



Cultural Descriptor: Support Services

A supporting service is any arrangement people use for taking care of each other. Support services occur in an area in both formal and informal ways.

This discussion of Support Services will focus on formal organizations, but it needs to be emphasized from the outset, that a key element of the effectiveness of community-based formal organizations, hinges on the flow of information between formal and informal networks. Effective formal organizations are able to pick up issues and concerns circulating on informal networks and use their formal resources to gather accurate information, develop effective action strategies and place information back onto the informal networks concerning opportunities for support, participation and individual and community empowerment.

By example, public land livestock permittees have a variety of support services which include livestock associations, Farm Bureau, soil conservation districts, water conservancy districts, extension service, property rights organizations, sustainable agriculture organizations etc. The combination of advocacy and information on improved range stewardship practices are essential to the future of public land grazing permits, and the viability of many ranches, and the open space and habitat supported by ranching. To the extent that these support organizations can provide accurate and useful information to their ranching constituencies, they will help to maximize opportunities for the future. Such information must flow through informal networks to reach the people that need it. If, on the other hand, supporting organizations feed polarization and misinformation they can have a negative affect.

The same dynamics apply to recreationally oriented Supporting Services. Back Country Horsemen, the San Juan Mountain Association, Trails 2000, the Jeepers Creepers Gang etc. can provide a valuable interface for their members and the networks that their members are part of, to address public land access and improved stewardship. Likewise the San Juan Citizens Alliance and affiliated conservation groups can provide an interface between environmental networks and public land planning and management. Similarly there are supporting organizations that are related to timber products, the oil and gas industry, wildlife and the full range of public land values and interests.

Beyond effective communication within the various public land user networks and supporting organizations is the need for communication among these groups. Given the multiple use mission of the public land agencies and the mosaic of public land interests within communities of place and communities of interest, advocacy for any given interest can only be achieved by reconciliation with the full range of interests.

Historically, the public land agencies have taken it upon themselves to reconcile competing interests, ending up

in a cross fire of interest groups, none of which are satisfied with decisions involving complex issues. Growing experience with collaborative problem solving indicates that groups with differing interests can get more of what they want by collaborating and by working with each other, rather than by pressuring decision makers and letting the managing agency, “cut the cake.”

The opportunity for people from a variety of supporting organizations to be part of a stewardship approach to public land planning and management creates the opportunity for people to develop insight and empathy for one another’s positions, find highest common denominator solutions and mobilize both their organizational resources and informal networks to promote same.

Implementation of plans and policies can best be achieved with the active participation of supporting organizations and informal networks that are bought into the solution, and prepared to share their portion of the responsibility.

San Juan Plan Revision Applications: Supporting Organizations

1. The recently adopted Forest Planning rules emphasize more collaborative and strategic planning. Supporting organizations can play a key role in implementing this planning philosophy.
2. Organizations whose members have values and interests associated with the Public Lands have helped to mobilize and support involvement of their members in the Study Groups and other opportunities to participate in the Plan Revisions.
3. In the course of Study Group discussions, participants have identified roles that supporting organizations can and should play in public land stewardship. Indeed user stewardship has been raised throughout the process in conjunction with organizational participation.
4. There has also been an emergence of organizations whose explicit mission involves the Public Lands such as the San Juan Mountain Association.
5. Another trend that can contribute in a major way to collaborative, strategic planning is the collaborative groups that are increasingly being organized.
6. Some collaborative groups involve structured memberships such as the Governmental Water Roundtable made up of appointed representatives of Federal, State, Tribal and local water management entities, and local governments. The Water Roundtable is working to explore opportunities in the Plan Revisions to use Federal, State and local water management tools and authorities in a complementary fashion and avoid, where possible, unilateral action and conflict. The governmental structure of the Roundtable improves on a patch-work of cooperating agency agreements with a comprehensive interactive process of information building and dialogue. The challenge of the Roundtable is keeping the dialogue open to non-governmental perspectives to enhance and broaden Roundtable outcomes.
7. Another collaborative model at work is the stakeholder approach which is possible when no single organization is responsible for convening and acting on the outcomes of the group. The Dolores River Dialogue was convened by invitation from the Dolores Water Conservancy District and the San Juan Citizens Alliance to address the ecological and social needs of the Dolores River below McPhee Reservoir. The Dialogue is organizing and developing information about the hydrology, geomorphology, and ecology of the Dolores River to find opportunities which can be pursued jointly by water managers, public land managers, private property owners, boaters and fisheries advocates to maximize the health and human benefits of the Dolores River. Each entity involved in the DRD will be required to contribute their part of agreed upon opportunities through their respective organizations. In the Community Study Group process this stretch of the Dolores River got some of the most concentrated input during the landscape exercises. The management of the lower Dolores River is also relevant to discussions in the Water Roundtable.
8. Another collaborative model that is relevant to the Plan Revisions are loose knit and pragmatic efforts between the Agencies and community level organizations. A good example of this is the collaborative relationships that have been applied to the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans in

conformance with the Healthy Forest Initiative and Act. Federal and State forestry and fire managers are working with local Fire Protection Districts, Counties, and private property owners to reduce wildfire hazards across the private/public land boundary. Reducing wildfire hazard was a much discussed topic in Study Group discussions. Fire planning will remain a collaborative challenge well into the future.

9. Efforts to coordinate Federal and local land use planning represent another collaborative challenge that is receiving increasing attention. The relationships between watershed health, wildfire, residential development and community water supplies became very apparent in the Missionary Ridge Fire of 2002 and its aftermath. Large scale development proposals such as the plans for resort development around Durango Mountain Resort provide another example. The other issue that came up in Study Group discussions involved community access to recreational trails and areas, and concern about loss of access both from the community and through areas of expanding resort development.