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Transcription of Forest Service experiences understanding power and working collaboratively: bridging the theory and practice, 10/9/2012

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[00:01 - 00:29] Lecturer: Which means the practice and broader use of electronic tools to support collaborative public land management. Peter served as a forest supervisor to the Wayne National Forest in Ohio, and the research staff officers of the Colville National Forest in Washington State, and as a research social scientist, among other positions. So [unintelligible] talk today, of course, those experiences understanding power and working collaboratively between theory and practice. So please help me welcome [inaudible]. [applause]

[00:36 - 02:22] Peter Williams: Thank you. Um, looks like there's there's a couple of pieces, couple of slides. We'll have tiny people that slide off that I used all the real estate. Um, so thanks a lot. I do want to mention that there's a reason a disclaimer is here. Um, I worked for the Forest Service. I work in the Washington office, and it is kind of on the policy side of things. And you all know we are in the preseason, less than 30 days to a presidential election. Um, the views and opinions expressed here are my own. [laughter] Um, so I wanted to talk today about, um, this this relationship I see between, uh, collaboration and power and variances, um, that I've had, uh, in the Forest Service. Um, and I'm also bringing in, um, my, um, research background. Um, my, my doctoral work. What I'm going to start is with setting stage just a little bit of relevant for service history and not starting with any assumption that anyone really knows that much about Forest Service history. So I want to give you guys a little bit of a foundation there. Then I want to talk about power and collaborative, um, public land management. Um, and I want to do two things. I want to suggest some ideas for recent and collaborations and, and then draw that into rethinking power, um, especially how, um,

collaboration and power are often discussed when we talk about collaborative public land management. Um, in my mind, it's, um, a perfect question for this seminar series. And I think one of the more pressing questions, um, for us, uh, who work in this area. Um, I then want to move into even though the bars look long, I'll go through these three sections pretty quickly.

[02:23 - 04:10] Peter Williams: Um, I want to give you some, some policy foundations that kind of build off of the rethinking and collaboration and power. Talk about some of the issues and challenges, including, uh, issues of theory and issues of practice, but also some issues of what you might call, um, uh, policy and politics coming from the Government Accountability Office. Um, then I want to just give you a real quick broad brush, you know, a thousand miles wide, a few inches deep look at some of the the work that's going on in the Forest Service and and other agencies in this area. Um, I tried to leave a lot of room for, for discussion, which is why some of this is going to, again, feel like I'm going pretty fast, but I really want to just give you that broad brush sense of some of the- there's just tremendously exciting work, um, going on. And so I just want to expose you guys to a little. All right, here's some setting the stage. Anybody recognize Giff? As we all call him in the Forest Service. So the Forest Service is part of the US Department of Agriculture, founded in 1905. Um, but the work that is today done by the Forest Service goes back into the late 19th century. Um, Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of Forest Service, um, really knew the importance of both power and collaboration from the beginning. I keep his 11 maxims, um, on my wall. Um, but there's a reason for that. It was a gift to me from, uh, the one of the Ranger districts on the Wayne National Forest when I left. It was sort of a return. I gave them a big version of the 11 maxims and said: "This is our job. Don't complicate it."

[04:10 - 06:09] Peter Williams: These are two of the maxims. These are the two that make me chuckle the most when I think about Forest Service and collaboration. The first: "Don't try any sly or foxy politics, because a forester is not a politician." And that's just great 19th century, you know, you can imagine, you know, a pipe in the hand or something, right? "Don't be a knocker: Use persuasion rather than force, when possible; plenty of knockers are to be had; your job is to promote unity.", and it's in my mind, if we in the Forest Service and a lot of other public land management agencies were kind of focusing on those few things, a lot of other things would fall into place. Um, in fact, Gifford Pinchot's 11 maxims are used in business each day. This is to teach um, um, sort of, uh, bureaucratic leadership. And that's, that's how powerful the first chief of the Forest Service, how powerful his ideas were. And also pretty simple. So a little more forest service history. Forest service mission. Uh, multiple use and sustainability. Um, sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. So Multiple-use, the same Yield Act 1960. We kind of built off that and picked up some of the language, um,

coming out of, of the discussion, sustainability and the sort of 1980s and 1990s, um, combined them and that formed the mission. It's really, in my mind again, pretty nice. Drawing from from a real strong foundation, um, but modernizing as well, if you want to know more. Um, it's it's talking real estate there, but, uh, there's a, there's a link to go to the Forest Service website. You can find about us and the mission.

[06:11 - 07:32] Peter Williams: The organization listens. Um, a lot of folks, when you think about the Forest Service, you might think the National Forest System, right? It's actually for what we call deputy areas, meaning that there's a deputy chief of the Forest Service in charge of each one, plus international programs. Um, the chief of the U.S. Forest Service is the chief forester of the United States and has, um, a legislated, um, mission that includes, uh, assistance to, um, foreign countries as well. That is a part of it. I know some of you guys actually are involved in that, in that program to CPC and elsewhere. Um, we also have state and private forestry. The formal name of it is co-op forestry. I'm going to come back to a couple of these. Then we have research and development, formerly known as Research and Development. [laughter] Um, business operations. We don't talk about that too much, but, uh, business ops, um, is what keeps the lights on in the USF. Our chief information officer is in there. Our center of learning down in Albuquerque is in there. Um, our contracts and budgeting and all that kind of stuff. Business operations. Um, and then the National Forest system. National forest system is the one that gets all the glory. Anyone care to guess where most money goes?Out of those four?

[07:34 - 07:34] Audience: [inaudible]

[07:34 - 07:59] Peter Williams: [Peter Williams and audience chuckle] This is probably racing to to close in on that. It's actually state and private forestry. A huge part of the Forest Service budget is what you might call pastoral. Um, it's grants to the state, grants to other other federal agencies, grants for local. And a lot of it is around one topic, more than any other today. And can you guess what that is?

[08:00 - 08:00] Audience: Fire.

[08:00 - 09:39] Peter Williams: Fire. Yeah, there's a big debate in in the Forest Service and elsewhere about this, um, tension between the, the growing demand for essentially the US fire service and the role and function of the US Forest Service and others I mentioned. Real interesting if you wanna get into it. Um, but, you know, one of the things that's kind of interesting is the the role of state and private forest. Again, I'll come come back to that. But let's think about the role of state and private forestry and co-op forestry as it relates to collaboration. Um, great, great work done there. I

think all of us, myself included. I continue to learn from them a lot. Daniel and I are going down to, um, we're going to be facilitating a regional western regional meeting, 17 states and the Forest Service take credit for meeting to develop a shared business plan. Um, next week in Denver. Um, and I, I can't wait just to see what we really learn from them, what they're doing. Okay, here's what the Forest Service does. Manages 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands. Shared responsibility. Working in concert with state and local agencies for the stewardship of about 500 million acres of non-federal land and urban forest. Largest natural resource research organization in the world and works with partners worldwide to protect global forest resources. Pretty big mission. We're doing lots of stuff here and fires be part of it.

[09:39 - 09:53] Peter Williams: Recreation is a big part of it. Um, we have, as part of the mandate, um, five, um, we call it the five multiple uses. Anybody, pop quiz? Anybody wanna go again? Recreation, wildlife, um-

[09:56 - 09:56] Audience: Water.

[09:56 - 09:59] Peter Williams: Water. Um, um, timber.

[10:00 - 10:00] Audience: Grazing.

[10:00 - 12:04] Peter Williams: Grazing. [laughter] Great. Thank you. You guys are good. Thank you. Okay, so now let's talk about power and collaborative public land management. Rethinking collaboration and rethinking power. So the way I think about it, let me start with collaborative public land management. Now work back to collaboration. So collaborative public land management I see at least as a particular way of working together, especially when making, implementing or assessing a decision. The decision part is really key in my mind. Um, that's the management part of collaborative public land management. We're not working together just to work together. We're trying to get something done, right? And so that's that decision part. It's not autocratic. One individual and autocratic refers to one individual or group that largely directs efforts of all participants. It's not adversarial, where each participant seeks to establish or protect positions, like lawyers. [chuckles] Um, collaborative is when each participant is more involved in decisions of the collaborative group than under an autocratic process, and that involvement is less confrontational or positional than when a more adversarial process occurs. When we come back to the traditional idea, um, because this is an important left position, but there's still a role for positions and ideas, and it's a helpful way. So let's take a closer look at, uh, collaboration itself. So kind of like I would say it's less hierarchical and autocratic than traditional problem solving. No single perspective, person or group holds sway. But at the same time, I would argue individual talent, interests, experiences, accountability,

responsibility and power remain as relevant during collaborative interactions as during any other human interaction.

[12:06 - 13:55] Peter Williams: Why is this important? Well, I'm going to come back to you, especially the power piece, in a moment. But think about this. You know, in a collaborative effort, choice matters. In the sense that every participant continuously chooses whether to remain engaged in a collaborative way or not. There's always that choice. And what that means is that we all have to earn that willingness. If we, if, if the, if we don't earn, and that's all of us, but if each of us, let's say we're all working on a, on a collaborative effort, um, if each of us aren't, in a sense, trying to earn the willingness of others to stay engaged, then we're going to slip into something that's a lot more adversarial, right? So I really think that that willingness to part is the key to understanding the difference between collaboration and other ways to work together. Learning matters. Um, participants learn to define an appropriately collaborative process together. Appropriately collaborative. I'm using that term, um, intentionally because in my mind at least, you got to define what's appropriate for the local situation. And that can depend on who's involved, why they're involved, how much time they have, what the history is and that kind of stuff. Um, there's no perfect, you know, there's there's this I, you know, on my more dismissive moments, I refer to them as collaboration acolytes. You know, they've got a mission, they've got a definition in their mind. And if you don't hit it, they're going to beat you up. And believe me, I get those at, at meetings. And you guys, probably if you've been to public meetings, you'll hear some of that, um, where someone is saying you're not being collaborative enough. Well, they're too. Back the appropriateness, right?

[13:55 - 15:51] Peter Williams: Um, and you also want to learn how others understand the problem, right? That that learning part. And if you want to learn about options and implications from each other, but that learning is really a key part to rethinking this idea of positions. I would argue that positions matter, but not in the sense of positional bargaining and positional negotiation in a different way. So positions become a way of, a way to grow a shared understanding, to learn how other participants see the problem, how how they see the the challenges. Positions are a starting point, and one of, one of the, um, skills, I would say that's essential to, to be successful in the collaborative effort is helping people understand better their own positions and start to rethink what's driving those positions. And, and there's a, there's a space that's used. Actually, I think I've heard it out of the CIA to call it walking back to cat. That's how the CIA does their analysis. They walk back to cat. So the cat is over here, and you want to figure out where the cat went last night. You got to walk it back from where it is now, right? So you start with their position and you work with them to walk back to task, to figure out what's driving that position. Think about it as a math equation. Right? The position is on one side of the equal sign. What you really want to learn is everything on the other side,

because that's going to help you understand how they got there, right? And then you without, without saying you need to change your position if you help them rethink what's driving that position. Perhaps there are other positions that could, in a sense, be a solution to the, to different parts of the same equation and stretching that math metaphor a little bit, but hopefully you're tracking it.

[15:52 - 18:09] Peter Williams: So here's the here's the big difference. You turn positions into a source of difference that holds people together, as opposed to splitting them apart at both ends. You're looking for both ends as opposed to either or. Traditional positions are either-ors. Either, or, wins, lose. Both ends is about finding ways to do, in a sense, to do more together. So here's, here's how I define collaboration. And this is out of my dissertation. A way for individuals, groups or organizations to work together that they jointly choose as appropriate for addressing matters they agree are important, even if they disagree about why some specific matter is important and are best addressed by working as partners instead of as competitors or adversaries, despite differences in power, responsibility, or accountability or problems with authorities. And there's probably unwillingness to gather despite differences. This, to me, is kind of a key part. I'm going to, I'm going to come, to come to. I want to explore that in a moment. So here's some traditional pieces of the traditional definition of collaboration. Um, often has three elements. And this is coming from Barbara Gray, 1985. Um, and it's been picked up. This great definition has been picked up by a lot of other folks. Um, so one aspect is this idea of pooling tangible resources, could be information, money, labor, et cetera. Two or more stakeholders working together, seeking to solve a problem or a set of problems that neither can solve alone. Now, it would maybe seem that there's not a whole lot of daylight between these, but I think there's some key pieces in the first one that kind of take another step. Um, and really, all it is, is capturing some lessons learned. Um, we've, we've had a lot of experience since 1985. Um, Barbara Gray's work and a lot of the work on that was, um, kind of moving collaboration forward.

[18:09 - 20:11] Peter Williams: And, you know, late 80s and early 90s was actually on the um, um, private sector side, right? And there are things that you can do on the private sector side that you can't do if you're trying to do public money management. And so it just we've learned some things about the details of that. So one is: Today we think about collaboration more in the long-term, not just solving an immediate problem or set of problems. We're thinking about a whole series of, and ability to work together as problems come and go. I think that's a, that's an important piece. Um, the other is that we understand collaboration more as a process- working together, um and that participants, participants don't even have to agree on what the problem is that they're trying to solve. The point is, are you willing to work together so that the problems that you bring to the table and the problems that I bring to the table can at least be put out on the table, so that we can can work on

that. Um, anyone worked in wildland recreation stuff, that you run into this idea of, of, um, a a problem that, that, um, doesn't exist for the, in a sense, the source of the problem? Um, the classic example is motorized and non-motorized recreation and noise. Motorized recreation doesn't see noise as the problem, but they don't. So that part of the challenge is for, for, um, non-motorized recreation and motorized recreation to at least be willing to work together, even though they're not even defining the problem. I mean, the motorized folks see the problem, and it's the unmotorized folks that- I mean, I'm being facetious, but I mean, that's not too far off the mark, but finding a way to have that conversation. Um, we also understand that there's a need to avoid what's called clientelism, which is also known as agency capture.

[20:12 - 22:18] Peter Williams: Anybody? Agency capture. Clientelism. Um, if, if we blur this real differences in power, accountability and responsibility, I would argue prone to clientelism and agency action. And this is a this is a significant issue. Um, so clientelism is what happens when the, um, informal social network substitutes for government structures that, um, should be used for allocating and distributing resources. Um, and it often happens in hidden ways which are not open to democratic scrutiny. Agency capture. The classic example is unfortunately, Forest Service and Timber program in the 60s and 70s. Um, in effect, um, well, and the other classic example is kind of the Food and Drug Administration and sort of big pharma or whatever. Well, more in the 80s and 90s, but that's a situation where like in a sense, the, the Forest Service started to see the timber industry as the client as opposed to seeing, um, uh, Congress and the citizens as the client, right? And that's the clientele. You see the same thing with the food and drug industry. Um, lastly, today, we understand bridging theory and practice means avoiding definitions that are going to create either measurement problems, which is an issue for theory, or, uh, practical problems and issues for practice. Um, and so, you know, my, my sense is that there's, there's a couple of, of aspects to the, that traditional definition that we may want to stay away from because it creates problems in [inaudible]. Um, coming back to the topic for the, for the seminar, the power piece. Um, some conceptions of collaboration involve this idea of sharing power that's similar, um, but sharing power, I would argue, is a problem. Um, for two primary reasons.

[22:18 - 24:48] Peter Williams: First of all, it can create a disincentive for those who have real power. And what I would call is a perversion incentive for those who don't. Okay? So what am I talking about? Sharing power in the, in this sort of traditional sense eliminates real power for those who have it, and creates all power in those who don't. And the result is that the community itself is less powerful than taking real power off the table and put all power on the table. It's like riding a plastic horse. I'm not going to go real far, right? [laughter] Sorry, I laughed when I found this one because I was looking for a graphic and I looked up like faults or something like that. And plastic pony showed

up. [audience laughs] Oh, I mean. All right, so what if I mean this? This is if I'm going to I'm critiquing traditional collaboration. I got to throw you guys a lifeline, right? So what if we think about collaboration and working together as partners, as getting to a point where participants are willing to leverage their power, their personal power on behalf of the community? I would argue that back to that successful collaboration, you get to a point where people who have been arguing with each other or have had disagreements, but decided the other thing are actually willing to leverage their personal power. Could be political power, could be bureaucratic power, could be decision authority. And so you're not giving up authority. You're not giving up power. You're getting to a point where you win the leverage. So when I was forest supervisor, I would meet with county commissioners. And we would we would talk and sometimes we were talking past each other and sometimes we were talking at each other. But what we were trying to do is get to a point where this, the power that an elected official had at the county level was; some of that was going to be leveraged on behalf of what we jointly were trying to do. And my authority as a line officer was going to be leveraged on behalf of what we were trying to do. I wasn't giving up power. They weren't giving up power. We were finding ways to where I could do things that they couldn't do, making decisions that I couldn't do. And you expand that out to other participants. That community is what collaborative public money managers were doing it well, you get to that.

[24:50 - 26:10] Peter Williams: Okay, so let me shift over. Talk a little bit about the Policy Foundation. Um, I'm going to talk quickly about some legislation that I think is worth knowing about. I'm not going to go into huge depth here. I'm just going to hit a couple of high points here. Um, so in September of this year, the new Office Management Budget and Council for Environmental Quality joint memo came out, um, on collaboration and conflict resolution. I'm going to give you a couple of excerpts from that, because that's a, that's a very, that's pretty important right now. Another one to know about is the Office of Management and Budget memo on open government, the open government initiative. Again, that's pretty important. Um, and then there's collaboration and the national environmental policy and community in, in collaboration, um, as far as the legal foundation, I would I always find going back to, to legal because it's pretty, at least in the US, is pretty powerful. And the reason is that in the, um, uh, Congress in NEPA, that was the first place where they said, this has to be done in the full light of day. So a little different than, than some of the previous laws, and I think a little bit different than some of the, uh, government and the sunshine laws.

[26:11 - 28:16] Peter Williams: Um, I don't know if you guys have heard that phrase, but, um, Nepa is similar there, but also goes a little bit beyond it, especially because it's environmental policy. So here's the CEQ regs and you'll see what I mean. So this is national journal-, National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the CEQ regulations Council of Environmental Quality in '78. Um, federal

agency shall to the fullest extent possible, um, implement procedures that make the process more useful to decision makers and the public. That's pretty powerful book right there. Um, and encourage and facilitate public involvement in decisions that affect the quality of the human environment and others. I mean, pretty obvious. That's why I go back to these, these, these regulations. Um, notice the word "shall there." These are there's no daylight. This is what you have to do. Um, make diligent efforts to involve the public in preparing and implementing their NEPA procedures and hold public hearings or public meetings whenever appropriate. Then in, um, if you was recognizing the power of the term appropriateness to this. Um, the new memo says, um, federal departments, this is in the policy direction; Federal departments and agencies should ensure they effectively explore opportunities for collaboration in their planning and decision making process. Now, even though I'm anchoring back to these, here's a couple of points. Um, one is collaboration is about how we implement, how we fulfil these CEQ mandates. But collaboration, the term itself isn't enough. So, so we if we're going to make it more useful, one way to do that would be in a more collaborative way. So I gave a talk last week to the Forest Service, um, NEPA planners around the country on on this idea. Um, so we're really doing what we can kind to drive that point home.

[28:17 - 30:29] Peter Williams: Public involvement. Public participation is not collaboration, but they're also, um, you almost can't separate them anymore. And they're, they're, they're very different, but they're inseparable. Um, the other is that it's pretty clear that there are increasing expectations that a process should be appropriately collaborative. And that's what the community members [inaudible]. Um, this is the Open Gov, uh, presidential memo and from; it was the first action of President Obama. Literally like walked off the South Portico, walked in and picked up a pen and signed that, right? Um, and then part of what he signed directed the office management budget to develop a policy memo, which they didn't in the first year of the Obama administration. It was three principles: Transparency, Participation, and Collaboration. You can't find anything more clear anywhere than right there, about participation and collaboration. Unfortunately, where this has gone on for a lot of agencies is the transparency part. We're going to make data available. That's how we're going to comply with open government. What I'm trying to do is really draw more attention to the participation and collaboration piece. Um, working with the department and the agency and across boundaries to really help, um, um, put some substance behind the other two pieces. Uh, requires federal agencies to take four steps. One: Publish government information online. Apparently, we kind of stopped right there. Didn't, didn't drag it home. Um, improve quality of government information. Um, create and institutionalize a culture of open government. That's where you start to see a lot of reference to, um, collaboration and participation in the policy language. Um, and then thirdly, create an enabling policy framework for Open Government. And that involves, uh,

what they call an Open Gov plan at the department level, um, which the agencies sub-, sub-department level does.

[30:29 - 32:30] Peter Williams: I'm sorry. So we work in the Department of Agriculture and we are an agency underneath that at the department level. That means Department of Agriculture for us. So the deputy kind of mentioned that, I'm going to want them, um. So here's a couple pieces on participation and collaboration to know that. Participation is, um, the goal here is to create more informed and effective policies. The federal government should promote opportunities for the public to participate throughout the decision making process. That's, that's pretty strong language right there. Um, and your agency's Open Gov plan should explain in detail how your agency will improve collaboration, da, da, da, in fulfilling the agency's core mission activities. A collaborative approach to core mission activities. Again, very strong language, very compelling. Um, and, you know, pretty exciting to be working in this area right now in the federal government, um, because of language like that. So some of you probably are aware of the Forest Service planning rule. Um, I was on a collaboration core team for the rules, handled a lot of the, um, sort of higher level national meetings and a lot of the electronic stuff for that. Um, I think I just threw the show off for having to do that. Um, um, but in the rule itself, not only did we take a collaborative approach to developing the rule, but collaboration is a key part of the rule itself. So the expectation is pretty clear. The responsible official shall, compelling word in, engage the public early and throughout the planning process using collaborative processes where feasible and appropriate. I had to do the challenge to begin with. Appropriate and effective is very important. Coming back to you, um, because it's really easy to slip too far one way or the other when you start using-

[32:31 - 33:24] Peter Williams: These are the, um, some people will see these as wiggle words. Um, I see them as appropriate for, um, what we do with them is kind of, um, making the difference or not. So what do we mean by a collaboration or a collaborative process under this plan? A structured manner in which a collection of people with diverse interests share knowledge, ideas, and resources while working together in an inclusive and cooperative manner toward a common purpose. Um, it's not by accident that there's some parallels between, um, this definition here, which is shorter, more concise and more bureaucratic, and that crazy definition that I gave you on the invitation. Um, it's we stretched it, simplified it, that kind of thing. Um, but I think that, that, uh, you know, we've been working on this stuff for, for a while, and I think it's really fascinating. And I've got some, I don't know.

[33:28 - 34:32] Peter Williams: Like, um, so I do want to mention, um, that non-national forest systems work in the agency as well. So that's one kind of talk across these different areas. So co-op forestry, state rights forestry, um, that act, these, these this comes from, so when you see 16 U.S.C.

that the United States Code that's the, the, the law, um, as it, as it's translated out of legislation. It was passed the legislation and it translated into the United States Code and these are the legal obligations of the Forest Service in the area of co-op forestry and research. Um, so we're authorized to work on non-federal forest lands in the US and forest lands in foreign countries. And, and there's a strong emphasis on cooperation, um, which is encouraged by the cooperation as it was. So this law was passed on 1778. Um, I can't remember when it was.

[34:33 - 34:33] Audience: In September.

[34:34 - 35:41] Peter Williams: Um, but that's really what we would call in many ways, collaboration today. So we talk about cooperative stewardship. We talk about providing opportunities for private landowners. We're not telling private landowners what to do. We're providing opportunity for them to do things that are consistent with, um, natural resource stewardship, natural resource conservation, um, and providing assistance to both state, um, local and, and as well as international programs, foreign governments, that kind of thing. Uh, research, um, we're authorized to conduct support or cooperative research related to renewable resource management. And they talk specifically about basic research, utilization protection and assessment research. But it's interesting, there's also, um, there's a really good, uh, social science program in the Forest Service, um, and a fair amount of research, um, devoted to, um, studies related to collaborative public land management, what we call that play.

[35:41 - 37:41] Peter Williams: And that really comes from, um, there's a license in the law, you could say, to do research into development of management alternatives. And so if if if the collaboration is being a method for developing, uh, management alternatives, that's the green light for actions in research in this area. So, let me talk a little bit about some of the issues and challenges, um, and the ones that I see and also ones that the Government Accountability Office sees. So there's been several critiques of, um, actually the list is long. I only picked the four, but I could cover this slide in about six others with the GAO critique for the Forest Service on this matter of the elephant. Um, but just looking at issues related to collaboration and perhaps power. Um, they seem to fall into four general areas: Interagency collaboration, how the agencies are working together, issues related to sharing data and information, um, uh, environmental indicators. Um, basically what we measured, um, and, and the, the issues being that we're, even when we try to measure the same things, we're measuring them differently. So accountability goes out the window. And Congress says, why can't the BLM talk to the Forest Service, talk to the Park Service assessment? Um, and then lastly, collaboration and participation. There's some several specific, uh, reports on how federal agencies work with others or work together, um, and other other areas. The

interagency collaboration and collaboration situations and sensitive topics were very nice. So these are, uh, the coverages for the reports that, um, in my mind, it was a pretty interesting and relevant one to take a look at. Um, these, um, uh, you probably don't want to print out them. They do a really nice job with one page summary and take a look at that.

[37:41 - 39:58] Peter Williams: Um, but then skim the rest of these. These are 140 pages of, um, um, stuff. [audience laughs] So some issues of theory at least. Again, what I see. Um, I see some issues around, uh, definitions. Um, certain understandings of collaboration. Kind of like I mentioned, things cause problems. Um, the one from from a real philosophy of science type perspective. What I see is, um, at times we have what would be called incommensurability between theory and method and challenges we're trying to address. So, an example would be, um, if we're, if we're using a theory that, um, is um, okay two types of reasoning: monotonic and non-monotonic. Monotonic means you measure something and the results are stable over the, over time or some period of time. Non-monotonic and changing. Well, if collaboration is about learning and people's opinions change while they're learning, we're dealing with non-monotonic agreement. Many of our measurement methods, surveys for example, especially if it's on the front end of a collaborative planning effort, would give you non-monotonic, I'm sorry, monotonic results. And what you end up with is science at the end of the process that is assumed to be monotonic, and yet is now incommensurable with the actual conditions, which are a result of people learning. That's a quick and dirty explanation of a real measurement problem that I think we've got to wrestle with as a, as a discipline here or as multiple systems. So this is, um, uh, there's multiple measures, multiple levels of measurement question. And I think, um, need to be addressed. Um, we have collaboration occurring at the sort of unified last position. Then we have some measurement issues that are at the theory level, and then we have some measurement issues that you might say are meta theoretic or multi theoretic.

[39:58 - 41:58] Peter Williams: If you're working with multiple theories simultaneously, there's some real, um, challenges there to try and do that. Um, and there's a great literature coming out of, of motion [inaudible], um, science literature, strategic planning literature and strategy literature and um, uh, business. Um, but I mean, really pushing very difficult, challenging things. Um, but I think it's something that, that we need to, to wrestle with more and argue, um, there's issues related to goals. Um, I see a challenge between which I call actionable knowledge versus descriptive knowledge. And this draws from the organizational learning literature. Um, a lot of our work might call it descriptive. Um, it's really right when you do what you describe a collaborative process and you say, "Well, where did you learn?" I mean, that's, that's what a descriptive project often does. And I'm being completely dismissive. I apologize, but I mean, it's it's kind of there's some truth there. There's been a prescriptive model and that's the expert model. Um, I go out, done a bunch of stuff, I do my study,

and I tell you what the next year is and here's what you should do to be right. But the problem is that it's prone to what is called the trap of the expert, um, which is coming out of, um, Collins and Gunderson and some of those works there. The trap of the expert rings a bell? What it is, is the expert comes, gives answers. Right? Well, it turns out that there's even the answers themselves lead to unanticipated problems. And when those problems emerge, it actually erodes the, the, um, the, the sense of expertise, the credibility of the expert. So the experts give the answers and then the answers don't play out because things change and it erodes the expertise.

[41:58 - 43:55] Peter Williams: That's the trap. Yikes! Um, so the, an area that I've been looking at more and more is what you might call diagnostic joint inquiry, um, getting into what's called double and triple learning, that kind of stuff. Um, I think there's some real promising, um, opportunities for research in that area. What does it actually mean to do that? What does it look like? That is and, and can we, can we explain it and implement it in a way that's practical? That makes sense? Um, that doesn't just sound like, you know, some pie in the sky, but, um, I think when we're doing collaborative public land management, well, we're doing this diagnostic joint inquiry type learning a lot. We just don't necessarily call it that. Um, methods, um, collaborative learning about collaboration. There's some questions there. Then there's this idea of the type three error. How many people are familiar with type three error? Type one and two are your normal disorders, right? Go do a test and come back and get a false positive or false negative, right? Type one or type two. Those happen post-hoc meaning that I do my analysis and I run the risk of the type one or type two error. And this is where power and there's physical sense response to that. A type three error actually occurs beforehand. And that's when you, um, fail to, to actually define the problem in a, in a decent way. So you're committing a type three error. It doesn't matter what you type one and type two problems are if you, um, uh, define the problem wrong. So that's a real issue, I think. And that's a saying that a collaborative approach to defining some of the initial problems, um, is, is pretty common and collaboration is actually a way out of it, of avoiding type three errors.

[43:57 - 45:54] Peter Williams: Um, so issues of, uh, practice, um, uh, transformation and partners and transition. Transformation is going from one thing to another, but you're not quite sure what the other is. Um, transition is, is doing one thing that, you know, to another that you know. I think what we're talking about here is a lot more in the category of transformation, um, organizational culture, very tough to shift. And when you're talking about collaborative public management, you're talking about a culture of cultures in the sense that it's, it's, it can be pretty tough. Um, readiness. Uh, the skills, knowledge and experience are are mixed. Um, training. Um, how do you actually grow collaborative faster? Um, leading an effort in forces to grow collective capacity. And or you talked about a thankless task [laughter], just to get them to define what they mean by that, is kind of an

interesting. Policy interpretation. Um, there's some urban legends around or urban myths around various laws, such as the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which is a factor or is an important process. Um, and the Paperwork Reduction Act. Is this funny, Tiffany? We pronounce our acronyms differently. Um, Paperwork Reduction Act: This is the Office of Management and budget clearance process. Um, which for federal agencies is a strictly org trying to do, uh, surveys in particular. Um, and there are urban myths around that. So part of what, because the urban myths affect our ability to apply the methods that, to either study or, or implement collaborative public land management, we get into this sort of, uh, I don't know, attachment to, if nothing else. Um, we also have our what I like to call our constructive critics. These there are people who really just just prefer to work in what you might call other than collaborative ways.

[45:54 - 47:40] Peter Williams: Um, and a little nod to Seinfeld. Not that there's anything wrong with that. Um, you know, it's fine. And, and one of the challenges with this one, from a practical sense, is there are times where a group or an individual decides not to work in a collaborative way and then says, you didn't work in a collaborative way. This works in primary practice because I didn't work in a collaborative way with you. Well, wait a minute. That's, [laughter] that's really, really hard to get my head around. Um, but it is, you know, just because some people disengage from a collaborative process and choose not to participate doesn't compromise the consensus, the collaborative nature of the whole process. I mean, something to to keep in mind. Um, I certainly- the last one here is trust doesn't appear by magic. It's got to be earned and maintained. And that goes back to this choice aspect, I think with this kind of version. Um, people can choose to, to leave, you know, really at it at any time. Let me talk quickly about some Forest Service efforts here. Um, a couple of quick ones. And again, I'm just going to touch on these. Um, so Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLRP), down a lot of our acronyms here, Watershed Restoration, the Planning Rule and Forest Planning, big ones there. Public-Private-Partnerships. That's kind of interesting. Um, the deputy undersecretary for natural resources and environment in the department, um, comes out of Colorado and has, has a lot of experience, um, working with some of the national forest. And he was at state forest, um, and got a lot of experience there. So he's bringing some of those ideas into the department and then back to the forces in an area of public private partnership.

[47:40 - 49:32] Peter Williams: Um, Empowering Collaborative Stewardship, um, or just collaborative stewardship. This is one that I'm heading up with another office in the Washington office called our National Partnership Office. This is joint. Um, just a couple of staffs working on this. Um, to lead it, but it really, we've been running webinars and all kinds of stuff for people inside and outside the agency. I'm trying to grow collaborative stewardship and grow collaborative capacity inside and outside. The point being that we're approaching that project, that effort in a very, um, sincerely

humble way, recognizing that there's a lot that we can learn from people outside of the agency, if we just figure out how to ask and how to, um, and vice versa. Uh, eCollaboration, um, another effort that I'm kind of heading up. I'm not a technologist. I don't play when I'm teaching. I have no intention of being one, but they need someone from the what you would call the business side of the house, not a technologist to run that. Otherwise, we're going to end up with all kinds of listings and bills and apps. Um, that, that just, you know, make no sense. Um, but we also have this National Inventory, Monitoring and Assessment Strategy, um, which is, um, I'm working to kind of co-lead the, um, uh, the social and economic mobility branch of that, of that discussion, looking at measures there. And one of the areas that we want to have measured is Collaboration. How do we, what do we measure? Um, so there's also some interagency efforts. Uh, many of them around climate change for, um, addressing and changing climate. There's a, the reason there's a split there. Climate change is a politically loaded term, where I can just say, let's work together to address the challenges that are coming from the changing climate.

[49:34 - 51:24] Peter Williams: Ranchers in Montana that are in that country were like, yeah, fires, drought. We get that. Um, I just don't want to be talking about climate change because, you know, there's politics in that. Um, Large Landscape Conservation and, uh, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. Um, another another area to know about, um, trying to deal with conservation at the eco-regional scale. Um, that immediately gets you right into collaboration. And you can't do that except by working across states, across federal agencies, with tribes, with non-governmental organizations, private sector, private citizens, private landowners, et cetera. Um, ecosystem services. Uh, cohesive strategy for Wild and Fire. Um. Uh, metadata. This is something Daniel and I are actually working on the Park Service. Imagine the Park Service is paying the Forest Service to go and do an inventory of our tools and our data to give to the person. Something that we probably ought to have done, you know, we should be doing that anyway, but it's such a great thing. They they they said we didn't they didn't want to start over, but they wanted to buy some more science and more on that. Um, lastly here, a lot of stuff happening at ground level. Um, forest planning vision, project planning. Um, a lot of coaching, training and mentoring. I wanted to mention that one in particular because, um, I I really kind of did not spend much time talking about business operations, but the coaching, training and mentoring is, is, um, what we're going to be able to pull off is going to be because of the partnership between folks like me on the national forest system side, or people on a private side working with our training programs in forest. That's why I have mentioned that. Most of the Forest Service, you're going to get all kinds of people.

[51:24 - 51:53] Peter Williams: And, um, and this is pretty exciting. We're really rethinking what what we're already doing that's working pretty well. And we're on our, our staff. Um. So there we have it.

Uh, covered a lot. How do you make a fire hose? [laughter] Um, but if you want us to be happy to, um, take some questions, have a discussion and, uh. And we have a few minutes, it seems to me. Yeah.

[51:56 - 52:07] Audience: You start with 11 straightforward maxims. And then you showed 382 ways to make it complicated. [laughter] And some, and some of those are probably going to have a lot of traction and take it places, but maybe some of them aren't.

[52:08 - 52:08] Peter Williams: Yeah.

[52:08 - 52:20] Audience: How do we take something that bifurcated and complicated and figure out what was really successful for it, what we really could then put in the dustbin and then move ahead with some other idea? How do we know if we should be moving ahead with different initiatives?

[52:21 - 53:31] Peter Williams: Um, great question. And that's, you know, that's part of this collaborative capacity effort. Um, we're, we're, we're, the approach that we're taking is, um, to look at what we're already doing well, based on what people are saying, and try and do more of that and then say, okay, if this is what's what's going on, what are some things that really could be done either because the mission has changed. Um, [inaudible] and so maybe it's necessary and, and listening for, from different perspectives, um, about how to answer that technical question. Um, is there some great insights from our partners listening? Or even when we really like to do more of this, but we may need to be a little more challenged after that. On the other hand, we may have some, you know, comprehension to what not, that our partners say, you know, that one is just not being captured. To me, that's the simple answer. Um, you're exactly right. There is a lot of, of moving parts right now. Um, it definitely goes beyond a different pinch of simplicity there. Um, but, you know, that's really how things are [inaudible].

[53:33 - 53:36] Audience: Let me get back to why I would be asking enough-

[53:36 - 53:53] Peter Williams: Yeah, but this is also the measures of success. We're looking at that too, so that we, I mean, I think if we were, if let's say we answered your questions in the next couple of months, um, that answer is probably not going to fit completely in another couple of years.

[53:53 - 54:07] Peter Williams: So we really need a system that is effective, um, and is what we're in, truthfully in. And putting that in place of itself is not, should not be underestimated. The challenge. There's a question, yeah?

[54:08 - 54:16] Audience: I don't, in a natural enviroment can you show me a collaboration where it's appropriate to measure and who defines what part of it is appropriate? Appropriate enough.

[54:16 - 56:22] Peter Williams: Yeah. Yeah. It's a great question. Um, I think that the I, I personally start with the assumption that, um, you know, we have to take a collaborative approach to define what's the purpose, right? And so what I do, um, especially, I suppose I specialize in really contentious planning methods for a long time. And the very first thing I do is go and visit with the folks who are the mobile opposition or constructive critics. Um, you know, the haters and, and, and work with them to figure out what they're trying to do and then suggest a process that we could all work on to get some place, right? And I don't go in and tell them this is going to be collaborative or not. I tend to not use that, that term and just let, let the actual details of the process speak for itself. Um, so it's designed to meet those specific immediate needs and whether or not it's collaborative that figures someone else out. That gives you a sense for at least I think, how I would tend to approach it. Um, and it's, it's, it's a it's a tough question, but I think a collaborative approach to defining it is, um, incredibly valuable. And it's got to be collaborative. This is the one piece of the in, um, the Forest Service itself and the Forest Service employees need to sustain that. Um, I often do when I'm doing an early assessment, trying to size up a really contentious situation. I'll have very similar discussion internally too and I'll find out, you know, the skeletons in the closet inside the forces locally. Um, and, and I will learn things about the Forest Service locally and about the partners, um, from the Forest Service that I won't learn from the partnership and vice versa. So I, I think involving both is actually crucial.

[56:23 - 56:31] Audience: If I could partially answer this already, how do you make sure that you identify all interested parties and work together in collaboration of that?

[56:33 - 58:23] Peter Williams: Um. That's an interesting challenge. Um, and the, the, my my immediate answer is you can't all. Um, but the parties themselves can identify whether or not they wanna be involved. So there are the people who are going to come to the table and work in a collaborative way. And then there's the larger pool of sort of stakeholders, and there are many stakeholders who don't necessarily even realize they are stakeholders. So that's one, one challenge. Um, but I think in a real practical sense, first of all, it's a great question. It is, it is a question that comes up every time, especially going into a contentious planning. And how do you get the right people to the table, right? And there's some really good references on how to do that. Why not? Um, I think the quick answer to that is, um, first reach out to the, the, the, the known players. Um, and do what's called kind of snowball champion in a sense. Who else should we be talking to? But couple that with, um, some, um, a some some communications. Um, traditional communications and

reaching out, whether it's electronic or through print media, prospecting. Things to get to, to get on the radar of the other people. And as long as you leave the door open and the invitation is there to participate, whether or not they do, that's that choice piece, right? So I don't. Um, going back to the first part of it. I don't assume responsibility for getting everyone to the table. I think there's not a lot of personal choice in all of that. I do assume responsibility for making sure that the majority of the people know they can come to that.

[58:23 - 58:24] Audience: Yeah, yeah.

[58:25 - 58:28] Peter Williams: Yep. Um, I think one more and now come up here. Yep.

[58:28 - 58:37] Audience: Including me, great, I come from a natural facility [inaudible].

[58:38 - 58:38] Peter Williams: Yeah.

[58:41 - 58:41] Audience: And I give [inaudible]

[58:41 - 58:45] Peter Williams: Yeah.

[58:45 - 58:46] Audience: I think [inaudible] to honor that [inaudible]

[58:55 - 58:55] Peter Williams: Yep, yep, yeah.

[58:55 - 59:04] Audience: Um, but, [inaudible]. How was the hard training, you know. Some go to facilities. You know, that's the content part [inaudible].

[59:14 - 01:01:02] Peter Williams: Yeah. Um, that that is the, uh. It used to be the $64,000 question. You know, the million dollar question. Um. You're right. Different people have different strengths, um, and different skills and different, different abilities. Um, one of the challenges to figure out which of those, um, really should be grown or have at some base level for everybody who might be working in this area. Um, and then, uh, also how to leverage the skills of other people within the organization. Um, so that's kind of the real quick answer to that. One, one of the things that we're doing, um, we've got several people coming up with kind of taking a triangulation type approach to this. e're, we're looking at what you might call, um, Collaboration Competency, right? That's a term that's used a lot in human resources. Um, in, in the training programs, as a large organization, public sector, private sector segment. So we're looking at what are those competencies. And there's been some really good work over the years already that we can just sort of draw from, put them together and say, you know what, where are we now? But the other thing is, um, figuring out what do we, based on those

competencies, what training programs do we already have learning how to strategize? So one of the things that said, um, I could talk about that, but this time is urgent, I'm sorry. Um, one of the things that I did was I sat down and just laid out a real basic matrix, doing some internal to external and going from, um, formal education to, um, informal, self-directed sessions, you know, and said, okay, let's fill in the black. What do we have? What do we want to try and do?

[01:01:02 - 01:01:45] Peter Williams: And so that that was one piece of, I think and part of the answer as well, kind of think about what are we trying to do in-house to grow that capacity. What is out of house that we can leverage? But I think that's the rub of your specific question is, um, that not everyone is good at every thing. And and sure, there are certain skills and abilities that can be grown in certain people, and then there are certain people that will never develop a particular skill or ability, and that's okay. Um, another [inaudible]. So I don't know what to say, but that's our great strategy at this point. Over here?

[01:01:47 - 01:02:20] Audience: Um, as you said about powers and recognizing the power. But when you're dealing with public land management because they're, they're is often seen as sort of a powerful or, um, and you have the implementation of the policies. How do you manage that if you can't really use an individual? And so these are the words that are essentially just leverage for the power of a community. Well, I guess I'm just curious. How do you how do you manage the power aspect? Well as the Forest Service.

[01:02:22 - 01:04:23] Peter Williams: Um, it depends on the chairman of the city. If I'm in a line officer chair, response to official decision quality, I'm going to have different powers, and I'm going to speak about it and use it differently than some in a staff position. Um, and, from a, from I, I think that the, the, the answer in the Forest service is that the tone is set by the line officer, by the forcing question. Um, and that a good, a good forest supervisor is one that empowers the employees, empowers the staff to think and speak and behave around power or with regard to power. And, you know, in a particularly positive way that doesn't end up creating this, this, this, some of the issues that I mentioned. Um, so I think it kind of starts with setting the setting the tone, um, and finding finding the right right words. Um, it is not the question that you're asking the, um, to answer locally. I think this is, um, um, that it's not for the faint of heart [Williams chuckles]. I mean, there's, there's some real possibility of misstep as a, as a line officer or even as staff. Um, you can offend someone who really has power. Um, but if you're really looking, if you just focus on, um, this idea of when you appoint people in a room to leverage their power, and then the process becomes one of identifying who has what power and what might, um, help get them to a point where they're on the [inaudible]. I

mean, it's going back to the question earlier about how to keep it simple. That would be my simple approach to rattle with them, you know?

[01:04:24 - 01:04:30] Peter Williams: Any other questions? Thoughts, comments? Well, thank you guys. Thank you! [applause]

END TRANSCRIPTION