

**Changing Institutions and the Puzzle of Accountability:
The Case of the Henry's Fork Watershed Council**

BY

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September 24, 1999

The fields of environmental, natural resources, and public lands policy have been notably affected by the larger reinventing government movement as the limits of top-down regulatory approaches to environmental protection become increasingly clear (National Research Council, 1992; Rabe, 1994; NAPA, 1995; Weber, 1998). Many now contend that effective environmental programs require complex, collaborative partnerships among diverse government, civic, and business actors at the state and local levels--a dynamic similar to reform efforts in a multiplicity of other policy arenas, including education, policing, rural development, public health, and tax administration.¹ Beginning in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, grass-roots ecosystem and watershed-scale management became the vanguard of this movement. Citizens, government regulators, small businesses, environmentalists, commodity interests, and others started creating and choosing alternative collaborative institutions for governing public lands and natural resources in an attempt to improve governance performance *and* enhance accountability to a broader array of interests (Dagget 1995; John 1994; Johnson 1993; Jones 1996; Klinkenberg 1995; Marston 1997a, 1997b; Snow 1997).²

Grass-roots ecosystem management involves a dramatic shift in the organization and control of public bureaucracies responsible for managing the interaction between society and nature. Instead of centralized hierarchy, government experts in control, specialized agencies, and layer upon layer of written rules and procedures, grass-roots ecosystem management is premised on decentralized governance, shared power among public and private actors, collaborative, consensus-based decision processes, holistic missions (environment, economy, and community), results-oriented management, and broad civic participation. Found largely in rural areas dependent on nature's bounty such as Willapa Bay (Washington), the Malpai Borderlands (New Mexico, Arizona), the Henry's Fork watershed (Idaho), the Blackfoot River Valley (Montana), and the Applegate Valley (Oregon), grass-roots ecosystem management involves over 30,000 core participants and volunteers in over 200 communities, primarily in the Western U. S.³

These new institutional arrangements resurrect an age-old puzzle for scholars and policymakers: how to achieve improved governance performance and democratic accountability simultaneously? The goals of performance and accountability are usually treated as involving zero-sum tradeoffs--enhancing one diminishes the other. Yet grass-roots ecosystem management tries to enhance both at the same time. As such, grass-roots ecosystem management does not separate the idea of governance performance from democratic accountability. Instead, governance performance becomes an essential component of the overarching definition of accountability. Proponents argue that without an explicit focus on performance, accountability fails to capture the essence of the democratic process. Performance adds meaning to the deliberation and conclusions emanating from political institutions by explicitly connecting promises with

¹ For environmental policy examples, see Chertow and Esty (1997), John (1994), Knopman (1996), Rieke and Kenney (1997), and Snow (1997). The move to share bureaucratic decision-making power with citizens, to embrace collaborative public-private and public-private-NGO (non-governmental organization) partnerships, and to reject dense rule structures and hierarchy as necessary components of an efficient and/ or accountable public administration is shared by the following policy areas, among others: community policing (Bayley, 1994), tax administration (Sparrow, 1994), education (Matthews, 1996), elements of the federal JOBS (Job Opportunities in the Business Sector) program (Bardach and Lesser, 1996, pp. 206-207), rural development (Radin et al., 1996; Radin and Romzek, 1996), and public health (Walters, 1997, pp. 160-162; "Oregon option" discussion). All of this dovetails with what might be termed the resurgence of the de Tocquevillian ethic of civic responsibility. In policy areas across the board publics are mobilizing against the perceived results of government regulation and, in some cases, the imposition of values contrary to their own. They are seeking to reclaim the right to control, or at least profoundly affect, the substance and execution of policy. For the theme of civic rejuvenation and innovation, more generally, see Broder (1994), Dionne (1998), and Etzioni (1996).

² Weber (1998) investigates national pollution control politics and finds a similar dynamic underlying the emergence of cooperation at the national level.

³ Dagget (1995); Haeuber (1996); Rice et al (1996); Rieke and Kenney (1997); Snow (1997); Weber (forthcoming).

outcomes.⁴ Bardach and Lesser (1996), in their study of human services collaboratives, go so far as to argue that this is the “main value of an accountability system... to motivate better performance than would otherwise occur” (p. 201). Moreover, grass-roots ecosystem management posits that democratic accountability is about accountability to whom and asks “who benefits?” Without this emphasis, the possibility exists that both responsiveness and performance will be forthcoming, yet the end result will be policies designed to benefit the few at the expense of the many. In this way, the new governance arrangements claim a normative concern for outcomes responsive to a broad range of people and institutions.

Conventional wisdom in the political science, public policy, and public administration literature, however, is skeptical of the ability of decentralized, collaborative arrangements to produce democratic accountability to broad public interests. One set of critics suggest that such arrangements may not be accountable given their propensity to produce agencies captured by private interests, co-opted national policy agendas, iron triangles, and, ultimately, policy outcomes benefiting the few at the expense of the many (Lowi 1979; McConnell 1966; Selznick 1957). Accountability occurs, but in zero sum fashion--democratic accountability is limited to truly localized matters or the preferences of private interests at the expense of broader state and national public interests. Past experiences in environmental policy provide considerable ammunition for this perspective (Culhane 1981; Maass 1951). A second stream of criticism is grounded firmly within traditional public administration theory as defined by the Progressive reform tradition and the classic Weberian legal-rational model of bureaucracy. Grass-roots ecosystem management violates several of the cardinal precepts of administrative doctrine that are designed to ensure democratic accountability (e.g., includes citizen participation on a par with bureaucratic experts, breaches the sacrosanct public-private boundary, and dissolves hierarchical authority relationships in favor of shared power with non-governmental stakeholders) (Moe 1994).

Nonetheless, there is an important contingent of public administration scholars who submit that the puzzle of accountability for such arrangements is more complicated than conventional wisdom makes it out to be. They argue that we do not know the answer to the accountability question as it concerns reinvented government, especially decentralized, collaborative arrangements. These scholars suggest that positive sum, or simultaneous accountability outcomes are possible (i.e., improved accountability to local interests, private and public, without a diminution of accountability to broader public interests), and that new frameworks are needed for understanding what accountability looks like in the new, reinvented world of policy administration. Milward (1996, 89) and Kettl (1996), for example, recognize that while collaborative policy implementation networks may make accountability far harder to secure by exacerbating problems of control, “the answer is not clear cut [concerning] ... the accountability of [such] networks.” Thompson and Riccucci (1998, 250-51) argue that given the potential for improved accountability within the reinvention ideology, it is now up to scholars to flesh it out. Bardach and Lesser (1996) take a few steps toward this end by clarifying the connection between the accountability “to whom” and “for what” questions, while suggesting, among other things, that the creation of behavioral norms for participants in collaboratives may help solve the accountability puzzle. Gilmour and Jensen (1998), Radin and Romzek (1996), and Romzek (1996, 111) also accept that accountability is possible in the new world of policy administration. They each make the case that as the paradigm for governance and administration changes from top-down hierarchies to networks, devolved authority, and/ or privatization, so too must systems of accountability. Weber (1999a) describes the differences in sources of accountability for American accountability systems over time. What is clear is that “[t]raditional

⁴The fact that a formal political process (legislative or regulatory) has articulated a manifest public goal--a policy deemed to be in the public interest--that the institutions of government are unable to meet represents a legitimacy problem for democratic institutions of governance. Accepting this scenario as *nonproblematic* implicitly accepts that government institutions have no obligation to deliver on promises once made.

definitions of accountability are too narrow and restrictive to be useful in this dynamic [collaborative] environment.”⁵

The problem is that even though accountability is possible in the new world of policy administration, *we do not know what effective accountability looks like because there is a gap in the literature*. While the importance of the accountability question is not in doubt—it is central to the study of public administration and public policy—the scholarly problem is that, with few exceptions,⁶ the question of accountability, and the potential for the dilution of accountability, generally has been lost in the enthusiasm for reinvented government (Durant 1998; Kettl 1996, 10; Romzek 1996; Thompson and Riccucci 1998, 254). As James Q. Wilson (1994) notes, “[t]he near absence of any reference to democratic accountability is perhaps the most striking feature of the Gore [reinventing government] report” (668).

How does such a model of accountability work? What are the ways in which grass-roots ecosystem management efforts operationalize accountability? In short, what might effective accountability look like when power has been decentralized and shared with the private sector, when the decision processes are premised on collaboration and consensus, when citizens actively co-manage issues affecting public lands, and when broadly supported results are key to administrative success? This article examines these questions from the perspective of the Henry’s Fork Watershed Council (HFWC), a grass-roots watershed management initiative located in east central Idaho. The analysis starts with a brief description of the HFWC and its general operating dynamic. A second section details the four primary sources of accountability for the HFWC—institutional structure, institutional process, approach to management, and participant norms. A representative sampling of various Council decisions and outcomes are then assessed and mapped against five different levels or scales at which accountability might occur—the individual (micro), community (meso), state/regional (mid-macro), national (macro), and intergenerational (future generations) scales. The array and logic of the various accountability mechanisms suggest that the HFWC is accountable to a broad cross-section of society—the nation, region, future generations, and the watershed community itself.

⁵ Kearns (1996, p. xviii). See also Radin and Romzek (1996, p. 81). Radin and Romzek (1996) argue that for the National Rural Development Partnership, predicated as it is on both intergovernmental and horizontal collaboration, “the more effective accountability relationships are likely to be those which afford some degree of discretion to the participants,” particularly what they identify as political and professional accountability types (p. 74). While the professional accountability type *is* traditional, they call their version of political accountability *atypical* because what matters is the direct responsiveness to rural residents “without elected officials playing their traditional mediating role” (p. 81). Bardach and Lesser (1996) find that “the traditional accountability system, ... does not always measure up. It may provide the appearance of solidarity but the reality of hollowness” (p. 223).

⁶ See Radin and Romzek (1996) and Radin, Agranoff, Bowman, Buntz, Ott, Romzek, and Wilson (1996) for a close examination of accountability and other related issues associated with the intergovernmental, collaborative state rural development councils (SRDC) and the National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP). See also Kearns (1996), who argues that as collaborative partnerships and reliance on nonprofit organizations increasingly become the norm, there is a need for a broader conception of accountability which expands the range of people and institutions to whom public and nonprofit organizations must account (p. 9) and for “keep[ing] the notion of accountability at the forefront of [bureaucratic and nonprofit] strategic planning and management systems” (p. xiv). Bardach and Lesser (1996) concentrate on the problems associated with traditional, financially-based notions of accountability and examine how collaboratives can increase administrative capacity and effectiveness, yet pose problems for our “ability to impose accountability on these redesigned [collaborative] structures” (p. 198). They posit that “new accountability systems, systems better suited to the policy and program purposes for which collaboratives are crafted, can be designed to substitute for the traditional system” (p. 222). A key component of their new system of accountability, that of partnership accountability, is also found in the grass-roots ecosystem management accountability system (pp. 204-206).

The Henry's Fork Watershed Council

Officially chartered as a watershed council by the state of Idaho in 1994, the HFWC is an intermediary institution designed to reconnect society to existing government institutions for the sake of improving the governance of the watershed--the biophysically based organizing principle that stresses the shared connection of each participant to their "special place." It seeks to give citizens a direct stake in the coordination and administration of policy using a collaborative, consensus-based decision forum, and therefore asks government agencies to share power by relinquishing a certain amount of control, but not legal authority. The Council pursues an integrated, comprehensive approach to watershed issues, both through an emphasis on ecosystem management and a tripartite focus on environment, economy, and community. Because it is chartered as a strictly advisory body, the HFWC necessarily relies on negotiation, broad-based representation of interests, self-generated information regarding watershed conditions, and persuasion (rather than mandates and coercion) to shape watershed policymaking and problem solving. The Council's formal mission statement sets forth three broad goals and four related major duties.

HFWC GOALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to serve as a grassroots, community forum which uses a non-adversarial, consensus-based approach to problem-solving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to better appreciate the complex watershed relationships in the basin, to restore and enhance watershed resources where needed, and to maintain a sustainable watershed resource base for future generations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to respectfully cooperate and coordinate with one another and abide by federal, state, and local laws and regulations
HFWC DUTIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to cooperate in resource studies and planning that transcends jurisdictional boundaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to review, critique, and prioritize proposed watershed projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to identify and coordinate funding for research, planning, and implementation and long-term monitoring programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to serve as an educational resource for the Legislature and the general public on the Council's progress

Official HFWC meetings are held once a month using an all day format and typically draw 40 to 60 people. In the Fall of 1998 these meetings were changed to a bi-monthly schedule on the consent of HFWC participants. Meetings start with the co-facilitators, Jan Brown and Dale Swensen, setting the ground rules for participation and deliberation. They remind participants about such things as the importance of civility, respect for others' views, and the prohibition of personal attacks. Thirty minutes of community building ensues in which anyone can speak on any issue. During this time participants often communicate personal stories, or voice concerns on matters relevant to the community. These preliminary activities are designed to focus attention on everyone's connection to place by emphasizing common ground and a shared sense of community. Action proposals, which can come from anyone, even outside organizations, are then entertained. The council splits into three committees--agency roundtable, citizen's, and technical--to deliberate and assess the validity of proposals. All participants have the right to speak and, in fact, are expected to contribute, if for no other reason than to signal their (dis)agreement with others' positions. The Council then reconvenes as one body, each committee's recommendations are made, and further discussion ensues as to which projects will be implemented. Decisions are guided by the Watershed Integrity Review and Evaluation (WIRE) process, which is designed to establish whether a proposal reflects a total watershed perspective, relies on credible scientific data, emphasizes ecosystem sustainability, addresses social and cultural concerns, and respects existing law and agency mandates,

among other things. Successful proposals must have the support of a consensus, which is defined as “general agreement,” rather than unanimity. Henry’s Fork Watershed Council meetings end with another half-hour community-building exercise.⁷

Committee work and other informal behind-the-scene discussions take place in the interim period between meetings, yet the rule is that interim efforts are focused on implementation and enforcement of collective decisions. No new work can be started until after full Council approval, even in matters seemingly as inconsequential as the co-leaders sending out a letter using the Council’s letterhead (i.e., it is not an official position until after consensus is reached).

Operationalizing Accountability: What Does It look Like?

How does the Henry’s Fork Watershed Council (HFWC) operationalize accountability? There are four primary sources of accountability--institutional structure, institutional process, approach to management, and participant norms--for the watershed council. The complex array of accountability mechanisms evident in the structure and operation of the HFWC appear to promote a broad-based accountability by not only inculcating allegiance to the value of broad-based accountability (see also Selznick, 1957), but by posing significant obstacles to political interests seeking to impose their *individual* will on other Council members or to craft outcomes favoring a narrow set of interests or values.

Institutional Structure

The institutional structure of the HFWC is comprised of eight key elements, all of which are related to accountability (see Table 1). First, the watershed council relies on a collaborative, non-hierarchical (horizontal) design. The collaborative, horizontal structure means that power, leadership, information and responsibility are shared among participants. By not assigning leader and subordinate roles or formally denoting power differentials among participants in any way, the institutional design forces discussion and negotiation and thus increases responsiveness to a broad variety of interests and views. By having all collectively produced information out in the open (rather than hoarding for strategic advantage), there are increased opportunities for innovation and successful watershed-level problem solving (Weber, 1998).

A second critical structural feature is the fact that the two chief facilitators⁸ are leaders of the two major protagonists in the timeworn battle over natural resources in the watershed. Jan Brown of the Henry’s Fork Foundation (HFF), an environmental organization interested in maintaining and preserving the watershed, especially the world famous fisheries of the area, and Dale Swenson, director of the FMID board, which represents 1700 farms in the watershed. More important than the fact that each represents a major stakeholder in the region, are the leadership qualities each brings to bear on the mission and operating dynamic of the HFWC. Each is clearly committed to the holistic environment, economy, and community mission of the HFWC as well as the collaborative process and watershed management approach. As another member of the Council notes: Jan and Dale believe in balance rather than an environment over economy approach or vice versa.” Equally important, the personal credibility of the co-facilitators helps them to communicate the perceived value of the Council design and processes to others. Each has earned a reputation for integrity, honesty, for always treating others with respect, and for having a clear commitment to and stake in the watershed (they are community members, not outsiders).

A third feature involves citizens directly in the decision-making related to the watershed, whether it is in terms of identifying problems, crafting solutions, or implementing and enforcing decisions. From

⁷ Minutes are taken at each meeting and provided to participants in advance of the next meeting.

⁸ There are many facilitators, especially when the Council breaks out into smaller groups. But it is generally Jan Brown and Dale Swenson who facilitate the full Council meetings.

this perspective, citizens are treated as co-equal to government agency representatives and experts; the concept of expertise is expanded beyond scientific, bureaucratic and organized interest expertise to include technical expertise in the community and citizen generalists with a “community” perspective (see also Scott, 1998, 309-341). In the latter case, for example, citizen input concerning the quality of community life, or other values the community holds dear, are treated as legitimate contributions on a par with the technical recommendations made by scientific experts. In the former case, the HFWC relies on “folk knowledge”—the individual and collective expertise of those community members most familiar with a particular problem and the capacities of the ecosystem in question, whether it be the history of watershed drainage patterns, the resilience of and changes in particular forest ecosystems over time, recollections of conditions promoting the health of riparian areas and fisheries, or stored memories regarding what works and what does not when it comes to managing nature. Participants, including government agency representatives, expect that tapping the existing store of community-based folk knowledge will enhance the effectiveness of governance regimes for rural, nature-dependent economies by bringing “new,” qualitatively different knowledge to the table (see also Ostrom and Schlager, 1997, 144-45). A member of a federal bureaucracy explains: “the HFWC increases our direct contact with citizens, ... it is a bridge builder that helps us explain our decisions in a give-and-take format, and pass along new information about developments in the watershed, ... [It] also serves as a refreshing ... forum for new ideas and potential solutions.”

Item four is the role played by the HFWC in relation to other organizations and agencies engaged in managing watershed resources. The Council is a catalytic, coordinative core that facilitates efficient governance by decreasing program redundancies and providing a one-stop communication forum for the many stakeholders in the area. In this regard, the HFWC is less interested in turf-protection and claiming sole responsibility for making the watershed cleaner or for preserving critical habitat, than in making sure that key goals are achieved. In short, it doesn’t have to actually “do” every project itself, it simply seeks to coordinate and catalyze others’ resources in the name of more effective watershed management.

Fifth, the structural character of the HFWC is place-based—it is firmly grounded in the local, nature-dependent landscape/watershed. “Place” is a catalyst for self-governance in the case of the HFWC because it mobilizes citizens to care enough to participate in the act of governing “their” place by reminding community members of what they share in common—the direct, tangible connection to, and love of, place (Kemmis, 1990, p. 78). More specifically, when taken together with the overarching mission of “environment, economy, and community” (see below), place inculcates a sense of duty to the broader watershed community. The “strong attachment to place” leads community members to “agree to put their interests, ... and [their] sense of duty to represent ... a particular perspective, ... aside in the interest of the collective and [the] ecosystem” (Sturtevant and Lange, 1995, p. 10). In addition, place facilitates cooperation and problem-solving; keeping the project and scope *locally focused* facilitates agreement between diverse interests.⁹ Finally, the relatively close geographic proximity of neighbors in the watershed (place) facilitates both monitoring and enforcement, while also promoting the norms of integrity and honesty in communication and action (it is relatively easy for others to know about your behavior).

The sixth element is the open access design of the watershed council. Community is defined as a “community of place ... [it] is not simply a summation of the residents of a particular area, but rather is a set of social relations that develops in relation to a place.”¹⁰ As a result, all are welcome at Council meetings, including those who may wish to monitor and report on Council activities to people outside watershed boundaries. Moreover, the HFWC practices government in the sunshine by voluntarily endorsing the community’s right to know about its proceedings, decisions, and projects. As part of this, the Henry’s Fork Foundation, a key member of the Council, maintains a public library and GIS database

⁹ Shipley (1996, p. 4). The general literature on collaboration identifies geographic scale as one way to keep collaboration manageable. There are others, see Weber (1998, pp. 105-119).

¹⁰ Moseley (1999, 62). The definition is taken from Snyder (1990, 25).

in their main office in Ashton, Idaho, conducts public field trips, and practices community outreach through schools as well as regional and national watershed conferences (Weber, 1999b). As a result, anyone who has a concern about HFWC activities, or perhaps simply wants to know more about the state of the watershed, has several means for doing so. In combination with direct, participatory decision-making, open access not only increases accountability to community members and any others who choose to participate, but encourages diversity and responsiveness to the concern of the many, rather than the few. It also fosters direct, immediate accountability to the unfiltered concerns and preferences of citizens—the public interest as expressed by citizens—rather than an accountability grounded in interpretations of the public interest by bureaucratic experts.

Seventh, the HFWC is a state-sponsored watershed council. The Idaho state legislature passed a law in 1994 encouraging such advisory bodies in all state watersheds. The official imprimatur of the state enhances formal legitimacy and establishes an accountability relationship with the state government and, by extension, all citizens of Idaho.

The final element of the HFWC's institutional structure recognizes that nothing in the mission or legal charter of the Council presupposes any right to circumvent or otherwise avoid obligations imposed by existing state and federal laws. Nor does it have any legal authority to force private landowners into implementing programs or policies against their wishes. Instead, the Council bears the burden of proof in convincing or persuading major watershed stakeholders, whether public or private, to undertake action(s) to benefit the watershed. The subordinate position enhances accountability to state, national, and private (propertied) interests by placing constraints on action.

TABLE 1/ Institutional Structure of the Henry's Fork Watershed Council

Source of Accountability	How it works
Collaborative, non-hierarchical (horizontal) design	--increases responsiveness to broad variety of interests/ views --increases opportunities for innovation and "bundling" or coordination of resources/ programs
"Balance" in the selection of chief facilitators	
Direct, participatory decision-making	-- citizens as co-equal with government agency representatives and experts --increases accountability to community members and any others who choose to participate
Open access design	--encourages diversity and responsiveness to concern of the many, rather than the few --offers community members a means for monitoring and evaluating Council activities
A catalytic, coordinative core in relation to other organizations	-- facilitates efficient governance by decreasing program redundancies and providing one-stop communication forum for fragmented stakeholders in the watershed
Place-based character	--common bond facilitates cooperation/ problem solving, monitoring, and enforcement --close geographic proximity, together with "open access" design, public database, and shared responsibility promote norm of integrity and honesty in communication and action
Legal charter of watershed council	--state legislation, which encourages and allows such an institution, enhances legitimacy
Subordination to existing state and federal laws	-- enhances accountability to state and national interests by placing constraints on action

Participant Norms

Over time, the HFWC has successfully created a set of informal participant norms, or behavioral expectations for all participants on the Council, which are a primary source of accountability for HFWC decisions. Informal norms are important because “if well-crafted and well-diffused, [they] can substitute for formal structural controls” (Gormley, 1995, p. 54). The norms governing participant interaction in the HFWC do appear to be “well-crafted and well-diffused.” They are part of an implicit bargain agreed to by individual citizens prior to joining group deliberations and are enforced by both HFWC co-leaders (J. Brown; D. Swensen) as well as other members as the need arises. Further, to the extent that the norms are clearly and consistently emphasized as integral to the Council’s business *and* are evident to those with political and bureaucratic power at the state and federal levels, it will be easier for those at the state and federal levels to grant the HFWC additional latitude to identify and solve place-based problems (i.e., they will not only be more likely to support HFWC efforts, they will be more likely to *not* interfere). From this perspective, participant norms help to promote trust not only among the participants themselves, but in the HFWC as a viable, alternative decision-making forum. The increase in trust stems from the increase in certainty that the watershed council will be democratically accountable--the participants will respect the rights of others, will do what they can to promote diversity in representation, will respect the legal mandates of government agencies, will follow through on program commitments, will operate in a public, open manner, and will make decisions with due attention paid to the accountability concerns of citizens and groups outside the region. To the extent that there exists a “strong fabric of trust” which informs the relationships among watershed council participants and with others outside the Council, performance benefits for governance efforts (more effective achievement of goals) are more likely (Putnam, 1993). Simultaneously, the enculturation of trust within institutions “controls the abuse of power.... It is [thus] the only technique for controlling abuse of power that not only averts a major drag on [governance] efficiency but actually increase efficiency” (Braithwaite, 1998, p. 351; Putnam, 1993). The participant norms and the accompanying operational dynamics governing participant behavior in the HFWC are found in Table 2.

Table 2/ Participant Norms of the Henry’s Fork Watershed Council

Participant Norm	How it works
Inclusiveness	--all have a right to participate once they accept the norms governing participant behavior --reinforced by asking “who else needs to be here?” or “what would so-and-so say about this issue if they were here today?”
Civility/respect for others	--each participant has equal worth and is afforded equal opportunity to influence decisions
Integrity/ honesty in communication and action	--necessary for success of community-building goal and good faith bargaining required to solve problems
Participant acceptance of dual role as community member and representative of particular interest	--obligates participants to take a broader view of problems affecting the watershed, to take a Pogo-inspired “them is us” perspective --commits participants, especially government agency personnel, to do whatever is necessary to help their neighbors solve community-based problems <i>within the rules provided by their legal mandates</i>
Commitment to balanced mission and holistic approach	--lack of tolerance for pattern of decisions only benefiting one particular segment of the community, or one element of the three-part mission
Trust as obligation	--given voluntary dynamic, participants accept the obligation to follow through on public commitments, voluntarily negotiated and agreed to --essential to program performance and voluntary, self-enforcement dynamic

Institutional Processes

There are a number of institutional processes connected to the accountability equation that are inherent to the HFWC decision-making dynamic. As previously noted, decisions are guided by the Watershed Integrity Review and Evaluation (WIRE) process, a formal procedural device that serves as a checking mechanism against outcomes serving a narrow set of interests. The WIRE process reminds participants that solutions must not only respect existing laws and agency mandates, but must also reflect a total watershed perspective, rely on credible scientific data, emphasize ecosystem sustainability, and address the social and cultural concerns of community members, among other things.

The combination of joint deliberation and negotiation (rather than administrative fiat), committee forums (technical, citizens, agency roundtable), and repeat interaction affect accountability in several ways. First, they encourage cooperative practices which build community and increase the capacity for collective action on behalf of the watershed, broaden individuals' horizons by exposing participants to others' views/ situations, and break down stereotypes, thereby facilitating more productive problem-solving dialogue. In short, these elements of institutional process increase responsiveness to a broad cross-section of viewpoints and make it easier for individuals to view issues from the perspective of enlightened self-interest or even from the broader perspective of the community and/ or region as a whole.¹¹ Second, joint deliberation and negotiation, committee forums, and repeat interaction force a systematic, comprehensive examination of evidence and values, increase the likelihood that all potential alternatives are explored, facilitate the bargaining necessary to compromise solutions, and enhance chances for project success by giving participants a bona fide stake in outcomes (creates ownership in outcomes). Taken together, they directly affect the performance element of accountability by increasing the likelihood that solutions will be properly “matched” to problems and carried out effectively. Third, working together in a deliberative forum predicated on repeat interaction *in a relatively small community* tends to foster the norms of integrity and honesty in communication and action. Purposely misrepresenting a position to gain advantage is high-risk behavior. Any gains are likely to be short-term given the ability of others to personally check the credibility of stories/ arguments and to impose sanctions of a social and/ or financial nature (e.g., less business from your neighbors) if found to be untrue. At the same time, for those who have a genuine, long-term stake in the watershed, it makes little sense to prevaricate given the almost certain loss of influence in future Council deliberations.

The HFWC also relies on a consensus decision rule, or a super-super-majority (as opposed to majority rule). This increases the legitimacy of decisions by insuring broad agreement and increases the likelihood of implementation success by lowering resistance and engendering self-enforcement. Further, although winning the day does not require unanimous agreement (100 percent consensus), the consensus rule provides a formidable bulwark against the abuse of minority rights.

¹¹ Individuals certainly bring self-interest and individual priorities to collaborative watershed approaches to governance, but the commitment to “place” and the potential for transformation through participation at the individual and community levels also seem to be motivating factors. The work of Michael Piore (1995), Daniel Kemmis (1990), and others (Arendt, 1959; Mansbridge, 1980; 1990) suggest that individuals closely associated with community-based, collaborative deliberation will no longer see their preferences and priorities in strictly individual terms, but in the context of broader community norms or structures. Who they are as an individual member of a community, hence their preferences for policy, unfolds in the context of their participation with others in governance. First, participation in these governing efforts might help individuals to better see their relationship to others including differences and similarities of ideas (Warren, 1992), or to identify primarily with part of a larger group (Dawes, van de Kragt, and Orbell, 1990). They might begin to understand themselves in the context of community, in other words, rather than as autonomous individuals. Second, when individuals begin to see their own preferences in a broader community context there could be consequences for the overall capacity of a community to address collective problems in the future. The concept of a collective ownership of a process, in other words, takes us beyond the simple notion of individuals and groups using a collective process to maximize a particular set of interests.

The community-building exercises at the beginning and end of Council meetings foster concern for, and obligation to, collective interests, while also purposely promoting civility and respect for others' views. Such exercises not only promote the equality, or the equal worth of all in terms of opportunity to influence outcomes, they encourage altruism and enlightened self-interest as motives for action (as opposed to narrow, self-interested actions).

A series of formal and informal oversight and monitoring processes reinforce the direct, almost immediate character of accountability found in the HFWC. Like a more traditional administrative arrangement, the oversight and monitoring features are designed to create assurance that programmatic goals are met, financial integrity occurs, and that the watershed council delivers what it promises. Three mechanisms are of primary importance. The HFWC systematically reviews projects in meetings in an attempt to assess progress and glean lessons for the future. They are also subject to a variety of annual evaluations by outside organizations, including philanthropic foundations that provide temporary funding in support of Council objectives. These funding organizations require annual audits and, occasionally, outside reviews of Council activities by professional evaluators to ensure correspondence between stated goals and activities. Failure to satisfy external financiers means that funding will dry up because unlike traditional public bureaucracy, there is no guarantee of future funding outside of demonstrable success in achieving goals. As part of the outside review process, the HFWC must make a report to the Idaho state legislature every year detailing its activities and progress (or lack thereof). Finally, several structural features--direct citizen participation, open access design, and place-based character--extend oversight capacity by creating a cadre of skilled, informed, and "connected" (those with a major stake in outcomes) citizens capable of monitoring and evaluating public policy decisions and outcomes. Thus, instead of relying solely on formal, often sporadic inspections or hearings conducted by superiors (e.g., congressional oversight of bureaucracy), this is closer to the idea of continuous monitoring. The creation of dozens or even hundreds of potential community-based, citizen monitors vastly increases the chance that someone with the skill and interest will stop by, check up on a project's progress, and report what they have found to others. The extended monitoring capacity creates added incentive to keep projects on track and consonant with stated goals (see also Tocqueville, 1956).

Finally, given the advisory status of the HFWC and because compliance is largely voluntary,¹² enforcement is a matter of collective responsibility in which self enforcement (in which citizens agree with and willingly enforce policy decisions) and community norms (the informal rewards and sanctions that accompany community members' choices) play critical roles. Self-enforcement is driven by a combination of self-interest (individual benefits), enlightened self-interest (collective benefits), and the norm of trust as obligation. The norm of trust as obligation facilitates self-enforcement because, by definition, the practice of trust as obligation by Council participants means that they cognitively accept obligations to others and are willing to act to honor such obligations (Braithwaite, 1998, p. 344). Moreover, the social pressure for individual performance to match public commitments in a collaborative improves the quality of individual performance because "the individuals kn[ow] they [will] have an audience for their performance, an audience that [can] be appreciative but that [can] also be critical."¹³ Participants aware of potential non-compliance generally rely on social persuasion, reminding the potential defector of their collective obligations, voluntarily agreed to, and warning them of the possible consequences of their action (e.g., expulsion from the watershed management effort; loss of community "status"). The expectation is that these sanctions are severe enough that, over time, and in combination with the gains from collaboration and the disincentive provided by the high costs of the alternative--traditional "conflict-oriented" politics--outcomes will become self-enforcing. In addition, the presence of a public database (open access) empowers more people and assists enforcement because interested

¹² Except in cases where contracts are signed to provide specific goods and services.

¹³ Bardach and Lesser (1996, p. 205). They call this the idea of partner accountability. Participants will feel accountable to and be held accountable by the various partners within the collaborative.

citizens can access information to measure HFWC progress toward publicly stated goals and assess the degree of (non)compliance themselves.

TABLE 3/ Institutional Processes of the Henry’s Fork Watershed Council

Source of Accountability	How it works
WIRE process	--standard procedure as checking mechanism; reminds participants that solutions much respect existing laws and agency mandates
Joint deliberation and negotiation, committee forums, and repeat interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --encourage cooperative practices which build community --broaden individuals’ horizons by exposing participants to others’ views/ situations --break down stereotypes, thereby facilitating more productive problem-solving dialogue --force systematic, comprehensive examination of evidence and values --increase likelihood that all potential alternatives are explored -- facilitate bargaining necessary to compromise solutions -- enhance chances for project success by giving participants a bona fide stake in outcomes -- foster norms of integrity and honesty in communication and action
Consensus decision rule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --increases legitimacy of decisions by insuring broad agreement --increases likelihood of implementation success by lowering resistance and engendering self-enforcement --although not 100% consensus mechanism, respects minority rights
Community-building exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --fosters concern for, and obligation to, collective interests (stresses altruism and enlightened self-interest as motives for action) --promotes civility/ respect for others --stresses equality/ equal worth of all in terms of opportunity to influence outcomes
Oversight/ monitoring processes	--create additional assurance that programmatic goals are met, financial integrity occurs; i.e., that HFWC delivers what it promises
Enforcement process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --voluntary, self-enforcement dynamic is driven by combination of self-interest [individual benefits], enlightened self-interest [tangible community benefits], and norm of trust as obligation --public database helps because allows citizens to conduct own analyses

Watershed (Ecosystem) Management Approach

The Henry’s Fork Watershed Council accepts that a key part of the accountability equation centers on government performance--the ability of government to actually deliver on promises—and adopts a management approach with an explicit focus on performance. The preferred institutions of earlier accountability models emphasize compliance with regulatory rules as the proxy equivalent of policy success--a cleaner, healthier, or protected environment, for example--and thus disconnect rules from policy results (Kettl, 1983); Knott and Miller, 1987; Weber, 1998, 94-97). But the HFWC rebels against the established pattern by employing a results-oriented approach emphasizing on-the-ground watershed conditions as a primary basis for decision-making and evaluation of policy success. Participants are asked to suspend preconceived ideas of the “right” way to achieve the ultimate goal of a healthy, functioning ecosystem.¹⁴ Field inspections--walking tours--involving a full cross-section of Council members are often used to examine the physical condition of the landscape. “Walking the ground”

¹⁴ The HFWC fits within the larger trend toward responsive regulation in which policymakers, regulators, resource managers, and resource users alike are recognizing that there “is not a clearly defined program or set of prescriptions concerning the best way to regulate” (Ayres and Braithwaite, 1992, p. 5).

reinforces the connection to “place” and an appreciation for the importance of nature to the entire community, while focusing discussion on the actual problems of the ecosystem in question in order to better match problems and solutions. In combination with the emphasis on the “best” available science, it provides an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of how a particular management strategy helps or hurts the watershed, thus easing future performance assessments (Johnson, 1997; Van de Wetering, 1996).

Other management elements feed into the HFWC’s general concern for governance and policy performance. The first is the adoption of a holistic “environment, economy, and community” mission statement designed to avoid the spillover and reverberation effects common to the specialized and single-issue approaches of existing environmental bureaucracies. By treating individual policy problems within the larger context of the entire watershed, humans included (i.e., community and economy), the Henry’s Fork watershed council seeks to improve accountability by recognizing and wrestling with the tradeoffs inherent in policy administration. Moreover, the ecosystem, or watershed, orientation looks comprehensively at the watershed rather than taking the traditional fragmented approach promoted by virtually every major federal environmental statute and supported by a bureaucracy specialized according to individual natural resources and management tasks.¹⁵ The watershed orientation also is explicitly concerned with the extant and potential stocks of natural resources, the various sources of pollution, the relationship among various pollutants and natural resources (in order to calibrate values for tradeoffs), and whether solutions actually solve a particular ecological problem, or merely shift its harmful effects elsewhere. In short, the management approach recognizes that the watershed’s “web of life” is interconnected such that individual, fragmented decisions by stakeholders in the watershed often affect the health and well being of other resources, habitats, and people.

In addition, and as previously noted, a key component of the HFWC management strategy is its reliance on a broad knowledge base. Such an approach accepts that real world problems encountered in the watershed typically do not fit nicely and neatly into the *singular* domains of traditional academic disciplines, nor do they allow for analysis excluding social impacts. Thus social sciences as well as non-technical, community-based folk knowledge are valued along with physical sciences (e.g., silviculture, biology, ecology, chemistry) and more technical professional advice (e.g., engineering). In a very real sense, the collaborative watershed arrangement argues that an interdisciplinary approach is an absolute prerequisite if broad-based democratic accountability is desired.

The overt focus on policy results, the use of management by walking around, the interdisciplinary character of analysis, the limited understanding of ecosystem dynamics, and the inherent uncertainties associated with a cross-cutting, integrated approach to policymaking have led HFWC participants to adopt an adaptive management style. Instead of locking-in the “best” solution, or automatically employing the same administrative structure for every program, learning through experimentation is the rule. Specifically, deliberate long-term experimentation with humanity’s interaction with ecological processes facilitates the process of learning what works and what does not (Lee, 1993, p. 8). Ideally, adaptive management increases responsiveness to watershed problems by promoting the values of continual innovation and adaptation in response to changing conditions, problems, and degree of success (or failure) enjoyed by solutions. It also helps to create an administrative mindset which more readily accepts the demise of non-performing programs, while increasing the likelihood that programs which have successfully solved a particular problem will either be replicated in the future as similar problems arise or discarded at the appropriate time.

¹⁵ See Clarke and McCool (1996); Davies (1990); Rabe (1986).

TABLE 4/ Watershed (Ecosystem) Management Approach of the HFWC

Source of Accountability	How it works
Focus on results/ performance (versus written rules as proxy for results)	--keeps Council focused on achievement of primary mission --eases performance assessment; makes it easier to judge efficacy and legitimacy of HFWC efforts
Comprehensive (integrated), holistic approach	--recognizes that the watershed's "web of life" is interconnected such that individual, fragmented decisions by stakeholders in the watershed often affect others --designed to overcome the spillover effects of existing fragmented approach to policy and resource management (in which individual solutions often only shift or exacerbate problems elsewhere)
Broad knowledge base	--increases opportunities for creative, more effective solutions as well as innovative marriages of existing program and agency mandates --recognizes that broad-based accountability requires interdisciplinary approach (i.e., more than just scientific, technical knowledge and/ or economic valuation methodologies)
Flexibility, adaptability, experimentation (adaptive management)	--increases responsiveness to watershed problems --reinforces Council's focus on performance; helps justify pulling the plug on non-performing programs/ projects
Proactive problem-solving approach	--focus on preventing problems, both those which are unique to the watershed and those defined by external authorities which may arise in the future

Mapping Accountability Across Different Scales

HFWC participants and proponents are clearly interested in more control over decisions affecting the watershed in order to improve governance performance, but it also appears that accountability is a fundamental tenet of institutional design. Accountability to a broad panoply of interests and jurisdictional scales is incorporated into the Council using institutional structure, processes, participant norms, and the watershed management approach. In practice and in rhetoric, the HFWC tells us to expect the following:

- Watershed Council participants will seek to control and maximize their individual goals (micro), but will do so within the constraints provided by the community (meso).
- The community (meso), as reflected through the HFWC, will seek to control and maximize its collective goals, but will do so within the broader constraints provided by the state/ region (mid-macro), and nation (macro).

But saying that these sources, or mechanisms, of accountability exist and explaining how (the logic) each element works says nothing about the degree of assurance that accountability will actually occur. In fact, skepticism regarding the accountability of decentralized, collaborative, citizen-based arrangements like the HFWC abounds. In a world of self-interested behavior, why would anyone seeking to maximize their own gain, whether individual- or community-based, accept the constraints of either the community or the macro-level, respectively? National environmentalists have criticized GREM as nothing more than an ingenious cover for the self-interested machinations of industry, who will dominate such proceedings to impose the values of economic growth and efficiency and to rid themselves of the burdens of national environmental laws (McCloskey, 1996). Others fear that such place-based administrative arrangements

will make the micro-meso connection, *but not* the meso-macro. Individuals within communities will find much in common and will willingly accept and support collective, meso-level goals. The danger is that such communities will develop a sense of themselves apart from and to the detriment of the nation. To the extent that this occurs on a widespread basis, balkanization and all its attendant problems for national democracy are the result (Schlesinger, 1992). A different variant of the same problem is that the micro-meso connection will be made for large numbers of the community, but not for all—a potential problem of tyranny by the majority in which minority interests are regularly ignored. Other potential problems concern the difficulty of holding someone accountable and of ensuring performance in network-based arrangements. If all are in charge, then perhaps no one is in charge (Moe, 1994)? Likewise, “[n]etworks are weaker vehicles for social action” given the coordination problems stemming from the fact that all activity is jointly produced (Milward, 1996, p. 79).

However, it is not clear that the standard, often historically grounded criticisms and concerns about accountability are valid for this particular decentralized, collaborative, and participatory arrangement. To clarify why this is the case, it is useful to take a representative sampling of various Council decisions and outcomes and map them against five different levels or scales at which accountability might occur—the individual (micro), community (meso), state/regional (mid-macro), national (macro), and intergenerational (future generations) scales. If the common criticisms are valid, we should expect to see a large imbalance in the way the outcomes are apportioned among the levels. Put differently, most outcomes should end up addressing only the individual and community (meso) levels.

Diversity of Representation

Council participation is broad based, ranging across virtually the entire spectrum of interests in the watershed region, including state/ regional and national interests. Integral participants come from a broad variety of environmental organizations, state- and federal-level agencies concerned with the management of public lands and natural resources, local administrative officials such as planning and zoning or vegetation/ weed control personnel, farmers and irrigators, ranching interests, recreation interests focused on fishing, hunting (e.g., Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation), and off-road motor vehicle use (e.g., Blue Ribbon Commission), independent and university-based scientists, others who “reside, recreate, make a living and/ or have legal responsibilities in” the watershed, and visitors from outside the watershed area (Johnson, 1995, 1). Table 5 displays the distribution of participants for four meetings held in 1997 and 1998.¹⁶ There are steady, significant levels of participation among four key groups with major stakes in the watershed. Federal administrative agencies and state-level natural resource bureaucracies—organizations that are manifestations of state and national wills--lead the way with average participation rates of 20.5 percent and 14.5 percent, respectively. Commodity and business interests comprise 13 percent of those in attendance, while environmentalists constitute almost 11 percent of all participants. Visitors from outside the region actually constitute the largest single category, on average (over 21 percent), while scientists, recreation interests, and unaffiliated citizens each average roughly 5 percent of HFWC participants. There is also occasional participation by local administrative officials, local elected officials, and legislative staffers for elected representatives from the U.S. House and Senate (U.S. Rep. Mike Crapo, R-ID, now U.S. Senator; Senator Larry Craig, R-ID; Senator Dirk Kempthorne, R-ID, now the governor of Idaho).

¹⁶ Future analyses will include participation figures for 12 meetings held between Fall of 1997 and the Summer of 1999.

Table 5/ Distribution of Participants in the Henry's Fork Watershed Council, Select Meetings

Distribution of participants	Nov 1997	Jan 1998	June 1998	Nov 1998	Averages
Environmentalists (Henry's Fork Foundation; ¹⁷ Idaho Rivers United; Idaho Wildlife Federation; Greater Yellowstone Coalition; Nature Conservancy; Teton Regional Land Trust)	12%	9%	8%	14%	10.75
Extractive/ commodity interests (i.e., farmers, irrigators, ranchers, timber, local business & development interests)	18%	10%	16%	8%	13%
Recreation interests (Henry's Fork Foundation; Idaho Rivers United; Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; Blue Ribbon Commission)	5	7	5	5	5.5%
Federal administrative officials (Bureau of Land Management; Bureau of Reclamation; Fish and Wildlife; Natural Resources and Conservation Service; Forest Service; U. S. Geological Survey)	25	24	15	18	20.5%
State administrative officials (Division of Environmental Quality, Departments of Fish and Game, Parks and Recreation, Public Lands, and Water Resources)	12	12	15	19	14.5%
Local administrative officials	2	3	0	6	2.75%
Federal legislative representatives	0	2	0	0	0.5%
State legislative representatives	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Local (elected) officials	2	2	0	0	1.0%
Concerned citizens (no formal group affiliation)	5	3	3	10	5.25%
Independent and university-based scientists	9	5	3	2	4.75%
Visitors	9	23	35	18	21.25%
TOTAL Attendance	43	59	61	76	60

Improving the Performance of Local, State and Federal Agencies

The HFWC promotes greater efficiency and effectiveness on the part of government agencies with jurisdiction over public lands and natural resources in the watershed. There are four main ways in which this is done. The combined effects of items one through three below also increase the certainty that agency decision-makers will have a better sense of the watershed's "big picture," and thus are likely to appreciate (or at least better understand) the importance of their decisions for the rest of the watershed.

First, the HFWC creates new sources of information and, in some cases, possess more detailed and comprehensive information about watershed/ resource conditions than the agencies themselves. The additional, watershed specific information can help agency decision-makers make better decisions that are more likely to "fit" the actual on-the-ground conditions of the watershed. For example, the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has extremely limited information regarding the water quality of the water bodies in the region, especially in areas surrounded by private lands, yet is mandated by court action to classify streams according to Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) standards. The limited nature of the data means that, in most cases, DEQ will set standards for major water bodies that

¹⁷ The Henry's Fork Foundation and Idaho Rivers United representatives were apportioned equally to two categories--environmentalists and recreation interests--given their interest in fishing as a sport.

automatically apply to adjoining tributaries. HFWC fears this will lead to many water bodies being misclassified to the detriment of the resource, either pro or con (the standards and ensuing management efforts will not fit the stream in question because they will either be too stringent or not stringent enough). Recent HFWC work in the area of water quality surveys and the integration of USFS, BLM, and other agency data into a single document are designed to provide a more comprehensive set of information that essentially challenges DEQ to come up with a classification scheme that more accurately captures the true diversity of stream conditions in the watershed.

Second, the HFWC provides a “one-stop-shopping” forum for communication, integration, and coordination of agency management efforts related to the watershed. This increases the potential that scarce resources will be maximized by lessening the chance for counter productive and redundant management initiatives and lowers the transaction costs of gathering information (makes it easier). It also creates opportunities for resource coordination and problem-solving that otherwise would not occur without the shared information/ dialogue and creation of working relationships among the various parties.

Third, the HFWC facilitates “support and consultation” networks of specialists that cut across agency boundaries. The new relationships promote problem solving and offer a “social-professional” support network that can increase employee effectiveness. Agency experts report that the new relationships mean that they can now call on specialists in other agencies or organizations, either in their own field or others with in-depth, watershed-specific knowledge. The working familiarity with watershed-specific conditions and issues is often of more value to their problem-solving efforts than if they had to rely solely on a similar array of experts inside their own agency, but without the watershed-specific knowledge.

Fourth, the HFWC extends the effectiveness of agencies by providing a source of additional resources--financial, human, political, informational--that are then used to achieve existing agency missions and goals. As already noted, HFWC provided resources essential to USFS efforts to survey and transplant cutthroat trout on forest streams. HFWC has also aided Fremont County officials in their attempts to control noxious weeds by coordinating volunteer weed pull efforts and furnishing \$1,000 in funding during 1998 and 1999. Further, HFWC has been integrally involved in road rehabilitation efforts throughout the watershed. They have assisted the USFS in repairing roads so as to minimize erosion and have helped Fremont County to adjust road levels and to design and place culverts along Sheridan Creek to better accommodate high water flows in the Spring.

Endangered Species Protection

The Watershed Council is proactively attacking the issue of declining, potentially endangered stocks of Yellowstone cutthroat trout. The Council is comprehensively mapping (identifying) existing fish populations, restoring habitat, and transplanting genetically compatible cutthroats into viable habitat--in the hope of forestalling or mitigating the listing of Yellowstone cutthroats under the federal Endangered Species Act. A key element involves a partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, which, although required by law to map cutthroat populations on public lands, was unable to conduct the mandated review for lack of funds. Working through the HFWC, the Henry’s Fork Foundation (HFF), partnered with the USFS by proposing an arrangement in which HFF provided the field staff and the agency provided a truck and a supervisor to coordinate the project. The collaboration intends to create community-wide benefits by bringing back fish native to the area (i.e., accomplishing the ultimate goal of the ESA) and by staving off the new constraints on landowner decision-making mandated by an ESA listing. ESA constraints would especially hamper the decision-making freedom of those with property adjacent to lakes and streams and those in agriculture dependent on irrigation water for their livelihood.

Restoring Habitat and Watershed Connectivity

The Sheridan Creek stream restoration project is the first major attempt to actively pursue the HFWC goal to identify, target, and reestablish the *connectivity* of tributary streams in the watershed. Connectivity is about making sure that tributary streams, such as Sheridan Creek, are physically connected (in terms of stream flow) to the Henry’s Fork. The specific goals of the Sheridan Creek project

thus are to restore the stream to its historical channel(s),¹⁸ restore habitat in the river and along the streambank (spawning beds; vegetative cover; colder, faster water flows), improve water quality, and reconnect the natural stream channel to Island Park reservoir so that migrating fish can again access traditional spawning grounds above the lake (not enough water in the natural channel to facilitate migration).

Key to the project are the redesign and rebuilding of ten different water diversion structures, and the drilling of wells away from the streambank as an alternative source of water for the cattle in the area (which means less erosion and damage to streambanks and greater opportunity for native vegetation/habitat to flourish). By providing critical funding (through a successful HFWC-initiated EPA Section 319 grant), coordinating the resources of the many public and private stakeholders with some form of jurisdiction over or interest in the stream, administering the EPA grant, and providing a deliberative forum for forging agreement over the restoration plan among the many stakeholders,¹⁹ the HFWC demonstrates the broad benefits of a community-based collaborative approach to managing watershed resources. The environment benefits (as described above) as do irrigators with control over the water rights. The new diversion structures help the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District monitor streamflows with greater accuracy, while ranchers in the immediate vicinity end up with consistent delivery of their own water rights and heavily subsidized reconstruction of their largely non-functional water diversion structures. Several FMID board members are also excited about the prospect of restoring healthy fish runs to Sheridan Creek; they recall “how good the fishing used to be when [they] were young.” Considerable benefits are also expected for areas downstream of the project. To the extent that cattle do not forage primarily on streambanks, water quality should improve.

Grizzly Bears and Road Closures: Staying True to Agency Mandates

The Council, through the Watershed Integrity Review and Evaluation decision-making guidelines, pledges to obey all existing statutory obligations. Agency representatives from the state and federal levels interviewed for this project unanimously report that there has never been any pressure to stray from legal mandates in the five years of Council operation (interviews, August 1998). An example illustrating the larger point involves the U. S. Forest Service. In the mid-1990s, as mandated under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976, Targhee National Forest officials started to revise the forest plan governing agency goals for the use and protection of forest resources. U.S.F.S. officials decided to release the draft plan and the EIS at a Council meeting “because the broad cross-section of people in attendance ... represent so many of the constituents and agencies we work with.” One of the most controversial aspects of the draft plan involved the closure and dismantling of a significant number of forest roads to increase the amount of “connected” (unfragmented) habitat available to grizzly bears. The Forest Service believed that such action was not only warranted by the science associated with grizzly bear survival, but was also mandated by the Endangered Species Act. Off-road motor vehicle enthusiasts and hunters mounted vigorous arguments against the closures, because it would prevent them from accessing large, historically accessible tracts of the Targhee. Yet the Council was unable to come to a consensus regarding the revised forest plan primarily because the USFS refused to budge on the road closure issue—an issue which the agency viewed as part of its legal mandate. There was even some discussion about whether to WIRE the road closure decision until it became clear to participants that this was not a decision for the Council, rather it was a USFS decision under the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

Taken together, the *legislated* advisory character of the HFWC, the willingness to voluntarily subordinate decisions to the existing legal framework, and the improvements to agency effectiveness enhance accountability to the community, state/regional, and national levels. At the same time, an

¹⁸ Over the years significant parts of the streamflow have been rerouted to irrigation canals due to broken/ degraded water diversion structures.

¹⁹ USFS, Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho Parks and Recreation, NRCS, ranchers/ private landowners, HFF, FMID.

argument can be made that accountability to individuals (the micro level) is also enhanced. Because it is citizens as voters who elect the democratic representatives who design and then invest agencies with legal mandates, the subordinate position and increased effectiveness in pursuit of publicly decided goals brings accountability around full circle to the voters who made the initial democratic choices.

Creating a Unified, Integrated Community-Based Network

As a result of the particular institutional choices made by the HFWC²⁰--the structure, processes, management approach, and participant norms--the Council is on its way to creating what some have called an essential component of a place-based community--a dense set of networks that can be called upon for communication, informal decision-making, and action.²¹ *Instead of a series of individual, separate organizations and networks representing narrow, often self-contained segments of the population and focusing on particular facets of complex, cross-cutting problems, the new dynamic connects the various individual organizations and networks together to produce a more unified, integrated, community-based network.* The unified, integrated character of the network, and its central focus on an environment, economy, and community mission, signifies the enhanced willingness on the part of participants to consider the needs of the broader community. The transformation is analogous to the difference between the weakness and fragmentation evident in a shattered piece of glass and a multi-colored, multi-shaped mosaic that has been welded together to form a stronger, more integrated whole. In short, the new network strengthens the capacity of the community to act collectively by easing communication, facilitating the creation of informal decision-making institutions to complement existing formalized arrangements, and engendering action to solve watershed problems. It suggests that networks can be a much stronger vehicle for coordinated action, especially when the complexity of watershed problems means that no one hierarchy can resolve the problem by itself. A Council participant puts it this way:

the relationships with ... all of these other folks have resulted in the creation of networks within the community that simply did not exist before. When something comes up now, people are more prone to ask, 'Well, who could help with that?' rather than arguing about jurisdiction and responsibility. It is not like the more traditional linear kind of thinking anymore, it's about networks. These relationships/ networks create a new kind of problem-solving skill based on connecting community members together. The connectedness of the network creates a critical mass of people focused on problems common to the watershed. It creates new opportunities for passing on information and solving problems. That's what happened with a rancher who was struggling to maintain his water diversion structures on his land above Island Park Reservoir. He contacted the HFWC; he had heard about our other efforts in the watershed [e.g., the Sheridan Creek restoration project]. We knew right away that here was a rancher trying to do the right thing, fix his structures, conserve water, and, by extension, help the environment. But we also knew that he did not have the financial wherewithal to do it alone. We said, 'Here's a community member who needs help and what a great opportunity to build another bridge to the ranching community. And it turned out that the Council, through an Idaho Fish and Game grant, could help.

Moreover, the extensive networking means that institutions and decision-makers who used to be inaccessible to many in the community, or were accessible only after "quite a bit of bitching and moaning or legal action,... are now only a phone call away because of the trust that networking has created" (interview, 7/19/99). Members of the HFWC point to Harriman State Park as a prime example. When first approached about getting involved with the Council and cooperating to manage resources that either were in the Park or affected the Park, park managers were "reluctant to jump in with both feet." Now,

²⁰ Each of which have been aggressively promoted by HFF.

²¹ Moseley (1999, 63); Priester and Kent (in press).

however, they are very enthusiastic about the Council's collaborative format because they believe the Council has helped them more effectively manage park resources, whether in the area of trumpeter swans, riparian restoration along the Henry's Fork, or simply taking care of upstream problems such that the Park itself experiences fewer resource problems (interviews, 8/12/98; 8/13/98). A second example involves an informal decision-making institution to govern water releases from Island Park Reservoir. The Fremont-Madison Irrigation District (FMID) controls water releases and prioritizes them according to water rights claims by downstream irrigators. Yet, beginning in 1998, FMID has shown a willingness to be more flexible by releasing additional water to benefit the environment (e.g., to combat dangerously high water temperatures) at the request of Jan Brown, a co-facilitator of the HFWC and Executive Director of the Henry's Fork Foundation (an environmental group). There are limits to this arrangement--there must be "extra" water in the river. Thus FMID is unlikely to be very flexible during low water years. But Council members cannot imagine the institutional change *without* the years of working together on the Council and the creation of new relationships and trust among segments of the community who traditionally never had a reason to communicate with each other (except through lawyers), much less cooperate for the sake of the environment.

Although it is still too early to know if the Yellowstone cutthroat efforts and the Sheridan Creek restoration project are going to produce all the expected results, one clear measure of success is that other stakeholders are impressed enough to seek out the HFWC for support and leadership for similar projects. Idaho Fish and Game modeled their Island Park Reservoir Tributaries project after the Sheridan Creek example and successfully tapped \$45,000 of INEEL Pit 9 money to fund it. Moreover, the vote of confidence in the HFF and the HFWC extends even further--Fish and Game asked the HFF to administer the grant on behalf of the Council. In addition, individual ranchers in the area to be covered by the grant have contacted the HFWC, offered to participate, and made the HFWC aware of additional Bureau of Reclamation funding for water conservation that will expand the original scope of the tributaries program. Idaho Fish and Game also liked the HFWC-USFS cutthroat transplant work enough that "they came to the Council and asked for moral support" for their attempts to start their own cutthroat transplant and ecosystem restoration program on the three upper drainages of Thurman Creek.

Changing the Worldviews of Individuals

The Henry's Fork Watershed Council is in the process of building institutions that govern, or at minimum have substantial effect on citizens' behavior, decisions, and outlook towards others and their community. The new institutions are responsible for creating new relationships, fostering a greater degree of trust among citizens, and cultivating a heightened sense of collective purpose in the watershed that is centered on the tripartite "environment, economy, and community" mission. In short, individuals' worldviews are being transformed, both with respect to how they view their neighbors and how they view their preferences for policy. The net effect is an increase in accountability to community, state/ region, nation, and future generations.

The HFWC focus on deliberation and cooperation with others on projects providing community-wide benefits creates new, constructive working relationships with others. According to one HFWC participant, this is "absolutely critical to building trust within the community..... To the extent that we investigate and cooperatively pursue projects that help all watershed residents gain something, trust will follow." Another finds that "[t]he one-on-one interaction helps us to see each other as individuals, as decent human beings who care about their families, their neighborhoods, rather than as caricatures or adversaries that go by the name of 'farmer' or ... 'developer' or 'environmentalist.'" The trust that comes from working together helps us learn to communicate more openly and honestly with each other." A citizen who has been involved from the start interprets the change in attitudes as follows:

Five years ago when the Council began, people were so cold to each other. It makes me happy to see how much trust has developed among us and how warm, friendly, and comfortable we are with each other now (November 1998 HFWC meeting).

Taken by itself, the increase in trust among community members helps to facilitate governance effectiveness (Putnam, 1993), but does not necessarily translate into greater accountability to collective goals beyond the community level. Yet the willingness to trust appears essential to the kinds of individual transformations expected by democratic theorists (e.g., Kemmis, 1990; Mansbridge, 1990; Piore, 1995). There is anecdotal evidence that at least some participants are now more willing to think of their own individual/ personal situations as connected to, or an extension of, the larger whole (rather than viewing issues and preferred outcomes from a more narrow, self-interested perspective). When asked whether participation in the Watershed Council has led them to give greater weight to how proposed actions will affect *the world outside of the watershed community*, fully one-third of those interviewed said yes (9 of 27). Interestingly, roughly 37 percent of those interviewed claimed the willingness to consider the effect of proposed HFWC decisions on the outside world *as a starting point* (i.e., the institutional dynamic matched or reinforced their original position). When asked whether participation has led them to give greater weight to the benefits of proposed actions for the *watershed community*, 40 percent answered yes, while almost 50 percent claimed community-mindedness as an original position.

Table 6/ Linking Outcomes to Accountability

HFWC Outcomes	Individual (micro)	Community (meso)	State/ region (mid-macro)	Nation (macro)	Future Generations
Diversity of representation	X	X	X	X	
Enhancing government agency performance	X	X	X	X	
Endangered species protection	X	X	X	X	X
Restoring habitat and watershed connectivity	X	X	X		
Staying true to agency mandates	X	X	X	X	X
Creating a unified, integrated, community-based network	X	X	X	X	X
Changing worldviews		X	X	X	X

Conclusion

The array and logic of the various accountability mechanisms employed by the Henry's Fork Watershed Council suggest that the Council is accountable to a broad cross-section of society--the nation, region, and future generations as well as the watershed community and the individuals within that community. Moreover, the Council maintains an explicit focus on governance performance as an essential component of the accountability equation. Claims of industry domination and an increased propensity to roll back established environmental laws are not supported in this case. Although four Council meetings is too small of a sample to come to hard conclusions, diverse, balanced representation among environmentalists and business/ commodity interests and strong, consistent participation by state and federal bureaucracies with stakes in the watershed appear to be the rule rather than the exception. Likewise, the outcomes suggest *enhanced* support for existing environmental laws. Outcomes also suggest that not only does the Council increase individuals' support for collective meso-level (community) goals, it strengthens the connection of the watershed community to the macro level by firmly integrating state- and national-level representatives into community decision-making processes. Further, accountability to future generations is strengthened as citizens become used to the idea that decisions favoring a sustainable environment, economy, and community are indeed possible. The Council's dynamic has facilitated this shift by making it easier to see the potential for innovation and success (superior outcomes) that can come from working together. Nor is there any evidence that agency representatives are being forced to choose between agency goals and Watershed Council goals. Instead,

the HFWC is helping agencies achieve their own preset goals by using innovative institutional means and by allowing agencies to catalyze new resources external to the agency, among other things.

In addition, as the discussion on the creation of a unified, integrated, community-based network implies, it is not clear that networks are weaker vehicles for social action, especially when compared to the weakness of the fragmented system of strong hierarchies in producing coherent, integrated outcomes. Put differently, strong hierarchies are capable of strong action (given less need for coordination) within their relatively narrow, specialized spheres. The problem is that such specialization often translates into an incapacity to see the big picture, thus leading to outcomes that shift, rather than solve, problems into someone else's sphere of influence, or that are suboptimal or even redundant from a collective perspective. The community- or place-based network being fostered by the HFWC coordinates and integrates first and then applies consensus solutions. Thus there *is* likely to be less action (fewer decisions), but more appropriate action that not only is supported broadly by citizens (agency representatives included), but "fits" the biophysical realities of the collective watershed scale of action. In addition, the network is advisory; participants are forced to recognize and work with established centers of power. It is not designed to replace existing administrative arrangements, but rather to supplement them by improving communication, coordination, and decisions among the various entities for the sake of the watershed.

Thus, despite the accountability fears commonly associated with decentralized, citizen-based collaboratives, the Henry's Fork Watershed Council appears to have constructed a relatively intricate and effective system of accountability.

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