Developing a Culture of Human Dimensions Thinking in a State Agency: An Evolution or a Revolution?

Critters

Habitat

People

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Pathways to Success Conference 2010
The Changing Face of Florida

• Population increase from 3 million in 1970 to 18 million in 2010

• Human demographics rapidly changing (increasing Hispanic population and an aging population overall)

• Change from an agrarian society to one based on social services (tourism and retirement)

0.8% of Floridians hunt; 85% like to observe wildlife
What Future is Ahead?

Florida now

Possible Florida in 2060
Ingredients for an HD Revolution in Florida

• Merger of two Commissions and parts of two agencies with very different cultures
• Rapidly changing human demographics and values towards wildlife (utilitarian to protection)
• A new executive director focused on “Good to Great”
The Catalyst for an HD Revolution

• In the course of developing a strategic plan for the new agency a diverse set of stakeholders was surveyed and they said
  – You do a thousand small things well but can’t do one big thing (random acts of conservation)
  – You do not work well across agency lines and often espouse contrary points of view
  – We want to be involved in the decision-making process
The HD Revolution Begins - 2003

• MATS team Managing Agency Change workshop
  – "All organizations (or people) are perfectly aligned to get the results they are currently getting"
• Based on stakeholder feedback, the strategic plan became an organizational restructure
• Meeting social needs and better understanding human values about fish and wildlife became agency drivers
First the Revolution - Then the Evolution

- Revolution: A dramatic and sudden change in ideas or practice
  - We had one and yes, we had casualties. Some couldn’t cope and retired or left for other jobs. There are still some that will never get over it….. or get it for that matter

- Evolution: A gradual development into a more complex or better form
  - Evolution is not a linear path and extinction can be an outcome
The Evolutionary Path for Florida – Avoiding Extinction

- Expert consultation
- Internal coalition building
- Capacity building
- Reflective inquiry
- Modeling the new behaviors
- Early successes in creating durable decisions, policies and programs
Expert Consultation

• We reached out to experts for:
  – an introduction to HD thinking
  – training
  – advice on how to develop an agency culture that embraces HD thinking as much as it embraces biological or ecological thinking

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Internal Coalition Building

• Team composed of thought leaders, creative thinkers, continual learners and change agents (TLAM 26)
• Coordinate on monthly conference calls
• Targeted training (introduction to social sciences and adaptive impact management)
Capacity Building

• Developed a shared HD position with the University of Florida, Department of Wildlife Ecology.
• Put a full time facilitator under contract.
• Looking for new hires with HD training or exposure.
• Providing internship opportunities for social science majors.
Reflective Inquiry

• Moving from output to outcome
• Asking why are we doing this or what is the desired future condition we are hoping to achieve
• The 80:20 principle (slow down to speed up)
Modeling New Behaviors

- Developed leadership expectations
- Integrated across work units and taxa groups
- Consideration of all perspectives – internal and external
- Identify impacts
- **Involve** stakeholders
- Repeat last bullet when in doubt
Early Success – Gopher Tortoise Management Plan

- 400+ individual stakeholders and 2 years to develop
- With nearly universal support from a coalition of development, landowner and conservation interests, the Florida legislature authorized **new fees**
- 4 new positions and $2.2 million recurring budget
Unexpected Success - Management Systems Concept

• Developing a management systems approach for undesirable, harvested, protected and imperiled species
  – Less about taxonomy, more about human values

• Will help set conservation goals and management priorities
Where Do We Go From Here?

- Anchor into agency culture - model by doing, “it’s the way we do things here”
- Keep “pushing the flywheel”
- Build robust network of social scientists
- Expand educational opportunities for staff (e.g. non-thesis M.S. program having social and business science emphasis)
Where Do We Go (continued)

• Network with other states and share “lessons learned”
• Increase communication of our evolving decision-making approach
  – Internal and external
• Monitor our progress and modify to improve adaptive impact management (AIM)
What to expect in a growing HD culture - Positive

• Recognition and acceptance among staff and stakeholders that a different world needs a different management approach
• More and deeper relationships with existing and new partners and stakeholder groups
• Increased support (or less active opposition) from stakeholders
What to expect - Negative

- Decisions take more time and resources
- Overt employee skepticism - “We are the experts”
- Creating super stakeholders who do not reflect the public anymore
- Backlash from traditional fishing and hunting communities – perceived loss of influence
Obstacles

• New way of thinking (WL management is people management)
• Change is hard
• Interpretation of social science results for applied use in decision-making is needed
• The dynamic tension between acting in a trustee role and being responsive to societal needs
The Dynamic Tension in Wildlife Management

Desired Future Condition

Beneficiary (public)
Societal perspectives and benefits

Trustee (agency)
Sustainable wildlife heritage benefits

Management Approach
Needs for state agencies to incorporate HD

- Build the foundation for multi-disciplinary teamwork (tools, expectations, support)
- Set conservation outcomes (sideboards)
- Create new competencies and expectations for staff
  - Wider analytical skills including structured decision-making
  - Inter-personal skills
  - Stakeholder engagement skills
Needs cont.

• Legitimize social science as a critical component of an overall wildlife management approach

• Create a framework for networking between WL scientists/managers and social scientists

• Create transparency in developing programs, policies or rules
Don’t

• Roll-out as the “new” initiative
• Manage from one work unit
• Expect wholesale immediate understanding, acceptance or implementation
• Expect decision-making to become faster
Do

• Talk widely about drivers for change in wildlife management
• Support your staff
  – Appropriate training
  – Resources (time, talent and treasure)
• Model the desired behaviors
What others can do to help the states

- AFWA /TWS/OWP – provide a forum for states to network on HD
- Secure funding for a full-time national HD coordinator:
  - maintain webpage, list-serve
  - coordinate meetings
  - keep networks fresh and active for the participating states
What others can do to help the states

• Academia –
  – Strengthen relationships with wildlife agencies (internships, seminars)
  – Interpret social science info for best management application (do applied HD research)
  – Recruit non-traditional students to HD work
  – Assess core curriculum to include more coursework in social and business sciences
Conclusion

• If your organization is no longer relevant to society, you will become irrelevant to the detriment of our wildlife heritage - you’ll know when the phone stops ringing

• If we are successful in engaging a broad spectrum of the public, we might one day see fish and wildlife conservation being funded and supported at the same level as health care, education and public safety