



Healthy Landscapes Program Quicknote #50

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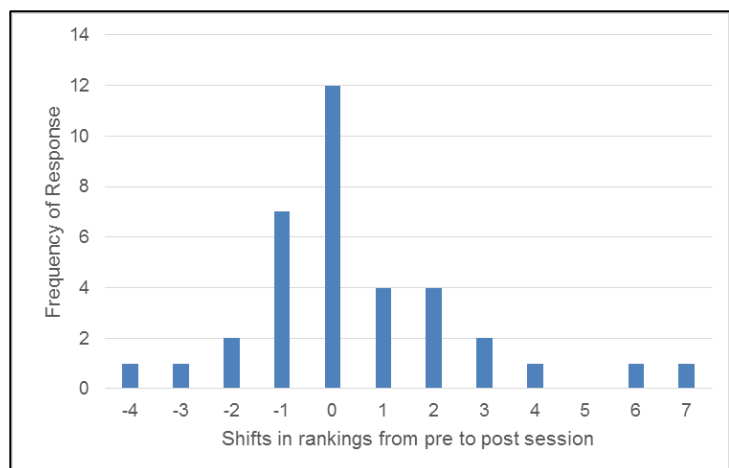
What is EBM? *It Depends*

At its heart, The Healthy Landscapes Program is about exploring, understanding, demonstrating, and sharing if / to what degree the principles of Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) might apply to the management of forested landscapes in Canada. A significant undertaking—made even more challenging by the range of interpretations and definitions of EBM.

To demonstrate this particular challenge, the HL Program conducted a series of four EBM dialogue sessions across Alberta in 2017 specifically including all partner and stakeholder groups. The purpose of these sessions was not to educate, but rather to create a safe environment for sharing one's and listening to other's stories and perspectives on EBM. We coupled these sessions with surveys of the participants before and after each session.

The results proved valuable in many ways. Perhaps the most poignant output was our survey question on the value of EBM. More specifically, the question asked was "On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend to a colleague EBM as a forest management approach? (one being lowest)". Our first surprise was how widely the idea of EBM was supported. On a scale of 1–10, the average score before each session was eight, and no one ranked it less than a five.

Our second surprise was how individual rankings changed before vs. after each session. Only 33% of those who responded to the survey did not change their answer to this question after their respective EBM sessions. Another 36% increased their ranking, and 31% lowered it.



So: What were the findings of the EBM dialogue sessions? We clearly heard broad and deep support for the idea of EBM across all partners and stakeholders. This is encouraging news for the HLP—and those in support of EBM ideals. However, at the same time, we also heard that this support was tempered by specific interpretations of EBM. More specifically, the 31% who lowered their ranking for this question after their dialogue session were responding largely to the realization that *THEIR* interpretation of EBM was not shared by everyone else. In other words, while we may generally agree that EBM is a good thing, we must acknowledge that it means different things to different people.

The EBM dialogue sessions offered several valuable insights to the HLP and anyone else interested in testing and adopting EBM principles. First, do not assume that your particular version of EBM is a) the right one, b) universally understood or, c) universally agreed upon. Second, make space and time to hear others express their version of EBM. Whether or not agencies agree on definitions is far less important than understanding the range of perspectives. Lastly, accept but also expect, that whenever agency or organization uses the term, or claims to be doing EBM, it should be accompanied by a clear definition. It matters less whether it is right, but rather that it is clear and concise.

Stay tuned for the next HLP Quicknote for the HLP definition of EBM!