

The stakeholder - nature conservation's best friend or its worst enemy?



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0 **PREFACE**

Involving stakeholders in decision making processes and in the planning and management of nature protection areas is a growing trend. However, as with so many other politically correct buzzwords even the definition of the word stakeholder itself is fuzzy around the edges and the concept of “stakeholder involvement” even more so, a universal problem that becomes evident whenever it is put into practice.

The aim of this report is to lock down some of the intangibles concerning stakeholder involvement using the Kvarken archipelago in Western Finland as a specific example. It should be viewed as a distinct case study, the conclusions applicable only to the geographical and temporal timeframe the report relates to. The report is a synthesis of many years of practical stakeholder work and complements the preliminary trans-national collection of guidelines.

While national regulations and local constraints always differ from one area and one country to another, the situation in the Kvarken archipelago is not distinctively dissimilar to other parts of the Baltic. The results from the ongoing stakeholder processes in the Kvarken area might thus be of use wherever stakeholder involvement is being introduced as a decision making and management tool in similar surroundings.

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1 BACKGROUND

1.1 *The EU membership and the Natura 2000 programme*

Finland joined the EU in 1995, and the main focus and preparations was on economic questions and international power-sharing, that the deal also included the EU nature directives and the Natura 2000-programme was given little significance. Inside a year the situation changed radically, and with almost no time whatsoever to prepare and no documentation available in Finnish (or Swedish) the Finnish nature conservation apparatus went into overdrive seemingly overnight, with a new rule-set and a Natura 2000 deadline set for 1997.

Though the Finnish authorities really tried to implement the Natura 2000-program as well as possible, but fitting Finnish boreal ecosystems into the existing Natura 2000 framework and locating and demarcating Natura 2000 sites with very little hard background data inside the time constraints available was in itself an impossible task. In addition, though the intention was to use as much state-owned land as possible during implementation the end result was that quite a lot of privately owned land was incorporated into the Natura 2000 programme, which in turn multiplied the amount of stakeholders. This was especially true in coastal and archipelago areas, where most of the land (and much of the waters) were privately owned.

The time constraints resulted in stakeholders generally being heard only after the initial area selection was made and then given very little time to digest this information. Even if the selection of areas were based on incomplete data, guesstimates or, on occasion, faulty data there was no time and no resources available to acquire additional data necessary for a new site selection process. In reality, there was seldom time to relocate designated areas. Private landowners were left with three possibilities, they could fight the Natura 2000 site selections on factual grounds (or using political pressure groups), they could accept the selection and voluntarily sign a protection agreement or they would get their land appropriated by the state. The Natura 2000-process brought anti-conservation feelings and viewpoints to the surface and came, rightly or wrongly, to symbolize much of what was “wrong” with nature conservation policies in Finland, which up to that time had consisted mainly of unilateral decisions by the authorities.

The combination of severe time constraints, scarce background data and inclusion of privately owned land also made the stakeholder negotiations into a gruelling ordeal. The amount of work needed for the implementation of the Natura 2000 programme required an immediate influx of fresh personnel, mostly fresh graduates or university students aiming at some extra work. After an initial period of planning and inventory data collection, this workforce was transformed into Natura 2000 “foot soldiers”, which were then with little or no preparation sent out to public meetings and negotiations with landowners and NGO representatives, in other words into strong and compact anti-conservation surroundings. In many cases these young negotiators had to propagate the official site selections at stakeholder meetings without being able to rely on hard facts and with little or no margin for negotiation. In short they were used as an expendable buffer, in what at the time probably seemed like the only way to implement a huge nature conservation

programme with very little information available inside the very short time span available.

The negotiators became focal points for a simmering hatred of nature conservation and “big-brother” authoritarian decisions by the Finnish state and had to deal with all this on the stage set by stakeholder/landowner’s meetings. Negotiators were publicly hounded and ridiculed and in several cases ostracized in their local communities. Some simply quit or gave in to the compact pressure from stakeholder and NGOs. But at the same time they had gained insights into stakeholder involvement that until that time were almost non-existent inside the Finnish conservation authorities. When some later went to work on a permanent basis for the authorities they had both first-hand experience what could go wrong with stakeholder involvement and a determination to change the way to handle stakeholders, both in theory and in practice.

Changing things from the inside takes time, and where authorities are concerned even “revolutionary” change can sometimes be measured in generations. This is especially true if the change is propagated from the lower echelons upwards, particularly in bureaucracy-driven governmental authorities, where directors and department heads slowly advance upwards and are rarely brought in from the outside. The governmental policies thus tend to reflect the conservative viewpoints of long-term bureaucrats currently in policy-making positions, unless a disruption forces decision-makers at all levels to re-evaluate existing procedures. The Natura 2000 programme proved to be such an event and started the impetus towards a change in stakeholder involvement.

Though the need for a general overhaul of stakeholder approaches and an increased stakeholder involvement slowly spread throughout the nature conservation apparatus, two processes got underway in the Kvarken area around the start of the new Millennium that allowed both the funding and the working space to develop new ideas on approaching and cooperating with stakeholder as well as testing these ideas in practice. One was the suggestion, originating from the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1996, that the Kvarken area fulfilled the criteria for a World Heritage site. The other was the Interreg IIB (and later Interreg IIIB) Kvarken-Mittskandia-programme, which facilitated cooperation with the Swedish authorities and funds for developing new tools for nature conservation management.

1.2 *Laying the groundwork for a World Heritage site*

A project with the aim of getting the Kvarken area on the World Heritage list was started on the Finnish side in the late 1990’s. When Kvarken finally was included in the list in the summer of 2006 the application process included close to two hundred stakeholder-, NGO- and “partner”-meetings. The framework for this stakeholder undertaking was the UNESCO requirement that a World Heritage application should be accepted by the majority of the local population, but the driving force behind extensive stakeholder work was the determination and the experience gathered from the Natura 2000 programme.



Fig. 1.1 The Kvarken Archipelago World Heritage site. More than 2500 people live inside the 3200 square kilometre area and the population more than triples during summer months.

When the project started right after the Natura 2000-programme was finalized in 1998 a World Heritage site application was considered by the majority of the local population as some sort of nature conservation extension. More than 90% were against the application, latent frustrations from the Natura 2000 process continuously crept up during meetings and suspicions and accusations of hidden agendas were ripe. Learning from the mistakes made during Natura 2000 the officials involved (all Natura 2000 veterans) quickly adopted a policy of complete transparency in combination with an effective distribution of all available information. At the request of local village councils the information flow was early on amended with authority-funded local study groups, open to anyone who was interested, with the stated aim of giving the local stakeholders the knowledge and the tools to be able to assess the implications of a World Heritage status themselves.

Local stakeholder meeting venues were moved out from the authorities' offices and the city into the villages and the schedules adopted according to stakeholder wishes. This meant that meetings were mostly held in the evenings (until this almost totally unheard

of by the authorities) and that the meetings were concentrated to late fall, winter and early spring (when the sea is covered by permanent ice and commercial fishing impossible). Local meetings were interspersed with larger general meetings, facilitating contact between different villages and different stakeholder groups. In the final stages farmers and fishermen from existing World heritage sites (for instance Stora Alvaret on Öland) were flown in and allowed to freely comment on and discuss what World Heritage status had meant for local people elsewhere.

At the same time authorities, NGOs and officials held their own stakeholder meetings on a parallel timeline, all the while getting feedback from and feeding information back into local stakeholder meetings. This was another lesson learnt from the Natura 2000-programme, though representatives from authorities, NGOs and other larger organisations often took part in public stakeholder meetings they rarely commented or contributed during meetings. In order to involve them more closely they were given the opportunity to meet “with their peers”, without direct public involvement. Most organisations and authorities actively stayed involved with the application process for the whole seven years, and several joined a partnership initiative in order to support the application both financially and knowledge wise

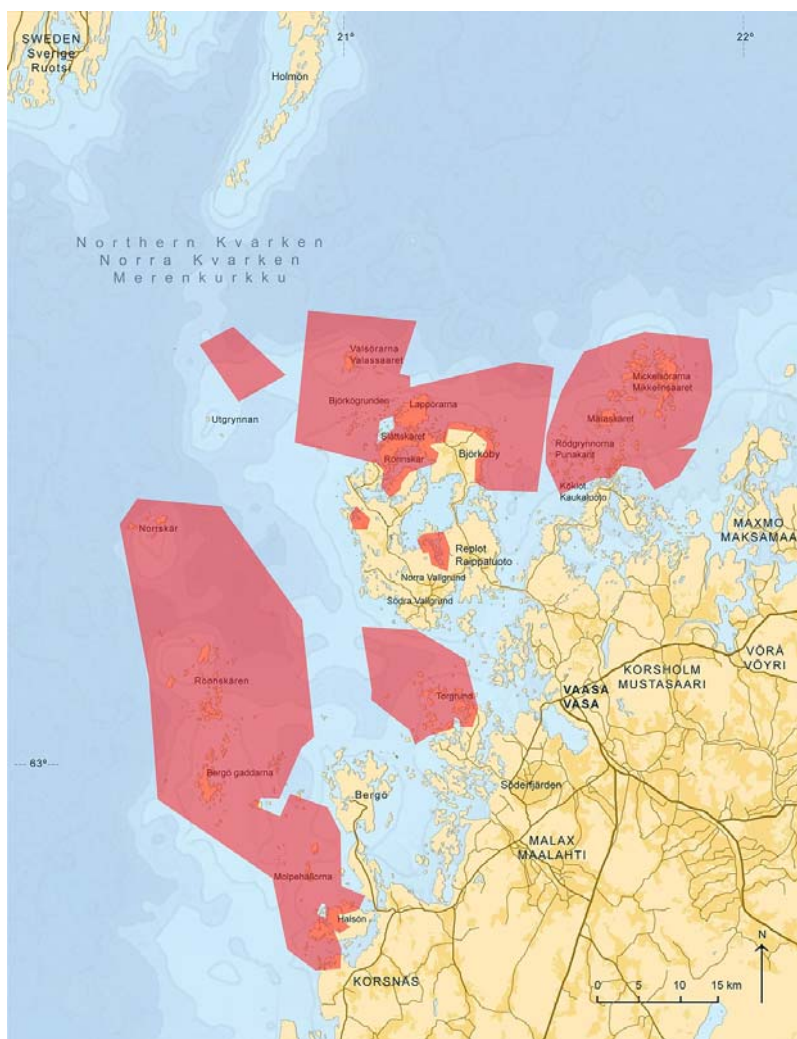


Fig. 1.2 Finnish national protection sites in the Kvarken archipelago. The land area in the top left corner is the Swedish mainland.

When in 1999 more than 90% of the stakeholders had been against a World Heritage application, this group had dropped to less than 8% by early 2006. Three full-scale official public hearings were held during the seven year long process and the final hearing in early 2006 significantly went through without even one single objection. This huge change of opinion was due not to an orchestrated propaganda campaign, but due to an open and transparent information policy in combination with frequent and frank contact between stakeholders, planners and authorities. After Kvarkens inclusion on the World Heritage list in the summer of 2006, the planning and management of the area has continued in an atmosphere of frank discussion and cooperation.

1.3 *Creating a new international collection of guidelines*

Also starting up in 1999 was the Interreg IIB-programme Kvarken-Mittskandia. The early general aim of facilitating a closer cooperation between Finnish and Swedish nature conservation authorities quickly led to the realisation that different governmental models and differences in planning and management procedures made any closer cooperation impossible. This in turn led to creation of two large-scale and amorphous projects, The Kvarken Green Belt (Grön Bro) and Kvarken Nature Monitoring Project, both aiming at producing tools and guidelines allowing combined cooperative monitoring, analysis and planning for both the Finnish and Swedish part of the Kvarken region.

Since both countries started out with large Natura 2000-areas and areas protected under other international and national conservation schemes and the authorities on both sides had been delegated the responsibility to manage these areas the focus was immediately placed on practical management and management planning. A decision was made to produce a set of guidelines for management planning in the archipelago areas on both sides, and funding was made available from Interreg resources. Drawing both on experiences from the Natura 2000-programme and from more modern nature conservation thinking the new set of guidelines aimed not only at introducing a transparent and stakeholder involving planning process but also at actively involving locals in long-time nature conservation. In short the goal was to introduce a modern, cooperative management regime.

The Interreg-funded project resulted in a collection of preliminary management guidelines from both countries that were then combined into a preliminary study. These preliminary guidelines has since been implemented and tested in local management planning processes. During the last four years the small regional National Heritage Services team in Vaasa has arranged and participated in more than 60 stakeholder meetings in several stakeholder processes. The Western Finland regional conservation agency has additionally organized another 20 stakeholder meetings. Most meetings were held at venues and times chosen by the stakeholders in order to maximise participation.

While being more expensive and time consuming than “normal” bureaucratic procedures, the close interactive contacts with stakeholders and local communities are starting to produce long-term results and benefits. Some hardcore doubters still harbour suspicions towards the authorities there is a tangible change in how government officials and locals interact. In the beginning one of the main problems were activating stakeholders and getting them to participate, now a few years later the main problem is a lack of resources and time on part of the government officials to handle all the suggestions coming in from local stakeholders. At the same time there is no going back to the older,

unilateral, authoritarian system. Doing so would now probably result in a local uprising. While it might be ideologically correct to include local people and other stakeholders in planning and management processes the participation is much more real and tangible to them.

The ability to affect conservation planning and management in areas where they live and function is fundamentally important to stakeholders. As important is the growing recognition on both sides that there are few if any fundamental differences concerning management issues and that the authorities responsible for the management of nature protection areas share many of the concerns of the local stakeholders.

Opinion polls and censuses were first used by the authorities simply to measure the general opinion on certain questions and were conducted mainly for internal use when planning site management. Polls were however quickly developed into important open management tools when it became apparent that the difference in opinions among the local stakeholders came as a complete surprise to the stakeholders themselves. So far opinion polls have been the best tool available in dissolving the “us against them” by showing that stakeholder opinion on planning and management issues are much more diverse than expected. This in turn has led to the possibility of finding more problem-oriented solutions and allowed more viewpoints to surface.

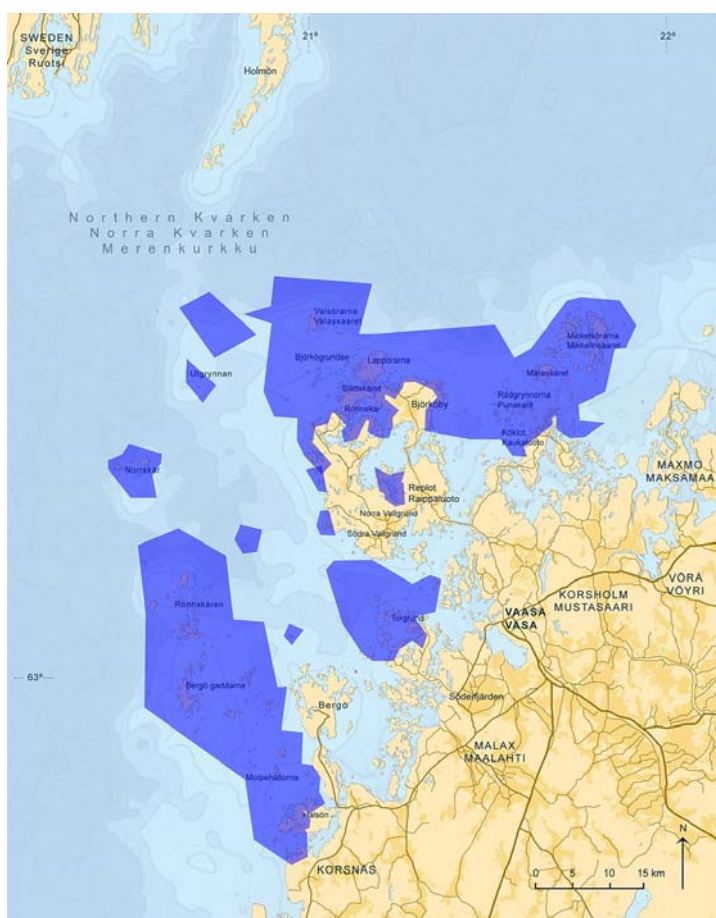


Fig. 1.3 Areas protected by international agreements on the Finnish side in the Kvarken archipelago.

2 THE “WHY INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS”- RATIONALE

Most democracies maintain systems that, at least in some part, allow citizens to participate and comment on the decision making process. This participation works best on a local level, where the distance between the authority and the stakeholder is short. This gives stakeholders/citizens an opportunity to directly comment on or affect the outcome. Larger issues are in turn decided somewhere far away by anonymous decision-makers and distant politicians, and do scarcely involve citizens directly at all. Nature conservation issues tend to be large scale decisions, and the guidelines and legislation for management and planning are generally formed on a national or international level. Since stakeholder generally cannot participate in the decisions, the only option left of involving them is through the management of the sites that directly affect them. But why involve them at all?

Protecting and conserving nature is by definition a (political) process that limits or prohibits human activities of some form or another. A strict nature reserve that doesn't allow any human activity (except regulated scientific study) has no real stakeholders (except the scientific community, if scientific research is allowed). In such a case normal human beings (i.e. not scientists) are stakeholders only during the decision-making process, but cease to be stakeholders once the decision is taken. The management in turn consist only of blocking access to the reserve and need not interact in any other way.

If, however, human activities are allowed to continuously affect the nature conservation site through different actions and activities all those that do so can be considered real stakeholders. The management of such a protection area consists, in all simplicity, of finding a way to limit the effects of human activity enough to safeguard the conservation values of the site.

One way of doing this is the authoritarian approach, imposing stern rules and regulations from above and putting in place some form of authority to implement them. In this case is the threat of getting caught doing something prohibited and of subsequent legal action and that safeguards the conservation values. Stakeholder involvement is usually limited to hearings concerning the set of rules and their implementation. The effectiveness of the conservation is directly related to the amount of resources used to guard and patrol the site, without a continuous, never-ending effort the conservation attempt will probably fail. In this approach, stakeholders do not contribute to the conservation in any way and are instead a liability, demanding continuous resource expenditure by the responsible authority.

The other way of keeping the effects of human activity under control is through cooperation resulting in stakeholder self-regulation. In contrast to the previous authoritarian approach this model requires at lot more resources in the initial stage, but considerable less once the collaboration between authorities and stakeholders are working. Stakeholders are considered not only a problem (which they by definition are) but also a necessary resource in safeguarding conservation values. The realisation that stakeholders might generate more benefits than problems is crucial, not only for the authorities but for the stakeholders themselves.

The benefits of a cooperative stakeholder effort are incremental:

- 1 “together we stand” - the basis for nature conservation is political decisions and gaining local support through cooperative stakeholder involvement is invaluable for nature conservation as a whole, as is the possibility for stakeholders to conform national guidelines to local circumstances.
- 2 “more bang for the buck” - nature conservation almost never generate more money than it costs, effectiveness is the key to increasing conservation gains.
- 3 “it is better to be part of the solution than the problem” – involving stakeholder in management is a double-win solution, you gain a valuable resource and loose a hindrance at the same time.
- 4 “ignorance is the enemy” – cooperation based on mutual trust allows a much freer flow of information in all directions and the key to both support for conservation issues successful management is knowledge.
- 5 “nothing is forever” – but history shows that basing conservation management on sustainable use is a lot more robust than basing it on fences and guards.

Regardless of the advantages of involving stakeholders a cooperative solution is not always possible and conservation “by force” is in some cases the only way to effectively protect nature values. Stakeholder involvement in its purest form, requiring hardly any input or guidance from “the establishment”, is also quite rare. Nevertheless, successfully involving stakeholders in a management regime always nets long-term gain for nature conservation as a whole.

3 CONCLUSIONS

Involving stakeholders in management and planning is a demanding process. Not only does it necessitate an initial increase of resources, there is no general road-map to success and no possibility for the responsible authority to control how the involvement process proceeds. This is due to the fact that the backbone of any successful stakeholder involvement scheme consists of transferring part of the initiative from the authority to the stakeholders themselves, over time. At the beginning stakeholders are passive participants, and even though they might have a lot of demands and are capable of making a lot of noise they are in no way involved in the actual management. Getting them to take part always involves some amount of power-sharing, both with regard to how the process should proceed and what goes into the actual management (plan).

Involving stakeholders is a high-stake game; a stakeholder involvement effort that breaks down due to mistakes on the part of the establishment can easily lead to a more inflamed and much worse situation than existed previous to the effort. During the initial stages of any stakeholder process all responsibility for moving the process forward is on the authorities and the stakeholders will hold them accountable. One official put it like this after a series of gruelling initial stakeholder meetings: “Not only do I have to be like Moses and show them a way through the desert; I have to collect and help all stragglers and then persuade and force everyone to come along every bloody step of the way.”

3.1 *Preparing for stakeholder involvement*

Involving stakeholder is a one-way ticket and the decision to do so should not be taken lightly. If there are too many uncertain or indistinct factors (legislation, other plans, and other decision-makers) or not enough resources to see the involvement process through it is probably better to follow established unilateral procedures and postpone the involvement of stakeholders to a later date. The same is true if there is no real intention of allocating resources into an indefinite management/cooperation scheme with the stakeholders once the “involvement process” is finished.

- 1 Set out clear goals and a definite timetable for the whole process
- 2 Collect a list of stakeholders and decide if they should be grouped into sub-processes (i.e. “hunting”, “fishing”, “recreation”, “local authorities” etc.)
- 3 Examine existing information (maps, other plans, legislation, inventory results etc.) and make a plan for information dissemination (including costs)
- 4 If several authorities are jointly involved, make a distinct and concise (and official) tasking plan that, in advance, clearly portions out responsibility for different parts of the process/planning to different actors.
- 5 Select process coordinator(s) with care; put them through training if necessary. The coordinator will quickly become the public face and focal point for the whole process, which is both a personal burden for the coordinator and a burden for the estab-

ishment behind him/her, since all decisions have to go through the coordinator. If the stakeholders for some reason decide that the coordinator is a puppet/messenger without any real power (i.e. commanded by a shadowy faceless authority) the coordinator's position will quickly become impossible and the whole process will falter. Delegating enough decision making power down to the coordinator/negotiator, the person who actually meets with the stakeholders is crucial, not doing so a common and significant mistake.

- 6 Make a realistic budget. A stakeholder process that collapses due to budgetary shortcomings has probably thrown all the resources spent so far down the drain and significantly worsened the relations with the stakeholders at the same time.

3.2 Starting the process

The best way to start a stakeholder process is with an open-for-all kick-off meeting. This initial meeting will set the tone for the process for a long time and every effort possible should therefore be made during the preparations:

- 1 Work from the premise that it is not enough to meet the stakeholders halfway, you have to meet them all the way.
- 2 Create a basic and easy to understand collection of background information and distribute it in advance to all that wants it. Reflect over the fact that this might be the only information package available to those who choose not to take active part in the management/planning. "Translate" laws and legislation into common language, produce clear maps, and make a list of available information resources. The first meeting will go much better if most of the participants have a clear picture of what everything is about.
- 3 Choose a time and a venue that allows a maximum of participants (i.e. after normal work hours, close to "home").
- 4 The most important thing at the meeting is not answering questions (or critique), but showing that you are completely in charge but that it is your clear wish to invite the stakeholders into the management/planning process. Make clear to the stakeholders what they can gain by participating. There will be time enough to solve problems later, but most of those lost at the initial meeting will stay lost during the whole process.
- 5 Ask for feedback and suggestions on simple issues (how to organise the process, where to meet, when to meet, how to distribute information) and show that you are actually willing to implement stakeholder suggestions and demands. Stakeholders are used to shouting but not to being listened to, and this is a good way of creating interest and starting to dissolve the (usually quite compact) lack of trust.
- 6 Always tell them straight up who will be in charge of what (coordinators/negotiators) and where and how they can be contacted.
- 7 Circulate different lists where stakeholders can sign up for information and participation in different working groups.

- 8 Some will come to the meeting only to demonstrate their mistrust and disgust with nature conservation etc. without any intent of actually taking part. Allowing all participants to ask questions and speak openly while at the same time not allowing inflammatory speeches to derail the whole meeting can be quite a balancing act. A good way of keeping the meeting on track is getting a local person to function as chairman, a local politician or leader will be more respected than the representatives of “oppressive” conservation authorities and with basic instructions he/she can usually keep the meeting in order.
- 9 Be prepared to stay for “unofficial” mingling and freeform consultations after the official meeting is adjourned. Many stakeholders do not want to ask questions or put forward suggestions during a large meeting, instead they want to discuss with the coordinator(s) one-on-one or in small groups. These initial contacts are invaluable for the process, and most stakeholders that will approach you afterwards are in fact interested in participating. This kind of open-ended, more informal discussion option can be arranged through simple mingling or in a more organized fashion, whichever suits the occasion. Allow at least two hours.

3.3 Working with stakeholders

Cooperation between authorities and stakeholders has to be built on mutual trust. Trust is much more important than differing opinions or enforcement of regulations. Stakeholders are generally quite used to cooperate with each other regardless of disagreements; on the other hand they do not cooperate with anyone believed to be untrustworthy. Trust has to be earned, and building trust should be a main goal for any authority attempting cooperation with stakeholders.

In addition the cooperation needs a distinct frameset, which clearly should split stakeholder aspirations into two realms, the impossible and the achievable. Formulating this frameset is the responsibility of the establishment, and it should stay more or less inviolate from beginning to end.

- 1 Run an open campaign. If you cannot disclose unofficial or secret documents (incomplete legislation, unfinished national guidelines, distribution of threatened species etc.) at least disclose that they exist and admit that you are not allowed to distribute them. Generally the stakeholders should have the same data available as the planners/managers.
- 2 Acknowledge all problems openly. Stakeholder cooperation cannot be built by primarily focusing on positive issues and suppressing problems. It is much better working in the opposite direction, confronting problems first and later creating cooperation around mutual agendas. Avoiding problems creates distrust. Trying to achieve a positive atmosphere at stakeholder meetings by avoiding problems and concentrating on positive issues is an easy mistake to make, but it can easily stall or even derail the whole process. Discussing problems openly generates trust, even if no solution can be found.
- 3 Never back down when you are right or when your legitimacy or your framework of rules and laws are questioned. It should always be unmistakably clear that you represent the government/authority and it is your decision to share power with stake-

holders, not their right to execute it. The reason for stakeholder involvement in management/planning is a mutual benefit through cooperation, nothing else. For the stakeholders it is a power earned, not given freely.

- 4 Allow the stakeholders to set the pace of progress, within your time constraints. Never allow the process to run completely out of steam, it is surprisingly hard work galvanizing “deactivated” stakeholders into renewed action.
- 5 Distribute information freely and effectively. Email lists and websites are good tools, but so are distribution points in local shops, schools, libraries or other easily accessed public buildings.
- 6 Always keep all meetings open and public for anyone, even when discussing specific problems or questions. The only exception is forming a special group consisting of other authorities.
- 7 Do everything to get the focus away from an “us against them”-perspective and on specific issues. One way of achieving this is forming issue-specific sub-groups (handling issues like “fishing”, “hunting”, “recreation” etc.). Another way of achieving the same thing is organising strict, thematic meetings. Conducting an opinion poll and analysing the results together with the stakeholders is a good way of showing them that local opinions vary much more than expected. It is not unusual that many locals are positive towards conservation issues but never utter a word in support due to peer pressure, however, the same views comes through strongly in an anonymous poll.
- 8 Try to involve all age-groups and all genders. It is all too common that a few middle-aged and older men speak for the whole community/interest group. Their wives and children might have radically different opinions, and should be given a way to participate. This usually requires activity from the authorities involved. Organizing or partaking in women-only meetings and arranging discussion groups in local schools is a good way to let everyone take part.

3.4 Wrapping it up

The final stage begins when the deliverables are finalized and are put through some form of final hearing process or published/enacted by the authorities. During the time between kick-off and delivery of the product the cooperation between the establishment and the stakeholders has usually been strengthened as a combined result of increased trust, increased knowledge, the solving of problems and the overall effect of uncooperative stakeholders dropping out while cooperative stakeholders stays in. Working inside a bubble of cooperation might lead to a skewed notion of how positive the stakeholders actually are.

The final stage allows the unsympathetic stakeholder to once again take part and put forward derogatory views towards the management plan (or other deliverables). Either due to surprise over the usually quite harsh critique and/or due to straightforward peer pressure there is a tendency among “involved” stakeholders to back down at this stage. They are simply not prepared to defend “the enemy’s” plan against their neighbours and colleagues.

The authority in charge has to counter this effect by actively accepting the brunt of the hostility, at the same time sheltering the stakeholders that are and have been willing to cooperate. If there exist a clear division in opinions locally and this final step is mismanaged, the end result of several years of hard work might become a cooperative management plan that suddenly is completely without any local support whatsoever and thus in part worthless. On the other hand, once this last hurdle is cleared things usually cools down for a long period, allowing both “cooperative space” for stakeholders so inclined and a slow face-saving change of views among those critical towards cooperation.

Equally important in the long run is the realization that though the initial involvement of stakeholders in conservation management from an establishment viewpoint is a clear-cut project, it something completely different for the stakeholders. From an authority viewpoint it is something that consists of a plan, a budget, a timetable, a beginning and an end. For the stakeholders it is a door opening into new possibilities, allowing them (usually for the first time) to actively affect important questions and problems on their “own ground”. What is seen as an “end” by the responsible authority is usually seen as a “beginning” by the stakeholders. To actually gain the long-term benefits of stakeholder involvement in management issues it is important that there is some form of continuity. Otherwise a considerable part of the benefits quickly evaporates, as initiatives from the now willing and able stakeholders are continuously turned down by overworked and under-funded authorities.

There has to be a contingency plan ready complete with necessary resources inside the authority to actively cooperate with stakeholders even after the management plan (or whatever) is finished. A good way of formalizing and continuing the cooperation is the creation of a working council of some sort that has annual or semi-annual meetings. This body can oversee the effects of a cooperative management plan, make necessary revisions and react to new problems or opportunities. At the same time it forms a conduit of information between stakeholders and authorities.

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About the BALANCE project

This report is a product of the BSR INTERREG IIIB project "BALANCE".

The BALANCE project aims to provide a transnational marine management template based on zoning, which can assist stakeholders in planning and implementing effective management solutions for sustainable use and protection of our valuable marine landscapes and unique natural heritage. The template will be based on data sharing, mapping of marine landscapes and habitats, development of the blue corridor concept, information on key stakeholder interests and development of a cross-sectoral and transnational Baltic zoning approach. BALANCE thus provides a transnational solution to a transnational problem.

The BALANCE partnership is composed of the following institutions based in 10 countries: The Danish Forest and Nature Agency (Lead), The Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland, The National Environmental Research Institute/University of Aarhus, The Danish Institute for Fisheries Research, WWF Denmark, WWF Germany, Institute of Aquatic Ecology at University of Latvia, Estonian Marine Institute at University of Tartu, Coastal Research and Planning Institute at Klaipeda University, Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Service, The Finnish Environment Institute, The Geological Survey of Finland, WWF Finland, The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, The National Board of Fisheries – Department of Research and Development, The Geological Survey of Sweden, County Administrative Board of Stockholm, Department of Marine Ecology at Gothenburg University and WWF Sweden.

The following institutes contribute as consultants to the partnership: The Geological Survey of Norway, Norwegian Institute for Water Research, DHI Water & Environment, The Leibniz Institute of Marine Sciences, The Sea Fisheries Institute, The Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute, Metria Miljöanalys and The Nature Conservancy.

The BALANCE Report Series included on 1th of July 2007:

- BALANCE Interim Report No. 1** "Delineation of the BALANCE Pilot Areas".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 2** "Development of a methodology for selection and assessment of a representative MPA network in the Baltic Sea - an interim strategy".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 3** "Feasibility of hyperspectral remote sensing for mapping benthic macroalgal cover in turbid coastal waters of the Baltic Sea".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 4** "Literature review of the "Blue Corridors" concept and its applicability to the Baltic Sea".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 5** "Evaluation of remote sensing methods as a tool to characterise shallow marine habitats I".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 6** "BALANCE Cruise Report - The Archipelago Sea".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 7** "BALANCE Cruise Report - The Kattegat".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 8** "BALANCE Stakeholder Communication Guide".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 9** "Model simulations of blue corridors in the Baltic Sea".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 10** "Towards marine landscapes of the Baltic Sea (June 2007)".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 11** "Fish habitat modelling in the Archipelago Sea".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 12** "Evaluation of satellite imagery as a tool to characterise shallow habitats in the Baltic Sea".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 13** "Harmonizing marine geological data with the EUNIS habitat classification".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 14** "Intercalibration of sediment data from the Archipelago Sea".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 15** "Marine spatial planning in the Baltic Sea – an interim report".
- BALANCE Interim Report No. 16** "The stakeholder - nature conservation's best friend or its worst enemy?"