

**Dawson Regional Planning Conference
Conservation Assessment Workshop
February 18,19, 2012**

Take Away Messages from the Afternoon Presentations

Ecological Benchmarks

- What is different about “benchmark” approaches compared to previous approaches
- Importance of T.K. in potential “benchmark” areas where wildlife & fish densities have changed over time
- show limits of benchmark area
- benchmarks needed to show/catch natural variation
- Determining percentile of larger area benchmark areas
- Importance of scale
- Ground truthing is important for ecological benchmark models
- Liked idea of exploring established benchmarks (criteria)

Planning Tools

- Lot of tools and science being applied to ecological side – are same levels of science applied to economic and cultural values
- Commission will have to choose from certain of the options/modeling tools for selection criteria
- Many mapping tools available to DRPC
- Need to apply how information can connect to existing policy
- Subjectiveness in data interpretation
 - Maps can illustrate points clearly (e.g. caribou vs. disturbance)
 - Effects of habitat disturbance (+ve/-ve)
 - fire vs man = different
 - scale of disturbance (ie. fire vs placer mining)
- How to include social values
- How to explain models
- Keep “the big picture”
 - Models drill down too far
- Models are communication tools
- products are only as good as available data
 - Need to be recalculated on a regular basis
- Need a tool or model that integrates and synthesizes
 - Must be understandable to public

Balance

- Thresholds apparent in hindsight
- Conservation trade-off vs industry resource development/production interests
- fluctuating values, need to be consistent and reflected in land use planning area
- Land claim agreements seem to be properly recognized in the LUP process
- what if catchment area assimilated for development?
- Matrix also important for conservation/eco values
- Corridors and disturbances fragment the matrix
- Need to maintain sustainable and viable wildlife populations

How might a Commission consider the economic or “development” potential of areas that have high conservation value?

Communication

- Bigger conversation between Commission and parties
- Better communication between concurrent land uses
- Identify core values everyone is looking to preserve
- Consider aspirations/values within Trade-Off positions
- Uniqueness of each case/positions prior to agreement
- Early engagement of stakeholders, incorporating local and traditional knowledge

Information

- High quality areas need to be clearly set aside
- Heritage/cultural values, interests, resources
- Geological potential
- Where are overlaps?
- Incorporate human values for human habitation needs
- Capture socio-economic environmental aspects of project
- Protecting special/unique features and representative of region/ecosystems

Decision Making

- Plan needs to tie in to adjacent Plans
- Build adaptive management into plan + monitoring
- Must consider importance of good reclamation and returning land to productive ecosystem – enhancement – not either or
- Decisions important because it may be irrevocable
- Retain benchmark areas (with flexibility)
 - Sufficient areas to keep baseline
 - Claim have low impact & = low number of economically feasible projects
 - Low impact exploration lessens impact
- Higher conservation areas need higher BMP
- Consider adjacent conservation areas
- Need to consider long term values as future, intact ecosystem tourism has high value for a longer term = value ^^
- Legacy value
- Operating windows for development = good BMP and allows synergy between activities and wildlife
- Conservation values (defining them) will likely not help solve local LUP issues
- Depends on community and time
 - Levels of tolerance to activity change
- Where are the areas of flexibility
- Complex decisions --→holistic
 - Values
 - Agreements
 - Simplify or separate issues to find areas of agreement
 - “divide and conquer”

How might a commission use a combination of concepts from “trade-offs” and Cumulative Effects Management presentations with those associated with Conservation Assessment?

Valuation and Measurement

- Full cost accounting
 - Cost benefit analysis (& risk analysis)
 - Bring in outside (international) expertise
 - Social acceptability
 - Economic benefits
 - Need valuation tools for natural values
 - Need to include closure costs in equation (e.g. Faro)
 - Some conservation areas should not be developed and cannot be traded off
- Capture socio-economic environmental aspects of project
- Look at landscapes and cumulative effects
- Incorporate human values for human habitation needs
- Serious concern of cumulative effects in exploration over time

Decision Making

- Consider aspirations/values within Trade-Off positions
- Uniqueness of each case/positions prior to agreement
- Decisions important because it may be irrevocable
- Regulation for land-based activities must be kept current with values
- Different approaches may be necessary based on scale of activity – qtz mining

Key Messages

- Ground truthing of ecoregions is important
- Same level of research/science/tools used for ecological assessment should be used for economic and cultural assessments
- Consider all resource potential – mineral, forest, heritage, etc.
- Broad, but relevant info gathering is key
- Need to incorporate local & traditional knowledge
- Plan must identify “core values” + build them into plan
- CE approach can address some conflicts, but not all
- Plan should build in adaptive management strategy
- Use consensus model - find areas of agreement first
- Practical, efficient, implementable, understandable management regimes
- Need a tool or model that integrates and synthesizes. Must be understandable to public.