

# 2009 ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATORS NETWORKING FORUM

## THE VALUE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

### what

The purpose of the Environmental Evaluators Network is to advance the field of environmental evaluation through more systematic and collective learning. The annual EEN forum provides an opportunity for evaluators and users of evaluation from the diversity of environmental organizations and disciplines to exchange knowledge and experiences related to the practice, theory and policy of environmental evaluation as well as collaboratively to identify and develop products that further the field. Ultimately, the aim of the EEN and the events and products that it supports is to improve the environmental community's capacity to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency, particularly in terms of environmental outcomes.

### history

The fourth EEN Forum was co-hosted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the George Washington University Trachtenberg School of Public Policy in Washington, DC on June 8 and 9, 2009. More than 230 participants were in attendance from federal government agencies, foundations, private evaluation firms, academia, non-profits and other organizations.

### themes

The theme of the fourth EEN Forum was The Value of Environmental Evaluation. Concurrent sessions covered three areas:

1. **Using Evaluation in the Early Stages of Environmental Programs and Policies**
2. **Using Evaluation to Improve Mature Environmental Programs and Policies**
3. **Building the Capacity and Culture of Evaluation**

### key note speakers

- **Debra Rog** - Westat
- **Mikael Hildén** - Finnish Environment Institute
- **George Grob** - Center for Public Program Evaluation

### presentations

**PLENARY 1: Economic Recovery and Environmental Goals: Opportunities for Evaluation** – Patricia Dalton, Mark Humpert, Dominic Mancini, Kathy Newcomer and George Grob. Evaluators and evaluation consumers give perspectives on the value of evaluation in addressing new priorities set by new leadership during a global economic crisis.

**PLENARY 2: Creating Common Standards In The Environmental Community: Learning From Nonprofits** – Richard Margoluis, Tess Present, Tim Reed and Stephanie Shipman. Representatives from environmental organizations provide an update on the Open Standards and discuss current opportunities and challenges associated with their adoption and implementation.

#### **Using Evaluation in the Early Stages of Environmental Programs and Policies**

- **Evaluation and Conservation Planning** – Andrew Knight, Devra Kleiman, David Callihan. These case studies highlight the challenges of conservation planning and will be used to share knowledge, examine the gap between “knowing” and “doing” effective conservation planning, and to focus group discussion towards identifying avenues for improving the effectiveness of evaluation for conservation planning initiatives.
- **Case Study of NFWF Keystone Initiatives** – Timothy Male, Tony Chatwin, Christina Kakoyannis. To better demonstrate the environmental or social impacts of the organization's grantmaking investments, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation provides additional evaluation staff and leadership support to embed a more comprehensive system of monitoring and evaluation into the entire lifecycle of the Foundation's new long-term initiatives.
- **Case Study of Moore Foundation's Amazon Conservation Initiative** – Luis Solórzano, Jared Hardner. This presentation provides an overview of planned conservation outcomes for the Andes Amazon Basin. Presenters explain how a new plan enables easier internal and external evaluation and attempts to overcome two of the greater evaluation challenges that face conservation programs—counterfactuals and attribution.
- **Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Evaluation Designs: Perspectives From Academia** – Paul Ferraro. Three case studies are used as vehicles to emphasize that experimental and quasi-experimental designs are feasible, useful and comprehensible to a wide audience.
- **Complex Evaluation Methods** – The Evaluator as Objective Analyst and Salesperson (and Occasional Punching Bag). Lou Nadeau. How do we get program managers to buy in to using more complex (and hopefully more valid) designs? What happens when the use of more sophisticated methods shows that a program is ineffective? This presentation will look at the roles of the evaluator that uses sophisticated methods.
- **Application of Criteria and Indicators for Forest Sustainability at the Local Government Level** – Don Outen. This presentation explains how Baltimore County is applying the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators for forest sustainability. Working through a multi-party Steering Committee and several special stakeholder Forums, the County structured management programs under the premise that better data leads to better dialogue and decisions.
- **Scale and scope in the application of criteria and indicators for forest sustainability at the national level** – Guy Robertson. The Forest Service recently released its Draft 2010 National Report on Sustainable Forests which relies on the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators for Forest Sustainability but, at the same time, it is guided by a broad public collaboration process. This presentation gives specific examples of how this balancing act has led to compromises in terms of both the scale and the scope of data presented in the report.



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### presentations cont.

- **Environmental Evaluation Practices and the Issue of Scale** – Hans Bruyninckx. This presentation examines the problem of scale. Social scientists, natural scientists, and evaluators have not properly defined the concept of scale for environmental problems. Environmental scale generally differs from social scale, which confounds the challenge of evaluating policies and governance arrangements in addressing environmental issues.
- **An Early Evaluation of NOAA's Habitat Matrix Program** – Bruce McDowell. The presentation details a report that makes recommendations for establishing an overarching statutory framework to unify NOAA's programs around outcome oriented goals, strengthening the performance goals and measures being developed and the related annual targets, increasing scientific support for habitat assessments and progress reporting, and working more closely with the program's numerous partners and stakeholders.
- **The Value of Process Evaluation: Risk Reduction Measures for Pesticide Products Could Be Implemented up to Four Years Sooner** – Debra Kemp, Peter Caulkins. EPA sponsored an external review of the Office of Pesticide Programs to identify opportunities for streamlining the product reregistration process. The evaluation team provided EPA with 25 recommendations that covered all phases of the process, as well as communication, performance management, information management, resources, and staffing. The evaluation led OPP to make significant changes in its program.

#### Using Evaluation to Improve Mature Environmental Programs and Policies

- **The Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program** – Amanda Bassow, Laura Carrier, Andy Rowe. The Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program has been awarding grants for local watershed stewardship and restoration projects since 1999. In 2007, GHK Int'l completed a third-party evaluation of the program. This session examines the changes that have resulted from the evaluation, and how those changes have been received by grantees.
- **A Case Study in How Evaluation Brought Change to the Environment Enforcement Training Programs at US EPA** – Zena Aldridge, Yvonne Watson. When the EPA's National Enforcement Training Institute (NETI) suggested several changes to improve the environmental enforcement training program in May 2006, senior managers could not come to consensus. Using information gained from a program evaluation project completed one year later, however, NETI recommended similar changes once again and senior managers came to a different conclusion: substantial changes in the program were approved and implemented. This presentation will highlight key components to this turnaround.
- **Evaluations and Environmental Education: Challenges and Successes** – Kathleen MacKinnon, Kathy McGlaufflin, Judy Braus, Connie Kubo Della-Piana, Leslie Goodyear. Four case studies are presented exploring the challenges of evaluating environmental education programs.
- **Recognizing the Value of Evaluation: Fostering Positive Stakeholder Interactions for Environmental Management** – Ken Genskow, Tom Koontz, Suzi Ruhl. While many evaluation efforts come from evaluation professionals, it is important to consider the role that stakeholders can play in evaluation. This panel provides diverse perspectives about how to foster positive stakeholder interactions.
- **Data and Information: Access, Use and Finding Meaning** – Ed Washburn. When you're making a good faith effort to demonstrate outcomes and beneficial impacts that are attributed to your environmental program -- and your program budget keeps shrinking -- and the 'transparency lamp' shining on your program keeps getting brighter, where do you turn for evaluation data? The GEOSS (Global Earth Observation System of Systems) might be a faint ray of hope.
- **Data and Information: Lessons Learned through the State of the Nation's Ecosystem Project** – Anne Marsh. This presentation describes two State of the Nation's Ecosystems reports (2002 and 2008) created to populate stakeholder-designed indicators on coasts and oceans, farmlands, forests, fresh waters, grasslands and shrublands, urban and suburban systems and the nation as a whole.
- **Using Evaluation Methods as Decision Support for Strategy Development** – Richard Gelb. This presentation describes how tools and methods historically used in the environmental evaluation realm can be applied throughout the performance and adaptive management cycle as decision-support to a variety of actors, with a particular focus on the role of intermediate outcomes and geospatial analysis.
- **Building a Network's Capacity for Evaluation** – Jennifer Splansky, Leslie Goodyear. Three case studies describe the framework for evaluation capacity building among NGOs and non-profit foundations.

#### Building the Capacity and Culture of Evaluation

- **Repositories of Projects and Evaluations: A Foundation for Evidence-Based Decisions** – Andrew Pullin. This talk will consider the value and necessary characteristics of a repository of evidence to support decision making in environmental management.
- **The Conservation Registry: Promoting Strategic Conservation and Sharing Knowledge** – Gina LaRocco. The transformative effect of Internet technologies is reshaping how conservation happens. Defenders of Wildlife and many partners have developed an online tool, the Conservation Registry, that allows all types of users, including agencies, organizations, private landowners, and policy makers, to record, track and map conservation projects occurring across the landscape.
- **Effective Communication of Evaluation Results and Learning** – Per Mickwitz, Shelley Robertson. The presentation discusses dissemination and production based strategies for communication of evaluation results. The presentation uses experiences from the development of eco-efficiency indicators in the Kymenlaakso region of Finland. The second half of the session, continues the theme by identifying ways to communicate results and encourage learning.
- **Theory, Practice & Application of the Utilization-Focused Evaluation Approach: Case Studies from Environmental Education** – Lisa Flowers, Annelise Carleton-Hug. This session explains the fundamentals of utilization-focused program evaluation: evaluations designed to provide data that is useful for program managers and other interested stakeholders.
- **Competency, Capacity and Culture: Toolboxes for Evaluators** – Michaela Zint. Many environmental professionals are interested in increasing their evaluation competency and yet, little is known about the extent to which various experiences may help them achieve this outcome. This presentation explains an online tool called "My EE Evaluation Resource Assistant," or MEERA.
- **The Handbook of Environmental Policy Evaluation** – Ann Crabbe. The Handbook of Environmental Policy Evaluation is a guide to environmental policy evaluation in practice. Beginning with an introduction to the general principles of evaluation, it explains the particular complexities native to the environmental sphere and provides a comprehensive toolkit of evaluation methods and techniques which the practitioner can employ and refer to.
- **A Tool-Kit for Agricultural Research Impact Evaluators: Report on a Work in Progress** – Doug Horton. This presentation describes a Tool-Kit for Impact Evaluation. The Tool-Kit under development will provide an overview of impact evaluation, the different tasks involved, and the different tools and approaches that can be used for each task.
- **Program and Policy Evaluation in State, Local and Tribal Governments** – Mary Beth Brown, Warren Kimball, Jennifer Falck. In this session, the presenters discuss the value of evaluation to decision makers and citizens in a state, local or tribal environment. The presenters will pose the question, "When does data become information?"