



LESSONS LEARNED IN NWCOS: SUCCESS AND CONSENSUS IN COLLABORATION PROCESS

*Bridging the Gap: Collaborative Conservation
from the Ground Up*

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The Northwest Colorado Stewardship (NWCOS)

- ▣ NWCOS was formed in 2003 after some controversial events in Moffat County.
- ▣ Mission: By seeking early, diverse, and collaborative input, NWCOS seeks to improve public lands decision-making by promoting commonly held values and principles.

The Northwest Colorado Stewardship (NWCOS)

- ▣ NWCOS is composed of local governments, state agencies, conservation groups, ranchers, oil and gas companies, OHV users, wild horse advocates, and normal citizens.



The Northwest Colorado Stewardship (NWCOS)

- ▣ In 2004, BLM kicked off a revision of its Resource Management Plan (RMP), a comprehensive over-arching land use plan for the Little Snake Field Office.
- ▣ NWCOS requested to participate in the collaborative planning effort.
- ▣ BLM hired a professional mediator from The Keystone Center to facilitate the collaborative process.

The Northwest Colorado Stewardship (NWCOS)

- ▣ NWCOS' first task was to agree on how it would function. The group ratified its protocols in 2004.
- Over the course of 30 meetings from 2004 through 2006, NWCOS attempted to provide BLM with consensus recommendations on the Draft RMP.



NWCOS Outcomes

NWCOS accomplishments were reflected in the Draft RMP, which the community and the BLM believe is a better document because of the collaborative process.

- ▣ NWCOS provided consensus recommendation on overarching goals, goals and objectives for specific resources, some items in the range of alternatives, and some things pertaining to the socio-economic analysis.
- ▣ NWCOS participants provided individual recommendations on oil and gas stipulations, special management areas, OHV designations, and the impact analysis.

NWCOS Outcomes

The group also realized some intangible benefits in the community.

- ▣ Educated community about BLM policy and processes
- ▣ Gave the community a sense of ownership in the plan
- ▣ Better, more open communication between partners and BLM, as well as between interests
- ▣ Some level of trust was built



NWCOS Outcomes

Despite a significant investment in time and money, NWCOS did not accomplish all it set out to do.

- ▣ NWCOS fell short of its ultimate goal, to provide BLM with a “community consensus alternative” for the Draft RMP.
- ▣ NWCOS could not come to consensus on management recommendations for the most controversial issues in the area, such as Vermillion Basin and other lands with wilderness characteristics, oil and gas leasing, OHV use, etc.



Obstacles to Collaboration within the Agency

- ▣ Resistance or hesitance to push the envelope in collaboration, community involvement and transparency.
- ▣ Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)*
- ▣ Facilitating collaboration with RMP budget and schedule constraints



Lessons Learned: Agency Perspective

- ▣ Find an acceptable strategy to deal with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) early in the process
- ▣ Consider utilizing a professional facilitator or conflict resolution specialist
- ▣ Take into account collaboration when selecting a RMP contractor and developing the Statement of Work.

Lessons Learned: Agency Perspective

- ▣ Utilize capacity building and training opportunities
- ▣ Develop a Collaboration Strategy with the community
- ▣ Get out into the field
- ▣ Start Small: smaller scope is almost always better





Questions, comments

