

## **Introduction**

The Western Consensus Council (WCC) is an independent, not-for-profit organization based in Helena, Montana. It was created in 1997 to support the Montana Consensus Council, a small organization that is administratively attached to the Office of the Governor. WCC has since evolved into a regional resource for citizens and officials throughout the American West. It is impartial and non-partisan; it is not an advocate for any particular interest or outcome.

WCC is primarily a research and education organization, dedicated to promoting inclusive, informed, deliberative processes to resolve natural resource and other public policy disputes in the West. WCC gathers, analyzes, and transfers information and knowledge to citizens and officials; develops strategies to integrate collaborative problem solving into public decision making and western resource policy; and examines alternative approaches to shape effective public policy and build sustainable communities.

In the fall of 2000, Dr. Charles Foster invited WCC to become an associate participant of The Harvard Environmental Regionalism Project. Based on that invitation, WCC organized The Western Regionalism Project, a long-term initiative to document, evaluate, and promote regional approaches to natural resource and environmental policy in the American West. In this context, regionalism is defined by efforts to look beyond political and jurisdictional boundaries and embrace a transboundary approach to policy and management. Regionalism, in other words, is focused on efforts to manage land, water, and other natural resources on the basis of watersheds, bioregions, ecosystems, and other regional characteristics, such as the economy. We are particularly interested in alternative institutional arrangements that support and promote regionalism, and different strategies for sharing decision-making responsibility and governing regional institutions.

## **Objectives of the Working Session**

1. To define and examine the nature of regionalism and regional approaches to policy, planning, and management.
2. To review the status and trends of regional approaches to land use, natural resources, and environmental protection in the American West.
3. To examine the forces for and against regionalism in the West.
4. To identify the obstacles and challenges to sustaining the effectiveness of regional initiatives.
5. To develop strategies and priorities to promote and support regional efforts. In particular, to identify a preliminary list of services that might be offered by one or more “centers of excellence” designed to promote and support regional initiatives.

# - Executive Report -

On December 6-7, 2001, 22 people met at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City to examine the status and trends of regionalism in the West, and to develop strategies to promote and support regional approaches to land use, natural resources, and environmental policy. Of the 22 participants, 18 were practitioners—people who lead and manage regional organizations. The remaining participants were scholars and conveners.

## **What do We Mean by Regionalism?**

The participants agreed that regionalism is by definition an **integrative** approach to policy and management. Regionalism looks beyond political and jurisdictional lines, embracing a **transboundary** approach that recognizes natural “territories of the issues” such as watersheds, ecosystems, bioregions, or other organic regions.

The participants also said that regional initiatives may start with a focus on a single issue, but eventually they touch on a whole circle of social, economic, and environmental issues. In fact, this is one of the comparative advantages of regionalism. For this reason, they agreed, any conversation about regionalism should not be limited to a particular type of regional initiative, such as those with environmental or economic objectives.

## **Why Regionalism?**

The participants enthusiastically agreed that “we are on to something,” referring to the robust emergence of regional initiatives at multiple levels for a variety of purposes. They said that people begin to think and act regionally for three general reasons: (1) because they have to, (2) it’s in their self-interest, or (3) because they recognize a common fate—that “our” future is linked to “their” future and we should cooperate. Within these three broad categories, more specific reasons for the emergence of regionalism include:

- Globalization. Advances in information, communication, and transportation technologies allow people to work together at global (Earth being our largest example of a “natural,” organic region), continental, and subcontinental scales.
- The integration of the world’s economies forces people to think and act regionally to remain competitive, both to sustain the local economy and to interact with markets around the globe.
- The re-emergence of federalism and an emphasis on decentralized government compels states and communities to think and act regionally to pool resources and resolve common problems. The larger the playing field, the more resources can be applied to the problem, and the easier it is to make tradeoffs among competing interests.
- Improved understanding of and attention to ecosystems as natural regions, driven in part by our attempts to protect endangered species and their habitat.
- Existing institutions are not effectively solving problems that transcend political and jurisdictional boundaries. People are looking for better ways to resolve these problems. Some regional efforts are attempts to pre-empt heavy handed or misguided regulatory enforcement.

- Congress and other leaders have promoted regional approaches from the top down through policies and executive orders.
- Public interest laws (and subsequent litigation) have compelled some agencies to engage in regional approaches.

## **Obstacles and Challenges**

The participants described a number of obstacles and challenges facing regional initiatives, including:

- People are stuck in Cartesian, deductive thinking, which divides problems into parts—not the most productive mode for developing regional solutions.
- Turnover, burnout, and generational change (within regional organizations and among constituents) make it difficult to build on progress and reconcile old and new values.
- People focus on immediate, personal concerns and personal agendas. They lose sight of larger-scale opportunities and long-range potential.
- Regional practitioners learn on the job. We need training, mentoring, and opportunities to share experience and ideas with other practitioners.
- We are not as skilled at tapping social and economic interests as we are at tapping the environmental interests. Political support often comes from outside the region, particularly on environmental issues. Urban centers provide political and financial support, but we struggle to build similar constituencies within the region itself. When people’s sense of self-identity doesn’t jibe with the region’s identity (as defined by a given issue), it is hard to promote a cohesive sense of place. We also face a constant tension among local, state, and national interests.
- There is a lack of understanding and appreciation for legal opportunities and limitations for regionalism initiatives.
- Hierarchical decision making—common in bureaucracies—doesn’t work on regional issues. No *one* person makes the sorts of decisions we deal with. Sometimes decision makers are uncooperative, uninterested, or overwhelmed.
- Government agencies tend to do their work “by the book,” with no room for flexibility or creativity. Some resist sharing power or decision making authority.
- When we make decisions that carry clout, we run into questions of governance—how is governance shared among the region’s constituencies? Who has the power to enforce these decisions? Who provides incentives for compliance? Who pays the bills?
- We tend to be trained in disciplines rather than process, and need training in collaborative problem solving in particular.
- We struggle with time issues—deadlines, time as money, conflicting expectations of how fast or slow to move, and the public’s short attention span.

## **Keys to Success**

The participants described several keys to success in pursuing regional initiatives, including:

- Process! Use creative processes and new approaches to get around the limitations of existing institutions. Promote inclusive and informed processes (such as collaborative problem solving) that foster meaningful, genuine dialogue and ownership among stakeholders. Set ground rules early and enforce them. Encourage productive behavior and build trust. Practice community building and organizing.
- Help people see that the whole is greater than the parts, and that they are partners working for a greater good or to increase the pie. Seek people with complementary skills who will listen and stay in the process. Enlist a respected spokesperson.
- Rather than simply advocating your idea, inform with a resonant solution in the best interest of each group in a region. Then build coalitions.
- Maintain a learning, adaptive attitude. Foster creativity. Respect other people.
- Link *ad hoc* forums to formal decision-making structures and existing political jurisdictions.
- Allow redundancy—more than one initiative working on the same issue from different angles, in different venues, sometimes with different participants.
- Consider different measures of success—outcomes, working relationships, etc.

## **Strategies to Support Regional Initiatives**

The participants agreed that we need to build the capacity of existing regional practitioners and initiatives.

- Meet again, perhaps on annual basis.
- Invite other practitioners, including governmental officials.
- Clarify our language. For example, more clearly define regionalism, and distinguish it from community-based conservation and other public processes.
- Create a listserv and a website.
- Develop and deliver training on:
  - Designing regional initiatives.
  - Managing regional organizations.
  - Collaborative problem solving.
- Identify and examine different models of regionalism.
  - Distinguish between citizen-driven and government-driven initiatives.
  - Clarify what works and doesn't work.
  - Identify regional models of governance, and explain how they emerged, how they are structured, and how effective they are.
- Create a “network” of practitioners.

## **Strategies to Promote Regional Initiatives**

The participants also agreed that we need to build a constituency for regionalism. If regionalism is more than a supplement to existing institutions and systems for public decision-making—if it offers an alternative form of governance—then we need to raise awareness, understanding, and

interest among existing decision makers and other people that may be affected by regional approaches to policy and management.

- Work with the Bush administration, particularly the Council on Environmental Quality.
- Explore the possibility of creating a Congressional Caucus on Regionalism.
- Develop executive orders and model statutes for state and local government.
- Prepare case studies and other evidence that regionalism works. Explain the comparative advantages of regionalism in terms of environmental quality, economic development, and social equity.

### **The Idea of a Center of Excellence**

The participants agreed that it would be helpful to have some sort of framework to promote and support regional initiatives, but rather than a “center of excellence,” they preferred to talk in terms of a “network of practitioners.” Several people said in any supportive effort we should be careful to avoid institutionalizing regionalism because it is more likely to thrive if it is free to be organic, flexible, and integrative. A network of practitioners would reflect the needs and interests of the practitioners themselves, and could be supported by the intellectual and facilitative resources of the co-sponsors. Participants suggest a number of possible services and resources to be offered by such a network.

- **Networking** among regional practitioners, with a fellowship program, mentoring, and opportunities for boards to meet and receive training.
- Providing a **clearinghouse** of ideas, information, models of regional approaches, success stories. Maintaining a roster of who know what and can provide which resources/services.
- **Generating and distributing funding.** Encourage entrepreneurship and experimentation with different models, minimize constraints.
- Garnering **political support.**
- **Providing advice, consultation, next steps, and best practices.** Help us **reduce frustration** within our organizations and among our constituents.
- Skill building in **collaborative problem solving**, training in **constituency building.**
- Help in **building a vocabulary, a way of thinking, a culture of regionalism.**
- Help to advance the art of **implementation.**
- **Clarifying and integrating** the roles and relationships of government agencies and private sector groups with regional initiatives.
- **Documenting advantages** of acting regionally. Survey regional efforts, examine legal opportunities and barriers to regional governance, and develop strategies to improve regional efforts. Develop incentives to think and act regionally. Produce peer-reviewed case studies, training manuals on regionalism topics (including collaborative problem solving), and well-edited material on regional issues such as computer modeling for land use and transportation decisions.
- **Formatting data at the regional level** (GIS, census, etc.) so it is more usable and relevant.
- **Continuing to identify needs and opportunities** for regional initiatives. Be rigorous in thinking about regionalism and the diversity of regional initiatives. Help regional initiatives build reflective processes that are tied to on-the-ground work and results.
- Giving referrals for neutral **facilitation, conflict management, and convening** services.

## **Next Steps**

The participants agreed that this is the beginning of an important body of work. To continue this work, they suggested that we:

- Review and finalize a summary of the meeting.
- Convene a conference call to prioritize next steps.
- Consider what happens at the eastern workshop in April 2002.



## - WORKING SESSION SUMMARY -

The first meeting of the Western Regionalism Project, convened on the campus of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, was attended by 22 people, including 18 regional practitioners from initiatives located around the West. The event was funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Surdna Foundation, and was convened by the Western Consensus Council. Co-sponsors included the Stegner Center for Land, Resources and the Environment at the University of Utah; the Center for the Rocky Mountain West, and the Harvard Environmental Regionalism Project.

Matthew McKinney began the session by explaining that the format for the working session was modeled on retreats convened by the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy, wherein 20 to 25 people with similar jobs (in this case, directors of regional initiatives) are brought together for an open-ended discussion. The five major themes for the first day of this working session would be the nature of regionalism, status and trends, forces for and against regionalism, obstacles and challenges, and needs and opportunities. The second day would focus on strategies to support regional initiatives (with the “center of excellence” idea as one possibility). The overall purpose of the session, McKinney explained, was to explore what might be done to improve the effectiveness of regional initiatives.

McKinney then asked participants to introduce themselves and briefly describe the regional initiatives they direct (see *Regionalism in the West: an Inventory and Assessment* for descriptions of nearly 70 regional initiatives, including the 14 represented at the working session).

### **What do we Mean by Regionalism?**

McKinney kicked off the group discussion by suggesting a working definition of regionalism that touched on the purpose and objectives of regional initiatives, their scale (from local watershed efforts to international projects), and the types of institutional arrangements that support regional initiatives. People around the table quickly joined in. We can’t single out one type of regionalism, they said, because “regionalism is necessarily integrative.” By definition, regionalism means bringing things together that haven’t been brought together before, sometimes merging existing institutions. “There may be homogeneity and overlap in the middle, but the edges tend to be fuzzy.” Some said that regions reach beyond jurisdictional boundaries, and are necessarily “unbounded.” Others raised the question of whether regions have natural boundaries. Isn’t the defining factor “Does this work as a region?” He recommended drawing the boundary where you need to draw the boundary.

Boundaries also change depending on how you define the issue. A “commute shed” is different than an “air shed.” So we define boundaries based on what the issue is and what (and who) is affected. Also, people tend to react to regional efforts, not always favorably. They want to know, “Is my backyard in this region, or not?” They may not like the answer, or they may be relieved, depending on how the issue affects their interests and what the intent of the regional initiative is.

People also self-define. When you tell them they're now part of a region, they may resent it because you're redefining who they are. On the other hand, very few people have a sense of "region" in their head. If you can't draw out the common values, do you have a region? The media and government, including representation in Congress, are more concentrated in the East. This encourages westerners to think of the West as a region, and to think regionally. Public lands in the West keep the tension between localism and national interests.

Regionalism tends to identify and focus on certain places, but doesn't necessarily differentiate among the human, governmental, and regional layers we impose on them. Yet regional initiatives must deal with local, regional, and national constituencies. "One-size-fits-all" solutions tend to alienate some communities, and regional efforts that begin and end with government partners may be in trouble from the start.

We should also be mindful of whether we're talking about regions of place or regions of interests. Do these values of place and interest compete, or are they coordinated? People within a region may focus on the local, state, and federal government agencies—the jurisdictional institutions already familiar to them. Jurisdictional boundaries are the "third lens" of regionalism, after ecological integrity and human needs/interests.

There are also forced or mandated regions and voluntary regions, and these are often at odds with one another. Laws drive agencies to compel parties to solve problems, within set time frames, while communities want to take time to figure out their values and best interests before rushing to a solution. Many regional initiatives get their start because political jurisdictions have proven inadequate to resolve the problems facing society. We should remember that regionalism is at its basic level community building. Communities may also bond together and work more collaboratively (and proactively) to get ahead of the regulatory hammer. We need to consider different types of processes to help them do this more effectively.

## **Why Regionalism?**

Daniel Kemmis moderated a panel discussion, starting off by asking a central question: Why does regionalism bubble up, all over and on many different scales, all now (or at least more now than we've seen before)? Why is this idea more insistent now? Kemmis then suggested some possible answers before opening the discussion to the other panelists.

"Organic" regions are an emergent phenomenon, Kemmis said, like crystals forming in solution. People are drawn to work together on several different scales. The **global** scale is inescapably organic—Earth defines itself, rather than being defined by humans drawing some arbitrary lines. We're seeing lots of global integration, including the systemic integration of the economy, communications systems (the World Wide Web), and ecological systems (we now affect ecosystems on a global scale, so we have to take responsibility). All of this is happening in a remarkably short time span—now.

We're also seeing this at the **continental** scale, such as the formation of the European Union and NAFTA. This creates an insistence that other continents will follow suit. It also creates more pressure to squeeze out inefficiencies, to be more competitive. And regionalism happens on the **subcontinental** scale, within large eco-regions (Cascadia, for example), and at the watershed level. Regardless of the scale, regions tend to have a focal point and fuzzy boundaries.

What drives this crystallization? Technology—particularly information and communication technologies—appears to be a major factor. For example, through our online news service “Headwaters,” the Center for the Rocky Mountain West is using information technology to evoke the region. We also foster regional thinking through the Western Charter, which pushes the question, “how far can people go in thinking and visioning at the subcontinental regional scale?”

Although Congress and the previous administration tried to promote regionalism from the top down, most initiatives start as grass-roots, organic movements. Many of these are in response to the inability of existing political institutions to solve problems, or are proactive efforts to pre-empt regulatory enforcement. In some cases, public interest laws (and subsequent litigation) have compelled agencies to engage in regional approaches.

## **Federal Lands**

Bob Keiter listed six forces and trends affecting policy and decision making on federal lands.

- Rapid population growth, increasing urbanization, and the emergence of a New West culture.
- The rise of environmental, recreational, and other amenity values.
- The impact of increasing globalization on commerce and trade.
- The re-emergence of federalism and devolution.
- The growth and perpetuation of public interest law reform litigation.
- Ecosystem conservation and restoration.

Our responses to these trends include:

- Alternative management initiatives and models (such as the Northwest Forest Plan, which may be the first—but not necessarily an enduring—contemporary model of ecosystem management).
- Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management initiative.
- Sierra Nevada Framework for Conservation at the ecosystem scale.
- Valles Caldera.
- Presidio legislation – citizen management.
- The Clinton administration’s national monument designation (top down).
- U.S. Forest Service Roadless Initiative (FMNA).
- Predator re-introduction initiatives.
- Malpai, Applegate, Quincy Library Group (citizen and local driven)

Lingering questions remain: Are these developments all positive? We might have reasons for caution. In setting conservation goals, how do we address national interests while respecting local concerns?

Keiter gave a “qualified endorsement” of collaboratively based community initiatives. His reasons for being cautious are:

- Collaborative problem solving is emerging in the shadow of laws that raise questions—what is the nature and scope of a working group’s authority? How do we answer questions of inclusiveness and representation? Do we have a mechanism for holding such groups accountable?
- The evidence is mixed – are western states and communities ready to support a preservation/ecological agenda? Perhaps some issues (wilderness, Endangered Species Act policy, energy issues) need to be resolved at the national level, but already we can see the risk of creating a disconnect between regional efforts and national efforts. For example, Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) are required under the Endangered Species Act when an area is proposed for development. Planners get smart and look at several species at once. But this quickly brings a host of other planning issues into the picture—not just housing, but transportation, utilities, etc.—and planning for them becomes driven by the need to meet Endangered Species Act requirements. In turn, this affects mitigations on public lands, the fees paid by developers, and so on. (Lindell Marsh said that in southern California they’re moving from HCPs with fixed boundaries to plans that are more systemic and that address issues that expand the boundaries.)

## **Large Rural-Urban Areas**

Carol Whiteside said that regionalism is community building. It’s also difficult to do in our changing world. People are more mobile today, and no place on the map is off limits or too remote anymore. We’re also seeing an enormous increase in the wealth of some sectors, again with no apparent limits. Finally, the West is undergoing rapid population growth and dramatic demographic change. Much of the growth occurs in low income populations with historically low interest in education and environmental protection, and a high interest in boosting the economy.

Large rural-urban areas face six major growth issues:

- The economy.
- Housing.
- The environment.
- Social equity.
- Governance.
- Infrastructure.

Efforts to address these issues are only as good as the constituency that influences the politician who makes things happen. The region is the scale at which you can make tradeoffs among competing interests. The larger the field, the more resources there are available for trading, so it makes sense to expand beyond local jurisdictional boundaries. There is also less government at the regional level.

Regional discussions also have to have multiple goals if they're going to attract everyone to the table who needs to be there. The issues are a circle, not a continuum. If you focus on the environment, eventually you have to deal with the economy, security, energy, education, etc.

September 11 was a catalyzing event. How do we turn it into a positive? It certainly has encouraged people to think more regionally. We need to put the idea of regionalism to the public as a way to improve something they care about. Also, managing vocabulary is the key to shaping public opinion. We need to explain to people how a regional approach can help solve the problems they face.

Regional efforts tend to focus on “generational” benefits—the future good that will come of the work. So how do we sell these benefits to people today? *Is regionalism a public benefit?* Matt Morrison mentioned that Vancouver, British Columbia, is using a version of the software Sim City called “Quest” in the public schools. Kids learn to model planning decisions for 20 years ahead. Someone else suggested that society governs by crisis management.

## **Metropolitan Areas**

Ethan Seltzer said that metro areas are finding that they have to produce a desired quality of life to be more competitive. Thinking as regions has the advantage of being less restrictive, though you may have to go back to jurisdictions to implement any resulting proposals.

The forces and trends affecting metropolitan areas include:

1. Globalization. The West is part of the Pacific Rim, and metro areas in the West are part of the network of global competitors, driven by knowledge industries. To cater to knowledge workers, metro leaders have to ask themselves, “How good is our city at generating new ideas, new knowledge?”
2. Searching for new models during time of change. People are looking for place-based solutions that are idiosyncratic. Regional designers (architects, landscape architects, etc.) are looking at how they can improve metropolitan design. Regional organizers ask, “How do we create new alignments and alliances among people?”

Seltzer suggested that the reasons for the rise of regionalism fall into three classes. People try regional approaches either (1) because they have to, (2) it's in their self interest, or (3) because they recognize a common fate—that “our” future is linked to “their” future, and we should cooperate.

The scale of issues faced in metro areas is too big to resolve within existing jurisdictional boundaries and institutions. The economy is a clear example, where existing institutions offer only a weak response to a pressing concern. In short, people no longer live jurisdictional lives. We live first in our block, then in our neighborhood, then globally. Regionalism asserts connections among things. It also transcends jurisdictional inertia and frees us up to move without regulations. Any strategy to promote regionalism would need to seek an answer about

how regions can succeed by improving social equity, the economy, and the environment. Altruism alone doesn't work. We need to ask, what can regionalism do to help places mature, to become not bigger, but better?

A question arose over the importance of the role of government. Seltzer said that the governmental, private, and civic sectors all have roles, and that they work together in partnership. It helps if a regional initiative has lots of public exposure so the government realizes that it doesn't have *all* of the control.

Seltzer encouraged participants to recognize that regionalism is not a problem-based exercise, but a place-based exercise. We should also remember that success doesn't happen overnight. Time dimensions are crucial—aim for long-range improvements. But keep your eye on the regulatory, investment, and development time frames. It was noted that it's often difficult to develop public support for an initiative until after it's done.

## **Obstacles and Challenges**

Participants were then asked to describe the keys to success, and the obstacles and challenges facing regional initiatives. We'll consider the obstacles and challenges first.

- Western civilization is stuck in the Cartesian mode of dividing an issue into parts and relying on deductive reasoning. It is not easy to create structures and initiatives that transcend boundaries. This becomes even more difficult when crossing boundaries between nations and cultures.
- It's difficult to build on progress from one generation to the next. Within our organizations, and among other participants in regional initiatives, people move on and burn out. We lose the history and continuity—the *story*—of our efforts. It's also difficult to reconcile old and new view points among the people within a region.
- People tend to worry about immediate, personal concerns. Sometimes our own regional work ends up focused on the participants' individual agendas.
- Most of us fall into our jobs as directors of regional initiatives more or less by accident. We learn by fire. We need training. Perhaps we could sponsor three-month mentorships, or opportunities for boards to visit with other boards, for practitioners to see how other organizations work, and to have time to reflect on what they learn.
- We are not as skilled at tapping social and economic interests as we are at tapping the environmental interests. Political support often comes from outside the region, particularly on environmental issues. Urban centers provide political and financial support, but we struggle to build similar constituencies within the region itself. When people's sense of self-identity doesn't jibe with the region's identity (as defined by a given issue), it is hard to promote a cohesive sense of place. We also face a constant tension among local, state, and national interests.

- The hierarchical model of decision making doesn't work. No *one* person makes the sorts of decisions we deal with. Our efforts are necessarily collaborative, but sometimes people don't want to cooperate, or the sheer number of people involved becomes unwieldy. Integrating the private and public sectors brings its own difficulties. Agencies see their legal mandates as rigid; they feel compelled to do their work by the book. Using discretion is regarded as risky at best, and "against the rules." Some people and organizations resist sharing power or decision making authority. Others turn blinders to the "vision of the possible," particularly if the existing situation is in their favor or if the "vision" seems far-fetched.
- When regionalism reaches the point of making decisions that carry clout, we run into questions of governance—how is governance shared among the region's constituencies? Who has the power to regulate, to enforce decisions? Who gives them that authority? Who provides incentives for compliance? Who pays the bills?
- Regional initiatives are usually set up for good causes, but too often they fail because the process is sloppy. We tend to be trained in disciplines rather than process, and could use training in collaborative problem solving in particular.
- Time—deadlines, time as money, and the public's attention span—is often a driving force in regional initiatives. Organizations and different constituencies often operate on widely different time frames, with conflicting expectations of how fast or slow to move.

## **Keys to Success**

- Regionalism works best when it helps people see that the whole is greater than the parts, and that they are partners working for a greater good or to increase the pie. Participants need to be willing to listen and willing to commit to staying in the process. We also need people with complementary skills.
- Promote inclusive and informed processes. Meaningful, genuine dialogue is better than public hearings and other traditional forms of public input. Seek to foster a greater sense of ownership among stakeholders.
- Maintain a learning, adaptive attitude. Foster creativity. Respect other people. Seek solutions where you may not have a common denominator. We're looking for processes that let us go beyond the lines, boundaries, and boxes to reach real dialogue. We need training in collaborative problem solving to go beyond zero-sum to create *value* and generate mutual gains.
- It helps to enlist a respected spokesperson.
- Help people overcome territoriality and distrust. Means are at least as important as ends. How we work together determines whether we build trust. Set ground rules early and enforce

them. Help people develop a more productive pattern of behavior and build trust. Practice community building and organizing.

- Link *ad hoc* forums to formal decision-making structures and existing political jurisdictions.
- It often helps to have redundancy—to have more than one initiative working on the same issue. They can keep chipping away at the issue from different angles, in different venues, sometimes with different participants.
- If you can figure out how a solution is in the best interest of each group in a region, then you can make it work. Frame it so they understand how it serves their interests, and build coalitions. Try to inform them with a resonant idea, rather than simply advocating your idea. It's important to show that you're also willing to learn.
- Consider different measures of success—outcomes, working relationships, etc.

## **Strategies to Support Regional Initiatives**

The participants agreed that we need to build the capacity of existing regional practitioners and initiatives. Comments included:

- I'd like to see more agencies invited to participate, especially the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The barriers are institutional, not personal.
- Invite people in state government to this dialogue. They tend to be engaged in many areas and efforts, so they can help bring together the big picture.
- Convene a half-day hearing with CEQ and practitioners to explore these problems.
- Distinguish between efforts initiated by federal agencies or laws versus those initiated by non-governmental organizations or communities. Ask ourselves, does regionalism happen because it increases political advantage? The network needs to plug people together and facilitate group sharing and information exchange.
- Keep the conversation going; become aware of what people are doing in various regional initiatives.
- Build in flexibility, but also focus on concrete, firm ideas.
- Bear in mind that regionalism needs to happen both top-down and bottom-up.
- Create opportunities for practitioners to continue learning.
- Set up a web site and/or listserv to share information and ideas.
- Change FACA to remove the unreasonable process barriers it presents.
- Develop ways to have breakout conversations with practitioners who are facing similar challenges (international, metro, and other issues).
- Involve more practitioners in the dialogue—don't assume that those present represent all of the various forms of regional initiatives and opportunities or concerns about regionalism.
- If agency people are invited to the dialogue, limit them to people who support this work.
- We want to see the document and results of the April Eastern meeting.
- Solidify what questions we need to address.

- Re-convene (even if it's just a conference call), at the very least to bring some closure to the work we've done in these two days.
- Prioritize our list of needs, and survey participants to see which are highest priority.
- How can the Center for the Rocky Mountain West help? Kemmis said that they will publish an article on this discussion and set up a bulletin board to continue the discussion on the Headwaters web site.
- Keep a focus on CEQ.
- Explore with universities—the University at Irvine—to see if they will participate.
- Keep this effort free-form—don't institutionalize it.
- Seek encouragement from the federal secretaries to support regionalism.
- Decide how to share ideas and contacts over the web—do this now. Move incrementally if we have too—we can always add on as we go.
- Don't move too quickly to engage foundations. We don't want to establish a clique of foundations, with strings attached, who may then exclude other funding options or even directions this effort might go in.
- How can we extend our own understanding?
- Keep local government involved in this dialogue.
- Expand the circle of dialogue participants unless we think this group is already representative.
- Avoid being branded as a homogenous group with a single agenda. We have different needs and perspectives here.
- Avoid the sense of an imposed agenda from outside. Keep it organic.
- Distinguish between regional practitioners (the on-the-ground movers and shakers) and community-based organizers.
- Do more networking, less “centering.”
- Extract 4-6 different models of regionalism from the Inventory to help focus future discussions and show their advantages and disadvantages.
- The four federal land agencies are supporting centers of science-based resource management at western universities—we should incorporate regionalism issues there.
- Talk about what things regional efforts do really well and what doesn't work.
- People have the heart and passion to do this work, but we need better tools and frameworks.
- Talk about specific practices and practical needs—media relations, alternative dispute resolution, collaborative problem solving, etc.

## **The Idea of a Center of Excellence**

The first day of the working session ended with a brief introduction of the idea of a “center of excellence” to foster regionalism. The participants agreed that it would be helpful to have some sort of framework to promote and support regional initiatives, but rather than a “center of excellence,” they preferred to talk in terms of a “network of practitioners.” Several people said in any supportive effort we should be careful to avoid institutionalizing regionalism because it is more likely to thrive if it is free to be organic, flexible, and integrative. They also said that any such effort would face the difficulty of bringing together a circle of issues (economics, social equity, education, transportation, the environment, etc.) among regional initiatives that typically specialize in one issue. If a center or central node on the network physically exists, it should be

located in the West. A network of practitioners would reflect the needs and interests of the practitioners themselves, and could be supported by the intellectual and facilitative resources of the co-sponsors. Participants suggest a number of possible services and resources to be offered by such a network.

- Skill building in **collaborative problem solving**.
- Training in **constituency building**.
- Garnering **political support**.
- Help in **building a vocabulary, a way of thinking, a culture of regionalism**.
- Help to advance the art of **implementation**.
- Providing a **clearinghouse** of ideas, information, models of regional approaches, success stories. Maintaining a roster of who know what and can provide which resources/services.
- **Networking** among regional practitioners. Perhaps offer a fellowship program, mentoring, etc. Provide opportunities for boards to meet and receive training, exchange ideas.
- **Generating and distributing funding**. Encourage experimentation with different models, encourage entrepreneurship, minimize constraints.
- **Providing advice, consultation, next steps, and best practices**. Help us **reduce frustration** within our organizations and among our constituents.
- **Documenting advantages** of acting regionally. Survey regional efforts, examine legal opportunities and barriers to regional governance, and develop strategies to improve regional efforts. Develop incentives to think and act regionally. Produce peer reviewed case studies, training manuals on regionalism topics (including collaborative problem solving), and well-edited material on regional issues such as computer modeling for land use and transportation decisions.
- **Formatting data at the regional level** (GIS, census, etc.) so it is more usable and relevant.
- **Continuing to identify needs and opportunities** for regional initiatives. Be rigorous in thinking about regionalism and the diversity of regional initiatives. Help regional initiatives build reflective processes that are tied to on-the-ground work and results.
- Giving referrals for neutral **facilitation, conflict management, and convening** services.
- **Clarifying and integrating** the roles and relationships of government agencies and private sector groups with regional initiatives.

The next day, the idea of a center of excellence continued to be a thread in the conversation during a conference call among the participants and Dr. Charles Foster at the Kennedy School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Matt McKinney reviewed the previous day's discussion, then asked, "How do we fulfill some of these needs?"

Dr. Foster said he's been interested in regionalism for 50 years, including from a pragmatic angle. He was involved in all seven interstate compacts in New England, and also helped organize a federal/state compact. Dr. Foster also wanted to reassure people that the question of a center of excellence (including where such an entity might be located) was open for discussion. Neither the Kennedy School nor Dr. Foster himself had any agenda.

Dr. Foster also mentioned that the Eastern contingent of regional practitioners will meet in April 2002. By June, Dr. Foster expects to have his findings and recommendations written up.

Dr. Foster said that the initial regionalism survey showed extensive regional efforts, with a lot of creative talent generating solutions to problems. This led the research team to realize that someone should facilitate (being careful to not standardize) this phenomenon. “I’m convinced that there’s something important going on across the country,” Dr. Foster said, “and we need to encourage it.”

There are many types of regional initiatives, he said, but there may be some merit in focusing on environmental efforts, if we embrace “environment” in its broadest sense, which includes economic uses of resources, etc. This focus might then broaden to include other aspects or concerns that can be addressed through regional initiatives. Dr. Foster said he also wants to stay away from defining regions (e.g., the West) in specific terms. Any effort to facilitate regionalism should move toward congruity, he said, recognizing that many efforts are working on different issues but all in one region.

At this point, Dan Kemmis reiterated some of the key themes from Thursday’s discussion. He said that regionalism is integrative and reaches out to all aspects of human community and activity. It would be counterproductive, he said, to enter the circle at one specific point—say, by focusing on the environment. This is not helpful, particularly in the West. We should acknowledge that people can see advantage in regionalism on many subjects. We’ll eventually get around to all of them, certainly environmental issues.

Dr. Foster said he was worried about our efforts getting lost without some area of emphasis. Also, focusing on environmental regionalism might help attract funders and supporters.

Juan Palma asked if there was federal or Congressional support for such work, and Dr. Foster said that the Council on Environmental Quality is interested. He’s also exploring potential relationships under the states, which may be “more useful laboratories.” Dr. Foster also said that the current conservative administration may favor regionalism as a way to encourage people to address their own problems.

Palma said that if there is a window of opportunity, we should not miss it. Dr. Foster said that any center of excellence for regionalism would be alert to such opportunities and available to help in any way possible. If we develop a network of regional organizations, that might lead to a network of political leadership to work jointly on political initiatives to support regionalism. Most conventional institutions fail to support regional organizations because they threaten conventional command and control, and regional organizations start seeking to share authority. Dr. Foster suggested a national effort to submit recommendations to the President, similar to an effort in Massachusetts, to suggest that the administration develop policies and procedures to engage people in policymaking. Regional practitioners might even draft model legislation to that effect.

Lindell Marsh suggested drafting a Memorandum of Understanding with key federal agencies and states, committing them to work together under CEQ. He said we should be less concerned with specific issues than improving the capacity to work across boundaries regardless of the issue. Dr. Foster seconded the idea, perhaps as a Presidential executive order to encourage

federal agencies to use these types of processes, particularly under CEQ. Some of these encouragements already exist under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Jonathon Kusel said that he sees many overlaps between regionalism and community-based work. Foster agreed, saying that regionalism should come from the bottom up. Community-based approaches are a good place to start. Dan Kemmis pointed out, however, that encouraging a federal role or appointing a center of excellence runs counter to the grassroots origin of most regional initiatives. We wouldn't want federal policy to stifle regional initiatives. Dr. Foster responded that, based on Bob Keiter's work, there are no legal barriers to federal agencies embracing regional initiatives. Any MOU or policy would simply urge federal agencies to encourage such work, not direct or shape it. We do not want to suggest that there is a standard way to do this work. But at the state and federal level, we could create an environment to foster organic regional initiatives. Top level federal officials seem agreeable to this approach, although middle management is more resistant.

Kemmis then proposed the idea of a "network" of excellence. Foster said you might need a modest center that delivers services through a network.

Steve Clauson asked how we can reconcile the time-bound legal mandates that direct the work of federal agencies with community-based objectives and time frames. Foster said that we should address such differences up front, and supply conflict resolution and facilitation services when needed. "Don't abandon agency responsibilities in favor of purely organic solutions—the answer is somewhere in the middle." He said we should encourage creative solutions, put them in practice, and learn from the experience. One of the issues will be dealing with problems in power sharing—deciding who makes decisions.

Some participants talked about pursuing funding from foundations, federal agencies with program funds, etc., aiming for a regional structure for support, but others were concerned that bringing funders and federal agencies in too early would give too much influence to outside interests.

McKinney broached the idea of a virtual network to link regional practitioners, think tanks, and funders. This might take the form of a web site or listserv, though it would still need a modest central person to organize and maintain it. Dan Kemmis said that the Kennedy School should be a key node in such a network because such an effort raises issues about forms of governance and relationships among regional initiatives. It would also be helpful to draft a concept paper outlining the "network of excellence" idea and describing strategies for how it would support practitioners and how it would work at the local, state, and federal levels.

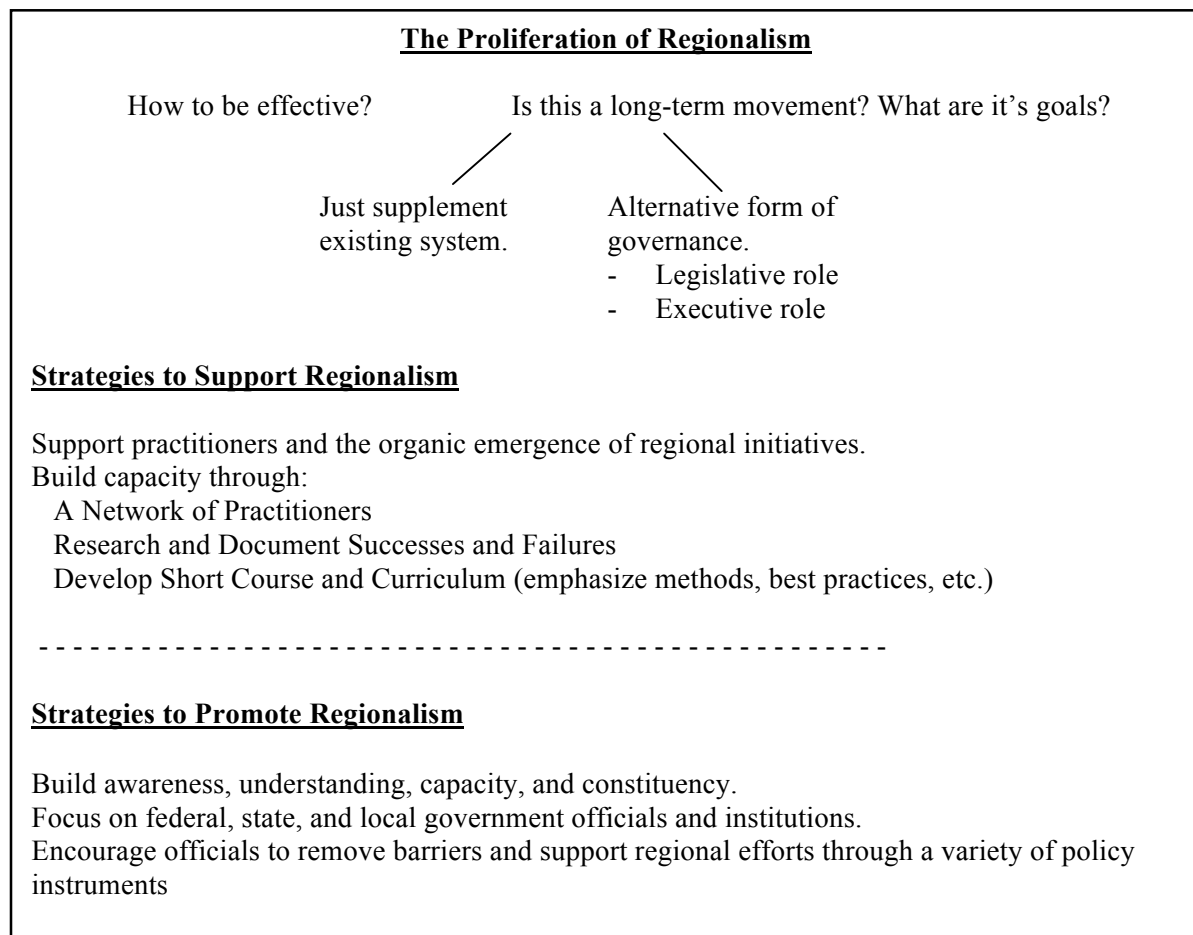
Matt Morrison suggested that Harvard could convene CEQ and regional practitioners to discuss how regional efforts work with and "around" federal agencies. FACA is a "pain in the neck," and needs to be improved or reformed. We also need to improve the capacity of federal agencies to combine budgets to support regional efforts. Jonathan Kusel noted that there's tremendous overlap between community-based and regional approaches, and those links need to be advanced or expanded. The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution and the Udall Center are

working toward helping federal agencies deal with FACA (mostly through how they conduct NEPA scoping).

Dr. Foster concluded the conference call by saying that the April meeting of Eastern regional practitioners could be used to attract an audience who might be able to help implement the combined recommendations of the Eastern and Western groups.

## **Synthesizing the Discussion**

McKinney then put up a flip chart summarizing the two-day discussion.



Looking at the flip chart, participants said that some tension exists between the bottom-up approach of supporting practitioners in their organic efforts (above the dashed line) and the top-down approach of building capacity and a constituency among government agencies. Several people said they want to be careful that we not institutionalize and thereby hamstring public support for regional initiatives. Any effort to help regionalism should be careful not to squelch the grass-roots, organic upwelling of interest and energy that's driving this "movement." On the

other hand, if we attempt to re-shape systems of governance, then we find it difficult to build a constituency.

Regionalism is emerging because people are following the issues into their natural territories, the boundaries within which the issues make sense. These are not always regional in nature, but sometimes they expand into regional efforts because people find a shared constituency across other jurisdictional boundaries, or to resolve the issue they must deal with many layers of government, decision making, regulations, and economies.

Jim Pissot said that some environmental regional initiatives seek to reknit dissected ecosystems, and they may want a heavier federal hand to help enforce it. On the other hand, some regional initiatives get their start because people are dissatisfied with government's response to an issue, and they seek a decreased federal role.

Larry Timchak noted that the new USFS chief Dale Bosworth is focused on removing "process barriers" from USFS operations. The ESA, he said, has forced cooperation and collaboration across jurisdictions.

Brad Ack said the offices of general counsel in federal agencies are reactive rather than proactive. Lawyers typically don't get involved until a lawsuit is filed. Their expertise up front could help agencies avoid legal challenges, and would also provide an opportunity for other stakeholders to raise questions and suggest alternative processes *before* decisions are made and appeals filed.

Timchak said that federal agencies actually have a lot of discretion regarding decision making processes at the local level. He suggested that regional initiatives need to develop working relationships with local managers. Rich Lindsey said that we need a central keeper of a roster of people with the knowledge and interest to refer people to who need assistance.

## **Next Steps**

During closing comments, the group seemed to agree that a network of practitioners, with some central coordinator, would be preferable to a "center." They suggested starting small and expanding as needed, working carefully to invite more participants to the dialogue, retain flexibility, and encourage the exchange knowledge and information among the various types of initiatives.

Participants said that this discussion reaffirmed the creativity and value of regional thinking. They would like to see further papers to address legal issues, constituency-building strategies, identify policies and legal changes that could help promote regionalism, etc. They also voiced how grateful they were to the sponsors of the working session—the Stegner Center for Land, Resources and the Environment at the University of Utah; the Center for the Rocky Mountain West, and the Harvard Environmental Regionalism Project.

The suggested next steps included:

- Reviewing and finalizing a summary of the meeting.
- Convening a conference call to prioritize next steps.
- Considering what happens at the eastern workshop in April 2002.



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# - Background Resources -

Matthew McKinney, et al., “Regionalism in the West: An Inventory and Assessment,” (A Draft Report of The Western Regionalism Project, 2001).

Charles Foster, et al., *The Harvard Environmental Regionalism Project* (John F. Kennedy School of Government, December 2000).

Charles Foster et al., “Fostering Environmental Regionalism: The Center of Excellence Concept,” (A Working Paper of The Harvard Environmental Regionalism Project).

Center for Resource Management, *The Western Charter Project: Initiating a Regional Conversation* (Denver, Colorado 1999).

## **The Alliance for Regional Stewardship**

Several existing organizations attend to many of the issues identified here.

Key among these is the Alliance for Regional Stewardship. According to its web site, the Alliance is “a national peer-to-peer learning network of regional leaders who benefit by sharing experiences and working collaboratively on innovative approaches to common regional challenges.... These leaders can come from business, government, education, and community sectors, but they share a common commitment to collaborative action and regional stewardship. The Alliance supports Regional Stewardship by helping leaders learn about best practices from other regions, communicate to state/federal leaders and the media about regional challenges and innovations, and develop new leaders for regional civic efforts.”

For more information on the Alliance, visit [www.regionalstewardship.org](http://www.regionalstewardship.org). Affiliates of the Alliance include:

California Center for Regional Leadership	<a href="http://www.ccr.org">www.ccr.org</a>
National Association of Regional Councils	<a href="http://www.narc.org">www.narc.org</a>
National League of Cities	<a href="http://www.nlc.org">www.nlc.org</a>
Partnership for Regional Livability	<a href="http://www.prlonline.org">www.prlonline.org</a>
Policy Link	<a href="http://www.policylink.org">www.policylink.org</a>
National Academy of Public Administration	<a href="http://www.napawash.org">www.napawash.org</a>

For more information on other regional associations, see Matthew McKinney, *et al.*, “Regionalism in the West: An Inventory and Assessment,” (A Draft Report of The Western Regionalism Project, 2001), which lists more than 75 organizations dedicated to the theory and practice of regionalism in the West.