BRICKS & MORTAR: The tangible and intangible factors that sustain multi-stakeholder collaboration

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30 Years Examining Lessons from “Natural Experiments”

- Formal and informal
- Bottom-up and top-down
- Different scales and scopes
- Different contexts (geographic, social, political)
- Different resources & issues (terrestrial, aquatic, marine)
- Different objectives (restoration, management, planning)
- Different authorities (regulatory, planning, advisory)
- Resource rich and resource poor
Asking questions like...

- What motivates people to engage and stay engaged?
- How are the processes structured and managed?
- What factors enable progress?
- What are the challenges and how are they managed?
- What do they accomplish; what is different because of their work together?
- What sustains them over extended periods of time?
Despite Significant Differences, Two Notable Similarities: BRICKS and MORTAR
BRICKS:
*The tangible factors that bound, organize and guide a collaborative environmental management process*

1. Explicitly-defined Niche & Boundaries
2. Organizational Infrastructure
3. Codified Roles & Responsibilities
BRICKS #1:
Explicitly-Defined Niche & Boundaries

- Authorities
- Purpose
- Scope
BRICKS #2:
Organizational Structure that Recognizes Core Functions

1. Providing Leadership & Policy Direction
2. Managing the Process
3. Doing the Work
   - Assessing Issues
   - Recommending Actions
   - Undertaking Projects
4. Linking to External Entities
5. Integrating Science
6. Generating Resources
Core Process Functions &
Organizational Forms

• Providing Leadership & Establishing Policy
  [Board of Directors, Intergovernmental Councils]

• Managing the Process
  [Executive Director, Secretariat, Staff/Coordinator]

• Assessing Issues, Recommending Actions, Undertaking Projects
  [Issue Teams, Working Groups & Committees, Partnerships, Contractors]

• Linking to External Agencies, Organizations & Communities
  [Standing Advisory Councils, Parallel Governmental Organizations]

• Integrating Science
  [Science & Technical Committees, Science Coordinators & Translators, Research Conferences & Workshops, Independent Science Panels & Reviews]

• Generating Resources
  [Member dues, Independent Foundations, Strategic Partnerships, Volunteer Programs]
BRICKS #3:
Codified Roles & Responsibilities

• Organizational Constitutions & Charters
• Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreements
• Co-Management Agreements
• Memoranda of Understanding
• Guiding Principles and Protocols
• Explicit Decision Criteria
But...BRICKS alone are not enough!
MORTAR:
Intangible factors that enliven and hold a process together

1. Nature of the People & Relationships
   Friendly, adaptable “people persons”
   Patient, civil and respectful

2. Shared Sense of Place & Responsibility

3. An Effective and Rewarding Process
   Compelling and Worthwhile
   Instilled Ownership
   Credible, Fair and Inclusive
   Focused and Well-Managed

4. Sustained Commitment at all Levels
MORTAR #1: The People Involved

“It comes down to personalities. You need “people persons” involved. With few exceptions, the people selected by states have been people persons: they are easy to work with, can do, positive, agreeable. It’s the people we have involved, the culture we are building, and the personal relationships. These are intangibles that are sometimes undervalued.”

“We all come to the Committee wearing a different hat as we come into the room, but we take our hats off at the door and we sit down and talk as equal members. There’s never been an “I’m more important than you.” If anybody even implied that they would probably get booted.”
MORTAR:
Intangible factors that enliven and hold a process together

1. Nature of the People & Relationships
   - Friendly, adaptable “people persons”
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   - Focused and Well-Managed

4. Sustained Commitment at all Levels
MORTAR #2: Shared Sense of Place and Responsibility

“At a base level, everybody is there for the same reason, and it’s because they really care about the community and they really care about the local resources.”

“All the agencies, NGOs, business members share a passion for this resource and an understanding of just how important it is and how magnificent it is.”
MORTAR:

*Intangible factors that enliven and hold a process together*

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   - Focused and Well-Managed

4. **Sustained Commitment at all Levels**
“They made it valuable so that those participating can’t imagine life without the Council. I hate to make it sound trite like that, but that’s the idea.”

“It boils down to ownership, and the sense that the community has stewardship over its resources and we federal managers are literally just there to help out. We often get ahead of ourselves and try to bring a top-down approach... But to have a strong bottom-up approach that then unifies with the top-down to provide an overall approach to management is, I think, a big lesson.”
MORTAR:

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MORTAR #4: Sustained Commitment

“It couldn’t have happened without community leaders being willing to engage with the process. It couldn’t have happened without that grassroots engagement that it had, and I don’t think it could have happened without the partners from state and federal agencies. That was really significant. Where you can get that collaborative and concerted buy-in on all of those different levels – that’s really significant.”
MORTAR matters!

“The intelligence quotient of any meeting can be determined by starting with 100 and subtracting 5 points for each participant.”  Dilbert©
Questions/Comments?

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