

Continuous Improvement of Inter-Agency Systems

Ongoing Programs: Coordinated Investment, Floodplains By Design, Implementation Strategies, Strategic Initiative Advisory Teams

Purpose

We continuously improving the efficiency of our inter-agency systems for ecosystem management¹ by empowering integrated local teams to identify improvements using waste reduction principles.

NTA Objective (255 char)

We will support the Ecosystem Coordination Board and local integrated teams in designing improvements to inter-agency operations to reduce waste in our ecosystem management systems.

NTA Description (1000 char)

We will build an interagency continuous improvement program, based on the early experiences of Implementation Strategies, Floodplains by Design, and Coordinated Investment efforts. We will: 1) help integrated design teams share their strategies for innovation, inclusion and transparency, so they can be better rewarded by funders, 2) develop a shared list of improvement targets for interagency systems, refined through dialog and investigation, and 3) we will select and implement improvement projects using contract labor to augment agency capabilities (the current limiting factor). Existing “barrier identification” efforts will collaborate through a shared system managed at the Ecosystem Coordination Board. Additional funding will be used to implement improvement efforts that reduce waste as local teams “deliver value” to public trust resources. Potential targets include coordination in acquisition, funding, and regulatory systems.

Larger Project (500 char)

Ongoing “barrier identification” efforts by PSP, Lead Entities, LIOs, SIATs, TNC, and NOAA are converging. We can combine our redundant efforts and catalog, refine, and evaluate actions for improving inter-agency systems. The opportunity is to more directly and efficiently harness the experiences of local integrated teams to drive the evolution of the state, federal, and local programs to so we can increase our efficiency at the point where ecosystem value is created (local ecosystem change).

¹ Coordinated investment work suggests eight interagency system functions critical to ecosystem management: strategic planning, project design, regulation, funding, research, land stewardship, and acquisition

What is Continuous Improvement?

“Improvement usually means doing something that we have never done before”

Continuous Improvement is envisioned as a Puget Sound-wide network of willing partners that are improving the operating environment for ecosystem recovery. This network includes: 1) agency staff and leadership among state and federal programs, and 2) integrated local teams that are attempting *integrated ecosystem design*.

These integrated local teams are built from reciprocal partnerships among diverse local communities who come together to improve social and ecological capital in a particular place. Integrated design may combine policies, programs, and capital projects and deliver multiple public ecosystem services, such as water supply, agriculture and forestry production, natural disaster adaptation, outdoor recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat. These integrated teams are important because they are best positioned to test and observe our inter-agency systems, because 1) they are directly engaged in the work of ecosystem management, and 2) they are cross-sector so they have built in mechanisms for differentiating between system waste and an actual conflict of interests. Continuous improvement is an ongoing process of evaluating how inter-agency systems support these local teams in integrated design by adapting agency program administration, coordination, or authorizing legislation.

We anticipate that continuous improvement needs three components.

1. local teams identify waste
2. We remember and chase down the cause of waste (sometimes identifying conflicts)
3. We change the system to remove the cause of waste

Who is Involved?

Participation in barrier identification and resolution is an “opt in” collaborative process. Each party brings its own resources and areas of focus to the continuous improvement table. The following programs and staff are currently contributing labor:

- NOAA Restoration Center - Jennifer Steger, Paul Cereghino
- The Nature Conservancy - Jessie Israel, Bob Carey, Heather Cole, Jenny Baker
- Puget Sound Partnership Implementation Strategies - Leah Kintner, Dan Calvert, Tristan Peter-Contesse
- EPA National Estuary Program - Susan Meyer

Three coordination bodies have expressed interest in tracking improvement projects

- Results Washington, Goal Council 3 - Governor’s Office
- Puget Sound Federal Task Force
- Puget Sound Ecosystem Coordination Board

The following local efforts show commitment toward integrated design systems

- [Snoqualmie Farm Fish and Flood Initiative](#) (Snohomish-Stillaguamish LIO)
- [Floodplains for the Future - Puyallup, Carbon & White River](#) (Central Sound LIO)
- [Snohomish Sustainable Lands Strategy](#) (Snohomish- Stillaguamish LIO)
- Nooksack River Floodplain Integrated Planning Team (Whatcom LIO)
- Skagit Farm, Fish and Flood Initiative
- [Yakima Basin Integrated Plan](#)

What are Our Principles of Waste Reduction

Reducing waste is a free source of revenue that requires no legislative appropriation. It increases the efficiency of every new resource we bring into ecosystem management. Tolerating waste is demoralizing and reduces societal support for ecosystem management.

Private sector manufacturing principles can be applied to ecosystem service production. The most important work is to clearly identify the value that we are creating. This enables us to look for waste--which is activity that does not create value. To understand the ecosystem value we are creating, we must examine our whole production system which is distributed among different institutions. This requires that we develop waste reduction strategies that break down barriers to information flow among strata and sectors of our governments.

"It's only the last turn of the bolt that tightens it--the rest is just movement."²

What Is The Value We Are Creating?

Ecosystem management creates value when the ecosystem services produced by landscapes are increased or protected, such as fish habitat functions, flood moderation, water storage, soil productivity, or sustainable forestry. Ecosystem services are increased when a system that is poorly functioning is modified by a project, and service production improves. Ecosystem services are protected when we change a proposed development of the landscape to reduce or prevent loss of services. In both cases we are managing the stocks of "ecological capital" that produce ecosystem services. Ecological capital is distinct from capital found in social systems or the built environment.

"A relentless barrage of 'why's' is the best way to prepare your mind to pierce the clouded veil of thinking caused by the status quo."

What Is Waste?

There are many kinds of waste. Waste can be any expenditure of effort that doesn't directly create value (movement that doesn't tighten the bolt). Waste can be created by starts and

² All quotes are from Shigeo Shingo, the historical architect of the Toyota manufacturing system.

stops that creates an uneven application of effort. Waste can come from overburdening some phase of production, and being unable to adjust labor allocation. Waste can come from disorderly work places. Many forms of waste come from poor information flow. Waste is a loss of resources. Waste can also exist as a symptom of social-political conflict. Waste is demoralizing reduces public confidence in our efforts.

“The most dangerous kind of waste is the waste we do not recognize.”

What is Our “Factory”?

Because our system for producing “ecosystem value” is distributed among federal, state, local, tribal, and private institutions, our work is easily disorganized. We actually “create value” when local, tribal, and private workgroups finish an effective project. Different kinds of value are created by different local and regional sectors--flood, habitat, agriculture, transportation. Rule-making and funding systems are managed by federal and state strata. Ecosystem observation across sectors and strata. Each sector and strata of this system sees itself as independently important, but not necessarily part of a whole system with shared stocks of ecological capital. There are almost no mechanisms for identifying waste or improving the production efficiency of this whole ecosystem management system.

Lean manufacturing theory uses the Japanese word *genba* to describe the place where value is created. It can describe a reporter on the scene, the scene of a crime, or on the factory floor. The local projects of counties, cities, tribes, corporations, and landowners are *genba*. If we want to find waste, we go to *genba* and look and ask. Our challenge is to organize production at *genba*, increase communication about waste between *genba* and management, and to adapt our support systems to reduce the most important sources of waste.

There are inherent conflicts in our ecosystem management system, because different actors value different ecosystem services, or don't value ecosystem services at all. This proposed process can help us discern administrative problems from social-political problems, so that we can use the right process to solve the right problems.

Proposed Framework

The following framework provides a simple basis for checking the status of our system. The outline describes three system goals: strengthening *genba*, finding waste, and removing waste.

Purpose: We continuously improve the efficiency of our inter-agency systems for ecosystem management³ by empowering integrated local teams to identify waste and then reforming the system to remove waste.

³ We have generally found eight interagency system functions: project design, institutional capacity, regulatory, funding, research, land stewardship,

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

1. **ORGANIZE GENBA - Integrated local efforts disclose their systems and strategies and are rewarded for innovative waste identification and reduction**
 - a. Local teams publicly self-identify and disclose their systems and strategies
 - i. *Number of disclosures complete*
 - b. Grant funders use this disclosure in grant making
 - i. *Number of grant programs that reference disclosures in decision making*
2. **IDENTIFY WASTE - We use manufacturing principles to continuously refine a shared list of improvement targets through dialog between agency systems and integrated local efforts**
 - a. Improvement targets are continuously identified and refined through dialog between integrated local teams and integrated teams
 - i. *# improvement targets ratified by integrated local teams and agency managers*
 - ii. *# processes identifying improvement targets*
 - b. We refine improvement targets by investigating how interagency systems create value for public trust resources
 - i. *# improvement targets with value chain analysis and indicators*
 - ii. *# improvement targets with cost/benefit analysis*
3. **REMOVE WASTE - Partners lead inclusive and transparent efforts to improve inter-agency system performance**
 - a. Improvement processes draw from diverse points of contact
 - i. *contact diversity per improvement project*
 - b. We implement least-cost improvements that provide maximum benefit for ecosystem recovery targets.
 - i. *\$ cost per improvement*
 - ii. *# Improvement projects with evaluation method*