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Seminar and Discussion Series

Transcription of History - Collaboration - why it's hard, why it's frustrating, and why I still think it is the way forward: reflections on collaboration in Montana's Crown of the Continent, 2014-01-31

Item Metadata

Collection: Spring 2014

Creator: Parker, Melanie, speaker; Unidentified speaker

Title: Collaboration - why it's hard, why it's frustrating, and why I still think it is the way forward: reflections on collaboration in Montana's Crown of the Continent

Date: 2014-01-31

File Name: ccc_2014_spring_parker_special.mp3

Date Transcribed: May 2023

Transcription Platform: Konch

BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

[00:08 - 00:11] Speaker 1: That was about collaboration. Why do you hate it? Why you love it? Why do you think it's the way forward?

[00:13 - 02:07] Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks, guys. This will be great. So I do have some things to say, but then I would love to have conversation and back and forth. And I actually am thinking of turning some version of this into a little essay. So if you can help me shape what would be useful or not useful, because now, like Robin said, I have been doing the collaboration thing, the dance for 17, well, 17 years as Northwest Connections and probably going on 20 something years beyond that. So I'm starting to think like maybe I should harvest some of my own experience and put it out there somewhere. I have no PowerPoint. [laughs] And so I thought I would introduce myself a little bit and then and then just go right into the collaboration for I have had meetings all morning about Northwest Connections. And the thing that I'll say a little bit about Northwest Connections is that it is a place based, community based, actually regionally based, I would say more than community based NGO. I was one of the founders, one of three founders. I am the current executive director. And that NGO has at its heart, kind of like Robin said, we do collaborative place based conservation, and then we teach collaborative place based conservation

to undergrads. And so the idea is everyone that works at Northwest Connections, we all basically do both. We do conservation and we teach conservation. And then the students who come get to sort of be part of the conservation and collaboration that we that were involved in. And and so that's that's thrilling and fun and also really complicated and difficult to figure out how to manage. But that's what we do. So if you have questions later about connections in general, I'm happy to go there.

[02:07 - 04:13] My own background so I grew up in Arizona to the south of here, and in a kind of a redneck ish kind of family, the youngest of five and blended family, the whole thing, and was the kid that was just always out in the dirt looking at tracks and plants and, you know, that kid. And then for vagaries of circumstances ended up in California and did my undergrad at UC Santa Cruz at the time at which and your slug two at the time at which I think I think UC Santa Cruz is still has an amazing program but very interdisciplinary very teaching oriented situation and had two amazing mentors who who worked in internationally and collaborative based, place based conservation long before it had any of those names. So two gentlemen who worked in the 50s and 60s. And so it was really shaped by them and always knew that I was going to be this bridge between sort of, you know, redneck users like my brothers that would drive jeeps in the middle of rivers and turn up the volume and that kind of thing. And the conservation world that I so vibed into. So through UC Santa Cruz, I really started to shape my interest as a youngster. And at Santa Cruz, I don't know if it's still this way. We had to do theses as undergrads and so I did my thesis in the country of Colombia. So I really, really got my first comeuppance from a woman, Margarita moreno otero. She was actually part of the Brundtland Commission. This is in 1986, 87. And and she did something that I want to later reflect back to because the project that we're part of now, the collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project, actually resonates a lot with what she was doing in Colombia at the time in terms of the way she was incentivizing collaboration. So anyways, worked in Colombia very quickly decided for me personally, international work wasn't where I wanted to put my energy and went through a whole sieve of I usually go on at length about this with undergrads because I think when you're that young, you're like,

[04:13 - 05:55] What am I going to be when I grow up? And of course I was like, What do I want to be? Through a long series of circumstances, decided to be a high school teacher, which I've now decided was boot camp for life. That was like the best thing you could have ever done. Todd High School man survived that and then decided to go back to graduate school. So like a lot of you, I feel like I was definitely the person who like school, work, school, work. I never just did like the big chunk of school and then, you know, tried to find the career, went back to graduate school in Montana, at which point I really wanted to do place based stuff and just lucked out in meeting a couple of, you know, fellow journey people and started Northwest Connections. So, so just I've been involved in

collaboration in Colombia, in the Swan Valley. I landed in a place called the Swan Valley. And so if I had a PowerPoint, you know, forget the PowerPoint, Just imagine very deeply forested Valley wilderness areas on both sides were about an hour and a half from the nearest town, which would be Missoula, Montana, about an hour and a half south of Glacier National Park. So these core protected areas on both sides and yet the valley very much carved up into multiple use lands for the Forest Service and then Plum Creek, Timberlands and state lands and then private. Right. So it's this multitude of ownerships landed there about the time that that local citizens fire before I got there. We're starting sort of those first nascent collaborations and and so that was really so I was involved in the Swan and that sort of very deep place based collaboration through. So I was just writing to myself in the 1980s, sort of did the Columbia International thing in the 1990s Swan Valley

[05:55 - 07:38] Refocussed local collaboration. Throughout the 2000 that local collaboration gave birth to dealing with a very specific issue, which was the divestment of corporate Timberland in western Montana. So we spent about ten years organizing and catalyzing collaboratives, a collaborative around finding a solution to that, which ended up with a fairly large conservation transaction. And then through the 20 tens here, the last four or five years, really very involved in restoration, job creating stuff through through the through LRP. You guys all know what CFS is, right? So can I just say from now on, Okay. Um, so I feel like I've done sort of seen collaboration and been part of it in some different angles and so, so the kind of, the first thing that I was going to throw out there is right now we are in the Northern Rockies in particular. We're getting a lot well, I think nationally, actually, there's there's sort of this push back against collaboration, right? So I'm hearing all these critiques about collaboration and and you know, how it's used. You know, it's undermining the NEPA process and blah, blah, blah, all these other critiques. And so the first thing I want to say in response to the critique so so I guess what I want to say is that I'm I'm a total champion of collaboration. Like I'm smoking the same stuff that you're smoking, right? At the same time. Like, I think that we have to not just be champions of what we do and we have to listen to the critiques and those of us that are doing it. And and I'm here to say that there's a lot broken and a lot not working with the collaborations that I've been a part of. So I want to get to that, like what I think is not working.

[07:38 - 09:47] But first I want to say, in my opinion, collaboration is has never, in my experience been about collaboration. It's always been about a place or an issue or both. And so I used to I always say, well, we do place based collaborative conservation because the whole, the whole magic of collaboration is that you can all talk to each other because you care about something in common, and usually that something is your place, right? So in the literature or in the blogosphere or whatever, I just want to stop. But we're not collaborating for collaborating sake. We're working with

diverse people to to to do something important for a place or, or about an issue. And I think either can, can, can work, although I think place is better. It's more grounding, no pun intended. You know, collaborations that I've been involved in have always grown organically there, sort of. I think now that collaboration is becoming institutionalized. We've forgotten that the origins of it is that it grew organically out of conflict, right? It grew out of places where we just couldn't talk to each other about things because they were so divisive. And so in our case, like in the Swan Valley situation in the 90s, our collaboration wasn't even that sophisticated. It was just simply to keep people from, you know, it was to heal the social divides in our community between loggers and environmentalist, basically. Right? It was it was like we're not being civil to each other in the post office, let alone that we're not affecting public lands management in any significant or meaningful way. We're just not being nice to each other. So we we started by just trying to broker civil conversations among ourselves about issues. You know, I look at things like the Blackfoot challenge and other collaboratives, you know, in our region, very much they grew organically and we still function this way to heal the divides between either agencies and landowners, communities or between academia and communities.

[09:47 - 11:37] And so very, very much we still work in that intersection. I would say I would say the social well, we'll get to that later. No, we'll get to now. Social divides. You never heal them forever, right? It's like I'm like at this point in my career, I'm like, it never ends. It never ends. As soon as you, like, get everybody singing Kumbaya, five people die, five people move, ten more people move in. Another person comes from the university. The district ranger changes jobs. You have a whole new cast of characters and you start all over again. So it's, you know, the sort of upside and downside is that it's never done. Just when you think it's done, it's not done. So so we've got to be in there, like Myles Horton said, for the long haul. Uh oh. And then the other reason I think the the collaboratives that I've been a part of organically grew up was to in that time of conflict, you know, hello, the environmentalist one for a while there, everything shut down. And so a lot of the collaboration did come. We have to be honest about this. A lot of it did come from people wanting to find a way forward for economies, for ranchers, for logging, for the things that we so successfully sort of clamp down for a little while. The Spotted owl example, what have you. And still today I think a lot of the collaboratives at their core, you know, yes, it's triple bottom line but there's definitely there's there's an edge there right. Among people that that that have livelihoods or people that want livelihoods for what's the path forward for our economies. So, you know, the idea that we're going to sort of bring in we're going to orchestrate a collaboration just by bringing a bunch of people together and talking, it's like, no, what's the organic reason that you have to get together?

[11:37 - 13:32] What's the what's the what's the identify what it is that you all want to accomplish? Um, also, I would say collaboration in the, in some of the critiques I'm reading is so focused on

because of CFA. I think there's a lot of anti collaboration talk out there that really makes collaboration. Sounds like it's all about forestry. And I'm like, It is not. We have been doing rangeland stuff, we've been doing wildlife stuff, we have done land exchanges, we've done trails, projects, you know, and on and on and on, development, you know, smart growth types of projects. So, so collaboration definitely bigger than than any one sector. And then the other critique I think that I'm hearing out there is because of a lot of the place based legislation right now. So. Right. You've got senators like ours in Montana and others around the West that are saying, oh, you know, we got the wilderness, the Wilderness Society and the the local timber industry got together and they're going to, you know, put together a quid pro quo, basically. Well, we'll give you more wilderness, right? Do you guys know what I'm talking about? So so for instance, there's there's this we call it the tester bill in Montana. But. Collaborative jobs, recreation. I can't think of that name right now. Anyways, it basically draws a circle around the geography and it says, We'll add wildernesses and then we'll try and guarantee certain amount of product coming off those those four services. Senator Wyden has sort of looked at some similar things in Oregon, various sort of place based legislation. And they're holding they're carrying that word collaboration. And so some of our detractors are saying, well, you know, collaboration that's just a backroom deal. And so part of what I want to say is that's not collaboration.

[13:32 - 15:41] Let's call that like a negotiated proposal or something. That's not what we all mean by collaborative conservation. So I think we do. People like me have to kind of speak out about that and get the get the word out that we don't as good as as good or bad as those special initiatives are, they aren't really what we're talking about in terms of collaborative conservation. The other critique that's out there that I've been just kind of just bristles me. It always has bristled me, but it's bristling even more now. Is this idea that collaborative place based conservation is is localism, right? It's it's devolving decision making to local authorities over national resources, whether they're water, wildlife, what have you, lands And I don't know about you guys, but I've never been a part of a collaborative group that didn't have if it was functional participation by regional and national groups. Right? We've always had regional conservation groups, national conservation groups, regional industry groups, not so much national industry, but regional industry groups. You know, there's always some representation of broader interests than just, you know, the people that live in that watershed or on the Front Range or something. So I think, you know, we should sort of be getting that word out there. And then the one that's really current that that I'm seeing a lot in Montana right now is that, you know, so there's this there's this thing that like Matt Taylor and some of our environmental advocacy groups in Montana are basically saying like NEPA is the ultimate collaboration. If you want to collaborate, get yourself involved in the NEPA process, submit comments. Right? That is the ultimate democratic, open, inclusive to, you know, process and and

also insinuating that collaboration is subverting the NEPA process, right? That we're a select group of folks and we're subverting the NEPA process.

[15:41 - 17:31] So so that's become a bit of a challenge. So I guess I'll just transition to what's hard and frustrating because that starts it right there. So I guess from the top of the list, you guys all know this, but what's hard and frustrating is getting the right people involved. And so that has a lot of nuance layers to it because if you're orchestrating getting the right people involved than by nature, you know, there can be this perception that it's orchestrated. So how do you invite everyone but invite the right people and and the right people, in my own opinion, being defined as people that represent different interests but are open minded and interested in learning and solving problems. Yeah. I want the people that are close minded and don't want to learn too. But if you don't have those right people there, you're sunk. Right. So getting the right people I think is a big challenge. But more important, I think keeping the right people is a big challenge with collaboration. And so this sort of issue of capacity to participate. You and I were talking about this a little bit this morning, the capacity to participate in these collaborative efforts. Who has the capacity, Right. And how how do you sustain your ability to participate? So like, for instance, for us, you know, we started out as sort of not doing it as part of our job. We would show up as citizens and volunteers, and then pretty soon we realized like, well, we can't sustain that. And we started writing it into our job descriptions and fundraising for it and showing up in that way. And then, you know, the people that supported doing that, those private foundations, they're all done now with funding that they're off to something different. And so now we have to find new mechanisms.

[17:31 - 19:24] So like for a group like ours, we're now taking sort of admin costs out of some of our federal contracts and saying we're going to take 10% of what we're doing on the ground and pay for our collaboration through that. Well then not everybody has that right. And so how do you sustain that participation? And so then what happens like what's happened with our help is you start out with a group that looks like this and it's a big, healthy, robust conversation. And then four and a half years into a ten year program of work, the group looks like this. And so we have a lot of groupthink. We're not really challenging each other. We all love each other. It's a big hug fest. And then, you know, and then, you know, I think we're wide open to criticism from folks that say, well, you're just a small group of people that are, you know, so the challenge of constantly stopping yourself and saying, who's not at the table and how do we outreach to them? And the worst part is who has the money, time and capacity to outreach to them. That's the bigger issue. Everybody wants to outreach to them. This is who's going to do it, Who has the time. So I'm finding that to be a very hard, very frustrating aspect of collaboration. And I also think it makes us really vulnerable as a movement. And so I'd love to I would like to flag that as one to open up to you guys. If you have creative ideas that you've seen

from other collaboratives or across, you know, your your experience for what what works to sustain people's involvement. The second thing that's really hard for us right now is when we first started in the Swan with our swan based collaboration and then now we have we have a regional collaboration in the Southwest Crown Collaborative, which basically what we did and this was Northwest Connection's catalyzing role.

[19:24 - 21:07] We saw that we had three regional watershed, small collaborations and we said, Why don't we draw a circle around all of us and go for this restoration money that Congress is dangling out there? And so that's how we created our Southwest Crown Collaborative. So it's really complicated because we have basically three pre-existing collaborations that are trying to work together. And then get this, you'll love this. Each collaboration is on a different district of a different forest. So we have the Helena National Forest, the Lolo National Forest and the Flathead National Forest. So we're basically saying all you people work together, which it turns out that doesn't happen very easily. And then all of us work together and then all across this landscape. So that's it's been a great challenge, I think in a way, because we are bumping up against a lot of internal Forest Service barriers and learning a lot about that. But it's definitely challenging and frustrating. But when we first started, we were working on that low hanging fruit, you know, the stuff that you guys can resonate with in Colorado, the sort of, you know, Oh, we haven't had fire in 100 years in the Ponderosa Pine Forest. Let's thin out the Doug fir. And and so that was pretty cool. And we all got really full of ourselves. Oh, we collaborate, we design these projects and we monitor them with multi-party monitoring. We're doing so well and but our forests are really, really complex in that part of Montana. It's, you know, if you're into botany, I was telling ARIN, right, this is a place where you can find, you know, Cedar Grande fir and hemlock and Ponderosa pine and larch and just crazy, crazy forest types all together. So they're really complicated and their ecology is really complicated.

[21:07 - 22:55] So we went to those little acres where the pine goes and we dug for well, and we were like, Well, we're so successful. Well, now we're all done with the low hanging fruit. All done. I'll treat it. Right now we're into mixed conifer forests, really diverse plant and wildlife habitats, critical habitat for lynx, you know, really much harder stuff. So guess what? Now our collaboratively designed projects are getting appealed and they're getting litigated and we're getting slowed down. And then the Forest Service is saying, But we collaborated with you people because you are going to keep us from getting appealed and litigated and you did for 4 or 5 years. Now we're not so sure about this collaboration. So then this leads to my next challenge. And frustration is that at this moment in time, 2014, we have dual processes. Everyone's doing both things. All the groups like us are participating in the NEPA process because we have to. We have to have a voice. There and we're participating in the collaborative, all the meetings, all the field tours, all the stuff that goes with

collaboration. And then the Forest Service is meeting with all of its collaborators collaboration, collaboration, collaboration. And then they meet with all the litigators and then they have to go through the whole NEPA planning and NEPA comment and NEPA process. So everybody's feeling double taxed right now. And and that, I think, is where some of the the friction is coming right now internal to the Forest Service. I think there's people saying why are we doing both external to the Forest Service. The the litigating groups are saying, yeah, you don't need to do both, just do NEPA. That's what we've always done. And then groups like ours are struggling with where's the most effective, Where are you most effective in the system?

[22:56 - 24:42] Um, so the dual process thing, I might go through just a couple of more challenges. Another challenge I think for collaboration is that everyone that is on the outside of a state or federal agency does not understand the inside of a state or federal agency, and particularly with the Forest Service, I've noticed lesser degree with other federal agencies there is a culture of not critiquing your own agency and so you can't even find out as an external partner how it works because they're afraid to say how it works because it'll make them it'll make the organization look bad. And so we have actually we've actually initiated a new thing in the Southwest Kern Collaborative, where the turn of the fiscal year for the Forest Service. We just ask our Forest Service partners, okay, give us the update. What are all the rules that just changed on you in the last 12 months? Like how is the budget different this year than it used to be? How are the targets different? How is Congress interpreting your job differently? What pressures are you feeling like? Download to us so that because otherwise we're asking for them to do things that they can't do, but they don't really want to tell us why they can't do it. So we're really trying to break down those walls a little bit. And the other thing we just started on our on our CFP is we started a policy subgroup. We have a retired four supervisor who is now that she's outside, the agency is like, I am going to make change. And then you have people like me that have been engaged in policy for a while. And so we have a little group where we're trying to harvest what are all the policy barriers that we're experiencing, this collaboration, and then push that up the line. But still, that's a that's a big barrier to understanding agencies.

[24:43 - 26:23] And then I already hit on my last one, which is the group think how you can kind of fall into groupthink. So, so why do I do it? So remember I said, those are all the things that are hard, but this is the way forward. So I do think it's the way forward. And it's not only the way forward, but it is fun. So collaboration, in my opinion, is the way forward and works best when it is collective learning and not just, you know, I think people from the outside think collaboration is, you know, compromise or. Um, you know, come to some common ground. But every collaboration that I've been part of that is succeeding never just drives people to find a common ground. It drives people to do collective learning, to sort of cycle up to a higher common ground. And the example is giving this

morning that I'm really proud of in the Southwest Crown Collaborative. For all the bad things I could say about our experience up there in Montana, and you can drill into me and I'll give you more, more bad things. But but one of the coolest things is that when we made our application to Congress, we said 10% of all of our money is going to go to monitoring and the monitoring is fine. It's okay. It's not it's not world class monitoring, but it's it's adequate. It's fine. But what we did start the last two years is at the end of every field season, we have this adaptive management workshop where and we get all the line officers, they're all the actual decision makers, the Rangers and the and the forest supervisors affected and all the monitoring projects give over two days, give presentations what their recent findings are. But then the most important part is that we broker us.

[26:23 - 28:12] So what conversation? So what? So you monitored all this shit. So what? What have we learned? What are we learning? And what's really cool is that the line officers now are feeling more and more comfortable to say you're monitoring the wrong thing. Because we have university partners, we have all kinds of partners that have their idea of what should be monitored to the Southwest plan. And more and more, the line officers are saying, you know, I like that. But what would be really helpful is if you measure this over here. And so we're really getting telling these guys, you know, after 25 years of seeing this stupid diagram, adaptive management, we're going to plan it, we're going to implement it, we're going to monitor it, and we're going to assess. I'm like, I never actually saw it happen. I've never seen it happen. Now I'm finally seeing it happen. I'm like, This is it. This is the this is the holy grail of adaptive management. So so it's exciting. We're actually doing that. So that's fun and it's collective learning. And the other thing that we're doing along the collective learning line, one of our partners from the Wilderness Society, I don't know if anybody knows Travis Beloit, but or below, but he's a resource ecologist with smart, smart guy, fun guy. He has talked our collaborative into really doing experimental design with a lot of our forest treatments. And so so we're actually doing the management that needs to happen, but we're doing it in an experimental design sort of framework. And he's got the Forest Service thinking that that's their job, which is really cool. And then the other thing that really works and is fun in terms of promoting this collective learning is, is post land management treatment, post treatment field tours.

[28:12 - 29:59] So heretofore every field tour I've ever been on, we stand around and we say, What do we want to do with these acres? What would we imagine would happen? How often does the same group of people, the same group of people, go back out afterwards and say, What do we think of this? Did it work? What do we like? What do we not like? What would we do different next time? So we're big advocates now in our region on the post treatment field tour and less less emphasis on the planning. Let's get the best plan we can out the door and then let's go see what we think of it. And then the other thing that is fun I already alluded to and what I think is really working is and let

me just go backwards to go forward. So I was saying when I was in Colombia in the 80s, this woman, Margarita, she had this idea. And so the idea was she had she had she'd risen up in her country and was the director basically of the Department of Natural Resources for the country. And she had studied in the US and studied in Europe and come home and sort of looked at her country. And everything in Colombia at that time was very top down. And most of the projects that her department was implementing were reforestation of degraded watersheds with eucalyptus trees. That was like the primary thing We're going to stabilize the mountainsides for water quality with eucalyptus trees. There was other things, but that was like the big push. And and so she sort of came with this idea like, I want to foment this bottom up thing. So she wrote a letter to all to a thousand mayors of towns across the country, and it just said, you're the mayor. You probably have a sense of what the problems in your locale are.

[29:59 - 32:10] If you can get together a diverse group of people, teachers, doctors, farmers, what have you, and you can come up with a plan for what you could possibly do to improve your locale. We'll give you money and 700 out of a thousand wrote back. Yeah, it was really very successful and very, very many of those implemented on the ground project. So when I did my thesis, I just went, you know, town to town and learned what everybody was doing and there was urban and rural and all that kind of thing. And then she had two other aspects of the whole program, which sounds like it's very similar to what you guys are doing here. But all those people came together, right, for collective learning at this center that she had created and sort of ongoing technical assistance, blah, blah, blah. Anyways, the thing I think I like about CFL or PE is it's not saying like, we want you guys all to collaborate. Here's what it looks like, here's the money, go do it. Basically, that whole program said, if you have a big landscape that you want to do something with and if you can get diverse stakeholders together and if you have a scientific plan for restoring the watershed, you may compete for these dollars. Right. And so I actually really like the fact that that's how they set it up. And there's you know, there's always issues with winners and losers, but at least the money went to places that were ripe. And now I think the really important thing about kelp we're halfway through a ten year program is and this is what excites me, is to harvest what's happening in all these places and then actually make this program effective at changing land and resource management. In the US, right? How it works. So if we can harvest this and go back and make those policy changes from what we're learning, that's what excites me. So so in a nutshell, that's kind of like what's really hard and what's frustrating and what gets me up in the morning to keep subjecting myself to this punishment. So with that, I would love to just open it up and see what you guys are interested in and what we could bat around here.

[32:19 - 35:12] [unintelligible]. [applause] [unintelligible]. What's your name, by the way? Crystal. [inaudible]. That's not one question, just so you know. Yeah. No, it's good. It's good. Yeah. [inaudible]. So I'm going to kind of come around about about that. I was saying earlier this morning, we a bunch of us in sort of Idaho, Montana, got a little funding from the Brainerd Foundation. The Brainerd Foundation said to us, you know, we love what you guys do, but you all use different words to describe it. Could you please come up with one phrase that or one you know, is it community based conservation? Is it collaborative conservation? Is it community natural based? Natural resource management? Is it community? So we've been actually in this branding process for the last 12 months with a marketing firm, and the marketing firm came in and she listened to a bunch of us for a bunch of time. She's. She's like, You guys are all about process. She's like, nobody finds process. Like unless you start talking about what you're actually doing, nobody's going to care. And we were like. Right. And we all knew that, but we didn't know it. Right? So so. So one of the things that that we are trying to get a lot better about is talking about what do we actually accomplishing. And I think going back to my very first point, there is no purpose to collaborate, collaborate. It's always about the place of the issue, what you're doing. So in our case with this with the Southwest Crown Collaborative, our objectives are, you know, because they're tied to the legislation, they're very much restoration and jobs, right? So we have objectives that we set for miles of stream opened up to native fish. We have objectives around acres, you know, restored to their natural fire regime. We have objectives around acres of noxious weeds returned to native plant communities. We have objectives around jobs maintained or created and the the local capture of those jobs, how how local those jobs are versus how we're bringing people in.

[35:15 - 36:49] We don't really have any process objectives, which is a really interesting point. Maybe we should because of the issue that I'm talking about in terms of getting smaller, but we don't right now have any process objectives at all, you know, and then we measure them rigorously basically, and report to ourselves every fall and say, you know, we're 60% away along the lines on this and we're only 20% on this and we only have five more years, what are we going to do to rank this up and that kind of thing? So that's how we do that. What was the other part of your question? [inaudible] They were collaboratively designed. [inaudible] A year and a half. Well, we had a deadline so that in that case, again, because I think this I really am a kind of a fan of CFL, as many as many bad things could be said about it. But we had a deadline to get our proposal submitted. So we had a we had about 18 months from the moment we started to when we knew we needed to submit our proposed strategy. So it was collaboratively designed objectives, collaboratively designed way to get to those objectives and sort of vetted through that process. And then we had a deadline and we had the Wilderness Society at the time had a lot of funding to help convene us. And so they

did a lot of the behind the scenes taking what everybody said, turning it into a document, spitting it back out, that kind of thing. They played a big role in that.

[36:49 - 39:44] So. Yeah. [inaudible] You guys would know better. I think. There is some some niggling around in the in the research sphere about that. Isn't there? [inaudible] One of the big ironies for us was the Colt Summit project, which has gotten a lot of press because it's been litigated and it's just now getting through the court process. You'll love this, actually. So, Tim Love it was it's Tim Love's district, right? So he got sued and and so they we went on we actually filed an amicus brief the first time the collaborative has ever done this. All the members of the collaborative filed a brief to the court, basically in support of of the Forest Service on this project. And anyways, Judge Malloy remanded one aspect and said, you know, you guys need to do a supplemental. A supplement to your on your links analysis.

[39:44 - 39:44] [unintelligible]

[46:18 - 47:41] I mean, it's interesting to me and I know maybe if you're a graduate student and you didn't work before graduate school, you wouldn't know this. But I think most of us know the most interesting thing about any work is the is the power dynamic. Between the funders and the practitioners. And and that issue of. What the funders think that they want to achieve and then how you couch what you want to do in terms that you know, and I think you. Were asking me earlier, you know, you know, there was about a. Ten year period well, there was about a ten year period in the 80s and early 90s where everything we talked about was civic engagement. And people like the Ford Foundation loved it and poverty alleviation and social blah, blah, blah. And then for about ten years it was all the environmental funders were like, Oh, you're getting you're getting stuff done where stuff is gridlocked. So the environmental so then everything. We did, we had to write. About all the environmental outcomes. And we're protecting land and wildlife and blah blah blah. And I'm not even actually sure what the next ten years is going to be, because right now I feel like all the grant. Funding has evaporated. In this part of the US and I don't know where the next source of funding is going to be, but I'm sure we'll have to figure out how to, you know to have that relationship between people who meanwhile but have their own idea of how what they want to see happen on your landscape. That's just crazy.

[47:42 - 51:30] [unintelligible]. Yeah. And I mean, I don't know what it will be like in what it is in Mongolia. I know what I was going to explain at one point is. When we started in the Swan Valley. It was very much citizen to citizen and a few very thoughtful, forward looking citizens saying, you know, we should be we should be thinking about how to take care of this. Place because those people come from Helena or state capital or Washington DC or somewhere else. They're never

going to do the things the way we would like to see them done. So let's let's start talking. And so those first conversations in our town. Hall. You know, before that it was very much working individually with land holders. Then it was landholders organizing a little bit. It was about ten years into that and it was actually me who at one point I was like, You know what we have in your guys's terms, we've brokered social agreement, we have social agreement we have no power. Well, what's that going to get us? You know, so that's when I was like well, we should start it now that we have this little nexus of social agreement. What if we invite some of the power brokers to come, but they come to our meetings. We're not going to their meetings they're scoping rooms. They're coming to our meetings. And that's when it started to build more into that representative and also built more regional than just the local. But, you know, I mean. I just think that's the thing I always tell and I will. Segue into. Undergraduate programs that we do in case you guys can proliferate our materials to any undergrads. You know. I always tell the undergrads, you know, there is no as you all know, every place has its own history, its own culture, its own. Ecology, its own. Quirkiness. Like what's the quirkiness factor? Like those people over there drinking evil water because they're all evil. And these people over here all do the cool stuff. So you know what is it about that? But there's just there's. The landscape is not uniform. So every kind of, you know, whatever we're calling this place based conservation or collaborative. Conservation is going to look different. So I think, you know, getting some of the the tools and the principles and for for these guys, for the undergrads that we have, we started these programs because we felt like we were never going to see systems change if we didn't see more and more. People. Coming into professions, whether they were academic professions. Or agency. Professions or, you know, World Wildlife Fund or whoever that didn't understand this kind of social, ecological, collaborative dance thing. So we started this as. Sort of a training ground for for. For undergraduates to come. They come, they live in our community, they participate in all this stuff, and then they do a formal set of curriculum. But we're out in, in the field all the time. And and when we started 17 years ago, we think we tell ourselves the story.

[51:30 - 53:59] As my therapist likes to say, the story I tell myself. Is the story I tell myself is that we were one of the first places to say, You don't just learn this stuff internationally. There's places in the US you can learn it. But now there's there's lots more like your own programs here. But, but, but I would love for you guys. We run two field semesters, one in the fall landscape and livelihood 16 credits. Undergrads can get and then Wildlife and the West. We started. Just a few years. Ago and it looks at wolves, grizzly bear, lynx and bull trout as case studies. Where we we go out. There and look at how community based approaches to wildlife recovery are happening. And we actually when I started Wildlife in the West, I wanted to do international comparisons because we have. Good friends that that work in a number of places. But everybody Pooh poohed me down on that. So we don't do that anymore. I'm the only one that wants to do international. So so these are two programs.

The credits come through University of Montana. We've had alum from CSU, so I know the credits transfer back. So if any of you are advisors. Or you get out there. I don't want to fly home to Montana with any of this today. So I'm going to walk around campus. But these are our one shooters for them for the nuts and bolts. And then these are posters. If you can think of any place to hang posters. I am shamelessly marketing, so it's part of our it's part of and I should circle back around that's part of the income. Earned income strategy. That we came up at Northwest Connections as an NGO. We said we don't want to be grant dependent. So our our sort of funding comes a third from students, a third from. Grants and foundation foundations and donors, and the. Third from contract work where we sell our our services to do contract work for the agencies, mostly. Monitoring, mostly ecological. Monitoring. So that's how we put our NGO together. So, so that means that we have to recruit and write grants. And so all the above. So yeah, thanks you guys. And [applause] yeah, I'd love to keep up the. Connection and super wild with all the work you guys are all doing. Super awesome. This is definitely one of those campuses that's pushing our movement forward, trying. All right. Have a good weekend. Enjoy the snow. Woo hoo! [unintelligible]

END TRANSCRIPTION