

Use of Available Resources to Facilitate Voluntary Wildlife Habitat Stewardship

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion through education.

Thomas Jefferson

Water makes us neighbors. It flows over, under and through private property. Society and individuals can exist without oil, but not without water. Water may well be the oil of the 21st century.

Water management has historically been very pragmatic. Romans, Greeks, Mayans and early settlers have all grappled with how best to effectively manage water resources. . How is a limited but critical public resource managed for maximum net social benefit? In Washington since 1917 there have been a variety of water codes all seeking to ensure wise use by the private landowner and effective stewardship and use of public water. Today, a water right only extends to that amount of water that is used for specific beneficial use. There is no water right, which allows waste, speculation, pollution, or withdrawal that is not returned to the public water system. Entering the 21st century water management systems will be more pressured to demonstrate how water will be conserved and reused to provide for increasing needs food production, drinking water, salmon as well as wildlife habitat.

How best to engage citizens in voluntary stewardship of this very valuable limited resource?

There is Best Available Science for the social science of education, marketing, motivation, behavior change and community development just as there is science for water and land use.

However, educators and community developers tend to be more humble and reserved in the prediction of future outcomes and certainties of their efforts.

"Science is built up with facts, as a house is with stones. But a collection of facts is not more a science than a heap of stones is a home." Henri Poincaré

In the past two decades almost all of the funding for water and salmon in Puget Sound has gone to the stones and bricks of projects on the ground and very little toward education and voluntary stewardship or the "hearts and minds" of the issue.

Nevertheless, given the opportunity there is certainly effective and proven strategies that could be funded and mobilized to ensure effective stewardship of local water resources.

Recommendations:

1. Empower- reinstitute watershed/drainage based citizen-planning groups. A first step would be to reconvene and staff the watershed based face-to-face planning efforts and forums that involved diverse landowners. These were modeled throughout Puget Sound in the 1980s and 1990s and

discontinued by the County in early 1991. Watershed based citizen efforts have proven successful in many regions and throughout Puget Sound. They allow direct participation, site-specific management and reflect the diversity of the water systems in the County. For example, Brinnon's water issues may be very different than Cape George and so will the solutions. Watershed based groups are successful to the extent they model diverse participation of all the interests in the watershed, work together to develop and analyze hydrologic based information, and develop proactive watershed based strategies that reflect the issues of that unique community. The groups develop trust, expertise, and real analytic ability as they share how they see the issues, develop a shared expertise, identify opportunities, concerns and shared priorities, and interact directly with funders and agencies. Too often inquiry and collaboration with citizen-based watershed groups gets trivialized, dismissed as too time consuming, or marginalized when traditional planning takes the forefront. However, research and experience in public policy in the last twenty years has demonstrated that watershed planning is a new form of direct democracy of informing and engaging citizens in the process of problem solving. Too often cynical landowners and overworked government officials meet only in formal, adversarial, quasi-legal settings. Local watershed based conversations, field trips, discussions around a table provide a forum that can lead to open, collaborative public planning process that places citizen expertise in the center of the process. This builds the necessary prerequisite trust and engagement for voluntary action to take place.

2. Engage citizens directly in the problem solving and management. Processes to date have centralized and isolated the decision-making. Current research nation-wide and effective

processes increasingly demonstrate that citizens want to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. Whether it be direct aid after tsunamis or Katrina- or home school and self help groups with cancer and investments, the social contract of delegation of authority to others is being replaced by the expertise and desire of those affected to be part of the decision making process. Direct involvement and an engaged citizenry are in demand over the more hierarchical, representative, delegated decision making of prior decades. Citizens on every issue, in every jurisdiction are increasingly resentful and critical of decision-making that leaves them out of the process and limits their input to comments on final drafts and more adversarial legal notices. The science and research of public policy participation and development recognize that there are significant distinctions among the various stages of public processes from a) traditional public outreach (legal notices or press releases); to b) public education (field trips and workshops); through c) citizen engagement (watershed groups, joint problem solving) to d) shared, co-management (empowering citizen based input in actual decision making, monitoring and implementation). In communities, such as Jefferson County, with high educational levels and indigenous natural expertise an option is to engage those landowners and citizens in direct action, monitoring and management. In jurisdictions with low tax capacity and small staffs this engagement of a citizen team can often provide unique and needed expertise, experience and hours of work from trained volunteers. In small jurisdictions, with limited financial and staffing capacity, it can be preferable governance strategy to engage citizens in the para-professional work of mapping, monitoring, developing management options, voluntarily implementing steps which can then be monitored and adapted as necessary over time.

3. Increased access to Plain English- Transparent information. To date there has been no staff or

funding available to develop effective "plain English" materials, web sites, or up to date briefings for landowners and the general public. Too many discussions quickly become adversarial when there has not been enough timely and accurate access to information. A first step would be to provide accurate, timely information in an open source web site that is easily accessible to all members of the public and effectively informs them of the issues, provides access to original documents in a timely manner, and is a "one stop" portal to all available information. In addition, planning documents need to be developed in easily readable formats with funding for public education and participation before development, during review, and prior to adoption.

4. Watershed based- Stream Teams of Landowners to monitor data, plan, and support voluntary management. Water is a complex issue. To be truly effective long-term relationships between the data and landowners is essential to effective management. Local watershed based groups, with diverse participation and technical assistance support from county and agency staff, could meet quarterly to review monitoring data, develop priorities for voluntary stewardship and restoration, and comment on proposed developments and land use changes in the watershed. Watershed committees would also provide an "early-alert" system to local residents and easy access to data, technical assistance and funding. Currently WSU Water Watchers and Shore Stewards are receiving no county funding support such as Stream Keepers which are funded by Clallam County or Beach Watchers in Island County.
5. Voluntary, technical assistance to Landowners. Currently large, conventional farm owners receive assistance from NRCS and the local conservation district. This is generally accomplished through development of a farm plan. There has not been adequate funding to ensure implementation of these voluntary farm plans. The real challenge, however, may be how to engage future landowners, manage growth and engage all residents in a fulfilling,

cost effective system that encourages and results in voluntary stewardship. An effective strategy would be to fund the Welcome to Your Watershed program cosponsored with the Jefferson county realtors and WSU. This program provides a comprehensive set of technical assistance tips and packet information for all new landowners in the County. Second, landowners throughout the watershed, regardless of land use, could be required or encouraged to develop a voluntary land stewardship plan. Similar to the successful farm plan or forest conservation planning the development of the plan could be required but the actual steps and strategies could remain voluntary. The concept is, similar to Thomas Jefferson---good people--given good information-- will make positive decisions for their interests and the public benefit. Landowners would be completely free, and provide technical assistance and funding to increase their understanding of the issues, determine which set of action would best meet their site specific stewardship goals, and implement voluntary on the ground strategies.

6. Citizen monitoring. Psychological "ownership" of the accuracy and completeness of monitoring data is important to its eventual acceptance of adequacy for future action. For example, in early watershed planning efforts water quality monitoring equipment was frequently made available to landowners in critical areas who could do their own assessments and collect samples for professional analysis. Data obtained by landowners themselves or their children in school based programs was rarely challenged as inaccurate. Landowners could take test during critical storm events, in particular areas of the streams with difficult access, and monitor samples over time at a much more reasonable cost than professional samplers. The landowner obtained data was much more frequently accepted and acted upon than agency developed reports. In addition, it was more timely and site specific than infrequent state or federal samplings. Citizens in Jefferson County

- are anxious to be engaged in collecting citizen-based data. Local youth can benefit from the science and math of field research. And increasingly acceptable critical quality assurance agreements have been developed between citizen groups and agency personnel. As data moves to adaptive management and site-specific improvements citizen based monitoring data tends to be more inclusive, more timely, and more quickly acceptable as accurate by adjacent landowners.
7. Amend the County Planning jurisdiction to include land and water planning. Too often issues of septic, instream flows, water rights and habitat come too late in the process, after the permit has been vested. With active watershed based committees in place the County Planning Commission can begin to request regular "state of the water" reports from landowner groups and assess and evaluate water availability and habitat BEFORE a land use or development is approved. It is clear that the challenges of adequate public water and its continued management will eventually require an integration of water and land planning on a watershed basis. In Jefferson County continued expensive litigation could be avoided if these systems were integrated now with proper procedures which ensure diversity of participation, timely and accurate access to data, citizen based monitoring, and voluntary stewardship planning.

Outcomes:

1. Four to five citizen based watershed planning councils
2. Engage citizens in a co-management shared decision-making
3. Easy Access to accurate, timely and complete information provided in "plain English" and available 24/7 through the internet or web

4. Stream Teams of landowners and volunteers trained to do voluntary projects county- wide
5. A voluntary stewardship plan-farm plan for large intensive land operations and a stewardship plan for other parcels which bring technical assistance to local landowners of the specific resources on their parcel, practical tips and technical assistance, a list of stewardship options and funding opportunities, and funding to assist implementation of voluntary improvement and management options (conservation, vegetation etc)
6. Funding for water quality and quantity and habitat monitoring in all streams and waterways in the County. Quality assurance agreements, equipment and training available at not cost to any landowners interested in voluntary participation.
7. Integration of land and water governance into a unified permit process through the County Planning Committee. Include watershed-based assessment, strategies and recommendations BEFORE land use permits are approved.

Financial Impact:

Funding of 2 full time staff-

Opportunity to avoid continued strife and litigation-priceless!

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