Northern Indiana Collaborative Groups

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Forest Land Conservation: An Indiana Portfolio
Location in North-central Indiana

Middle Wabash-Little Vermillion Watershed (Community # 1)

Wildcat Watershed (Community # 2)
Interviews with private landowners Summer 2002 and Summer 2003

Convene Natural Resources Community Forums, beginning in April 2004 in two north-central watersheds

- Purpose: “…provide a place and time where participants can engage in a dialogue to uncover common interests in natural resources and develop ideas as to how to take action…”

- Invitations to all landowners (> 1 acre) in study area and agency personnel in county
Structure of Forums

- **Conveners provide:**
  - Flexible meeting agenda
  - Refreshments
  - Maps
  - Supplies (flip charts, pens, notebooks)
  - Discussion points
  - Neutral facilitation
  - Meeting minutes
  - Evaluation opportunities

- **Participants provide:**
  - Discussion
  - Ideas for focus, goals, and activities of forums
  - Knowledge about community and others interests
  - Commitment
  - Direction
Meeting Places

Community # 1

Community # 2
Methodology

- Host the Natural Resources Community Forum
- Observation of the process
- Record of the forum discussion (meeting minutes)
- Reflective journal
- Focus group interviews
Forum Attendance

- In both communities:
  - Approximately 5 – 11 landowners/meeting
  - Range in acreage ownership
  - Both “active” and “non-active” private landowners
  - Core groups of participants in each watershed
  - Previous participation in interview -or- invitation from forum participant
  - Participation from natural resources agency personnel
Progression of Discussion:

Community # 1

- Forum # 1: Introduction; Presentation of interview results; Discussion on issues and challenges
- Forum # 2: Issues, experiences, and ideas; Solutions and resources
- Forum # 3: Presentation on collaborative natural resources management from U.S.; Discussion on goals, focus, and means
- Forum # 4: Discussion on goals, focus, and means
- Forum # 5: Presentation on survey of woodland owners; Planning discussion (grants and presentations)
- Forum # 6: Presentation on Water Quality; Discussion on where to go next; Learn about forests
- Forum # 7: Planning for future activities
- Forum # 8 (future): Meeting with Drainage Board
- Forum # 9 (future): Meeting with IL watershed group
Progression of Discussion: Community # 2

- **Forum # 1**: Introduction; Presentation of interview results; Discussion on issues and challenges
- **Forum # 2**: Issues, experiences, and ideas; Solutions and resources
- **Forum # 3**: Presentation from a panel of natural resource agency personnel (NRCS, DNR, SWCD, County Planner)
- **Forum # 4**: Discussion on goals, focus, and means; Cameras distributed for Landscape Photo Documentation Project
- **Forum # 5**: Discussion on septic systems; Decision to have local presenter join the group
- **Forum # 6**: Presentation from local organization focused on Wildcat Creek; Discussion on what landowners would like to see; Septic systems and water quality
- **Forum # 7**: Landscape Photo Documentation Project (discussion of photos, location, and next steps)
- **Forum # 8 (future)**: Presentation from Extension specialist
Current Situation

- **Participant ownership of Forums in Community # 1**
  - Participants organizing November and December Forums

- **Lack of ownership of Forums in Community # 2**
  - Perceived as “Learning Circle”
  - Kenli organizing speakers
Why Different Routes?: Speculation on the Differences

- **Focus**: Specific place-based resources v. broader interests
- **Stakeholder commitment**: Perception of having a “stake” in process and outcome
- **Levels of concern**: Perception of immediate, galvanizing concern v. general interest in issues
- **Efficacy**: Perception of ability to affect change
- **Presence of natural resources**: Creeks serving as focal point
- **Existing groups**: Level of existing activity in watersheds
- **Participants**: Willingness to engage in dialogue and vision for forum
Potential Outputs and Outcomes: Community # 1

- Feedback
  - “Not attending is no sign of our disinterest. Think you are doing a great job and would like to support your efforts.”
  - “…very much interested in finding common ground with the others…”

- Participants inviting speakers & organizing direction of forums

- Dialogue on issues of importance

- Spring workshop series

- Establishment of self-sustaining group of landowners
Potential Outputs and Outcomes: Community # 2

- Conversation on issues of importance
- Landscape photo documentation project
- Learning about natural resources issues and existing programs
What’s Working?:
And Speculations on Why It’s Working…

- Finding key focal points:
  - Water quality: Particular streams (sense of place)
  - Recreation opportunities: Public access
  - Aesthetic qualities: Rural character
  - Education: Involving youth

- General discussions

- Using networks of participants to achieve collective results

- Willingness to buy into process
What’s Not Working?: 
And Speculations on Why It’s Not Working…

- Nebulous nature of these Forums
  - No perceived crisis
  - No perceived common vision

- Lack of commitment from participants

- Ensuring adequate participation
  - Concern over lack of involvement from others

- Difficult to keep conversation focused

- Timeline
Is This Collaboration?

- “...A process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible” (Gray, 1989, p. 5)
- Multiple stakeholders
  - Open and inclusive to others
- Discourse-based
- Learning-focused
- Voluntary pooling of resources
- Process requirements
  - Interdependence
  - Work constructively
  - Joint ownership of decisions
  - Collective responsibility of direction
  - Emergent and dynamic process (synergy)
Next Steps

- Continue facilitation of Forums until December
- Reassess need for facilitation
- Begin analysis of process for key topics:
  - Social capital (trust, networks, norms)
  - Sense of place (attachment, dependence, identity, satisfaction)
  - Community/community attachment (social, environmental, identity)
  - Collaboration (antecedents, process, outputs and outcomes; effectiveness of this approach)
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Thank you!

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Techniques Employed to Facilitate Collaboration

- Meeting minutes
- Parallel handouts in each Forum
  - Welcome sheet, meeting outline (agenda), participant evaluation of meeting
- Guidelines
- Flip chart record
- Landscape Photo Documentation Project (Community #2)
Framework

Sense of place, sense of community, social capital

Antecedents

Process
Problem ➔ Direction ➔ Structuring

Outputs & Outcomes
A New Form of Governance?

Call for “the kind of forum through which new, local norms of conservationist management are most readily established…need *for* governance… landowner-initiated, landowner-controlled” (Elmendorf, 2003)
Landscape Photo Documentation Project: Community #2

- Photograph focus
  - Creeks,
  - Public access
  - Wooded corridors, woodland
  - Habitat
  - Prairie
  - Rural character
  - Farming practices
Landscape Photo Documentation Project: Community # 2