

Action Learning Scenario – Leadership 201 – June 2010

Boundary – Spanning Leadership at the Science-Resources Management Interface

How can USGS most effectively partner with DOI Bureaus to bring science forward to inform Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC's)?

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Issue: A Symposium entitled “Science to Inform Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and Other DOI Management Issues” was held recently as part of the 2010 DOI Conference on the Environment (Attachment 1).

This symposium sparked a dialog regarding how USGS can partner to bring bio-physical science research, data, and information into a framework of ecosystem services and resilience to inform resource management tools such as adaptive management. These tools incorporate scientific data to aid decision-making and are critical components needed to advance the goals of the LCC's (Attachment 2). Feedback during the symposium indicted strong support for a new approach to more effectively link science and management. The challenge is to provide leadership to implement boundary-spanning tools and concepts for science-based resource management.

Background: USGS has traditionally had very strong “vertical integration” within our disciplinary structure which has allowed us to serve a long-standing set of constituents. Since the publication of the USGS Science Strategy in 2007 with its focus on interdisciplinary science addressing societal issues, USGS has been moving toward commonality of science practice and the strengthening of our ability for “horizontal integration:”, the capacity to work across disciplines, to inform complex natural resource decisions. This need was highlighted in the recent Secretarial order regarding climate change and the establishment of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (Attachment 3). The LCC's will become the fundamental units of planning and science capacity to facilitate-on-the-ground conservation at landscape scales using a partnership approach. It is critical that USGS and other DOI leaders develop effective ways to interact within these “Cooperatives.”

Leadership Challenge: How can USGS effectively partner with other DOI Bureaus, predominantly FWS, to bring key science-informed decision tools and concepts such as adaptive management, ecosystem services, and resilience into the LCC's? This is not about science per se or about management per se, but about spanning the boundary between them. Doing so will require that we maintain excellence in discipline-based science (biology, geology, geography, hydrology, information) while strengthening our ability to integrate these core capabilities more rapidly and thoroughly in application to complex interdisciplinary ecosystem management challenges faced by the LCC's.

Institutionalizing this new paradigm will require changes in organizational culture to implement boundary-spanning approaches for the science-resource management interface within the LCC's (Attachment 4). We are looking for your ideas on how USGS can work with FWS and other DOI partners within the context of the LCC's to effectively integrate and link science with decision making through key decision tools and concepts. In addition, what institutional and organizational enablers and barriers can be expected and how can leadership be exerted to address them?

We welcome your creative ideas!

Attachments:

1. Background materials from 201 DOI Conference on the Environment
2. LCC Information Bulletin #1, Office of the Science Advisor, USFWS, 1/2010
3. DOI Press Release on Secretarial Order for Climate Change
4. Boundary Spanning Leadership: Mission Critical Perspectives from the Executive Suite, Center for Creative Leadership Organizational Leadership White Paper Series, 2009.