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Session 5: Program and Policy Evaluation in State, Local and Tribal Governments

The Value of Environmental Evaluation: When Does Data Become Information?

Mary Beth Brown
Puget Sound Partnership

- How do you get all of the data and make into information for decision makers
- Help decision makers make decisions
- Restore and protect the Puget Sound
- The Washington State wanted them to: Build an action Agenda: achieve a healthy Puget sound by 2010 and include outcomes and how you will measure them
- Establishing Indicators and Benchrmarks
    - The science panel shall: identify environmental indicators measuring the health of Puget sound
- Elements of Performance Management System
    - Plan: goals, logic models
    - Do: implementers who can rack and report progress
    - Assess
    - Adapt
- Work to improve the action agenda
- Project: try to come up with the indicators: 105 of them and need to condense them
- Came upon the Conservation Measures Project: Had their own Plan-Do-Assess-Adpat Cycle
    - We were able to get help from CMP
    - Had lots of data but had to get into a format that was useful and could give to decision makers…. Needed to narrow their focus
    - Not going to change our work but apply to open standards to their work
    - Hoping to get down to under 20 or 15 indicators using CMP

[Major point was that they had so much information, but it was not organized and had no system to analyze it to be able to aid decision makers with concise and useful information. Thus they decided to get the help from CMP.]

Jennifer Falck

When Do We Put the Trout Back In?

- Small project and watershed
- Oneida Nation- reservation in Wisconsin: outside the city limits of Green Bay
    - About 3,000 tribal reservation and about 9,000 non tribal members living on the reservation
- Trout Creek Watershed: in the northern corner of the reservation

- Goals:
    - enhance stream habitat
        - 17 restoration or containment projected completed
        - Example: Manure Containment Project
    - improve water quality
        - Routine monitoring. Water monitoring improved as projects were completed
    - gain broader public support
        - did community events, outreach, semi-annual newsletter, annual water report (done every other year by the tribe), and partnerships
    - reintroduce Brook Trout
        - Just this year reintroduced the Brook Trout
        - Had to work with erosion and fish passage issues
- What was found when fish put back in?
    - Data demonstrated improvements to habitat and water quality had been made as measured against known standards
    - An outside source identified Trout Creek as cold water trout stream in blind test
    - Meant the creek could hold Trout successfully
- They are planning to monitor the health and survival of the trout. Predict 10% survival rate

Warren Kimball

Passed out a water quality "report card": meant to use the report card to solve environmental issues

- Al Gore in 1996: environmental report card to coordinate monitor efforts, guide decision-making, accountable to the public (way to monitor and evaluate)
- Report card should include (these are the things that this report card is able to do):
    - Environmental baseline: status
        - Do this by color codes/ response indicators for water uses
    - The decision making guide: ID problems (do that by colors/ causes card), prioritize problems (view columns), geo-target problems (look at rows), ID threats, ID remedial action groups
    - Public accounting trends
    - Coordinate monitoring information inventory ID information gaps
- The report card uses a color system that denotes: good, concern, fair, to poor and has categories that the colors describe
    - Report card condenses pages upon pages of information on page for easier understanding of the problems and issues
- Asked the questions on the handout and used the report card on the power point to answer questions.
    - This report cards allows people to drill down and some answers
    - Allows people to ask the right and useful questions
    - Each of the squares have a judgment in it… so also can report 1-4 system of certainty: 1 is not certain; 4 very very certain
- Can geo-target by looking at rows (example: which river needs the most information)
- Can look at columns to target issues

- This report card makes it easier for decision makers to make decisions… where to put money to. The report card reflects where you need the most information and where the major problems are
- Red vs Green data
    - Found that red is always red… no matter how high the confidence it was
        - If crude implement picked up that … know its bad
    - Green is harder: must have more data for green
    - So could make decisions on red but need more information on green
- The report cards are done with assessment reports… does them as often as the assessment reports come out
- Created a second report card: with sources of pollution
    - Paint red when know source of solution
    - Orange potential
    - Yellow: suspect
    - Grey: don't know
- The report cards also allow people to see changes or lack of changes by comparing report cards. Can see if meet goals or not. Are there fewer reds?