

What Did We Learn - *About Participatory Integration?*

The third of four types of integration considered during the Hwy40 process is *participatory integration* – the degree to which a group of individuals work together as a *team*.

Teams agree to and work towards shared objectives by being open, flexible, and supportive. Team members function as the one and only voice for their respective agencies, and bring experience, expertise, and information to the table.

Committees compare and contrast the relative merits and needs of individual objectives. Committee members bring values and positions to the table. Planning decisions are made by way of negotiations that often involve compromise and tradeoffs.

Overall, the Hwy40 planning participants functioned for the most part as a *team*. Attendance was high and discussions were broad and meaningful. Solutions were often creative and thoughtful, and the willingness to listen to others and desire to make the project a success was universal.

The isolated participatory issues that occurred were significant in their impact: For example;

- The lack of willingness of one land partner to consider any concurrent disturbance activities created an artificial level of participation.
- When a planning team member complained directly to senior staff (not involved in the project) that their value was not sufficiently being considered, the inevitable fallout created some internal friction.
- Inconsistent commitment to follow-up work between meetings suggested to some that the project was not a high priority for everyone involved.
- Frequent and poorly executed replacement of team members by one agency similarly suggested to some that the project was not a high priority for everyone.
- 11th hour demands by individuals not involved in the process (but represented on the planning team) suggested that team participation was, for some, conditional.

Although few in number, the impact of each of these incidents on the culture of the Hwy40 “team” was significant. The difference between a *team* and a *committee* is clearly fragile.

The reality is that not all of those involved in this project have been required to work in a team environment with respect to planning. To some, participating as committee members is a more familiar role that is consistent with the mandates of their respective agencies.

In the bigger picture, the current planning system encourages and rewards the *committee* system. Many resource management professionals have neither the experience nor the authority to participate as *team* members on behalf of their organizations.

In terms of lessons learned, we did many things right as regards project organization, but in hindsight we did not go far enough. A project hierarchy was created (update #3), but not strictly enforced. We had buy-in for the project from many decision-making levels, but “support” was not defined well enough. We laid out some participatory expectations, but a more formal Terms Of Reference and Conduct was required. The planning team chair was both the project lead and a scientist, but an independent professional would have been better.