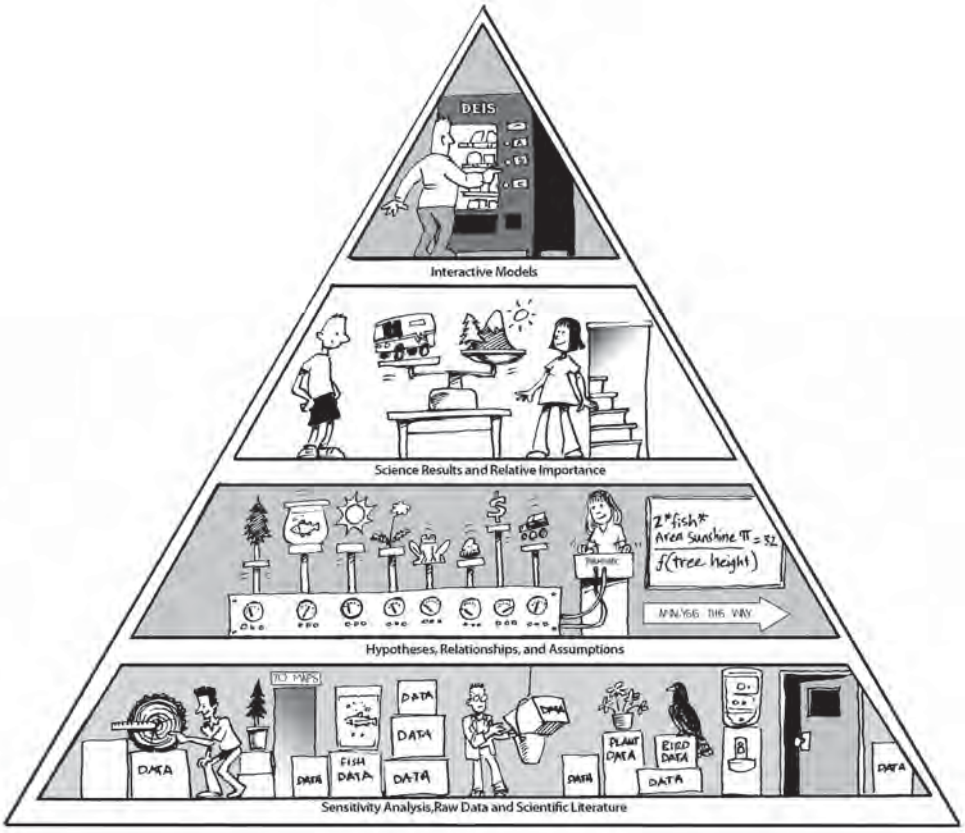
WOPR Outreach:

Carie Fox, with Philip Murphy, Decision Scientist & Thom Cheney, Illustrator & Graphic Designer



The Web Pyramid, Discussed in Section VI

I. Introduction

Background on the Report

The Outreach Team

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Acronyms & Shorthand

BLM: Bureau of Land Management

DEIS: Draft Environmental Impact Statement

ECR: Environmental Conflict Resolution

GIS: Geographical Information System

IDT: Interdisciplinary Team

Institute: U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution

NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act

MCDS: Multi-Criteria Decision Support

PID: Personal Identification

WOPR: Western Oregon Plan Revisions

This is a report about hubris, tenacity, and a naive yet resilient passion for improving participatory democracy. Our team came to the Western Oregon Plan Revisions with dreams of "pushing the boundaries of mediation" and of pioneering more inclusive, more empowering web tools for public outreach.

Yet WOPR was not the right context. An expensive experiment with few tangible benefits, our experience with WOPR nevertheless has had profound impacts on the way we think about public participation. It may provide insights on future web work.

The BLM had a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Institute for Environmental conflict resolution, and the Institute, working closely with BLM, contracted with us to provide novel outreach for WOPR. Background information about WOPR, which we prepared for the website, is presented in Appendix A.

The first half of the report focuses on public participation models and their relation to good outreach and web practice; the role of ethics in pushing us beyond traditional mediation boundaries; the risks one takes when pioneering and how they can be recognized and mitigated for; and the relationship between outreach, learning theory, and the web. We emphasize the role of internal agency buy-in if deep outreach is the goal.

Sections V and VI address specific work we performed and catalogs the lessons we learned in innovative web designs.

Audience: This report is written for agency folk, stakeholders, neutrals and managers of neutrals who are interested in empowering more people using novel methods, including interactivity on the web.

Scope: This report discusses our work "pushing the boundaries of public policy mediation" and using the internet in novel ways. It is not a commentary on the WOPR project as a whole.

Goals: Our goals were to improve accessibility of WOPR information, push technological frontiers to reach more people in a more empowering manner, glean additional information from DEIS comments, explore what it means to "push the boundaries of mediation," and perform our work ethically.

Bottom Line: Though we had some successes, we failed at most of our tangible goals. One of the tools we proposed, Multi-Criteria Decision Support, was jettisoned in part because we came in too late on the project. The map-based commenting tool had wonderful elements but was over-designed and probably received too few visitors to make a di erence. Our collaboration with BLM to post

& Overview

and Key Questions

the DEIS online was plagued with problems.

Our greatest successes were with traditional facilitation; our ability to maintain, repurpose, and rediscover ethics, and our willingness to learn from the numerous lessons WOPR provided.

Challenges: In many ways, WOPR was an ill-suited project for our endeavors because of:

- The timing of our entry into the WOPR process (when the DEIS was ostensibly almost ready to go to the printer);
- The real schedule and the aspired-to-schedule;
- BLM's internal dissonance about WOPR overall and our goals specifically;
- The starkness of the issues in WOPR;
- WOPR's geographic size and scientific complexity;
- The centralization of WOPR in the Oregon o ce;
- The level of disruption WOPR would have presented to the status quo;
- The fact that WOPR was a programmatic plan; and, of course
- The narrow decision space.

Our dream was to help people go deeper on WOPR information. But WOPR may not have been a project where people needed to go deeper in order to have a good grasp on their position.

For our learning, though, WOPR was ideal. It could not have been better designed to winnow away the hubris and naivete, and also to help us develop a better grounding for the type of work we somewhat ignorantly proposed for WOPR.

Advantages: Our greatest advantages were the individuals with whom we worked most closely at BLM, who taught us so ably and performed miracles on behalf of our shared work; the members of the public, industry, and activist groups who were generous enough to talk with us in spite of our near-irrelevance; and our colleagues who helped us work through the ethical implications of our novel work, deepening and refining our thinking.

To capitalize on WOPR's learning opportunities, in July of 2008 BLM representatives, several outreach team members, Larry Fisher of the Institute, and Boykin Witherspoon III, a GIS and NEPA expert, met to review our experiences. This report includes the insights from that day.

Our **key lessons** can be summarized as questions one might ask in assessing whether a particular outreach need calls for the services of a neutral. Is there:

- Focus on long-term outreach investment?
- Adult-learning orientation? (We assume mediation-like perspectives and neutrality are most useful for an adult learning style of outreach.)
- Investment in agency/stakeholder discussion and resolution on outreach goals?
- Commitment to publicize?
- Schedule realities and investment allowing for beta-testing and iterations well beyond the NEPA requirements?
- Agreement for ubiquitous, instantaneous, publicly reported feedback?
- Agreement to use Institute server and interpretation of cyberlaw?
- IT and graphics bench strength?
- Clarity about roles? ...and
- A reasonable cost/benefit analysis?

Great appreciation is due to BLM for supporting this report, yet another example of their willingness to take the risks inherent in transparency.

WOPR not a Mediation

Resolving legal interpretations, seeking to create precedents, and head-on values collisions are not good fodder for mediation. To create the exquisite balance of tension that is mediation, every stakeholder needs to recognize that there is something to gain by participating, something to lose by opting out.

There was not the slightest question whether WORP met the criteria for mediation: it emphatically did not.

Authorship Our work involved a large team. This report reflects the invaluable discussions we had as a team. Section VI: Cyberpioneering was written with Philip Murphy. The actual narrative and conclusions—including any errors and omissions—are mine. *CF*

II. Ethics and

Finding a Structure Within Which

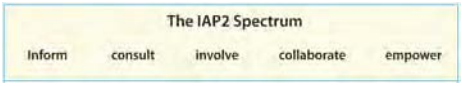

Fig. II.a The IAP2 spectrum can be found at http://www.iap2.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=5

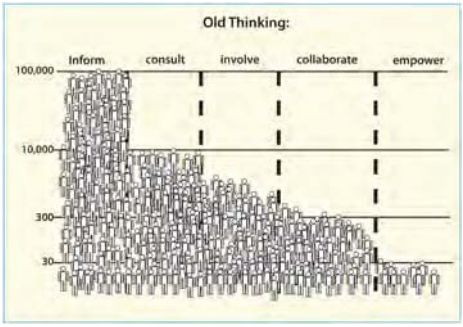

Figure II.b: Proportions of people reached with respect to the IAP2 spectrum.

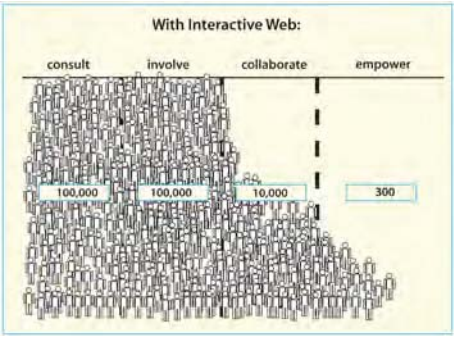

Figure IIc: Proportions of people reached using interactive web. Note that even in the collaborate mode, we envision an order of magnitude increase.

Our team and the Institute were partially motivated to work with WOPR because we wanted to "push mediation boundaries." It is only through the WOPR experience that we are better able to express what that might mean.

The International Association for Public Participation has a simple yet powerful model for thinking about participation, moving from "inform" to "empower." Fig. IIa. Mediation focuses on the "collaborate" part of the spectrum, where, as illustrated in figure II.b, very few people can participate. In public policy, where so many people are affected, small-scale collaboration becomes exclusionary. Thus, concerns about inclusion and implementability force us to think about scaling up.

One thing we meant by "pushing the boundaries" was "including more people in a more empowered way," as illustrated in Figure II.c. We wanted to test web technology as a means to achieve that end. In scaling up for WOPR we discovered a great deal about the scalability of collaboration ethics generally.

Aside from scale, the other "push" we made was to work in a situation that was not mediatable see text box p. 2. What happens to our principles when we attempt nevertheless to work as neutrals?

In early drafts of this report, I have been asked " why talk about mediation ethics at all, when you say WOPR isn't a mediation?"

There are three reasons:

1. When a team includes three mediators under contract to a conflict resolution agency, the first problem is one of communication: if we are not mediating, what are we doing?
2. Mediation provides authority and ethical precepts within a precise boundary. If we go outside that boundary, we need to articulate where our authority lies and what its ethical requirements are.
3. Websites alter the world. If they are to alter the world in a fair, transparent, and meta-transparent way, then the designer *must* have a principled foundation for her work. Such design comes from good conceptual models. These models support the original design, conversations among the stakeholders about the design intent, and testing of the design successes. This is underscored in Section III, where I talk about different approaches to agency intentions when they inform the public. Mediation offers a point of departure for those principles.

Mediation ethics are not sacrosanct. It could be that we would want to leave them behind and use something else as with the

Web Design

to Make Better Design Choices

shift from confidentiality to transparency . But it turns out, happily, that repurposed mediation principles are often very, very useful.

Mediation is a defined, focused space within which the parties exist in counterpoise–a crucible. There, they can hold one another accountable. There is a potential for profound change. As well, the parties are committed to the process and to the proper training or calibration of the mediator.

When one scales up and/or works outside of a mediation, one moves out of a crucible and into a very large sieve. The loss of counterpoise has profound implications for the leverage points in a process. In a sieve there is:

- No team of diverse stakeholders invested in teaching the designer what neutrality means in a specific conflict;
- No counterpoise among the stakeholders and thus–
    - No place of equipoise for the designer;
    - No added accountability among the stakeholders;
    - No authority for the designer to act independently;
- No confidentiality; and
- In theory, much more transparency.

The question is: are any of these changes a loss? And if they are, what can one do about it?

Neutrality need not be among the design values in all government websites, but as a practical matter it might often behoove the agency to embrace it. People do not come to websites they perceive as biased, and they certainly do not send their constituents there.

Here is an example of neutrality it took me far too long to appreciate, a very simple tenet of mediation that was easily repurposed once I woke up to it, and something that would have been quickly set straight if I had been steadily calibrated by all the stakeholders: the concept of a website as a meeting space.

There is no question about the importance of choosing a physical meeting space to be welcoming to all the stakeholders. Agencies routinely accept that their offices may not be the best place for a public meeting. If an Institute contractor recommended such a thing, and the agency balked, the Institute would most likely support the contractor. We should think of websites in the same way. Here are examples of things to consider if we wanted the virtual meeting space to be as welcoming to stake-holders as the physical meeting space:

- Are the visual cues welcoming?
- Is the palette neutral–no, not gray, but taking into consideration all interests? Activists may want bright, action-oriented colors, an agency may want cool colors.
- Is the tone welcoming rather than bureaucratic?
- Is the experience enjoyable and efficient?
- Is this the type of site people would be willing to send their constituents and allies to?

In a way, this list is trivial. If the design includes opportunities for stakeholders to give feedback on the outreach, *the public* will inform the designer what neutrality and effectiveness mean for that situation. The important thing about this list is that, by working without the counterpoise offered in mediation or its equivalent, I missed these types of now-obvious issues. Another example of my blindness is the attitude towards "SPAM," discussed in Section VII.

The second problem is of authority. In mediation, the neutral's authority comes almost solely from channeling the parties' views. What is my authority without them? It cannot be because I have the secret, the right answer to outreach like an engineer with his engineer's stamp or that I know the standards and how to test for them like a 3rd party water

Ethics and

IAP2 Spectrum & Process Feedback

One of the most useful places to apply the IAP2 spectrum is to the feedback on the website. Is it "consult," "involve" or "collaborate?"

tester . The constitution never appointed ex-mediators as a 4th branch of government. If the Institute and its contractors are to claim independence from the agency, what, other than tenacity and charm, allows us to do that?

Unless we can find a way to replace the equipoise of mediation that is usually provided by diverse stakeholders, I believe our only role in this type of situation is as coaches, not as 3rd party neutrals.

But can we replace the equipoise found within the crucible?

Maybe, through **feedback** at large scales, we can design something to calibrate the design to stakeholders' needs and to provide a basis for the designer's neutrality and validity. Large scale, instantaneous, reported feedback would also increase the agency's accountability–though unfortunately it would do little to support accountability from the other stakeholders back to the agency.

Of course feedback works best if it is iterative: feedback followed by adjustment. This requires more work and more dialog than NEPA does.

If the large-scale feedback were augmented with public meetings and focus groups, the designer could develop a reasonable understanding of what constitutes neutrality for the particular situation, and might have the authority and credibility she needs to act as a 3rd party neutral and to develop a website people trust and endorse.

The other mitigation for the loss of the mediation crucible is **transparency**. At the outset of a mediation, the equipoise among the parties forces good behavior in a way that often becomes internalized and even relatively stable. Outside of the mediation context, transparency might increase accountability in an analogous way, which can in turn support a more full and constructive dialog–though we have a lot to learn about how to do this.

Interestingly, though, transparency is often thought of as a one-way show, what I'll discuss later as a podium-style delivery of information. This in itself does not make government accountable. It is what people *do* once they have "seen into" government that creates the accountability. Websites are not just a way for people to passively acquire information. The interactive web is also a way for people to send information back and for that response to become part of the public dialog.

The first question about transparency is definition. People often focus on what one might call substantive data dump–responding quickly to FOIA requests or making raw data available in a convenient manner. Sophisticated groups and individuals are best able to benefit from this kind of transparency.

A second kind of substantive transparency focuses on *understanding* as well as data transfer, and is discussed in the following section.

Any new outreach technique alters the playing field. Meta-transparency means that the stakeholders have an equal chance to understand and adjust to those changes. A meta-transparent website includes:

- Opportunities to test beta versions of interactive tools such as multi-criteria decision support or online modeling e.g., through a beta version as we did with WOPR's Spring Forum ;
- Analyzing biases and making them explicit such as web design choices about ordering and reporting public input, etc. ;
- Providing opportunities for people to give feedback outside of the website's particular rubric;
- Clarifying how the information submitted by the public will be exposed;
- Articulating how the information will be used; and

Web Design *cont'd*

- As well as a real-time exit survey, providing **universal, ubiquitous, instantaneously reported feedback**.

If both feedback and meta-transparency worked, then one might have a structure within which the design could be effective, appropriately independent, and fair.

Transparency is a tricksy thing, however. In the influence diagram below, notice that transparency by itself increases risk, and by increasing accountability it increases risk twice over. Risk is not well rewarded in government:. Therefore the more risk, the less management support.

To nourish transparency one needs to reduce risk or increase management support in other ways. The website feedback is a leverage for accomplishing this: feedback increases skill, and skill reduces the unnecessary risk related to web blunders. Lower risk means greater management support, which in turn enhances all the left-side elements: skill, publicization, peer support and so on. The diagram on the end page of this report shows how radically website feedback could feed transparency.

It would have been good to develop a much stronger version of this influence diagram collaboratively with internal BLM folk, or on another project to work this through with internal agency folk and other stakeholders as appropriate. If the outreach they dream of is a long-term investment, if it is about transparency but what kind? , if it is to be supported horizontally and vertically by the agency–then it would be useful to have a simple approach such as this diagram to sort out different players' perspective. Based on the diagram, what is the long-term viability of the chosen outreach goals?

In this section, I have asked whether 3rd party neutrals can operate without an active group of stakeholders to offer a counter-balance. Indeed, I ask whether she would know *how*. I then asked whether there are ways to substitute for the lack of counterbalance and cautiously suggested that perhaps large scale feedback in combination with face-to-face meetings would work.

Transparency may also provide a container within which an appropriately independent person might work, but transparency needs to be defined and nourished.

Both the large-scale information and the transparency would be supported by universal, ubiquitous, instantaneously reported feedback So easy. So cheap. So effective. Yet so rarely seen on government websites.

For WOPR, we did have an exit questionnaire. Murphy/Fox projects in the future will have page-by-page feedback.

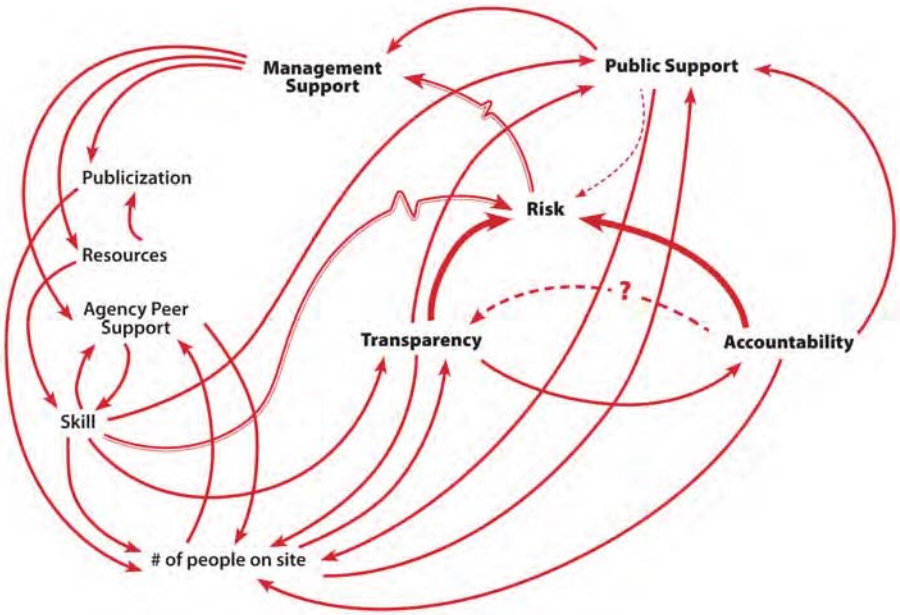

Figure IId: Influence diagram showing that transparency does increase government accountability, but there does not appear to be a great deal feeding into transparency.

III. Rethinking What it

Culture Wars and

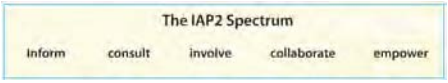

Figure IIIa: The IAP2 spectrum can be found at http://www.iap2.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=5

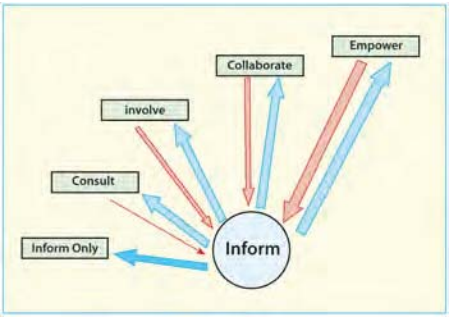

Figure IIIb: Inform at center of the IAP2 Spectrum. The red arrows indicates the flow of information om agency to stakeholder and back.

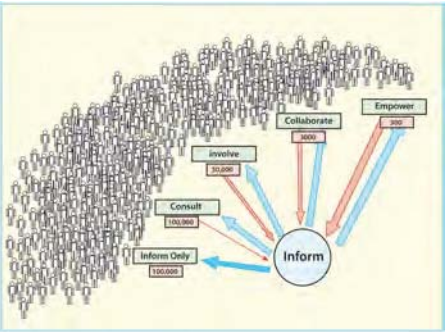

Fig. IIIc: People reached .

Participation is Not One Answer

When analyzing where a conflict falls in the IAP2 spectrum, it is important to unpack the issues. Even if the big picture fits in "consult," sub-issues may be appropriate for collaboration, and vice-versa.

Our work sparked conflict with and within BLM. We were operating inside of an unspoken rift within the agency. Not "unspoken" as in "censored," but unspoken because BLM is at the forefront of a new struggle that may not have had a vocabulary yet. Reflections on WOPR have helped suggested a vocabulary.

Disgruntlement particularly attached to one idea: that it was wrong to send a signal of a willingness to compromise when compromise was not possible given WOPR's setting, and that the kind of outreach we were attempting did send such a signal.

There are good arguments for limiting outreach in a project like WOPR, and it is absolutely true that one should not signal compromise unless one means it. But the crux of our miscommunication lay around the idea of what does and does not signal compromise.

If I could go back and do one thing differently with BLM, it would be to discuss the graphs in this section with them and work them through collaboratively, then apply the results to WOPR and use the resulting model to surface and resolve our jostling assumptions.

If we could have that discussion, we would bring for examination four assumptions:

1. Inform is at the center of all types of public participation;
2. Inform can be "talking at" or "talking with" podium speaking or adult learning ;
3. "Talking at" is mostly appropriate when one does not intend to collaborate; but
4. "Talking with" is eligible for all types of public participation, even when you don't intend to negotiate.

BLM liked the IAP2 spectrum Fig. IIIa . It helped anchor discussions about the kind of outreach they wanted, seeing public participation as a range of possibilities rather than just collaborate/don't collaborate. We had a big poster of the whole page at many of their meetings. After looking at it so long, I found myself increasingly bothered by the placement of "inform." Stakeholders usually need information from the agency *throughout* the spectrum of public participation. Fig. IIIb.

In retrospect, this was important, especially when combined with a distinction between podium speaking and adult learning.

Podium speaking happens when an expert stands above the audience, behind a wall, with a surface designed to hold up a tome or static speech. The podium speaker talks *at* the audience.

Means for Agencies to "Inform")

Transparency

The implication of the term "adult learning" is that kids can suck up information like sponges, but adults need to work with the information in order to get it into their brains. The emphasis is on adults' need to acquire new knowledge by weaving it into their existing body of wisdom. Adult learning is a surprisingly personal act.

Self-selection is also important. This means that the learner can choose when, how, how much, and what to study, in what order. Does this help adults retain more information, and to integrate it into their own mental context? Yes. But of course self-selection also has implications for status. "Here's the information made available in lots of ways, why don't you browse and see what interests you" suggests a peer-learning experience rather than downward delivery.

Figure IIId is a mock-up of how people with a preference for podium speaking perceive the advantages of podium speaking and adult learning, contrasted with the way adult-learning types see the world. In the first two bars solid blue and hatched blue , you see an issue that could be discussed constructively, even without a proper framework or vocabulary–a discussion about how well a data dump serves the public. Adult learning types would liken that to "drinking water out of a fire hose" and score it lower than podium-style folk. But this is a matter of degree–even without clarifying their mental model, people with different perspectives could muddle along.

A discussion about avoiding condescension the third set of bars would be very hard to navigate without this graph or something like it. Pro-podium and pro-adult-learning people see the world so differently. If they also lack a mental model for articulating the basis for their differences, the conversation will almost certainly be frustrating and inconclusive because it is simultaneously and unknowingly at odds about means, goals, and predictions.

When the solid and hatched bars are of equal height, that means people with differing perspectives would be likely to agree. Those instances are few.

A related, persistent mis-communication within BLM and among BLM and our team was the connection between approaches to

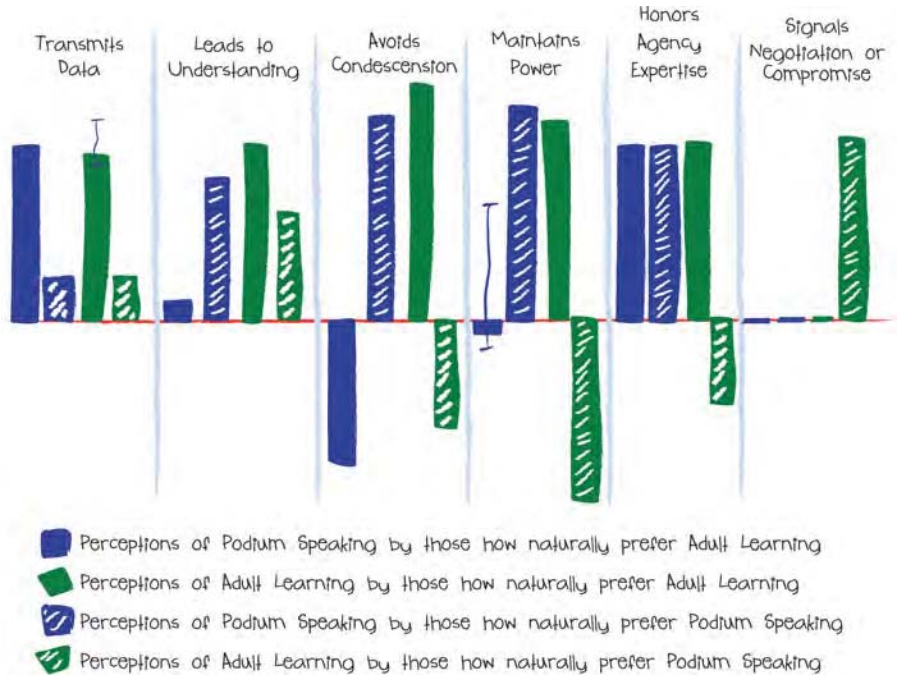

Fig IIId: Perceptions of Podium Speaking and Adult learning. Note how the graphical aesthetic emphasizes the "as I imagine it" nature of this graph. An excel output would have been easier, but it would have hinted at reams of non-existent data.

Rethinking What it Means

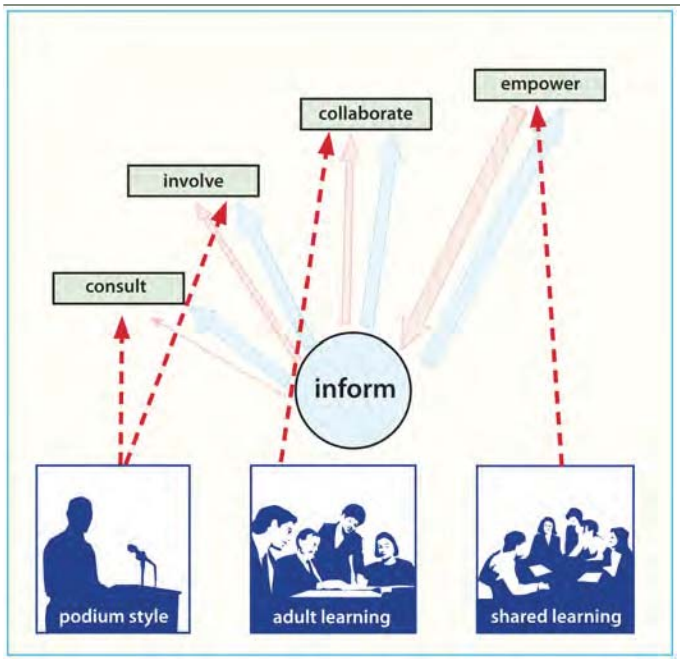

Figure IIIe: Perception that adult learning is appropriate for collaboration only. This figure shared learning, which is discussed in Gre Walker's book Working Through Environ-mental Conflict: The Collaborative Learning Approach *(Greenwood/ Praeger).*

"inform" and collaboration. WOPR was not appropriate for collaboration. If one equates adult learning approaches with collaboration fig. IIId , then our attempts to design in an adult learning mode were sending the wrong signal.

Transparency and "Inform"

In Section II, I talk about substantive transparency as transmission of data (podium speaking) or as fostering of understanding (adult learning). I also talk about meta-transparency: good processes where the rules are clearly understood and where the public can provide publicly-reported feedback.

I also reference the confusion about a 3rd-party neutral's role in this world. It is not as though we can apply some clear, and clearly accepted, measure of transparency and meta-transparency to a website. But really, the test is the audience.

But if one sees adult learning as appropriate across the spectrum of public participation, then what we proposed at least passed the first hurdle fig. IIIe and the 6th set of bars on Fig. IIId . From our perspective, adult learning approaches do not, of themselves, signal compromise. It is not that we were pro-adult-learning and BLM was pro-podium. First, podium speaking often is exactly the right tool. Good outreach based on podium speaking is an important and rare skill. Second, plenty of BLM folk are naturals at engaging in adult learning–hence the success of the science meetings described in Section V. However, as a general rule, if an agency wants podium speaking at the "inform only" end of the spectrum, they are less likely to need a person with mediation skills and perspectives, and it may be that the situation is less likely to require a neutral. At the same time, because this was our background, and because I had my share of hubris and naivete, I pushed ideas that were grandiose in this context.

The adult learning features of self selection and mental integration through interactive experiences find a natural home on the web. The problem is, to do this right is not a simple decision, affecting only outreach. If an agency wants to create a true adult learning experience on the web, this will require different thinking about outreach, different timing, and different relationships between the IDT and the web designers. It will require much more internal buy-in. To test the web with its intended audience, iterations will be required. If the interactivity of the web is analogous to tools actually used by the IDT, then careful thought will have to be given to comment analysis, reporting, and incorporation in the final EIS. This is a big undertaking. Especially since we have not we figured out the kinks, it does not make sense on every project.

What, then, are the considerations when deciding whether or not to take on the considerable financial and staff burden of adult learning for large groups of people?

- The more this approach is used as a long-term investment,

for Agencies to "Inform" *cont'd*

rather than a single NEPA event or even a single planning process, the better;

- When issues are stark, one investment is in creating "good adversaries." When there are shades of gray, the investment is in providing people with a way to deepen their understanding as they develop their opinion;
- The importance of building social capacity understanding of issues, trust, familiarity with the modes of communication ;
- Though it is an additional challenge, the need for deeper internal buy-in might actually benefit the agency in the long run;
- Supporting a "learning system" in comment analysis as discussed in Section VII may be a benefit or a detriment depending on the agency's goals.

Resources are limited. For the general public, is classic NEPA outreach enough? If the answer to that question is a resounding "no," then invest in large-scale adult learning.

If the answer is "yes, NEPA is enough" then ensure the "informing" is complete: everything from the goal through the science to the ultimate decision should be clear and, as importantly, so should the link from one to the other. For discussion of the decision logic articulated in the WOPR paper DEIS, see Appendix B, which can be found at www.infoharvest/wopr/deisanalysis.pdf .

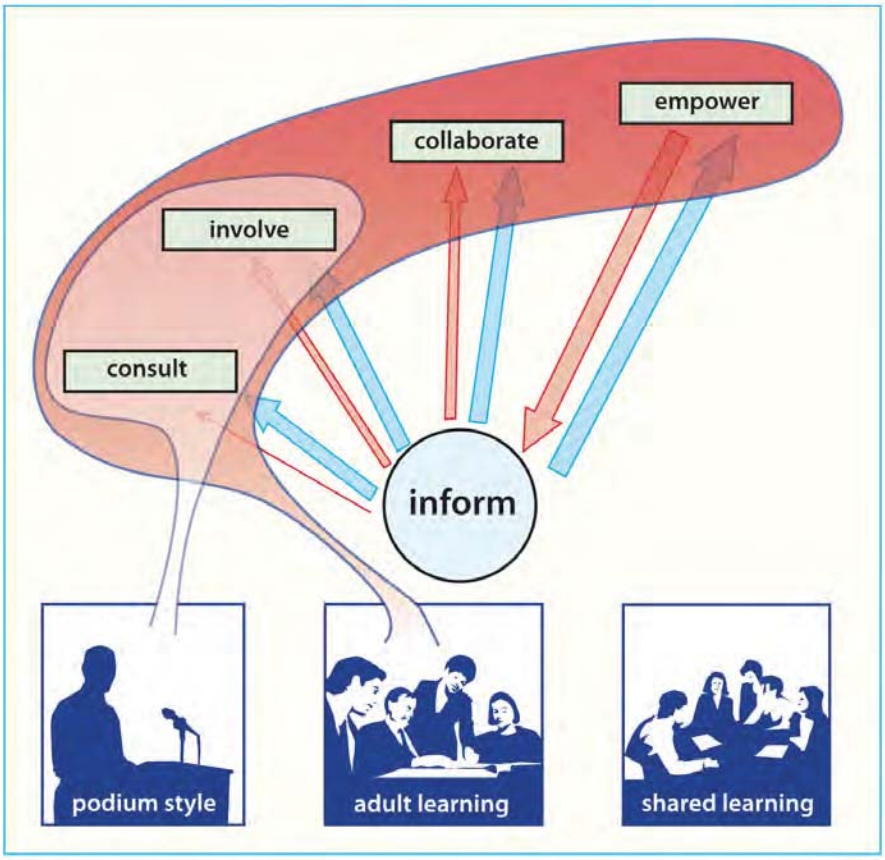

Figure IIIf: Adult learning is appropriate across the spectrum of participation, not just for collaboration and empowerment. With the web, an adult learning approach is now possible at larger scales (section II).

Keith Johnstone says that every human conversation involves status. When people protest "but surely not in friendships!" he responds that in friendships, there is just as much status interplay, the difference is that with friends we are willing to share. In a conversation among good friends, the person who has been "up" for a while will actually look for a way to "down" himself or to up his partner's status. The same may be said about "good adversaries." Realizing that temporary shifts in status are not the same as losing power, good adversaries are secure enough, even across the chasm of intense disagreement, to allow some play in the status equation. (Several of the District Managers excelled at this.)

A web interaction is a conversation, albeit an asynchronous one. The web's interactivity allows for the more status-sharing adult learning, as well as learner-selection.

The one who constantly plays "down status" loses power. The one who constantly plays "high" has it, but in a fragile hold. The one who can play up or down is truly powerful, especially if one considers effectiveness as an aspect of power. Walking away from the podium… for a while… is not losing power. As well, using adult learning techniques is not of itself a signal that an agency is offering to put things on the table.

–Johnstone, Keith. 1979. *Impro*. (Methuen Publishing, London)

IV. BLM & Culture Change

"WOPR and Beyond"

WOPR's "Decision Space"

BLM knew its interpretation of the O&C Act (see Appendix A) left little room for policy debate, but when we first came on they thought there was nevertheless a small decision space. As discussions progressed, the decision space dwindled. The focus of the DEIS became: do the alternatives meet or "over meet" the requirements of environmental law?

Public participation around policy, mixed policy and science, and values is very different from an almost entirely fact-based discussion. It would have been interesting to start our design work with the latter premise.

Publicizing & BLM Word of Mouth

Part of our goal–our contacts at BLM and the Institute's and our team's–was to reach more people in a more empowered way. That meant we wanted to reach beyond the usual circle of people–beyond the ones on BLM's mailing list. For a web tool, internet publicization makes a lot of sense. Easy, engine-searchable urls, Google and Facebook ads, and YouTube: 21st century publicization.

Research also suggests an important element in jump-starting a website is word of mouth. If the design is off, the agency folk will know it. They need to be involved enough to tell the designer so. And if the design is good, the agency folk might be the first to sell it.

BLM and Beyond

Both the Institute and our BLM connections talked about "WOPR and beyond." Even if our work had been wiser and more effective, we would have needed a deeper level of internal buy-in for it to have a realistic "beyond."

Our team had amazing support from our champions within the agency. But we certainly did not have buy-in from the agency as a whole, nor–fatally–from the public affairs office.

Neutrals have to be distant from the agency, and the Institute excels at protecting that distance. But where did our authority as neutrals come from if not provided by the combination of stakeholders? As I ask in Section II, what *was* our role and authority within the agency?

We did not work for our "champions" within BLM, we worked for the Institute. More complex yet, the functional connections we had within BLM were outside of the public affairs office. I felt then, and now, a great deal of sympathy for a public affairs office saddled with this oddly independent group of erstwhile 3rd party neutrals. We may not only have run counter to their view of WOPR, but to their goals for Oregon BLM outreach overall.

This must have been frustrating for them, but it was fatal for us. We needed the public affairs officers at the Oregon office. Even more, we needed the experience and counsel from the field offices. We tried to engage. I failed. Our designs and project were the poorer for it.

I believe that if the Institute is to work outside the boundaries of public policy mediation, these and other types of organizational issues will need to be resolved.

In a future project, the graph in the previous section would be very useful in creating a constructive dialog about different approaches to outreach. It would be wonderful to recreate the graph collaboratively, and to use it as a way to explore the agency's premises about outreach.

It is unwise to attempt to do even traditional outreach when one a does not have stakeholder involvement, and b does not have buy-in from the agency's public affairs office. If one wishes to use an adult learning approach to public participation, full agency buy-in becomes even more important.

Another issue with BLM culture which will be important in future collaboration is stability of decisions. This is relevant to collaboration among the agencies and with the public. To partner in a collaboration, an agency must be able to find a balance between reevaluating decisions and moving forward consistently.

V. Traditional Facilitation

Investing in relationships as "good adversaries"

Our clearest successes lay in our traditional face-to-face facilitation.

WOPR U was an internal BLM meeting to help the field staff understand WOPR's science. Our experience there provided a great deal of material for our thoughts on adult learning, thanks in large part to the BLMers we worked with.

One perspective on WOPR U design: there was a lot of information and no opening for compromise, therefore it made sense to pour the information out as efficiently as possible. Note the assumption that podium-style learning is necessary when compromise is not possible, which I argue against in Section III. Our perspective, and the perspective of the organizers within BLM: use adult learning to help people really wrap their heads around the information, take advantage of peers to generate ideas where there is discretion primarily outreach ideas, or so we thought and also create gentle opportunities for people to process emotionally.

We did this, and we did overdesign a tad, but based on feedback, people were able to incorporate the information better than in similar meetings performed podium style.

The **science meetings** were held late in the DEIS commenting period and were the shining light of our work on WOPR. There were three. One, hosted by an environmental organization, was an invitation-only meeting between BLM and scientists working within the environmental community. In this meeting, superb communication happened, yet none of the parties had an expectation of persuading one another nor of coming to a compromise. The IDT wanted their work to be understood; the hosts to the meeting wanted to understand it. From BLM's perspective, I believe it was a long-term investment in creating "good adversaries." It was an exemplar of adult or even shared learning. And it probably would not have been possible without the District Officer's high level of community relationship.

It busted the idea that one should only do shared learning when there is a goal of compromise or persuasion.

There were also two all-day public meetings focused on high-level science discussion. With so much information to convey, it was hard for the IDT to give up half of the agenda time to open-ended questions, but I believe they found this to be a worthwhile approach. The mark of success was that halfway through each of the days, the members of the public took their share of responsibility for maintaining a space for dialog, rather than relying entirely on the facilitator. If people got off track, threatening to squander meeting time, members of the public took responsibility for getting the dialog back on track.

The parties brought a remarkable generosity of spirit to the discussion. I watched the sheer stamina it took for stakeholders to dispassionately explore the challenging science of WOPR, with its controversies over the precautionary principle and profoundly different approach to riparian buffers. I witnessed the unflagging respect with which the IDT, which had labored over WOPR so long and with such personal dedication, listened to people's confusion and concern about their work. These people—all of them—possess the secret of public dialog.

Somehow, we have to catch that spirit on the web, but I do not think we could, or should accomplish it without a blend of face-to-face meetings in combination with new web and other technologies.

Traditional Facilitation

Our team facilitated several WOPR face-to-face meetings:

- Two all day public meetings focusing on the WOPR decision framework (discussed in Section VI).
- Three Coast Provincial Advisory Committee meetings (Gregg Walker, Carie Fox, and Dana Lucero);
- Four NEPA Cooperator Meetings (Carie Fox)
- Five WOPR DEIS public meetings (Gregg Walker, Jon Lange, Carie Fox)
- "WOPR U" (Carie Fox, Gregg Walker)
- Hosted Science Meeting
- Two all-day public meetings re. WOPR Science

VI: Cyber-

Web Challenges, Online Publishing,

First Steps in Design Require:

Agreement on goals of outreach, including podium/adult learning and where on the IPA2 spectrum issues lie (there isn't a single answer for all aspects of a conflict);

If adult learning is chosen, then early on:

- Design a system for "early and often" feedback from the intended audience;
- Schedule for iterations with stakeholders;
- Figure out how to come as close as possible to having "a common platform for outreach and analysis;"
- Develop close working relationship between IDT and outreach folks.

Hyperlinking and Table of Contents

Hyperlinking and other types of nonlinear access are wonderful, but they can be confusing if there is not some sort of predictable structure a reader can come back to. A good table of contents is helpful: for really big documents, it should run along with the document all of the time but without taking up excessive screen space. Thumbnails, collapsible tables of content, and other visual conventions are useful. The point is to balance freedom with a sense of where one is in an argument.

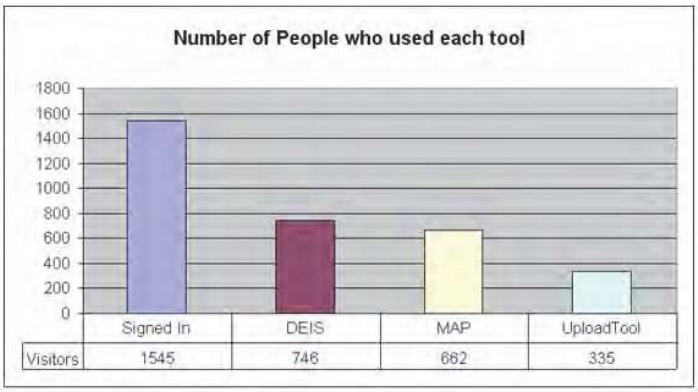

Fig. VIa: Website usage statistics. As a point of reference, about 1,300 paper copies were distributed (number of CDs unknown).

Together with BLM and the Institute, we developed several approaches to the cyberportion of our work:

- Online posting and commenting for the DEIS;
- Map-based learning and commenting; and
- Multi-criteria decision support online.

Our approach, even without having yet fully developed the mental model described in Section III, was solidly in the "adult learning" mode. Therefore, we were particularly interested in taking advantage of the **pyramid** style of the internet, in all its three-dimensional glory Fig. VIb and title page. We had visions of luring people from insights on the map to relevant document content, to other assets such as the beautiful fly-overs and elegant slide shows.

With BLM in the lead, we made the beautiful fly-overs Fig. VIf and prepared accessible yet scientifically accurate text for the slides, but the linking was limited given the barriers. Imagine the pyramid where many gateways lead to one experience and then a dead end: that was our website.

WEB PUBLISHING

A website is a wonderful place for impressions, scanning, and reconnaissance. But under current text-rendering technology, it is a poor place for serious reading. To study the material at the bottom of the pyramid a person is better off printing the material and reading it off paper.

The web is best for recon, while paper is best for serious reading.

Current government websites generally underutilize the advantages of the web: little deep linking, poor use of gateways such as tables of content, poor internal search functions, absence of pow-factor web copy, underutilization of headings, minimal interactivity and boring graphics. Meanwhile, they often *over*utilize the web as a place to read traditional paper-media copy.

If agencies want is to provide the equivalent of a paper copy without shipping and printing costs, they would be better off posting a series of PDFs with a good table of contents BLM did this well with their appendices . But to design the site as a place for people to actually read the second tier of information or–shudder–

Pioneering

Multi Criteria Decision Support & Collaboration

Carie Fox & Philip Murphy coauthored this section.

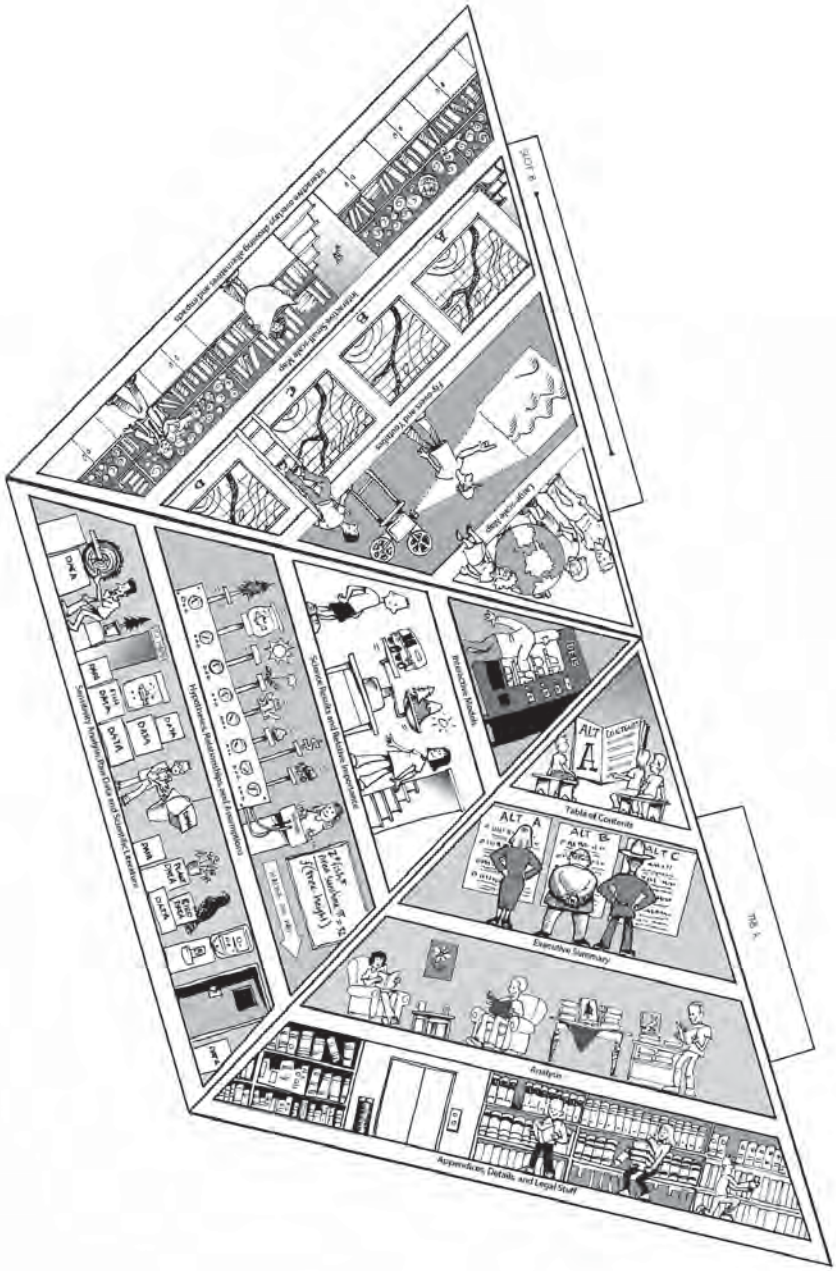

Figure VIb: The pyramid's layers go from 'table of contents' types of entrées, to 'heading'-style writing complete in and of itself (while simultaneously acting as a trail for self selecting adult learners to follow at their will), to lengthy discourse, and nally down in the lower reaches to data or legal analysis that is of interest to only a few (but of great interest to those few).

This pyramid also appears on the title page.

the lowest tier actually decreases the quality of information exchange without offering any countervailing benefit.

This is the type of bad implementation we perpetrated when we published the WOPR DEIS online.

We dodged around many barriers thanks to the extraordinary help of our valiant champions at BLM, but each time something was lost:

- Deep linking fell by the wayside because we used different servers, we were plagued by ever-changing and occasionally bizarre security requirements, and we were slammed by the schedule;
- Another schedule and IT bench strength casualty–the document was not searchable!;
- The table of contents was clumsy, overly large, and buried the most salient tables and figures–not on purpose, but in the last scramble towards publication;
- Graphics were underutilized;
- Pagination differed from the paper version;
- There was no spritely introduction written specifically as web copy.

The pyramid is about access through diverse materials as well as the ability to find salient information quickly and enjoyably. This is doable, but we did not pull it off on the WOPR DEIS.

Cyber-)

There are, of course, other access issues. We did badly there as well. In a positive vein, here are recommendations for future websites:

- Streamline or remove the login see discussion below ;
- Have a simple url, open it up to web search engines and design the site to catch the attention of the engines;
- Publicize the site for an expanded audience using tools such as Google and Facebook ads if people do not know the site exists, *there is no access* ;
- Be creative in reaching the needs of visually impaired people–complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act is only a start;
- Have an exciting, web-copy introduction;
- To the extent possible, provide paper and face-to-face analogs for the interactive web experiences see text box on the digital divide ;
- Send people directly to the action; do not make them follow multiple links.

Login issues are particularly challenging for the user and for the agency, deserving further discussion. Logins mean drop-offs. There are two wrinkles to the login: security around personal identifying information and establishing legal standing. Many agencies and WOPR was a wonderful and early example of this are publishing comments–including personal identifying information, Therefore, imposing odd design requirements to protect the soon-to-be-published information makes little sense.

For programmatic plans, it is not clear one needs to establish one has commented on the DEIS to establish standing. For project-specific plans, we suggest people should be advised of the legal consequences of not logging in, and given a choice.

If they do choose to give information about themselves, people should have the option of providing name and address, as usual, and also of responding to an open-ended "tell us about yourself" question.

If login is necessary, trigger the login only when someone goes to make a comment. Let them romp all over the pyramid in the meantime. And if they must log in, consider recognizing 3rd party identity managers, allowing graduated identification, or using 3rd party PID escrow.

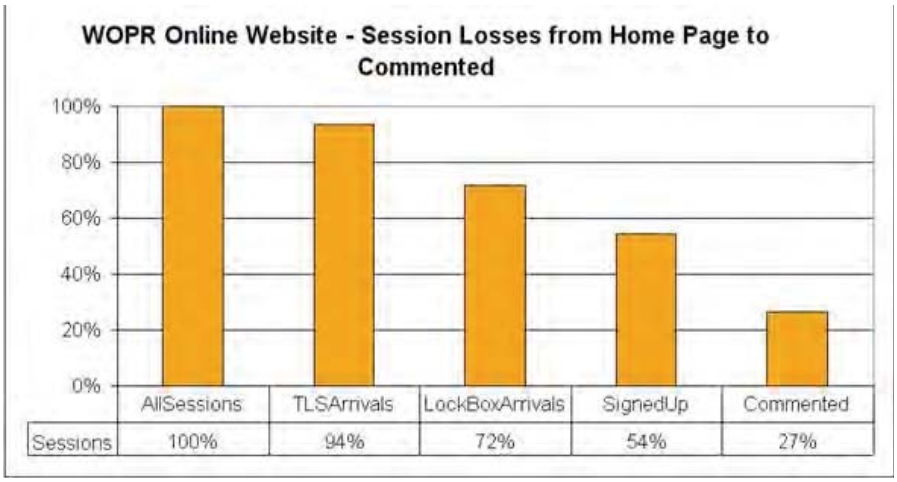

Fig. VIc: Website usage statistics. TLS=arrived to the instructions for Internet Explorer people to change their browser security settings in order to be allowed in, Lock Box=People who had other browsers or succeeded in changing their settings. We consistently lost half the people who came to the website in this way. But of those who actually made it through, more than half left a comment.

There are **management issues** for online publishing:

- Quality control for the website is as important as other factors in the DEIS publication;
- Even when contracting out, the agency will need bench strength within their IT department;
- Managing core team time as the DEIS approaches traditional paper release is a major juggling act: be ready to have another object thrown into the mix, one that will require time and skill to manage;

Pioneering *cont'd*

Views

Page	Views
Cover Letter from the BLM State Director	1143
What alternatives are being proposed?	430
Alternatives 1 and 2	401
Summary	369
Comparing the Alternatives	339
List of Tables	330
What is the purpose and need for the action bein.	307
Alternative 3	295
List of Maps	286
What are the environmental consequences of the a.	254
Introduction	246
Chapter 1	227
Abstract	210
Preface	196
List of Figures	190
Timber	165
Ecology	143
Socioeconomics | Environmental Justice	142
Chapter 2 - Alternatives	131
Chapter 4 - Environmental Consequences	113
Marbled Murrelet | Northern Spotted Owl	108
The Alternatives | Preferred Alternative	106
Selecting a Preferred Alternative	97
Special Forest Products | Botany | Invasive Plan.	95
Reasons for Revising the RMPs Now	92

Figure VId: Viewing statistic for WOPR's online DEIS.
The member of the public was taken to the State Director's cover letter, which

- Rather than thinking of web development as consecutive get the DEIS off to the printer, then turn to the web materials , begin web development and testing at the very beginning.

Hyperlinking, which is the bare minimum for pyramidal reading, requires early collaboration between the IDT as well as early access to the electronic text.

It's not that the hep web design has to be a large sink of time and money. There are some modest design approaches that could be very effective. But even a modest interactive web design has to evolve *along with* the analysis and along with the writing of the document.

The crux: posting a print medium on the web reduces readability without providing many benefits. If one wants to justify the cost and loss of readability, it will have to be by using deep web design. This will send more profound reverberations through an institution than one might think.

Adult-learning outreach is built on a common platform with the analysis. It is not just something one drapes over the top once the real work is done. Likewise, interactive websites, websites designed to promote understanding rather than downward delivery of information, need to be built from the beginning and need to be owned by the entire extended team.

As well as requiring a deeper IDT-outreach interrelationship, web design opens up a radically different attitude that is more egalitarian, inherently more improvisational, and more risky. And that is at the web 1.2 level! When we are actually at the point of web 2.0 design, the computer monitor we are used to using as an advanced piece of slate will have turned into an open window.

Technology shouldn't be was never meant to be—an end in and of itself. It is only interesting and meaningful and valuable where and when it serves people. Clara Shih in *The Facebook Era*

Cyber-)

MAP BASED INFORMATION

If publishing a DEIS online requires IDT/outreach integration early on, explaining the DEIS and eliciting comments on maps requires an even closer connection. For natural resource planning, maps *are* the platform. After all, the purpose of natural resource planning is to manage the landscape. The maps useful to the IDT should relate closely to the maps useful to the public. Likewise, if the site is to be interactive, the levers the public gets to pull should be similar to the ones the IDT finds useful. Thus, when comments are made, they are made in the same universe as the actual planning.

Paradoxically, a truly transparent process would also find ways for people to step out of the frame of the IDT, or at least invite them to recognize where the boundary lies. If the website were developed collaboratively or with sufficient stakeholder input, these types of issues would be surfaced.

Figure VIe: Web users could compare alternatives on the landscape,. It also implicitly shows land ownership.

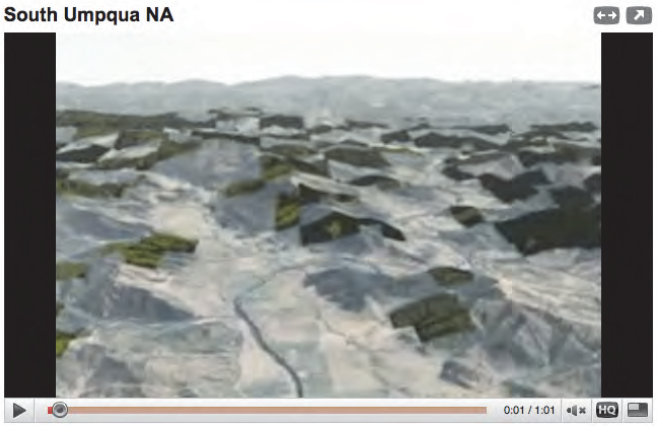

Figure VIf: Flyover of the South Umpqua Natural area.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2BMvHwXxm2

For WOPR, our original intent was to create an interactive map upon which people could comment. This would have made more sense for a project-specific plan, or if one intended to continue to use the programmatic maps in subsequent NEPA processes. As our design involved, we realized how this misfit affected the design and also became keenly aware that to provoke deep comments, one has to provide deep yet relatively easily accessed information. Our attention shifted.

Pioneering *cont'd*

Map-based information was important for several reasons:

- The size of the landscape affected 2.7 million acres within a much larger mosaic ;
- People's sense of place;
- The complexity of BLM's land ownership patterns;
- The complexity of the proposal, and;
- Oregon BLM's unique expertise and tradition of openness with geographic information.

People could zoom in on any landscape they chose, at any scale, and see overlays for each of the alternatives. They could play with various resource layers, highlighting or juxtaposing them. This was a very powerful way, for instance, to see the impact of differing riparian buffers on the landscape.

BLM also had amazing resources in building imaginary fly-overs: one could actually see a corridor with representative age classes shown in color and 3-D for different alternatives. But they were confusing as heck; one had to watch the film and read the narrative at the same time, so we added voice-overs. Fig VIf.

Our experience on WOPR suggests:

- The map-based information is superb at helping people understand how the alternatives play out on their landscapes;
- Avoid GIS scope creep: start clarifying goals and tactics before the Notice of Intent;
- There's a large cost to familiarizing the public with new tools the agency's cost and the public's : use familiar tools such as Google Earth to reduce those costs;
- For the same reason, use the same tool throughout the planning process;
- A well-designed website should have a natural growth curve– but the less you start with, the flatter that curve looks. There has to be publicization, and it has to include shoulder-to-shoulder training of public leaders in order to prime the growth in attention.

The maps were amazing. But to get to them, you had to find your way to our site difficult and, towards the end, nearly impossible , brave the login and master a new web tool. When all was said and done, we may not have had enough people on the site to be relevant.

Commenting Campaigns & Rival Websites

Occasionally an interest group will choose to campaign on a NEPA DEIS. This includes eliciting submissions for or against the proposal in the DEIS. Most identical submissions are generated through this sort of campaign, as are a large number of comments that would not be considered substantive under any test. The latter indicate a preference rather than offering an insight to aid the rational decision-maker. The writer is indifferent to the decision-maker's often self-imposed decision space. These commenters are not concerned about standing, and they will rely on the interest group's leaders to write the letter that will be used as part of the legal strategy. The short-hand for this is SPAM, but it is only SPAM in a NEPA frame. An effective web design has to take into consideration other motivations as well.

A group may set up an independent website where constituents can go to learn and make standard or independent submissions. The website may be geared to forward the comments electronically and "marry up" with the agency's website so that submissions are seamlessly transferred, or they may gather the comments and transmit them manually on paper or (out of the kindness of their hearts) electronically. For our WOPR DEIS, we spoke with the coordinator for the environmental activist's WOPR website. She eventually made a link to our site from hers. After some time for reflection, I am amazed she did. Overwhelming generosity? There is a hint of that, when one considers the login travails her constituents would experience. But, in spite of general pessimism about our value-added to WOPR, I take the linkage as an important testimonial to the (at least minimal) neutrality and relevance of our website.

The fact that she was willing to send her guests to our virtual living room spoke highly of the work BLM and we did as well as of her and her group. This is the most important point about neutral public policy website design: if it is to create a space for dialog, it needs to be a space diverse leaders would want to send their constituents to. Designers must get agreement: is it or is it not a goal to create that space?

There is a reflex to think those with rival websites are bad people. Not so. They have concerns about accessibility (and their flexibility in designing accessible websites is greater), voice (much more comfortable with relaxed english), feel of the room (they may want more action-oriented colors and graphics) and the substantive information. --And of course, they need to maintain their connection with their constituents--how not? These are legitimate, if sometimes extra-NEPA concerns that will need to be addressed. It's not SPAM.

For more information about MCDS, see www.infoharvest.com, or http://decisionanalysis.society.informs.org.

Cyber-

MULTI-CRITERIA DECISION SUPPORT

MCDS is an approach that supports and communicates but does not make decisions. We developed MCDS for WOPR over the first five months of our tenure with WOPR, working with BLM to create a draft decision map, conducting two all-day public meetings designed for MCDS, and posting a beta-test of interactive online MCDS with the public.

And then we pulled it, in large part because we had started MCDS much too late in the process.

MCDS consists of a decision map, which organizes alternatives positions and criteria interests; it is very useful in fostering interest-based dialog. It helps people to almost effortlessly distinguish between what they want and why they want it, as well as keeping clear about science debates and policy debates. This worked very well in the public meetings.

However, MCDS includes not only the decision map, but also the scientific ratings for each alternative, including uncertainty as appropriate. MCDS connects the positions and interests by asking "how well will each alternative actually do for each of the things that will matter to me?" It seems a natural for NEPA: the decision map articulates the purpose and need, criteria, and alternatives, while the NEPA analysis provides the ratings. However, to do this easily you must start with the decision map early in the process, and the IDT has to have reason to believe in it if they are to provide the necessary analysis.

Finally, to be complete the decision framework has to articulate *how much* each criterion matters relative to the others. With all those pieces in place, MCDS can be run as a computer model to support good decision-making and decision communication by:

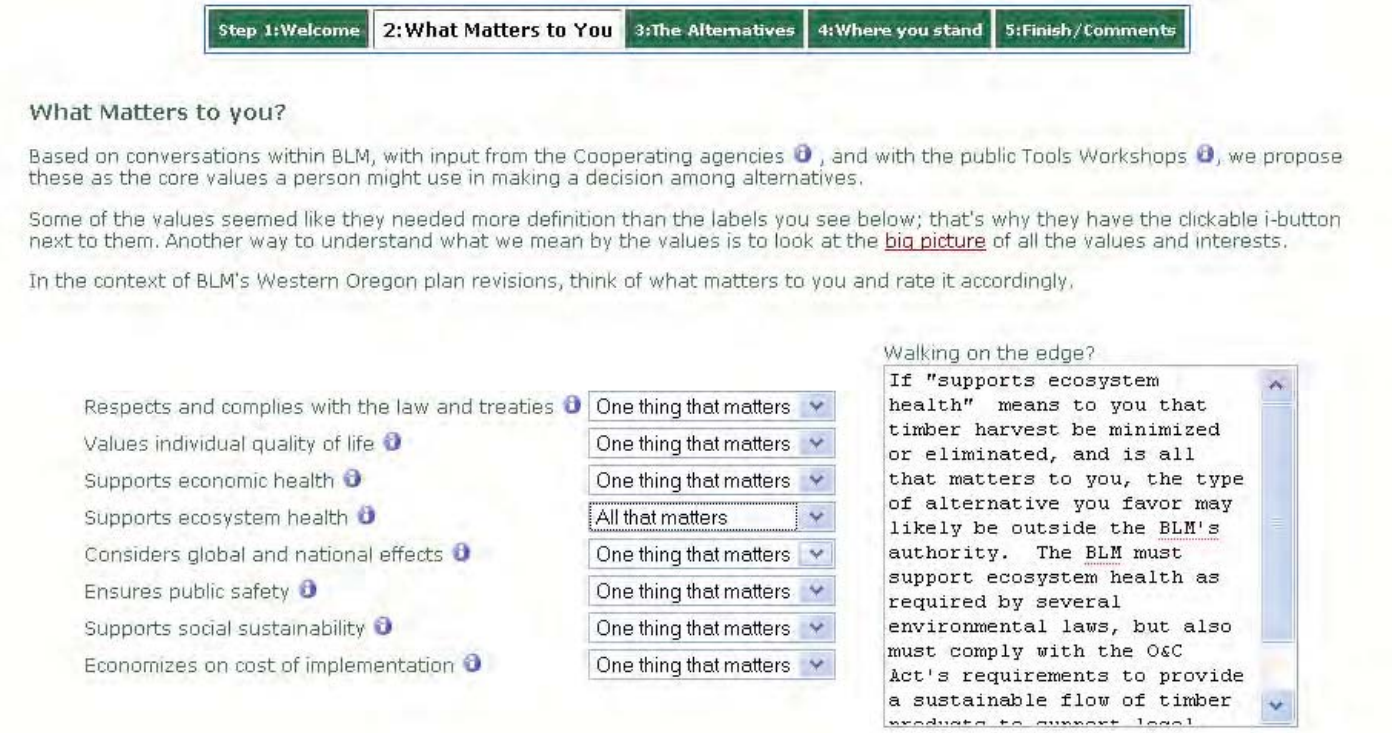

Fig. VIg: The Beta Test of MCDS for WOPR. In this screen shot, if a person chose "all that matters" for "supports ecosystem health", she would be informed (in somewhat turgid prose) that that choice lay outside BLM's decision space.

Pioneering *cont'd*

- Identifying where additional research or analysis is most likely to clarify the decision;
- Helping people make decisions based on the totality of information, rather than by relying on heuristics short-cuts used when information is overwhelming ; and
- Making the building blocks and logic chain for the eventual decision utterly transparent and traceable.

When we started, we and our BLM contacts believed there was a "decision space"–albeit a small one–within which BLM could negotiate. Thus we designed MCDS to map that decision space. The struggle to reconcile the decision map with WOPR reality helped us and BLM to understand how small the decision space was.

Within its O&C context Appendix A , WOPR became a factual question: how much logging is legal under environmental law? We could have designed a decision framework for *that* question, but by then it was too late.

But then why bother, one might reasonably ask?

Whatever else they might have criticized about WOPR, few people felt confused about its intent. Therefore, MCDS's transparent, traceable virtues were of appreciably less value.

And yet... when one reads WOPR, the actual logic chain between the analysis and the eventual decision is not crisply articulated nor easy to find. Imagine a member of the public finding an attractive website quickly and easily, doing an efficient and enjoyable recon, deciding he wanted to play with the decision framework, and in a matter of minutes not only exploring his own values but being able to clearly see the connection between criteria, alternatives, scientific analysis and eventual decision. If he then decided he wanted to learn more about one particular rating, the decision map would work as a table of contents, taking him directly to a voice-over powerpoint, text in the DEIS, or other material of his choice.

If it passed the cost/benefit test, it would be lovely.

Digital Divide?

One of the critiques of online commenting is that it shuts out those who have poor internet access. This is an important issue, but it is a frustrating critique when one looks at how utterly daunting it can be to participate offline. Online material can reach a wider audience, and well-designed interactive sites can appeal to a more diverse group of people because of the web's inherent design opportunities. Should we be concerned about the type of bias the web could introduce? Absolutely. But let's also think about the cumulative bias of different methods, and do the best we can in an informed way.

A Dream for Accelerating Development of Good Web Design

Introspection about our own experience as well as observation of other websites, such as OpenGov and Limehouse, have reinforced our interest in creating a "crucible" for web design. These websites shine with good intentions, but they appear to be developed, as ours have been, within one kind of choir or another. In our case, we missed the central idea that the website was like a meeting place. It should be a place most stakeholders would invite their friends to come to.

Our intentions were neutral, but neutrality requires more than good intentions: it requires wisdom about the particular situation, and that can only come from diverse stakeholders. In Section II, we struggled to find mitigation for the reduction of diverse perspectives outside the mediation context, suggesting feedback, focus groups, more feedback and public meetings as a way to reclaim neutrality and effectiveness. Over time, this probably would work. (If not, private websites will be the true pioneers, and eventually government would have to catch up.)

But what would really accelerate the design of effective, transparent and meta-transparent websites is collaboration about design. What if stakeholders used the tools we suggested in Section II *and* worked collaboratively to develop a website? What if the goal were to develop a website that other federal agencies, state and local government, the timber industry, the environmental community, the American Disabilities Advocates, and the League of Democracy Transformers all supported and campaigned for among their constituents?

I suppose we are still naive, tenacious and hubristic, because this sounds like paradise.

VII. Comments

Treasures in the Chaff &

When an agency analyzes comments made on a DEIS, they first sort the submissions and identify the unique ones a submission is a letter, postcard, etc.). They then parse the unique submissions into comments. For example, an individual letter could contain: a comment about wetlands, another about riparian buffers, and yet another about the BLM's interpretation of the O&C Act three comments in one submission. Finally, the agency determines whether an individual comment is substantive under the Council on Environmental Quality's guidelines Part 1503.40).

The schematic below is roughly proportional: as is typical for large projects, about half the submissions are unique. That means that for WOPR, about 5,000 people took the time to write an original submission. If one assumes five comments per submission, that is 25,000 comments.

In examining public comments on WOPR, we had three objectives:

- To determine whether the non-substantive comments "the chaff") might actually contain valuable information;
- To see whether we could increase the proportion of substantive comments through our innovative elicitation of comments on the web, and mayhap to increase the amount of 'valuable information;'
- To report on the comments in such a way that the public would know they had been heard.

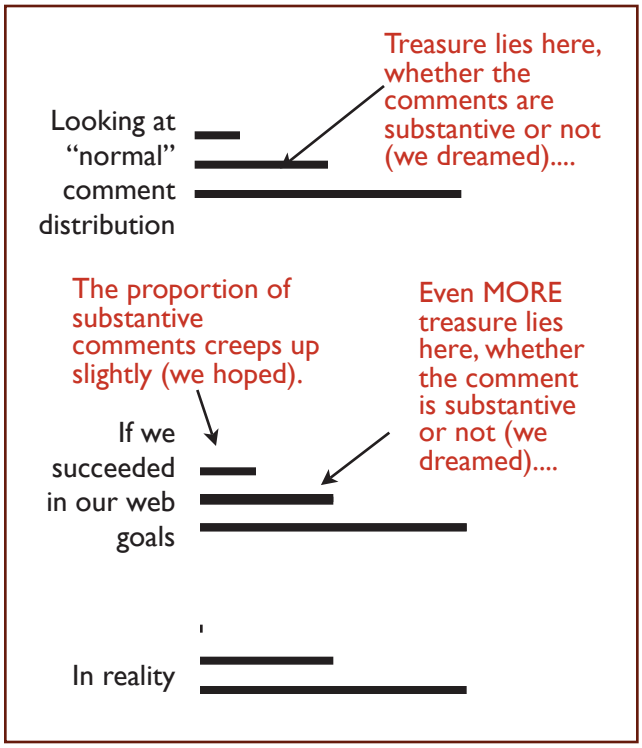

Fig. VIIa: In each of these sets of bars, the top bar represents the proportion of substantive comments, the middle bar is unique comments, and the bottom bar is total comments. The bars are proportional.

In the meantime, BLM's application of the guidelines became more strict than we had anticipated, as illustrated in the bottom set of bars in the schematic: fewer than 100 comments were deemed substantive.

Dr. Brian Muller, of the University of Colorado's Land Use Futures, performed the analysis. He hypothesized the "chaff" would actually hold important information about the way the public:

- Relates to the agency;
- Uses the land now and expects to use it in the future;
- Applies values to resource decisions;
- Has/develops/fosters an attachment to place;
- Understands the agency for instance its land ownership patterns);
- Understands the science; and,
- Relates to outreach.

In addition, the programmatic information could help in project=specific planning, and an analysis of the patterns of commenting could provide insight in designing future outreach.

Dr. Muller's Insight Report can be found at www.ecr.gov/pdf/LearningFromPublicComments.pdf

Interestingly, when sifting through the totality of comments rather than focusing on "substantiveness," the team still had difficulty, at first, in giving weight to procedural and relationship issues.

Richly Understood

Thoughts for the Future

The document did a much better job of reflecting what was heard than the FEIS, with its legally appropriate emphasis on substantive comments, though more could have been done to synthesize the information visually and spatially a good exception is Fig. VIIb).

Our learning went way beyond the comment report, however. The abyss between comments and substantive comments shocked us, and the interplay between commenting and outreach was a revelation something I knew intellectually, but to which I had never paid proper attention.

Key biases coming out of this experience were:

- The commenting system in NEPA is not a "learning system," but rather teaches and reinforces an ever-degrading dialog between agency and public and this is not peculiar to WOPR;
- Comment analysis and reporting have a legal aspect but also an influence on civility in its most basic form would it be beneficial to analyze this system in terms of communication principles and governance goals?
- If one wants to use outreach to elicit deeper comments, then the outreach has to be about promoting understanding. Podium speaking is insufficient.
- If one succeeds in eliciting deeper comments, the agency had better be poised to provide responses beyond those legally required;
- Reporting repeat comments as opposed to duplicates), such as variants on "Don't cut old growth," creates a challenge when preparing a vital, resonant summary. This is analogous to some of the problems with blogging and so-called "flame wars." It may be that "mapping comment space" provides a solution; and
- Improving commenting dynamics requires a long-term investment. It is nothing less than increasing social capacity.

Our experience with comment analysis also provided much of the fodder for the ruminations on neutrality presented in Section II. Agencies talk about "forms;" activists use the term -member comments-. Agency folk use NEPA as the frame. "Voting" style comments such as "don't choose alternative A" run afoul of the agency's constitutional role and self-image as the rational decision-maker. At one level, there is nothing they can do with those comments.

Yet outside of that frame, there are many reasons to generate non-substantive comments. As a neutral, I was blind to that perspective. A neutral website designer needs to understand and appreciate all stakeholders' motivations for commenting.

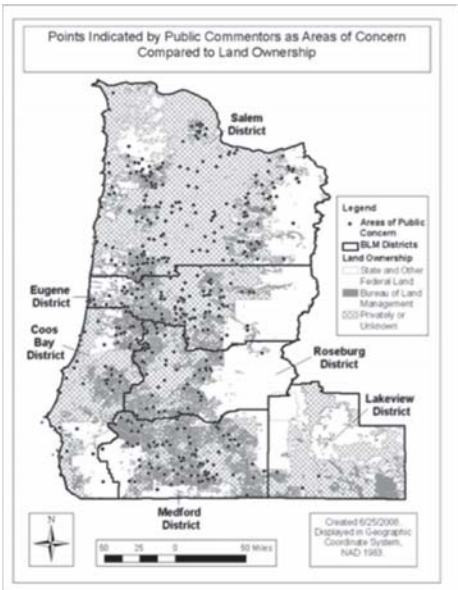

Figure VIIb: Land Ownership and Areas of Public Concern in BLM Commenting. This map suggests that the public has little understanding of BLM's land ownership and area of influence. The shaded areas denote BLM ownership. Dots represent place-based comments for BLM's WOPR.

From the Insight Report:

... there may be an opportunity to actively talk to or cultivate a broader constituency among people in the large and mid-size cities that represent a large majority of the comments. Second, there may be an opportunity to expand communications with both traditional and underserved BLM constituencies by focusing on the concerns of people in the 20 or so zip codes which generated the most comments. [p. 42]

Commenters... are confused about BLM's goals, mandates, and legal requirements and lack confidence in the science. [page 31.]

There is still much work to be done in encouraging people to make comments that are thoughtful and expressive of a genuine personal opinion. [page 45]

VIII. Personal Conclusions

One thing is clear: BLM took a big step when they hired us and invested in our web work. The Team Lead for WOPR has spoken many times of the decision to hire our team because it looked like we would present something different. "If you just keep doing things the same way, you can't expect to get a different result" was one oft heard phrase. "Scary Carie" was another.

There are two types of evaluations one must ask when beginning or ending a project. Too often, we skip to the second: was the hammer the right size? Was the screwdriver properly used? Did the house leak? In answer to those types of questions, our work was a bit of a op but not a hideous failure, especially given the challenges.

Let's review the goals from the introduction:

- *To improve accessibility of WOPR information*

Yes, we did, though both the accessibility *to* the site and *within* the site were riddled with problems.

- *Push technological frontiers to reach more people in a mor empowering manner.*

Yes, we did, and sometimes we felt it push back. Was the result more empowering? In some sense, for the few we reached, yes.

- *Glean additional information from DEIS comments*

I think here our naiveté was most evident. It is true that providing more engaging presentation does increase the information value of the comments, as we have found in other projects using MCDS. But generally speaking, the information value of comments is low. Sometimes that is because the writer has different objectives than providing high information value–we need to understand and design for those objectives more intelligently. Other times the paucity of information value is a sign of something seriously awry in the public government dialog.

The proportion of comments deemed substantive in WOPR is striking, but it is also a red herring. Whether there were 82 or 820 comments deemed substantive, the fact remains that the comment system seems inadvertently designed to develop a "reservoir of rage" between public and agency. It is an *un*learning system, a wound much bigger than WOPR or BLM. It was beyond our ken and beyond our in uence.

- *Explore what it means to "push th boundaries of mediation,"*

Here I think we did well, for we did in fact explore very thoroughly. The one thing I learned in my past as a workplace mediator is how essential role clarity is to relationships. In a mediation, the role of the mediator is well understood, albeit odd. But in this world of non mediation, erstwhile neutral 3rd party, there is no role clarity, and little authority or grounding for our involvement. I think this will inevitably lead to confusion and strife.

In section II, I talk about "counterpoise" in mediation (the environmental activists and industry are counterpoise for one another, and sometimes to the agency). I talk about neutrality as requiring good intentions, backup, and wisdom (in context). Because of WOPR, I have developed the hypothesis that neutrality without some version of counterpoise is probably not sustainable. Again because of WOPR, we have developed some ideas about how one might start to create a different kind of counterpoise outside of mediation. This is the single most important point of this report, the need for **ubiquitous, instantaneous, and instantaneously reported feedback** on websites or in other technologies in conjunction with traditional face to face outreach.

Finally, it was our goal to

- *perform our work ethica y.*

Did we? Yes, in a way. Certainly, looking back at my notes, I see a repeated theme. I get "pulled under," nearly drowning in the confusion and pressures of WOPR–and the confusion and pressures of my own hubris–and every time it is the rediscovery of ethics (and, occasionally, humility) that saves me. What I learned is

& Invitation to Collaborate

Set Us Straight

In preparing this document, I have done my best to integrate all the information from the WOPR experience and to honor the various points of view about our experiment. What WOPR did, more than anything else, was to show us the questions that come up when one tries to empower more people in public participation. It gave us enough to form some hypotheses about transparency and perspectives on public participation. They're a good start, we think, but only a start. Tell us what we missed, got wrong, got right... Tell us what ideas popped into your head as you read this. Let us know whether you would like to be part of an ongoing conversation! Contact Carie Fox, carie@daylightdecisions.com or Philip Murphy, philip@daylightdecisions.com, to set us straight. Thank you.

that one does have to repurpose ethics when one goes into new territory. The first time around that is difficult. But once done, incredibly useful.

The ethics of my teammates are rock solid. They were my touchstone when things got wobbly. As "scary Carie," I was the one who occasionally felt a loss of balance. I hope this document spares the next pioneers some of that.

The way my ethics stuttered a bit is that ethics are thoroughly practical. When one is ignorant of the landscape, good intentions are not enough. In the past, I have unconsciously relied on the counterpoise of diverse advocates to teach me the practical landscape–the context for neutrality. In WOPR, I discovered how isolating it is to be an oddball not quite embedded in an agency, who is at the same time of reasonable irrelevance to the advocates. I discovered how much on the job training is involved in neutrality, and how much I missed it. With Philip Murphy, I am now dedicated to designing systems in which that training can occur outside the mediation context.

And now for the first question: *Why are you doing this at all?* Ideally, that was a BLM decision, but it had some characteristics of a BLM tug of war. Again, this was new territory for me. I have often been called upon to help an agency in a mediation resolve their inner decisions so that they can operate successfully in a mediation. If the agency cannot prepare in this way, the other parties will run circles around them. Thus as a mediator it is not necessary for me to plead or scold, I just let the system create the pressure for resolution.

But who was I in relation to BLM's internal stresses about WOPR and outreach? An outsider. I respected those who thought we were misguided as much as those who championed us, but I had no basis for holding them in a room together until they came to agreement.

Today, I think I have some better tools for helping an agency think and talk through the differing perspectives on outreach, as discussed in Section III. But at that time, I was not able, and perhaps never would have been able, to help BLM answer the key question: *Why do this at all?* Perhaps monitoring this kind of ruffling of purpose would be a goal for the Institute in future projects.

I would like to conclude with a quotation from John Berger, which itself is a fitting segue to a plea for your input on this report. It was my hope to speak truth in this document: not just mine but whatever shared truth people were generous enough to struggle towards.

I thank them.

Contrary to what is usually assumed, a true writer's voice is seldom (perhaps never) her or his own; it's a voice born of the writer's intimacy and identification with others, who know their own way blindfolded and who wordlessly guide the writer. It comes ... from trust.

John Berger in *Portrait of a Masked Man* from *The Best American Essays 2009*, edited by Mary Oliver

Appendix A:

Why is BLM revising the existing plans?

BLM is revising the existing plans for three basic reasons:

1. After 10 years of plan implementation, timber harvest levels have not been meeting the levels directed by the existing plans. Through those years, BLM has gained experience and more accurate information upon which to base future actions.
2. There is now an excellent opportunity to coordinate BLM's land management plans with new recovery plans and critical habitat re-designations currently being developed for listed species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service.
3. BLM is re-focusing management goals for most of these lands to the goals of sustained yield prescribed by the statutory mandate of the O&C Act of 1937.

(See Purpose and Need - Draft EIS)

What has happened so far?

In September/October 2005 the BLM explored what was in play by collecting thousands of public comments, concerns and issues about the future management of BLM-administered public lands in Western Oregon. These varied comments were summarized in the Scoping Report, which also contains a Summary of Issues, Issues Identified, Alternatives Suggested, and Criteria for selecting a Preferred Alternative.

WOPR Background from the Website

Meanwhile, a couple of other significant documents were published: The Analysis of Management Situation, which describes the BLM's ability to respond to the issues raised in the Scoping Report and to formulate reasonable alternatives; and The Proposed Planning Criteria, which explains the planning process and the goals for the RMP.

Out of the process to date, three management alternatives were developed. We realize that you might not like any of them, and want to know how they were chosen, so here's the lay of the land:

There is a defined decision space, which led BLM to the "Purpose and Need". This space is bordered by laws like the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act and the O & C Land Use Act.

So, while each alternative represents differing approaches to new management of the land, what they have in common is that each was designed to meet the stated Purpose and Need of the plan revision process. The BLM can't chose which laws they want to comply with and which they'd rather ignore. If you don't care for the Purpose and Need, then perhaps the agency has interpreted the law differently than you would, or the law itself is not your cup of tea.

What does all of this have to do with you?

Well, hang on a bit longer. Now we come to the present and the preparation of the draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and draft Environment Impact Statement (EIS). This is probably what you're most concerned about–what are the consequences of each alternative if put into practice? The draft EIS is what you'll want to look at, as it will show you how the three alternatives will make a difference to your landscape.

Then, whatever your feelings, you can now share them in the public comment period following the release of the DEIS. Maybe you accept the boundaries within which the BLM must base their decisions. Still, you might have ideas for modifying the alternatives. You may see ways to add to, improve, or modify the information the BLM accumulated. Or do you even see some other alternatives that fit the Purpose and Need? Tell us.

If you submit comments, what will be done with them?

Well, if your comments are substantive, BLM will summarize and respond to them in the final EIS. Then, following the comment period, the proposed RMP and final EIS will be prepared. These documents will build on the draft RMP/EIS and your comments to make a better plan. Meanwhile, an Independent Report will be prepared for all the comments.

So who makes the final decision, you ask? That would be the Oregon State Director based on advice from the six BLM District Managers.

This background to the WOPR DEIS, which included numerous hyperlinks, can be found at http://www.daylightdecisions.com/content/PrincipalFramedPage.aspx?PAGECODE=WHATS_ABOUT.

This report is available online at:
http://www.daylightdecisions.com/ddweb/WOPR_Report.pdf

The End Page

WOPR Outreach: Lessons Learned

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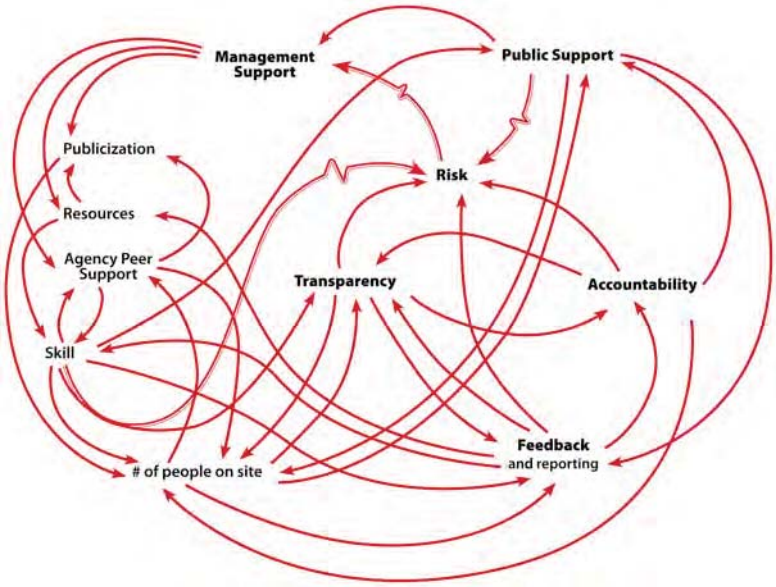

Fig IIe: Influence Diagram for Transparency when Feedback is Included. The smooth arrows indicate x increases y. The squiggly arrows indicate x decreases y.

Useful Links

http://www.ihdocs.com/explorers/DocExplorerFrame.aspx The online DEIS Text. Note the dominant (but not particularly useful Table of Contents.

http://www.daylightdecisions.com/content/PrincipalFramedPage.aspx?PAGECODE=WHATS_ABOUT This is where some of the best (and absolutely cheapest nuggets were tucked away: the narrative contained in Appendix A of this document and the powerpoints explaining the core science issues.

http://www.decisioncafe.com/dhroot/dhowners/wopro/mro/wp_Slideshow.asp?QSHT=DH_NOBODY&QSMID=298&QSDBT=MSSQL This was part of the 'Spring Forum' as we beta-tested the use of MCDS for WOPR. (Log in your values on the first such screen tosee how we helped people understand the decision space.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2BMvHwXxmQ Fly-over of the South Umpqua Natural area under WOPR.

www.ecr.gov/pdf/LearningFromPublicComments.pdf The independent analysis of comments without using a "substantive" filter.

http://www.infoharvest.com/wopr/deisanalysis.pdf Philip Murphy's decision analysis of the WOPR DEIS.

http://gsnm.ecr.gov/ is an illustration of what Murphy and Fox learned on WOPR: the graphics are better, and the Table of Contents, which appear on the x and y axes, is appropriate to the objective of the interaction. Also note the ubiquitous feedback options.

http://gsnmvibe.ecr.gov/hike/ Interactive modeling (multi-criteria decision support . If user goes to the right, can input values as part of general scoping; if goes to the left, gets a preview of the interactive modeling to be used with the DEIS (important for meta-transparency .

http://www.iap2.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=5 houses the IAP2 spectrum: the single most useful 8 1/2 x 11 in public participation.