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The Creeks and Communities strategy : accelerating cooperative riparian restoration

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Introduction The Creeks and Communities strategy for accelerating cooperative riparian-wetland restoration integrates scientific information into collaborative decisions . Successful management cannot be achieved through reliance on scientific and resource information alone . Riparian and watershed resources are typically nested within a complex maze of jurisdictional and administrative boundaries with divergent cultures , land uses , interests and ways to perceive reality , so a collaborative approach is often needed .

Methods There is not a uniform approach for dealing with riparian-wetland area issues . The management of these areas is technically and socially complex . Each situation will be different given the current social , economic , and ecologic condition of an area . There are , however , standard principles and practices that apply to all situations (Wyman et al 2006) . The Creeks & Communities Strategy follows those principles .

The people who live and work together are the ones who are responsible for success . The Creeks and Communities strategy attempts to accomplish this by bringing the affected people together , creating learning environments , building relationships and trust within a community and empowering that local community to resolve their own issues . By bringing together the right people , in constructive ways , with good information , communities will produce better decisions (more informed , effective , sustainable and popular) ; improved relationships ; and sustainable communities and landscapes . An adaptive management approach provides flexibility in managing the resources . This leads to long-lasting improvements for the community and the environment .

Results and discussion When addressing complex issues , collaboration is a good tool for promoting decisions that are informed , understood , accepted , and feasible (USDA 1999) . Successful collaborative efforts adapt to the conditions of a particular situation ; there is not a recipe or cookie-cutter approach . Typically , successful efforts focus on a particular place ; secure the involvement of all relevant stakeholders upfront ; and identify durable , practical , and flexible solutions (adaptive management) . Finally , they often rely on the use of a trained , neutral facilitator or conflict manager and the use of consensus-building techniques . The intent is not to dispel conflict , but to help groups or individuals reach enough agreement that they are able to do something mutually beneficial on the ground . Often this involves creating a new solution that no individual had thought of or could implement alone (Wyman et al 2006) .

Conclusions As larger numbers of people become aware and interested in private and public land natural resources , conflicts will arise . Open discussions help alleviate those conflicts in a constructive , productive manner . The Creeks & Communities Strategy has been used throughout the western United States with success in bringing people together on the land to make sound resource management decisions .

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