrated its vision and willingness to be a comprehensive fish and wildlife agency, which was essential to its ultimate success in getting the sales tax revenues (Jacobson et al. 2010a).

Transformation Part Four: Sustaining the Legacy

The aforementioned Assistant Director stated "We have the financial resources to do a top-notch job. Now we must perform" (Brohn 1977). In 2002, the MDC dedicated an issue of the Conservationist magazine to a comparison of the original Design for Conservation objectives and the actual achievements. This comparison suggested that the MDC has more than lived up to the promises made and the expectations of most Missourians. In 2004, a series of articles in the Kansas City Star newspaper (Thompson 2004), suggested that the conservation sales tax was directly linked to the Design for Conservation, and now that the goals of "Design" had been met, the tax was no longer needed. This high profile public criticism combined with concerns about an aging public mandate and future relevance began to emerge as a theme for the remainder of the decade, and today the Department

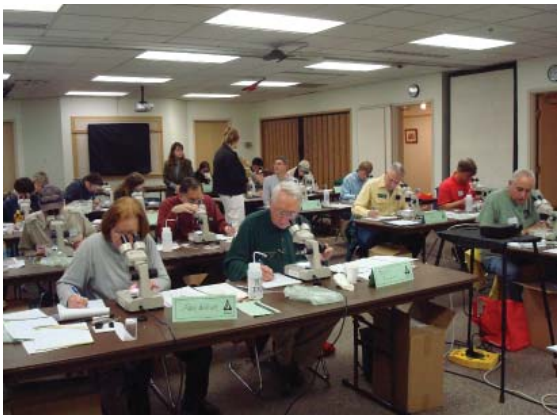


Discover Nature-Family Programs

continues to struggle with defining (or redefining) itself. Clearly, sustaining the Missouri conservation legacy into the future was going to be more difficult than in the past.

Connecting the Public with Programs and Funding

The original Design for Conservation was a long-range plan for expanding Department programs if additional funding was made available. The strength of "Design" was that it was a clear and concise document, containing enough information that the public could glean priorities and projected costs. Betts (1970) recognized that what is "perfectly clear" to professional conservationists, is not so easily grasped by the "average voter," hence the need for something that is simple and direct. Witter et al. (1993) identified the agency strategic plan as the best starting point for communicating with the public. Arkansas, during its decade long struggle to secure dedicated funding, also understood the importance (and risks) in clearly stating how additional funding would be used (Griffee 1999); a good plan draws supporters but also becomes a measuring stick in future years. In more absolute terms, if you want to better connect people with the purposes of the agency and their taxes, it's important to articulate specifically what it is you intend to do with their money. If you want people to continue supporting the agency and associated funding, they must believe the work of the agency has value.


Citizen Science in Missouri

Fish, forest, and wildlife conservation is, at some level, important to most Missourians (Rikoon et al. 2004, Responsive Management 2005). However, the exact benefits of conservation to the general population of Missouri are likely obscure. Once you subtract direct users (e.g., hunters and anglers) and attempt to dig deeper into the reasons why a society should support fish and wildlife, especially as compared to other societal needs (e.g., education), it becomes increasingly difficult to state clear and compelling arguments. If citizens need to feel connected to where their tax dollars go if the are going to continue supporting them, then we must spend more time trying to understand what citizens expect of us. How much conservation do they want? And in the end, accountability to the public is critical. For those Missourians that may not fully understand the purposes of conservation, we must work hard to frame the messages and discussions before others do it for us. We must tell the story.

At a basic level, people must see a connection between the conservation funding and public service received. It's not enough to keep repeating the success stories of the past (e.g., deer and turkey restored). We must clearly connect need, revenues, and expenditures with accomplishments. If the public knows where the money goes and why, they may still debate the appropriateness of certain types of spending, but hopefully, will not question the fundamental need for the agency and dedicated funding. Success lies in demonstrating a connection between purpose, funding, and need (McKinney et al. 2005).

A Matter of Trust

Dedicated funding in government is often linked to issues of trust (i.e., the public doesn't trust appropriators to adequately fund desired programs). Political influences can undermine important processes, whereby false priorities supplant real, public supported programs and services. The creation of the MCC in 1936 by constitutional amendment was also all about trust. Indeed, the number one objective for the 1936 amendment as stated by the first MCC (1939) was "to protect, as far as legally possible, the administration of the state's wildlife resources from the influence of partisan politics." Politics, however, is not only of the partisan kind, involving elected officials. Because they are governor-appointed decision makers, Commissioners are inherently political. This is a necessity, even for a so-called apolitical conservation commission. It only becomes a problem if the commission

breaches the trust it has been awarded. If a commission breaches the trust and is viewed as overtly political, public suspicions and skepticisms can overshadow important work carried out by the agency.

Trust must also be sustained between the Commission and those elected to represent the public. The MCC and the earmarked tax are, in actuality, a redistribution of political authority. This re-distribution of authority will forever be a point of contention; however, it can result in a healthy tension if it brings about openness, accountability, and the informed consent needed to sustain authority and earmarked funding. Sustaining the governance structure, authority, and funding equals sustaining public trust.

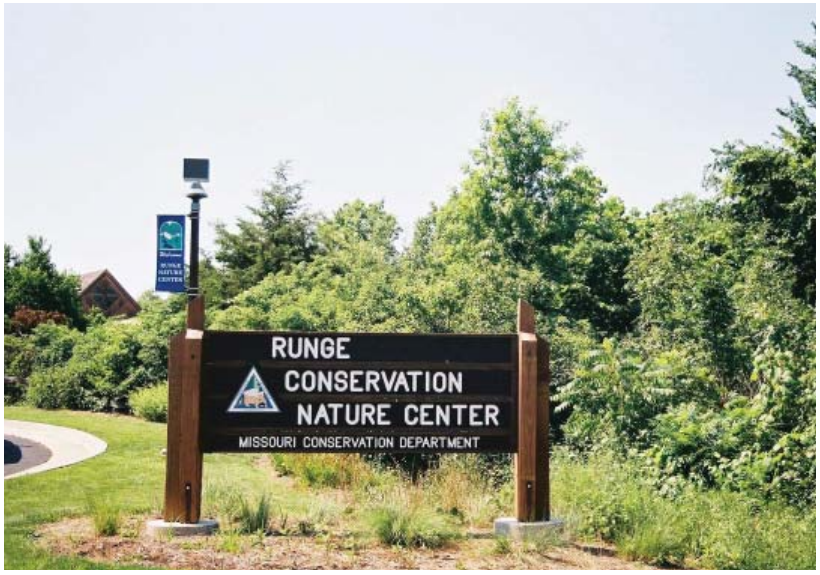
A Forum for Advocacy

In 1936 and again in 1976, the electorate of Missouri was asked to support conservation at the ballot box. Conservation leaders and impassioned citizens organized their actions in a way that ordinary voters could see, understand, and support the need for the authority and funding that now exists in Missouri. Through the work of the Conservation Federation of Missouri and other groups, a cause - a social and political movement - was brought to life. While everyone, no matter the group or the individual, had a different reason for supporting these initiatives, for a brief moment in time, conservation, however one defined it, came first.

Today, the forum for conservation advocacy still exists, albeit a bit more complicated. The huge number of specialty and quasi-conservation groups all vying for attention and resources make it extremely difficult to bring everyone under one umbrella. The result is that the agency sometimes tries to be all things to all people, thereby diluting its overall effectiveness and obvious strengths. While it's impossible not to compartmentalize the work of conservation to gauge appeal and success with the various publics, many of the threats to the future and quality of fish, forest, and wildlife are universal to all groups (e.g., habitat loss, water quality, invasive species, etc.). Therefore, we must find a way to populate the forum with discussions about these and other topics while folding in the specific interests of each group and what they stand to lose (or gain through their support).

A Question of Relevance

Over the years, there have been several attempts to bring the conservation sales tax back to the ballot box. An enduring question in these discussions is "Why should the MDC continue to receive such a benefit?" Earlier it was postulated that if citizens need to feel connected to their taxes if they are to continue supporting them, then we must spend more time trying to understand what



citizens expect of us. However, fish, forest, and wildlife conservation is, to a large degree, about ideology. Once we move beyond individual needs (e.g., places to hunt and fish, boat ramps, etc.), we venture into what is obscure and abstract for most people. Biodiversity, ecosystems, landscape management, watersheds, and associated quality of life compared to schools, health care, jobs, public safety, and (again) associated quality of life; commensurable incommensurables. How do we weigh the value of a species against the value of some social service? We shouldn't have to, but we try, because the same source of funding pays for both (i.e., taxes).

The people have placed a huge amount of trust in the MCC and Department to fulfill its intended purpose. A collapse of that trust would surely cause the public, including past supporters, to champion the cause to re-direct the agency. In 1953, a member of the original independent study group that

helped set the "Design" wheels spinning said it best "In a democracy, a government agency or program may, through the non-progressiveness of its leaders or because of a rigid legal framework, fall only so far behind public opinion. Eventually the people, by one means or another, will insist on progress. The agency will be brought sharply up to date."

A vote on the conservation sales tax might seem like a reasonable test of MDC's relevance and sense of public priority; however, the risks and potential ramifications to the state are huge, especially if we have failed in our efforts to adequately articulate our purpose and relevancy to the voting public.

Conclusion

Sustaining the legacy of governance and funding in Missouri means developing clear messages that resonate with the public. People must feel a connection between themselves, the taxes they pay, and real public benefits, and MDC must help the public to understand and experience those values and benefits that extend beyond the monetary aspect. An open process for setting direction, determining priorities, and assigning budgets will keep the agency relevant by directing discussion to program needs and priorities, rather than questions about relative purpose and need for funding. In Missouri, this is achieved to some degree by continually showcasing important programs and accomplishments; however, full transparency even within the agency is still elusive.

The future is not as much about re-defining ourselves to better fit the mainstream as it is about calibrating our agency against our fundamental purpose and the current environment. We achieved transformation; now we need to continue to evolve, and at a base level, the fundamental purpose of why we exist should not be compromised.

Finally, it's important to embrace the idea that sustaining the legacy is deeply connected to matters of public trust and accountability, and that the question of our relevance lies in our ability to help the public gain a broad understanding of the importance of fish, forest, and wildlife conservation at many different levels, not just the obvious and traditional view.

Leading and Managing Transformation of Fish and Wildlife Management in Florida—A Voyage

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Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Introduction

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has experienced over a decade of truly transformative change, continuing yet today. Our transformative voyage has been revitalizing and wonderful, and at the same time demanding and daunting. Transformation has not come quickly because at the core it involves changing organizational culture, which can be doggedly inflexible in some quarters of an organization as large as FWC. Nevertheless, we have changed in a few big and many little ways that have made FWC a very different organization today than we were 10-15 years ago. Our transformation is remarkable in some respects, but we are not yet finished. We have come to realize we are engaged in a voyage, not an exercise.

This case is the most comprehensive of those presented in the guide. It covers most of the steps Kotter has identified, some being handled better than others by FWC, but all have been or are yet being given attention as the agency continues its metered pace to transform into a fish and wildlife conservation agency for the 21st century.

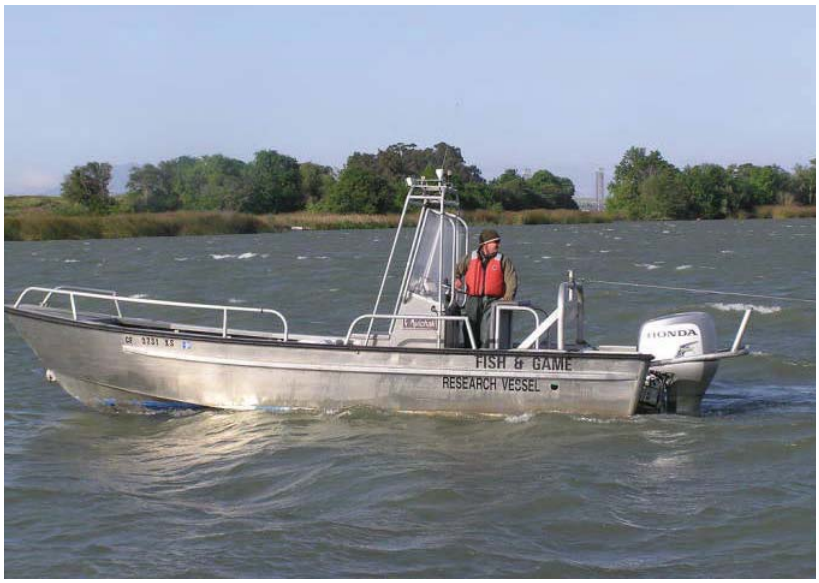
Background

The 1990's was a dynamic decade for environmental and natural resource conservation in Florida. It was a time of litigious conservation challenges in Florida; i.e., a marine fishing net ban, closure of black bear

hunting and several lawsuits over management of the endangered Florida manatee. It was also the beginning of an era of increased government transparency, more accountability and doing more with less. Several Florida agencies were merged to integrate the natural resource regulatory and management objectives of Florida into a unified ecosystems management approach.

During this time the Executive Director of the former Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) realized that discussions in the state legislature about increasing the efficiency of multiple public lands management programs provided an opportunity to re-invent the agency. He saw the need for goal expansion and began to broaden the boundaries of GFC, moving away from a game-harvest focus to a more inclusive fish and wildlife management focus. This was the beginning of a momentous transformative change. Under this Executive Director's leadership, GFC was well positioned when a citizen-led initiative in the late 1990's proposed a multi-agency merger that was supported by a broad coalition of conservation, environmental, hunting and sport fishing groups. A newsletter in 1998 described the purpose of the merger was "to create a unified fish and wildlife commission as a solution to the difficulties of passing conservation-oriented management regulations in a political atmosphere." In addition to streamlining government, the initiative advocated for (a) sound science and management practices to prevail over politics in wildlife conservation and management, and (b) greatly increased citizen access to the new commission. The constitutional amendment creating the current FWC governance structure was approved by over 72% of voters in 1998.

In 1999 the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) was created by the merger of all of the staff and Commissioners of the former Marine Fisheries Commission, elements of the Divisions of Marine Resources and Law Enforcement of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and all of the employees and Commissioners of the former Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Five years later, after consulting with stakeholder and staff, FWC restructured internally to better align programs and operations to address Florida's conservation challenges. This reorganization impacted the agency structure, processes, culture, internal and external working relationships, personnel, and even the existence of some programs. It purposefully built capacity for new ways of working – new thinking styles, beliefs, tools and processes. These are necessary elements of transformative change.



Leadership that promotes a cultural change towards broadening goals

Leadership at the top matters – where is this ship heading?

The genesis of a decade of transformational change at FWC came from a variety of sources, but the key role of leadership has been a common thread. A former Executive Director of GFC understood the potential impact of discussions of mergers of all state agencies that managed public lands and began to expand boundaries to implement a more inclusive fish and wildlife management approach. FWC, the newly created agency to unify fish and wildlife decision-making processes, merged entities from several organizations but didn't unite them. Then a new Executive Director who "grew up" in an organization where change was constant and considered "good," together with new 28-member senior leadership team (SLT) he created, recognized the need to better integrate the agency's collection of programs to address the conservation

challenges of the new century. Mindful of lessons learned earlier in his career (anticipating trends, consensus building, and understanding what is important, coupled with long-term science-based programs), the Executive Director continued this approach of seeking others' perspectives, and identifying their needs and building partnerships.

Though an unassuming leader, the new Executive Director communicated clearly, consistently and often. He very clearly articulated his expectations of staff and his vision for FWC. He attended many mid and lower level work unit meetings in person, provided information and updates by video messages, sent frequent all-staff emails and provided updates in newsletters. He felt that we were "grossly under planning for the future and needed to blend tradition with the future." The driving force behind the reorganization and transformation was to put FWC in the very best position to improve fish and wildlife conservation in a changing world.

Keeping the ship on course – a steady hand at the helm

The second key player in FWC's transformation was a long-term, well-respected biologist turned planner and member of the SLT. As the Director of the Strategy and Planning Office (SPO) he and his small staff were the full-time "implementers" of FWC change strategy. He played the roles of leader, planner, facilitator, and counselor, followed up on the details, and provided historical context to roles, personalities and agency culture. He was an excellent judge of how much to push the change activities and which staff or work units needed more attention to achieve the desired end point. SPO was wholly dedicated to this effort and thereby reduced the logistical burden on key leaders. A vital role of SPO was responding to staff concerns and questions about the reorganization.

Coach and critic – the valuable role of an outside perspective

The third key player was an external consultant the Executive Director employed to play a major role in FWC's transformation – a coach for the leadership team and the enforcer of new ways of doing business. This third-party role was critical to the success of the transformation, functioning as the lightening rod for handling much of the staff anxiety, uncertainly, frustration, and anger that surfaced. He gave staff a sense of comfort that their concerns and uncertainties were "normal." He brought new perspectives and challenged staff to think bigger and broader. This role also allowed the Executive Director to participate as a member of the teams implementing the reorganization.

Effective transformative leaders are realists

The Executive Director and Director of SPO anticipated the heavy work load and resources that would be needed to fuel the reorganization. Perhaps more importantly, they recognized and valued the level of planning that each element of the reorganization would require. Almost every element was planned, tested with staff, revised, implemented and then debriefed. The effort to attain message clarity helped minimize uncertainty and any sense of destabilization. All documents created in the reorganization were available to any staff for review and comment, providing transparency and building trust. Key leaders were realistic and frank about the organizational and personal challenges in merging several different work cultures. Much effort went into clarifying roles and responsibilities of new work units, teams and individual staff.

Communication about the transformation was consistently grounded in the need to address mounting challenges to fish and wildlife conservation from a growing and increasingly diverse population, better understand and serve stakeholders, and align structure to ease and increase collaboration and efficiency. The Executive Director and Director of SPO carefully selected mid-level leaders for their tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, willingness to ask questions, and ability to move information out to staff. Agency leaders at multiple levels also communicated frequently with stakeholders about the reorganization and how the improvements would affect them.

Details matter

Over 40% of our 2200 staff changed supervisors. Such change can generate uncertainty, fear, and resistance which can impair morale and productivity. Extensive planning

was aimed at reducing these negative impacts. Work units were realigned to better reflect functional areas of work - new divisions, sections and subsections were created. New units were named carefully to emphasize the change. Leaders and peer pressure created the impetus to not fall back into habits of using old work unit names. Logos, vehicle colors, business card design, and even agency PowerPoint templates were created to provide a sense of unity and promote the concept of "Think FWC."

Encouragement to adapt these new directions was embedded in almost every communication from leaders. The challenge and expectation from the Executive Director to become the premier fish and wildlife agency in the country was a common theme. Staff were promised that the operational and administrative changes would never result in a decrease in service or functionality. Best practices would be applied to every element of our operations. Leaders adopted a genuine open-door policy and willingness to listen to staff. The transparency of the details and the progress of the organizational changes – including staff, budget and structure changes – demonstrated a new environment of openness and trust. "Success stories" were communicated to all staff, emphasizing improved conservation outcomes because of increased integration and collaboration. The commitment of FWC's senior leaders to integration and collaboration was demonstrated by encouraging staff to attend offsite interdivisional knowledge-sharing meetings.

Leaders set the standards

Senior and mid-level leaders' personal behaviors were critical to showing commitment to the new directions. In the environment created, where openness is valued and expected, members of this group would "call each other out" if they were slipping back into old habits. They modeled the behaviors desired of staff by serving on multidisciplinary teams and supporting their staff to serve on teams and continually asking "who else was involved in this decision?" Leaders supported the new concept of multi-disciplinary decision-making through teams by understanding that participation on the teams might take staff outside their traditional areas and require significant time commitments.

Community of learning

Early in the transformation effort senior leaders focused on developing a "learning community" with respect to methods for staff to work more effectively with each other and stakeholders. This included determining staff DISC® and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® profiles. Staff continue to use this information in understanding team and work unit dynamics. "The Art of Thinking" (Harrison and Bramson), "Emotional Intelligence" (Goleman) and "5 Dysfunctions of a Team" (Lencioni) were recommended readings to help staff understand different thinking styles and how to work together better. With this thoughtful approach to understanding individuals and groups, FWC is building a culture of candor where staff can actively debate the merits of a management action, response or proposal before it is executed. In most meetings, it's an expectation that anyone can provide alternative opinions or respectfully question their colleagues. This community of learning about transformative change adopted a focus on debriefing, critiquing, discussing, capturing and sharing lessons learned from activities related to the transformation.

Perhaps a key factor in FWC leaders' ability to get the new behaviors and directions well rooted was that they talked about it all the time. Each SLT meeting for years had discussions about the progress of some element of the transformation. The Director of SPO and the consultant kept the pressure on maintaining progress. Books were recommended to leaders and discussed at meetings. The two books most frequently referenced were Jim Collin's "Good to Great" and John Kotter's "Leading Change." The SLT even created a scorecard based on each chapter of "Good to Great" and graded themselves about two years after the launch of the reorganization. Employee satisfaction surveys and mid-level leadership meetings were also designed around the progress of the changes.

Evaluating, adjusting and refining

In the spring of 2004, FWC held five "Good to Great" meetings designed around concepts adapted from the book with that

title. Over 200 mid-level staff participated. Leaders of these meetings, mostly Division Directors, modeled the new expected behavior of openness, questioning, and information sharing. Agendas were designed to create inter-division interactions; real scenarios were posed to small groups to encourage multiple division/work unit problem solving (e.g., how to respond to a major wildlife disease event). Lots of time was budgeted for questions and discussions. All FWC's senior leaders attended these meetings, sending a clear message to staff that they supported these change efforts.

In fall 2005, senior leaders were surveyed to get a sense of progress of the reorganization. They responded to two questions: What was going right? What was going wrong? The focus was on identifying short-term wins that could be celebrated with all staff. Problems that surfaced were analyzed and addressed by leaders with renewed vigor.

Seizing opportunities for creating "community"

The hurricane seasons of 2004 and 2005, when 10 storms affected Florida, created unforeseen situations that drew together staff from disparate units to work cooperatively in unconventional ways. To confirm the well-being of staff following a storm, the agency started conducting "wellness checks." If staff didn't contact their direct supervisor within 24 hours after a storm, a law enforcement team was dispatched to determine the status of the staff member and family. Volunteer staff teams were also dispatched to provide assistance to those whose homes had been damaged and a staff-donated account was created in the FWC support organization, Wildlife Foundation of Florida, to provide loans to staff for emergency needs. This effort is sustained; each year teams of staff volunteers provide non-sworn disaster assistance during hurricane season. The underlying message: we are family (interdependent community) and take care of each other.

Developing strategy to expand organization boundaries and grow coalitions

Shortly after the merger, an external consultant was hired to engage FWC's primary 100 stakeholders to learn what they thought about the agency reorganization and identify what they thought was the most important things FWC should be doing. Their feedback set FWC on our current trajectory of engaging with stakeholders and partners to help define our goals. We were told "FWC is doing lots of small things towards conservation but can't do one big thing" (a phenomenon staff now call "random acts of conservation") and that stakeholders were getting different answers to questions depending on who in the agency was asked. This feedback prompted the concept of "Think FWC" and "speak with one voice." It was also a watershed moment for stakeholders - they realized we would be talking to and working with them much more, and they had a responsibility in this new relationship.

Another expectation of the Executive Director was to "go forth and engage!" with stakeholders. A Marine Fisheries Summit was called in 2004 to better understand stakeholder concerns. Several more summits followed focused on the future of hunting, the Wildlife Action Plan, freshwater fisheries, and climate change. Numerous advisory boards and technical advisory groups were created to work with staff on an on-going basis to discuss issues, resolve user conflicts, and propose research and management priorities. These interactions with stakeholders help develop partnerships that become invested in the outcomes of our management actions. The need to better understand stakeholder concerns is leading to increased understanding of and desire for human dimensions insight via social science research.

With FWC's new focus on stakeholder engagement, staff needed to learn how to engage with stakeholders beyond the traditional public meeting format. A university professor was hired to help facilitate stakeholder meetings on hot issues. Because of his facilitation skills and familiarity with FWC he has become a role model and mentor for agency facilitators. In the summer of 2008 he surveyed managers of projects that involved stakeholders about their methodologies, successes and failures. The lessons learned were captured in a stakeholder engagement manual and shared widely with FWC staff

to improve our interactions with stakeholders.

Another tool to help staff better engage with stakeholders is the AFWA Management Assistance Team class "Publics, Problems and Politics." The train-the-trainer format has worked well at FWC and over 200 staff have participated in this workshop that includes an overview of different methodologies of stakeholder engagement formats.

FWC has launched numerous initiatives over the last 5-7 years that focus on developing partnerships to achieve joint conservation objectives. They focus the partnership's expertise, staff, equipment, funding, and communication on common purposes. FWC recently realized the impact of our initiatives on our partners and stakeholders. Requests for their participation are coming from all sectors of the agency in well over 40 conservation initiatives. Efforts are underway to minimize stakeholder "fatigue" while maximizing conservation outcomes.

Assessment of public interest and design a feedback loop to demonstrate accountability

FWC monitors public interest in a distributed and relatively uncoordinated manner. We have many detection or information gathering points of public concerns and interests, but they are rarely compiled or cross referenced until they reach a critical level. Sporadic but increasing numbers of social science inquiries are being incorporated into FWC decision-making processes. Education of staff and stakeholders about the necessity of scientifically valid public attitude, opinion and behavior inquiries is sorely needed.

Assessment of public interests, concerns, attitudes, and behaviors is generally orchestrated at the project level and occasionally at the division level. FWC now understands that it needs to institutionalize our efforts to incorporate more valid social science into our decision-making processes. For example, FWC is currently working with the University of Florida to fund a fulltime faculty member whose research focus will be to help FWC better understand public attitudes, opinions and behaviors about fish and wildlife. In addition, FWC recently hired a market researcher who will assist staff with satisfaction and opinions towards a variety of conservation issues.

FWC has entered a new phase of stakeholder engagement. Stakeholders have had input in efforts ranging from development of a Recreation Master Plan, setting priorities for FWCs Wildlife Management Areas and other public lands, and co-management of more than 2400 artificial reefs. On a few recent issues, particularly those involving imperiled species, staff and stakeholders have engaged in intensive, long-term interactions to discuss needs and concerns, resolve differences and craft acceptable resolutions. There has been an evolution of stakeholder behaviors, from meetings that reflected hostility and anger, to meetings where needs and concerns were openly discussed with civility. Demonstrated commitment of agency staff to solicit and understand all stakeholder needs and concerns and to work towards an acceptable solution has led to Commission decisions that all parties supported even if they did not agree with all aspects. The respect and the personal relationships built through these engagements resulted in an increased trust among the stakeholders and between them and the agency.

Expansion of programs and services

Often stakeholders and partners have driven expansion of the scope or scale of FWC's programs and services. A member of the FWC directorate is typically the first point of contact from major stakeholder groups when a need is identified. Increasingly individual Commissioners are also lobbied for increased services or new programs. The Office of Recreational Services was created to address the concerns and needs of stakeholders not traditionally considered by FWC's precursor agencies (wildlife watchers, paddlers, hikers, etc.). This office also houses FWC's volunteer coordinator to provide experiential activities to those who value conservation, promote and better utilize citizen science, and supplement the agency workforce.

FWC has invested in new technologies, such as internet mapping services, that allow the public, partners and stakeholders to search data relevant to their interests. An online Florida wildlife conservation database

guides effective land-use planning, project design and habitat management activities. Increasingly staff are translating highly technical information into easily understandable products to help stakeholders and the public better understand conservation challenges and issues; e.g., FWC's "Wildlife 2060" report graphically shows the dramatic loss of wildlife habitat based on current growth projections. FWC engages in several efforts to conserve habitat, for example:

- In addition to traditional landowner assistance programs that provide incentives for specific improvements to land management that benefit wildlife, more generalized habitat management workshops are also offered to the public.
- Public involvement in setting the priority of uses on management areas has created a robust method for determining recreation needs on these areas.
- The number of ecosystem-based restoration partnership teams is growing to protect and manage exceptional diversity while remaining consistent with the partners' individual and diverse missions. Joint planning processes are used to identify conservation goals and actions and leverage resources among partners.

FWC has tried to keep up with increasing demands for information and services. "Ask FWC" allows the public to search frequently asked questions and submit new ones for staff to answer. Frequency and level of interest in topics are tracked as a method to detect emerging issues. News and information is pushed out through traditional press releases but also through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Scribd. FWC frequently uses nonscientific web-based open surveys to gauge interest in a topic and then creates focus groups of stakeholders to engage on that topic.

FWC is exploring an agreement with the University of Florida to create a Human Dimensions of Wildlife faculty position. This position, initially funded by FWC, will study stakeholder engagement and wildlife governance processes in Florida; integration of social and ecological insights into policy and management; natural resource decision making, including structured decision making. The incumbent will engage in collaborative projects with FWC staff and be a bridge to the social science resources at the university.

The agency is increasingly offering nature-based recreation opportunities targeted towards nontraditional stakeholders such as *Becoming an Outdoors-Woman® and Ladies, Let's Go Fishing!* ® More opportunities are being created for citizens to get involved in citizen science projects. Increasing numbers of recreation guides and interpretative materials are being produced to encourage residents and visitors to explore natural areas and learn about wildlife and their habitats. Feedback about the needs of nontraditional stakeholders led wildlife management area managers to shift mowing schedules to let some plants flower that attract butterflies and butterfly watchers.

Challenges in sustaining the legacy

Perhaps the biggest challenge for sustaining the transformation is anchoring it deeply in the organizational culture such that it becomes a legacy. Many change efforts in government agencies have tried to incorporate the latest "business book" or improvement fad. The key to sustaining change is to continue applying positive pressure and communicating the positive conservation outcomes. Anchoring change also requires finding and promoting staff who truly believe in the new direction and putting them in right places. Staff that were openly skeptical (but not overtly negative and destructive) about the change efforts were embraced and encouraged to continue to ask clarifying questions. This helped develop a culture where all staff opinions and perspectives are important for building a common understanding of the issue at hand. FWC continues to enjoy and actively encourages a "safe zone" atmosphere in meetings and discussions.

Leadership, leadership, leadership

Leaders and many staff of FWC now realize that the agency reorganization was a kick start (albeit a large one) into a continuous improvement culture. FWC has institutionalized many actions in the reorganization effort, but assessment and modification will continue indefinitely. Leaders are receptive to modifying structures and processes to get it right; expansion and consolidation of program activities will always be a factor in FWC as we continually build and strengthen the agency.

Leaders understood that a key to building a new culture and creating sustainable habits is taking on only a few at a time—progress needs to be measured, even in transformative change. Teaming, for example, was a foundational element to achieve our goals so we had to make teaming and the concept of gathering and considering multiple perspectives in decision-making a habit before we could move forward in other aspects. Stakeholder engagement and partnering is continuing to be adopted across FWC and will eventually also normalize.

Leaders found that a major challenge of implementing the reorganization was being able to think strategically while still handling routine work and the crisis of the day. It was difficult. Staff involved in the transformation were deeply dedicated to the new directions and invested untold extra hours needed to craft and implement actions.

Consistency of message and stability of leadership

Using the same language and phrases constantly throughout the agency at multiple levels and locations helps keep the message alive. FWC employees often use Jim Collins' phrase "Good to Great" in many settings. Other terms still commonly in use include: premier fish and wildlife agency, proactive vs. reactive, science-informed decision making, teaming, and integration and collaboration. The new language has become part of our oral history passed on to new staff.

FWC enjoys a stable core leadership group of about 75 people. With only a 15% turnover in 6 years, this group provides a broad base of corporate knowledge, a stable framework for communication, and a deep understanding of conservation issues. Their strong personal friendships and professional respect allows open and honest discussions that sometimes are uncomfortable and contentious. The negative side of this longevity is that some leaders tend to identify their career success with the "survival" of work units they created over decades and may create a barrier to a reorganization effort.

As with other fish and wildlife agencies nationally, many upper level leaders are approaching retirement. Planned overlap of several months for current position holders and people slated to fill their positions allows transference of corporate knowledge. FWC's in-house leadership development program provides opportunities for staff at all levels to improve their professional management skills. Currently over 7% of staff are taking classes in this program and over time this training will create a deeper leadership pool.

Accepting change – a learned behavior

The reorganization experience was difficult for many staff and more detailed attention should have been paid to staff morale and feedback at the outset. For example, many staff were not comfortable with open debate and resolving conflict. Over time, however, by leaders demonstrating collegial open and honest discussions on conservation issues, staff are having more reflective and philosophical discussions rather than jumping to solutions or actions. Collaborative participatory planning and implementation is increasing.

For example, FWC's work with Cornell University's Human Dimensions Research Unit and others helped develop an interdivisional community of staff that deliberately and frequently work across organization structures. Their work has helped us challenge ourselves to rethink what we are about as an agency, what our role is, and how we plan strategically for the future. It has helped FWC more fully see *why* we are doing what we do and better understand the public trust and value dynamic. A key element to the implementing and sustaining the transformation is communicating the "why" behind the "what."

Merging multiple work units created a lack of shared priorities. FWC is currently

developing an agency-level strategic plan to better align activities to the agency mission, rather than multiple division-level strategic plans. This is being developed using five large teams to collaboratively envision desired future conditions and high level objectives for the agencies core areas of conservation work. These teams are bringing multiple groups together to refine FWCs direction and are reinventing intergroup relationships, building a common purpose and associated goals, and reenergizing a shared identity as they build the agency's conservation framework. The teams are modeling new behaviors reflecting interdependent roles, responsibilities, and relationships. The revised strategic plan will provide a framework to align activities and concentrate our actions to achieve the most important conservation outcomes. It will be a guidance document to help staff, who historically have been reluctant to end a project, plan a thoughtful and strategic close-out of projects that no longer support the agency mission.

To keep staff from becoming complacent about continually improving our programmatic outcomes and products, we need to continue and in some cases increase our engagement with current and emerging stakeholders. New and different perspectives will help us better analyze the issues and create shared implementation plans. Staff need to continually hear from leaders and stakeholders that the agency is improving and achieving positive conservation outcomes. Success is reinforcing and FWC continues to celebrate the successes of its new approaches through recognition of teaming and other examples of collaboration and integration, stakeholder and partnership development, etc.

Coordinating to exert leadership

FWC leaders are mindful of the "silo trap;" i.e., the inability to connect, collaborate and integrate because staff work in self-contained units that don't share information. Continued emphasis on teaming and broad conservation initiatives will minimize slipping back into this mode. Teaming takes coordination. FWC has increased the number of "coordinator" roles among staff whose purpose is to be aware of ongoing activities and issues and work across agency structural boundaries. One pitfall to avoid in this approach is other staff thinking that all responsibly for cross-unit coordination falls to the coordinator, when in reality it is a shared responsibility.

Conclusion

What made the transformation of FWC successful to date? A strong vision and the right key players: a leader with the vision, a coach and enforcer, and an implementer. The significant investment of energy by senior and mid-level (guiding coalition) leaders sustained for several years above and beyond their regular job duties was critical to the design and implementation. It also was important to have a group of "early joiners" to help keep the initial momentum going. Having dedicated staff to research, test, implement and evaluate the initiatives lessened the burden on line staff and leaders, provided objectivity to the evaluations, and lent to consistency across agency programs. Staff were engaged early and often in deciding how to change which created legitimate ownership in the process.

The transformation was treated and communicated as an ongoing systematic improvement effort (a voyage, not an exercise) where assessment and evaluation were normal aspects of doing business. It was also used as an opportunity to identify emerging leaders, build leadership skills and strengthen the agency. The reorganization supported transformation by creating a collective leadership culture that replaced a traditional hierarchical style. The Executive Director and the leadership teams that led the transformation recognized the need to advance individual expertise and leadership but also to develop a collective leadership mindset. That, coupled with increased integration and shared ownership of issues, allowed the agency to better address emerging challenges, create stronger staff capacity and capabilities, lead change, be more responsive to stakeholders and implement a shared direction with partners.

According to the Center for Creative Leadership®, organizations evolve along a path from dependent, to independent, to interdependent. In dependent leadership cultures, control and authority are held at the

top. This was the culture of the former GFC and Marine Fisheries Commission. Independent leadership cultures distribute authority and control, and value decentralized decision-making, individual responsibility, and expertise and competition among experts. Many of the non-Law Enforcement work units that came from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection reflected this and an almost academic-like culture. FWC is now moving towards an interdependent culture and views leadership as a collective activity that requires cross-boundary collaboration and learning to deal with increasingly complex issues.

This large transformative change in FWC was the vision of a quiet and effective top leader, aided and abetted by other senior leaders who formed a guiding coalition. It is the result of sustained effort, not splashy headline-making stuff. Nevertheless, it took the courage and conviction of many dedicated staff. The transformation has positioned the FWC well to deal with conservation in the 21st century because it has created a more relevant and adaptable agency, which means it is more likely to remain relevant.

Best Practices for Transformation

Turning Concepts and Experiences into Effective Practices

Leading scholars in the field of organizational behavior have identified preconditions and steps leading to transformative change. For example, in Part I and in some case studies in Part II, John Kotter's (1996) eight steps for organizational transformation are referenced. Stories of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and other state agencies indicate Kotter pretty well nailed it, at least with respect to their experience. So there you have it—follow Kotter's eight steps and you're done. What's the problem? Why aren't state fish and wildlife agencies (SFWAs) just starting with step one and proceeding through the rest to arrive at a new, better place? Why all the fuss about making transformative change?

As most readers of this guide know, the answer is that initiating a change process isn't that easy; resistance abounds, resources are scarce, and who has the time? Furthermore, despite Florida's encouraging story, the experiences of agencies reported in this guide and in the transformative workshop papers published in the transactions of the 2010 North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, SFWAs face many different challenges to change. In truth, the suite of challenges confronted by SFWAs has been identified quite well in the literature by scholars such as Kotter and Aldrich, and this work has been important for informing and framing the discussion of transformation thus far. Yet, reluctance to engage in transformative change, or resistance faced by those who wish to catalyze change, simply overwhelms efforts to launch change thinking and behaviors.

In this part of the Leaders' Guide we extract and synthesize what we have gleaned as key points from the organizational change literature (summarized in Part I of this guide) and experiences of SFWAs for transformation. We largely avoid a "steps" approach, but it is obvious that some developments need to precede others in a comprehensive change strategy. Our suggestions are necessarily general and do not delve into the "how to" details because what is **most** important to share in a guide like this are the lessons learned and general rules of thumb emerging from experience. The details leading to transformative change are so situation specific as to make it impossible or foolish to try to lay out the many possible specific tacks one might take. More productive is identifying key considerations that agency leaders can use together with their understanding of an agency's history, organizational culture and current context, combined with their good judgment, to apply these considerations in their particular situations.

The main points to keep in mind about transformative change in SFWAs that we

have extracted from the literature, case studies and our experiences can be considered in three groups based on focus: people, processes, and practical advice. In practice these are interrelated.

People

1. Leadership is absolutely necessary, but not sufficient.
2. Change takes different kinds of players filling different kinds of roles.
3. Cultural change is at the roots of successful organizational transformation.
4. Commitment to change is essential, but not everyone has to be on board before starting the change process.

Processes

5. Capacity for change often requires forming collaborations and building partnerships.
6. Strategic vision and planning are vital to turn adversity into opportunity.
7. Strengthening relationships and communication is a must.
8. Stakeholder engagement and transparency are important to build trust.
9. Communicate the key message to staff, partners and stakeholders old and new.
10. Build and maintain trust with an understanding that demonstrating credibility and accountability is a never-ending responsibility.

Practical advice

11. Creating catalyzing events helps fuel transformative change.
12. Reach out to other agencies to avoid insularity in your approach to change.
13. Rely on inquiry over intuition whenever possible.
14. Be bold.

These points are interrelated in many ways, so any attempt to separate them in a list is arbitrary. Nevertheless, lists can be helpful in breaking the interconnected whole into bite sized pieces. To summarize what we have gleaned, we expand on the pieces briefly below.

People

Leadership: necessary but not sufficient

Leadership is always identified as necessary for transformative change. The experiences of state agencies indicate that critically assessing leadership capacity is important, and taking steps to ensure leadership development should precede a change initiative, or at least be one of the first actions of a comprehensive change strategy. This concept needs to include both (a) training in transformative and adaptive leadership and (b) the actual cultivation of leaders through experiences. While training is crucial, actually doing something with potential leaders – putting them in leadership roles, giving them opportunities to lead, and finding out where they may be best positioned to lead in the agency, is essential.

When planning leadership development, keep in mind the distinction between management, normal leadership and transformative leadership. All are necessary to achieve agency transformation. The roles are mutually supportive:

- *Management is focused on doing things right.*
- *Normal leadership is focused on doing the right things.*
- *Transformative leadership is focused on inspiring others to imagine what might be an unimaginable or unobtainable future to them at first, and then aiding them to embrace and work toward that future by developing a new organizational culture that drives and motivates new actions to achieve the desired future for fish and wildlife conservation.*

The experiences of SFWAs point to the important role of the top leaders of an agency being highly committed to and communicative about change need and process. Speaking often with lots of people in an agency is recommended, and listening to their reactions and ideas is equally valuable. But an agency's handful of top leaders can't carry the communication load alone; empowering mid-level leaders to be key participants in information flow, up as well as down the chain of command, is important for multiple reasons.

Players and roles

The cases examined and our experience all point to consideration of the various kinds of roles that different people (internal and external) need to play in organizational change. These include:

- *Local champion*—a leader within the agency who is widely respected, articulate, persuasive and effective.
- *Thought leaders*—agency staff looked to by others for ideas and for validation of new ideas being considered. These people are important to the process of change acceptance across the agency (i.e., adoption and diffusion of change philosophy, goals, processes and practices). Thought leaders may be the official leaders in the agency or others whose opinions count among staff in various sub-communities of the agency.
- *Implementers*—people with day-to-day focus on strategic change communication and processes.
- *Guiding coalition*—a group of respected people from within the organization, representing a cross section of the sub-communities within the agency (e.g., formal leaders at various levels, thought leaders, etc.). The guiding coalition, the idea for which may be seeded by one or more top leaders, likely is most effective when started informally as a product of grass-roots interest within the agency. After it is formed, the guiding coalition should be recognized and "blessed" by the top administrators of the agency, listened to and consulted by top leaders, and legitimized to provide leadership and facilitate change efforts at various levels of agency. Members of the guiding coalition may include both formal and informal leaders in the agency who are viewed as well steeped in the culture of the agency.
- *Credible outsider*—different roles
  - **validation role:** a person who can confirm that the change effort is valuable and who can guide early thinking about it.
  - **coaching role:** if a relationship with a person as described above is maintained through a change process, this person serves as a coach.
- *Facilitators*—valuable when you do not want to tie up staff with facilitation roles, when they could be contributing to discussion as a full participant.
- *Mediators*—valuable when change becomes contentious among internal factions and potentially destructive.
- *Stakeholders*—needed to participate in processes aimed at identifying broad goals and outcomes desired (in terms of benefits they recognize and value; i.e., impacts sought from management of wildlife resources).
- *Partners*—a special set of stakeholders; representatives of those agencies and NGOs with overlapping objectives, capacity, etc. that will be needed in collaborative approaches to conservation.

Cultural change is at the roots of successful organizational transformation

Sometimes organizational restructuring may be thrust upon an agency. Directive alone, however, does not ensure effective change, because cultural change that supports the vision and structure is essential for success. Anchoring a change vision and related behavior in the agency culture is crucial for enduring success and achievable

only when benefits are observed—so generate and publicize positive outcomes early on. Create real wins that can be seen, felt and celebrated. Leaders of change need to be prepared to overcome the staff attitude that transformative change is simply another management fad that will run its course, fizzle out, and nothing will be different. Nonparticipation should not be tolerated.

A key indicator or measure of organizational culture change, in the context we are focusing on for SFWAs, is strong internal support and advocacy for publicly-derived goals. This is facilitated markedly when agency staff feel they play a significant role in driving the change process, such as by having them participate in identifying priorities for each stage of it. A word of caution though—part of the transformative change that many agencies need to make is being more transparent and participatory with a broader set of stakeholders, so the transformative change process should not be viewed as just an internal affair. That would run counter to the core purpose of most transformative change visions one might expect for SFWAs.

Avoid the inclination to shift agency attention from outcomes (vision and goals—ends focus) to details of reorganization and restructuring when that activity is initiated (means focus). This argues for starting the change process with strategic planning and associated visioning and goal articulation (identification of purpose) before reorganization is mandated. After purpose is established, the next question is what core values will be necessary – this also often is an overlooked step because its hard work many would rather avoid doing, but it's critical to success in transformative change. Importantly, this puts the agency leaders and staff on the road to a cultural shift that may be needed, prior to the time-consuming activities associated with a reorganization effort. In many cases, reorganization is most appropriate in the later stages of transformation. Then, as the agency culture changes and new approaches take root, reorganization will reflect these shifts, not direct them. Often a reorganization effort is launched to "force" change, which can work, but may be a painful approach for many.

Commitment to change is essential, but not everyone has to be on board to get started

The experiences of SFWAs points to the need for commitment to change at several levels. The top leaders in the agency need to be committed to the vision and supportive of the change strategy, but sustaining a change effort over the several years it may take to reach fruition typically requires the commission and governor to be supportive. These political leaders have to be willing to tolerate and weather risk and controversy perhaps for several years as change unfolds. Likewise, stakeholders old and new need to support, or at least not politically resist change. This is achieved through stakeholder participation in the process of identifying the strategic vision and goals for an agency, which may even point to the utility of restructuring/reorganizing it.

Within the agency, the vision for the future needs to be embraced by a significant portion of the thought leaders at various levels and across divisions. This does not mean a majority of staff need to actively support change. As pointed out in one case, 20 percent support is adequate if that set of people includes the movers and shakers of the agency. One needs to view this not as a referendum, but as an innovation-adoption/adoption-diffusion process, where a new idea (a new, transformative vision in this case) is adopted by the innovators and early adopters in an agency. These thought leaders/opinion leaders are often looked to and followed by the majority of their peer group.

The experiences of SFWAs have demonstrated that addressing external resistance is critical. Meeting that head on, with no fear, can range from difficult to daunting. What does it take to persevere in transformative change? Knowing that what you are doing is the right thing for society, the resource and the agency is necessary, but you also need to be approaching change with political savvy, appreciation of timing and a set of people in the right places as back-up.

The dark side of transformative change that most commentators fail to mention is the fact that some staff—not to mention stakeholders, policy makers, etc.—my never accept the need for change. Sometimes that means they just ignore the changing context,

predictably leading to dissatisfaction and marginalization. With respect to SFWA staff, perhaps this can be tolerated to some degree, especially if prospects of retirement or "special assignments" are in the offing. Other times, when resistant staff actively attempt to derail change and cause problems that can't be ignored, a leader must contemplate this pearl of wisdom: "If you can't change the people, change the people."

Processes

Capacity for change – forming collaborations and building partnerships

One should not jump into a transformative change process without first assessing and perhaps building capacity for such change to proceed. That capacity takes several forms. First, an adequate knowledge base should exist about the size, characteristics, needs and preferences of the broader stakeholder population that an agency hopes to serve. Second, a contemporary, endorsed strategic plan should be in place. Third, a track record of successful public engagement (trusted, inclusive, meaningful, etc.) should exist.

A great fallacy of our time is the belief that SFWAs can "do more with less." The reality is that agencies forced to do more with less will inevitably do everything less well. It is not possible, even considering technological efficiencies, for agencies indefinitely to do more with the same or often declining levels of human and other resources. The realistic mind set is "do less with less, but do it really well." The trick of course is to adopt a modus operandi where an agency uses its base resources to garner more resources to apply to priority conservation issues. In practice, this means forming collaborations with other entities around specific issues and building more enduring partnerships around broader, long-term issues. At first blush this may not seem very satisfying to SFWAs accustomed to thinking that they can do all and be all, but such an agency is a myth in the 21st century. Leadership for fish and wildlife conservation can be exerted by SFWAs through cultivating and fostering cooperative effort. The outcome is what is important, not the size of an agency. Developing a philosophy of collaboration, and practicing it effectively, may be one of the more significant transformative changes in agency culture and operation. As an added bonus, creating unique coalitions is a good way to expand boundaries and stretch thinking about new conservation initiatives.

Turning adversity into opportunity: the importance of strategic vision and planning

Many SFWAs are finding reorganization and restructuring being thrust upon them by state governments seeking efficiencies and cost cutting measures. It is encouraging to see the way some agency leaders have approached this strategically as an opportunity to expedite change in their agency, rather than just hand wringing about the adverse effects it will have on the status quo.

The record indicates that for such reorganization directives to be approached as an opportunity, several pre-requisites are necessary:

- A **vision** of a desired future condition and related goals that would be the outcomes of a transformative change.
- A **strategic plan** that has been vetted within the agency and with external stakeholders such that it provides a blueprint for restructuring an agency.
- Organizational **enthusiasm** for the vision and acceptance of the strategic plan.
- **Cultural change** in organization already underway, such that the momentum can be built through actions taken in fulfillment of the restructuring mandate.

Working on establishing these pre-requisites **before** a directive to reorganize hits the director's desk seems to be smart business.

A caution—even though a mandate to restructure can be made into a strategic opportunity, reorganization can take on a life of its own and gradually become perceived as the main goal of change. Restructuring or reorganization is a means to an end, not an end in itself. We have observed many cases where structure has supplanted vision, which means an opportunity may be lost.

Strengthening relationships and communication

Developing a sharp focus on strengthening relationships and opening new and

diverse lines of communication with an extensive and inclusive array of stakeholders is one hallmark of a transformative change strategy on a course for success. The critical role of internal and external communication is evident. Internally, all branches of the agency need to be informed of processes and progress, as well as setbacks. Externally, partners, traditional stakeholders and new ones need to understand the purpose and anticipated outcomes of transformative change. Partnering, or at least coordinating with other authorities that have overlapping or complementary interests, is good strategy. Avoiding the easy, default approach of "round up the usual suspects" is apparent in successful change efforts.

Stakeholder engagement

Adopting public input processes to inform agency leaders is necessary, but should not be considered sufficient to secure public support for transformative change. Input is not the same as involvement. It is only through meaningful, productive involvement that stakeholders develop commitment to a vision and a change strategy. Some agencies, perhaps many, perceive that they are not able to do this because of cost and staff time required. If this is the case, assess your staff's current level of direct engagement in representing your agency with stakeholders. Are they engaging the public broadly or are they limiting contacts to a narrow suite of interests? Strive to balance engagement so your agency is reaching out to as broad a spectrum of the public as it reasonably can. Ask your staff to make a commitment to reach out to a new group, appropriate for their program area. Challenge them to help the agency overall demonstrate that it is committed to considering interests beyond the scope of its past attention. More important, be the entity that brings together groups that would not normally talk to each other, and do so in ways that facilitate relationship building among them as well as with your agency.

The key message

Wildlife professionals have often referred to the "art" of wildlife management, and perhaps nowhere else is art required more than in the articulation of a meaningful, compelling and memorable message about the basic mission of a SFWA. Agency experience indicates value in articulating the "public trust" concept in an inclusive way that clearly indicates embracing non-traditional stakeholders and promotes a vision of a more inclusive and diverse conservation community going forward. This does not mean traditional consumptive users will be ignored, but it does mean working with others and, hopefully, in so doing broadening the production of conservation benefits and beneficiaries, thereby enlarging and strengthening the base of conservation support (financial and political).

Fundamentally, the imperative for SFWAs is not only to broaden the suite of stakeholders and ensure consideration of their interests in management decisions but to convince traditional constituencies that what is important to them—the continued existence of healthy fish and wildlife – depends now more than it ever has before on collaborative conservation. In light of all of the forces compromising our natural world, SFWAs and traditional conservationists cannot reasonably hope to address conservation challenges alone. They need to be creative and resolute in bringing all stakeholders for fish and wildlife conservation into the discussion.

Trust—demonstrating credibility and accountability is a never-ending responsibility

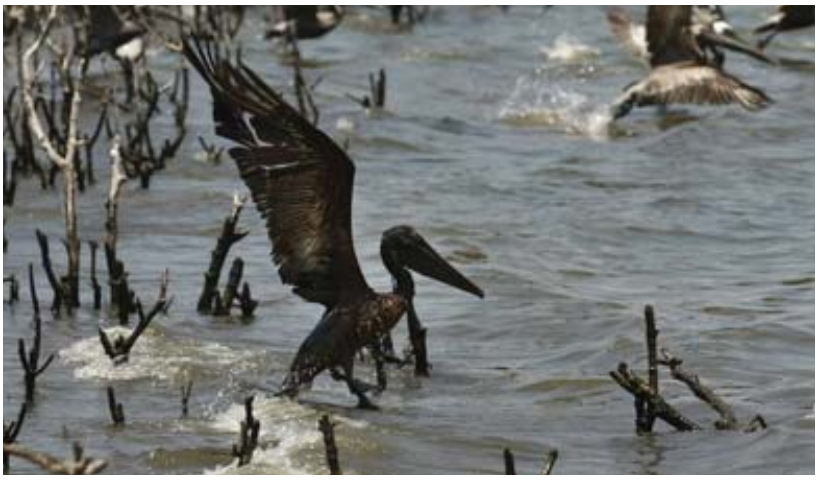
The literature on transformative leadership is replete with references to the essential role of trust in the change equation. This goes hand in hand with admonitions about building and maintaining credibility with various players in public fish and wildlife conservation. Trust is not simply requested and granted, it is earned and difficult to re-establish if broken. Trust is gained through: authentic effort to seek and use input of others, transparent decision making, accountability, and consistent performance.

Trying to develop trust from scratch with new stakeholder interests while simultaneously remaining engaged in the messy business of transformative change is not a prudent idea. If possible, a base level of trust with key parties should be in place prior to instituting a change initiative. Demonstrating credibility and accountability is a never-ending task, but not particularly difficult if

the agencies culture makes transparency, accountability and consistency a normal way of operating.

Experiences of SFWAs indicate new stakeholders typically will not trust that an agency with a long history of focusing on consumptive users and largely ignoring other wildlife interests is truly broadening its boundaries and expanding activities in a serious way with long-term intent. Behavior change, not just rhetoric, seems to be required prior to gaining support from new stakeholders. The author of one case referred to the "rule of reciprocity," meaning act in support of interests of a set of stakeholders and they will reciprocate by supporting your program.

SFWAs need to develop a track-record of evidence that human dimensions research and public involvement practices meaningfully influence decision making. Even good performance is insufficient without ensuring it is recognized by stakeholders. The simple definition of public relations is "performance plus recognition"—don't assume the recognition will come just because performance has occurred. Publicize the broader stakeholder engagement your agency is doing. What may seem to agency staff to be an obvious use of stakeholder input may be opaque to stakeholders themselves, especially if the integration is subtle (i.e., not a dramatic up or down decision based on stakeholder input). In addition, claims of program success are hollow if not based on systematic and thorough evaluation that includes input from stakeholders themselves.



Oiled pelican, Gulf of Mexico 2010

If a SFWA adopts an impacts-management approach (Riley et al. 2003), human dimensions inquiry can be directed at measuring public reaction to programs and the impacts experienced by stakeholders in terms of fundamental objectives they have helped establish for management of a particular resource.

The need for demonstrating credibility goes even further than getting initial support for program change, as the folks in Missouri have learned. MDC, long the envy of most other states because of its dedicated sales tax for conservation, has found that even with a broad suite of programs targeting a wide spectrum of citizens' wildlife interests, accountability is required to sustain political and funding support. The value of conservation programs needs to be measured in terms of benefits recognized by recipients. To help people not focused on fish and wildlife per se to understand the importance of conservation programs, SFWAs may need to articulate benefits that are collateral to fish and wildlife conservation, such as clean water, human health, and many others.

Although the importance of stakeholder input and involvement is emphasized in most cases, a SFWA must strike a balance among three considerations:

- Providing stakeholders who have various interests with opportunities to give voice to their needs and concerns, or perhaps meaningful roles in decision making.
- Fulfilling a responsibility to society at large, which includes some stakeholders who are not organized and not represented by a formal interest group.
- Exercising the agency's statutorily mandated decision authority and responsibility, including defining the limits of management outcomes.

Balancing these three considerations is not to be taken lightly. The requirement for such a balancing act may not be evident to stakeholders, so clearly communicating this requirement is an objective of communication with stakeholders and potential partners such that their expectations develop in line with the SFWA's intentions.

Practical Advice

Create catalyzing events

Given an SFWA has the capacity to engage in transformative change, and that it is not thrust upon you by larger political forces demanding reorganization, one might consider introducing a catalyzing agent to get things started. This should be attempted after the capacity considerations mentioned earlier are assessed as being satisfactory.

One catalytic approach is to commission a blue-ribbon panel of external experts to review and analyze the situation and create a report articulating the "SFWA of the Future for (your state)" that will raise the necessary questions, point out deficits and pitfalls of maintaining the status quo, identify in broad terms a set of actions and changes needed (an external panel should not create a vision for your agency—that is the work of agency leaders and others), and urge action.

Avoid insularity in your approach to change

Tap experiences of other agencies. The value of agency staff being exposed to the efforts of peers in other states is evident in the cases reported herein and in others we have observed. The legitimization and perhaps stimulation provided by first-hand interactions with peers experienced in transformative change seem to outweigh that provided by academic treatment of the topic. Discussion and evaluation of performance of others can help staff in your agency be more effective. Such interactions also contribute to confirming value of change and verifying that the ideas of your agency are on track, or how they might be modified.

Training/in-service education. The value of in-service education and training in adaptive leadership, strategic planning, systems thinking, etc. (e.g., MAT, NCLI, Thinking Like a Manager) is identified in most cases we have examined. Whether these are internal learning opportunities involving your agency staff exclusively or external offerings where individuals from multiple agencies learn together, the value of structured learning seems well established. An outcome of such activities seems to be professional networks, which can be valuable whether focused internally or externally. The idea of networking change agents should not be left to chance; such networks should be purposefully encouraged and supported. As one agency leader put it, "the nature and quality of the connections…within this alliance of department staff" is beneficial and, even if informal, should be supported in various ways.

Rely on inquiry over intuition

Agencies engaging in transformative change for purposes of addressing a broader swath of public interests in wildlife report that systematic inquiry is needed to identify the variety of wildlife interests that exist and to characterize the stakeholders who have such interests. This may be especially critical for the people who are not direct users of wildlife, but for whom wildlife play a role in their outdoor recreation experiences. Furthermore, inquiry can bring clarity to the expectations that these stakeholders have for wildlife management.

Be bold

If you are going to engage in transformative change, do it boldly, not timidly. Often cautious leaders advocate for small, incremental changes. This seems prudent, safe, but in reality the world in which SFWAs operate is changing fast. In such an environment, small changes, while noticeable internally, typically do not occur at the rate needed to catch up and keep up. Thus, while objectively change may be occurring through incrementalism, it may not have much affect because it is too little too late. The idea of making gradual changes may be seductive, but it likely is inadequate. Be bold and strategic. Assess the risk of launching into tranformative change and calculate when it is worth taking it.

Concluding Thoughts

Our hope is that the concepts and case studies presented resonate with you and encourage your current or contemplated efforts to lead change in your SFWA. Regardless of financial or political constraints, the desire to do better, to be more effective and to maintain relevancy with society is minimally an aspiration, and hopefully an imperative for all SFWAs. We want to leave you with some concluding thoughts as you think about transformative change that will work for your SFWA:

- **Develop a common vision and let it guide you:** Transition to an inclusive approach is not immune from being reversed—lots of internal and external forces exert pressure to return to the "old ways." If the groundwork for developing a shared vision is laid prior to launching your initiative, it will be less likely to get derailed.
- **Demonstrate relevance to society:** A SFWA that expects to sustain financial and political support must also sustain relevance to a changing society. This requires both good performance in producing valued benefits and ensuring the public recognizes that these benefits have been created. Dedicated funding can be rescinded, or supplemented, depending on how well the values of conservation are communicated vis-à-vis other pressing societal concerns. We need to create a greater awareness of the relationship between the quality of our natural resources and our quality of life, economy, health, and recreational opportunity. This is especially challenging to communicate to taxpayers who do not "use" fish and wildlife resources in the sense of normal consumerism.
- **Seek innovative, context-specific funding solutions:** A lot of SFWAs look to the Missouri sales tax funding model and wish they might have a similar dedicated funding source. That is likely unrealistic considering the political climate and economic situation in many states. That model is a product of a different time. New models feasible for current times and specific to an individual state's circumstances need to be imagined.
- **Launch a new fish and wildlife governance model that is stakeholder focused:** SFWA staff should avoid the temptation of responding to a broader program and broader stakeholder base as simply a larger array of activities and people over which to apply a top-down, expert-based, "we know what's best for you" model of agency-stakeholder interaction. Simply laying out a broader set of expert-derived objectives and management prescriptions could result in undermining all trust by new stakeholders—with potential to backfire badly.
- **Approach transformative change as a process or voyage, not an event:** Transformative change requires orchestration of a set of processes and elements.
  - ***Planning:*** a process that eases anxiety of staff by gaining agreement on the destination and creating a navigation chart that will guide transformation
    - *Strategic planning* is about the vision, fundamental objectives and general approach—deciding on outcomes desired and gaining

commitment to them. (Focuses on ends.)

- *Implementation planning* is the specific set of steps needed. (Focuses on means.)

o ***Ends:***

- Vision—focuses on the desired future conditions.
- Goals—focus on fundamental objectives that taken together create the desired future conditions.

o ***Means:***

- Management objectives—the necessary achievements that mark progress toward the desired future conditions.
- Actions—the policies, regulations, education, communication, and myriad other tools and activities needed to achieve objectives.

Staying on Track

It would be disingenuous not to point out that even after a change strategy is launched and off to a good start, considerable effort is needed to maintain momentum. The cases featured in this guide all indicate that forces are constantly at work to return to the previous condition. The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission experience highlights some tips to sustain a trajectory of change:

- Maintain consistent, openly supportive leadership at the top level of the organization throughout the change process to anchor the new philosophy and way of doing business in the agency culture.
- Ensure that staff at multiple levels celebrate "wins" from the change effort and generally feel they are part of a "winning" organization (morale boost).
- Avoid creation of new "silos" in a restructured organization by institutionalizing multi-disciplinary (and cross-office) teams.
- Embrace the skeptics—get them to be part of a better solution.
- Create many leadership development opportunities (trainings, experiences, etc.) that reinforce the change vision for people throughout the agency, such that future leaders are being mentored to replace existing leaders and therefore maintain capacity to sustain the change effort.
- Develop and deploy high-quality collaborative, participatory planning processes that engage staff and stakeholders, preferably together.
- Attend to the internal "people issues" created by the change strategy, demonstrating that staff are valued, and are critical players in achieving the change vision.

An endeavor to lead transformative change will not be swift or easy. It will necessarily take you into unchartered waters. Nevertheless, you are not the first nor will you be the last to launch a transformative process for a complex organization. And always remember that one distinction of a transformative leader is the ability to inspire those whom you lead to take action themselves, to become agents of change for a better future of your SFWA. Success in this aspect leads to creating and empowering a legion of collaborators in transformative change, ensuring you will not be alone to shoulder the effort. ❖

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Notes

Notes

State fish and wildlife agencies (SFWAs) are struggling to address new and emerging conservation issues while retaining core traditional programs. Many are finding they are unable to do so adequately, and they fear loss of relevancy to society unless they are able to transform into organizations that meet changing public needs and interests. Organizational transformation is not easy. For those SFWAs that have embraced a vision and made a commitment to transform, planning the first steps— identifying an appropriate and realistic process and securing necessary resources—proved a formidable challenge.

In 2010, the editors of this guide organized a workshop titled *Transformation of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies: Challenges and Opportunities for Leaders* at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference to discuss elements and precursors for SFWA transformation, identify impediments to transformation, and generate ideas to help initiate transformative change efforts in state fish and wildlife agencies. The 2010 workshop catalyzed a network of interested agency leaders who desired to stay connected and explore strategies for transformative change of SFWAs. Because of the interest generated at that workshop, the editors were asked to organize a second workshop at the 2011 North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, this time providing opportunity for SFWA leaders to explore in greater depth topics that were identified by participants in 2010. The Leaders' Guide offers a framework, examples and some best practice guidance meant to help workshop participants and others interested in designing transformation strategies for their states.

The guide is organized into four sections. Part I presents a conceptual framework for understanding agency transformation focusing on broadening goals, boundaries and activities. Part II offers perspectives on transformation from a diversity of fish and wildlife agency professionals. Part III synthesizes the experiences from state agencies, relevant literature and authors' collective insight to suggest best practices to facilitate transformation of state fish and wildlife agencies. Part IV delivers concluding thoughts to help fish and wildlife professionals initiate transformative change within their agencies.

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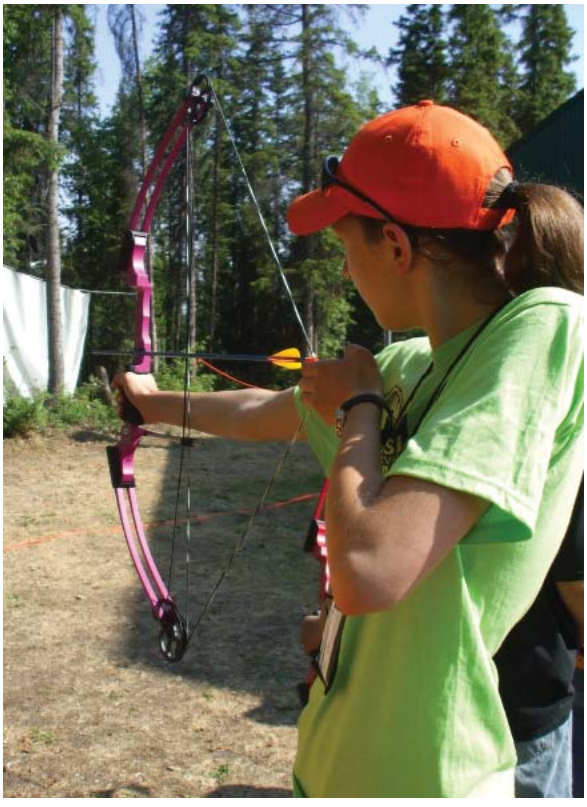

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