Diagnosing Conflict:
Skills for the Natural Resource Professional

ABSTRACT

Natural resource professionals have to deal with plenty of conflict, yet few professionals are explicitly trained to manage this part of their work. Professionals are usually involved early in a conflict over the public's natural resources. Frequently, these early stages are high-leverage opportunities to play the productive role of conflict resolver. Whether the professional is a party to the conflict or is facilitating problem-solving for others, he or she needs the ability to diagnose the situation and then apply intervention skills. Here we introduce basic diagnostic skills, offer advice on how to begin applying conflict intervention strategies, and encourage the professional to incorporate conflict resolution training into career development.

Why Become a Conflict Resolver?

As a professional you have extensive training in your particular technical discipline, such as biology, genetics, population dynamics, harvest management, etc. Employers have firm expectations about how, when, and where you will apply these skills.

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They also have standards they expect when you apply technical expertise. Professionals, themselves, set similar standards—witness the various codes of professional conduct promulgated by professional societies (e.g., American Fisheries Society 1997; Society of American Foresters 2000). These codes typically speak to a professional's responsibility for maintaining the integrity and credibility of technical contributions to the public process of decision making. Employers and professional societies generally are silent about the professional's responsibility to create constructive decision-making processes.

Yet, the work environment has dramatically changed since this "technical-expert" model of management emerged from the Progressive Era (Hays 1980; Ozawa 1991). The context for allocating natural resources has shifted from questions of managing abundance to managing scarcity. Today, "…management decisions are perceived as value-based choices that determine the answer to the classic political question: who gets what when? With a fixed land base, expanded demands result in competition among interests of a magnitude unseen in earlier years. While in past years, managers could give everyone much of what they demanded, they are unable to do that today" (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000:30).

In this contemporary environment we believe there are two good reasons for you, as a natural resource professional, to acquire and use conflict resolution skills. First, these skills can improve your chance for conservation success—thereby creating an incentive for voluntarily acquiring them. A common concern we hear from professionals is that entering into a mediated conflict resolution mode such as we present here is equivalent to asking them to compromise their personal ideals or ethics for the sake of agreement. Instead, we think of the skills described here as one more set of tools to pull out of the box and use when you think it appropriate. Our advice is about how conflict resolution skills can be creatively used to explore solutions that might meet needs in innovative ways and in so doing strengthen rather than weaken the foundation for a future working relationship. The second reason to use conflict resolution skills is because conflict is a routine part of the public-sector working environment. In this environment accepting responsibility for conflict management is similar to accepting responsibility for providing technical inputs to decision making. We believe that professionals working on Public Trust issues already have conflict management as an implicit responsibility. We advocate making this responsibility explicit by including conflict resolution skills as part of the professional's training and career development.

This article introduces eight diagnostic skills that provide ways to explore what might be going on in a conflict, introduces some conflict management principles to help improve your intuition about the art of intervening, and provides exercises you can use to reframe a conflict you are currently experiencing. Our advice stems from the substantial social research and practical experience in alternative dispute resolution that has emerged since the era of *Getting to Yes* (Fisher and Ury 1981), its evolving application to natural resource issues (Amy 1987; Bingham 1986), and its adoption by managers as a regularly applied tool (Bazerman et. al. 1997; Daniels and Walker 2001; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). Our frame of reference is conflict in a Western cultural setting. While the ideas we present are highly transferable across

cultural settings, there are important differences too complex for the scope of this article.

We encourage you to integrate these skills into your work life without assuming that the way we have organized this article implies a cookbook method. We will position you as a conflict resolver in two contexts: a professional working inside your own conflict and a third party facilitating conflict resolution for others. In doing this we are going against the convention that because the people inside a conflict are not well positioned to resolve it, the best way to proceed is to use a neutral third party to manage the process. The reality is that natural resource professionals routinely find themselves in a conflict where a third party is not an option (e.g., imagine standing on a stream bank talking to a rancher about riparian area protection and the impact of grazing). We do not view the two roles as mutually exclusive and the skills are transferable across roles. We encourage you to develop your skills so a third party is not a common necessity but that you also use this knowledge to know when you should call in a neutral facilitator.

To provide some perspective on our experience with conflict resolution, Fraidenburg is a certified mediator by the Washington Mediation Association, a senior mediator with the Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) of Thurston County in Olympia, Washington, and with Strever teaches conflict management for natural resource professionals. Strever completed the Certificate Program in Conflict Resolution at the Centre for Conflict Resolution Training, a program of the Justice Institute of British Columbia. As training manager for the DRC, she has trained over 2,000 people in communication and conflict resolution skills.

THE FIRST SKILL—
Redefine the Meaning of Conflict

In our society we have a fairly common perception about conflict—it is inherently bad. This commonly held belief hides the fact that conflict has useful information imbedded in it. It is helpful to challenge this assumption and thereby set the stage for resolving conflict. When we think that...

Challenging accepted, negative beliefs allows you to view conflict in a more positive context in which the potential exists for the parties to agree that they have a shared stake in creating a durable solution to their problem.

THE SECOND SKILL—
Suspend Judgment

Imagine how you would feel if you were sitting in a medical examination room and the doctor made a diagnosis about your condition while standing in the hall, before examining you or asking any questions. That is the most common failing we have seen in our experiences as mediators and facilitators in natural resource disputes. The parties in dispute make a lot of assumptions (premature judgments) about the causes of conflict without seeking information about the specific conflict.

This second skill is all about not pre-judging a situation and, instead, entering into an explicit search for information about the conflict. Professional mediators are successful largely because they suspend judgment as they gain an adequate understanding about why the parties are squabbling, not just what they are squabbling about.

Let's try it. Stop reading now and diagnose a current conflict. Reproduce Table 1 and answer the questions. Save this worksheet to compare with some work we will have you do at the end of the article.

Table 1. Conflict diaganosis worksheet.

Step One: In two sentences or less, describe a potential or real conflict you feel is currently brewing between you and another person or that you are otherwise observing. This conflict can be work-related or personal. Be as specific as possible.

Step Two: Diagnose the source of this conflict. Why are the parties squabbling?

Step Three: Prepare yourself to communicate with the other person.

Step Four: Clearly define your needs or the needs of one of the parties (both process needs and outcome needs).

Step Five: What needs does the other party have?

Step Six: If this is your conflict, specifically list what you want the other party to give you that you think he or she can live with. If this is a conflict between others, what is the common ground between the parties?

conflict disrupts order . . . . .it can be an outgrowth of increasing diversity, complexity, and scarcity.

conflict is always negative . . . . .it can be a sign that the status quo is no longer working.

conflict is a battle between incompatible self-interests . . . . .it can be one part of an ongoing relationship involving values, needs, perceptions, power, goals, and feelings, not just issues.

conflict is an isolated event that defines the entire relationship . . . . .it can be an event that punctuates a long-term relationship and can help clarify it.

conflict stifles creativity . . . . .it can be a valuable component of creativity.

conflict is an all-or-nothing struggle between right and wrong, good and evil . . . . . . .it can be about certain aspects of a relationship, leaving other aspects available to use in building conflict resolution.

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feature

Table 2. Conflict management styles (after Thomas and Kilman 1974).

THE THIRD SKILL—
Understand How People Behave in Conflict

Most people have a dominant conflict management style they learned early in life and tend to use across a variety of situations. There are five basic behavior styles in a conflict (Table 2), all of which have appropriate uses as well as limitations, depending on the situation (Thomas and Kilman 1974).

Understanding these different conflict management styles can help you in two ways. First, if you are a party to a conflict, increased awareness of your own dominant style can open you to consciously choose the appropriate style for the current situation. For example, are you avoiding a particular conflict because that is the appropriate style for the situation or are you locked into this style because you learned it early in life and tend to use it automatically? Here is another place to suspend judgment, this time about yourself, and to step back and consciously choose a style that will allow you to enter the conflict productively and get an outcome that satisfies you.

Second, understanding when the parties are using different conflict styles and understanding that people shift their styles during the course of a conflict positions you to help individuals and groups address the different needs inherent in each style (Table 2). For example, laying out ground rules for civil discussion can help an avoider feel safe in participating, and allowing each party an uninterrupted turn to talk can invite an accommodator more fully into the process.

Our experience is that when the parties have sufficient time, enough good will, and the ability to communicate, the collaborative style creates the greatest chance for durable agreements. More frequently, this style makes participants feel they have been part of fair and inclusive problem-solving (their process needs are met), that all the important issues have been addressed and resolved well enough (their material needs are met), and everyone's feelings and values have been considered as criteria for developing creative solutions (their psychological needs have been met).
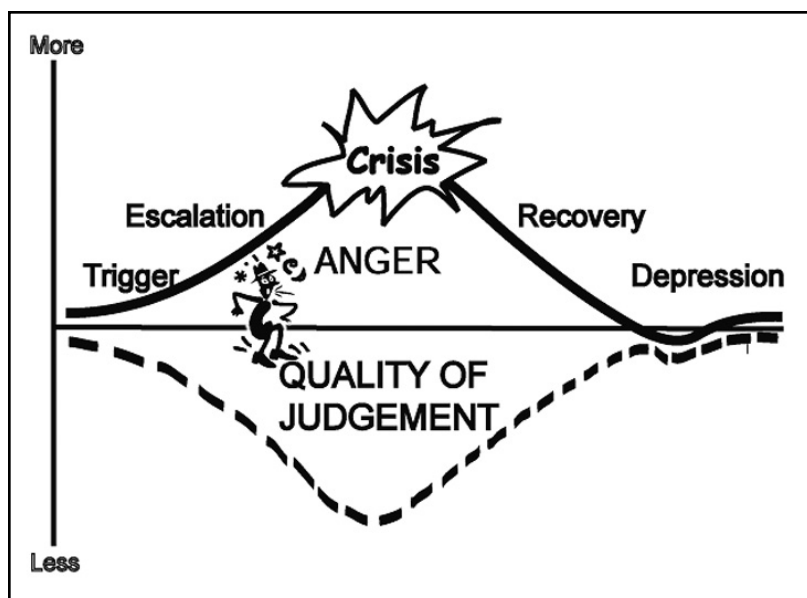
THE FOURTH SKILL—
Understand How People React to Conflict

Parties in conflict have a wide range of emotional responses, a common one being anger. Diagnosing conflict requires understanding the physiological progression of anger and its accompanying effect on a party's ability to reason (Figure 1) (Smith 1979).

Trigger—The cycle begins with a trigger. Usually an external event, the trigger causes a party to react. Spoken words, body language, and information are perceived as threatening. There can also be an internal component. For example, a current situ-

Style	Characteristics
Avoid	• Party does not enter actively into conflict, is disengaged, is apathetic, or withholds information • Appropriate if one lacks power or is unsafe; appropriate if issue is unsolvable or unimportant • Inappropriate if issue or relationship with other party is important • Can cause significant interests to remain hidden and unresolved; can erode relationships • Party needs safety and empowerment to enter actively into conflict
Accommodate	• Party is agreeable to solutions posed by others but unlikely to offer own; is everyone's ally; may be passive in decision making but complains later • Appropriate if relationship is more important than the issue • Inappropriate if one's own interests and values are important yet are sacrificed • Can cause one-sided outcomes and erode relationships • Party needs invitation to give input and needs assurance about value of relationship
Compromise	• Party likely to use give-and-take style, making offers and expecting equal return; tends to operate "by-the-book" and focus on precedents • Appropriate if the issue and relationship have medium importance • Inappropriate if the issue or relationship is too important to risk • Can cause important needs to remain unmet; outcomes can lack creativity • Party needs a sense of fairness in decision making
Compete	• Party has an all-or-nothing approach to conflict; is focused, strong-willed and passionate about their interests; may out-power others to get own needs met • Appropriate if the issue is more important than the relationship • Inappropriate if the relationship has significant value • Can cause one-sided outcomes and injure relationships • Party needs active input from others and assurance about importance of own needs and perspectives
Collaborate	• Party approaches conflict as an opportunity to enhance relationships; tends to be creative in achieving win-win solutions • Appropriate if relationship and issue are of significant importance • Inappropriate if there is insufficient time to process interests and needs; inappropriate if other party is unable or unwilling to advocate for self and listen to others • Can build inclusive relationships, deeper understanding of issues and interests, and innovative solutions • Party needs process that includes interests, feelings, needs, and values

THE FIFTH SKILL— Assess Power Imbalances

In any conflict everyone has some degree of power, which is the ability to influence others to get what one wants (Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County 2002). Whether negotiating for yourself or facilitating other parties, observe where power lies, how it manifests, and when shifts in power occur. To develop durable solutions conflicting parties need to use their power constructively.

Three types of power are present in any conflict: social, role, and personal power. Social power is conferred by the larger societal context in which the conflict is imbedded. All parties to a conflict bring with them the power that the larger society and its institutions give them. This power can be explicit or implicit, such as age, social class, race or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability/disability, and so on. The realities of privilege and oppression within society come to the table with the individuals involved. These may be a significant part of the conflict as well as an important part of the power dynamics at the table, even if they operate at the unconscious level. These realities apply not only to the disputing parties but also to the facilitator.

Role power usually arises from institutionally-conferred influence built into formal roles (e.g., manager and employee) as well as informal roles (e.g., longevity in a position with the accompanying possession of institutional history, access to power networks, etc.). In conflicts between stakeholders, role power also accompanies the job descriptions of individuals (e.g., elected officials, regulatory agents, attorneys, content experts, or citizen spokespersons). Material assets also confer substantial power. For example, corporations have assets for mounting legal battles that stakeholders and public agencies usually lack. And the ability to create social pressure is a source of power. For example, citizen groups can wield pressure through media exposure and negative publicity.

Personal power also comes with each party. An extremely charismatic person may naturally assume and be granted greater power, for example. Some parties are more verbally adept or able to process complex information more readily than others and are accorded deference as a result. The conflict styles covered earlier in this article also may confer impressions of

ation can trigger a memory of an earlier event that can make the present response more intense.

Escalation—Once triggered, anger can escalate. Adrenaline is released and the body prepares for a crisis. Physical responses include rapid heartbeat and breathing, increased blood pressure and muscle tension, and changes in eye shape and voice. Long-term needs start getting displaced by short-term defensive needs.

Crisis—At the extreme, anger can precipitate a crisis, the point for which the body has prepared itself. This is the "fight or flight" stage, when all the body's resources have been mustered for attack or defense.

Recovery—Next is recovery, the reversal of escalation. The body begins to return to equilibrium after great stress and energy expenditure.

Depression—Last is depression, a short phase when the heart rate is actually below normal as the body regains balance. There can be an emotional component, including feelings of guilt, regret, and sadness.

The quality of a person's judgment is different at each stage. A primary goal of good conflict management is to preserve the parties' ability to listen, take in information, problem solve, and make decisions. A conflict resolver monitors anger responses, including his or her own, and applies strategies that are tailored to the different needs in each stage of the anger arousal cycle. For example, at the escalation phase, using active listening skills can often prevent another party from moving closer to crisis. During the crisis phase, when listening skills diminish, using short, direct, and non-provoking statements or taking a break can re-establish perspective and calm. At the depression stage, people can be immobilized. Giving them extra time or non-partisan coaching so they don't make decisions out of guilt or regret can support them in creating durable solutions.

different power levels. For example, the person using a competing style may be perceived as having more power. Interestingly, a person who uses the avoiding style can be very powerful by not engaging fully in discussion, by withholding important information, or by sabotaging resolution efforts behind the scenes.

Whether you are a party to a conflict or a facilitator for others, it is important to assess the social, role, and personal power dynamics and to work toward balancing these. For collaborative conflict resolution processes to work, power needs to be balanced well enough so that all parties can effectively look out for their own interests, make informed, voluntary decisions, and follow through on agreements. It is dangerous to make assumptions about who has more or less power based on your own worldview. Also, power imbalances can shift many times as issues are raised and problem-solving negotiations unfold. The appropriate balance of power is a matter of context and the ability of the parties to adequately represent their own interests in that context. In our practice we avoid intervening with a collaborative conflict resolution process when power imbalances prevent a party from looking out for his or her own interests. Conflict resolution, for us, is about all parties improving their situation, not about assisting the most powerful party to advance at the expense of others.

Strategies for balancing power include:

- Modeling respectful communication,
- Ensuring that pertinent information is gathered and fully shared by all parties (i.e., information is power),
- Equalizing airtime (the opportunity to talk, provide position papers, propose solutions, etc.) ,
- Stopping intimidating behavior,
- Managing the conversation's tone and emotional climate,
- Taking a break so that disempowered parties can regroup and refocus and the more powerful parties can assess the long-term suitability of their strategy,
- Focusing the parties on the future rather than on rehashing the past, and
- Getting agreements from all parties on the process for decision making and managing their process.

If you are a party to a conflict and involved directly in negotiations, you can accomplish many of these strategies by using your own behavior as a model for others and by requesting process agreements, including ground rules for discussion and consensus decision making. If you are facilitating conflict resolution for others, you have substantial role power for taking charge and managing a decision-making process that is fair and inclusive. When power imbalances are too extreme, be ready to discontinue a collaborative approach in favor of other processes that take decision-making out of the hands of those directly involved, such as grievance procedures, arbitration, and litigation.

THE SIXTH SKILL—
Understand the Difference Between Issues and Interests

Most people in a conflict get caught up in the issues—the topics they understand the conflict to be about—and take rigid positions on these. However, underlying their definition of the issues and their accompanying positions lie the parties' interests—the needs and values that are actually driving the conflict. Consider the issues as the problems to be solved, positions as each party's solutions to these problems, and interests as the reasons they hold their positions. The most durable resolutions emerge by avoiding bargaining over positions and, instead, focusing on interests. While positions are rigidly held, there usually is more than one way to meet an interest. Diagnosing underlying interests is a vital skill but participants in our workshops often have a hard time distinguishing between issues and interests (Table 3).

While interests are the driving forces behind a conflict, they are often hidden and expressed indirectly as emotions (anger, fear, righteous indignation, sadness, or grief, etc.). Interests and feelings are not the same thing. Feelings are how the interests present themselves. An astute conflict resolver learns to set aside his or her own reactions to others' feelings and to read emotions as welcome signals that important underlying needs and values are being expressed. Examples of common interests are safety, basic survival, security, credibility, fairness, health

Table 3. Issues and interests (Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County, 2002).

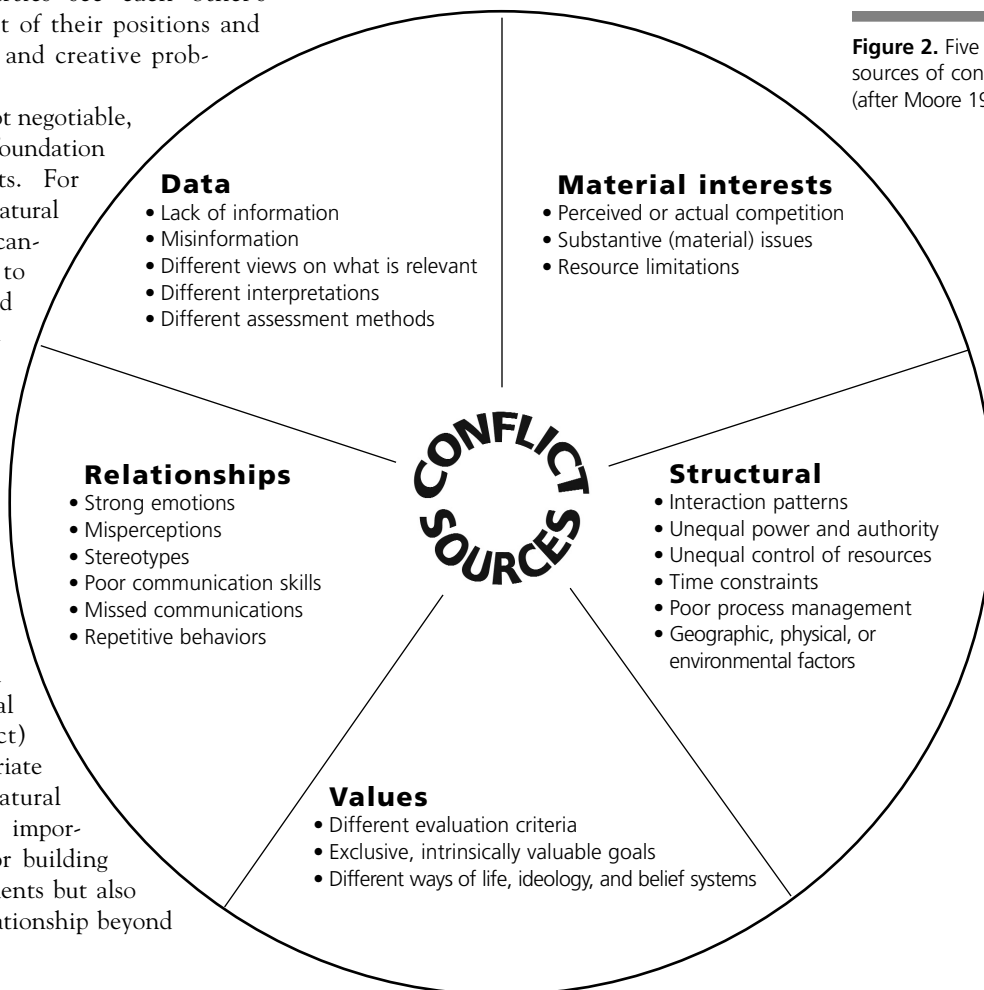| Issues	Interests
Topics or problems the parties say they want to deal with	The underlying needs and values of the parties
The overt agenda	The unstated agenda
The substance of the dispute, the 'what' of the dispute	The essence of the dispute, the 'why' of the dispute
Finite, measurable, tangible, specific	Abstract, intangible, general
Drive or keep parties apart	Can bring parties together
Require facilitator to be accurate and complete	Require facilitator to be creative and sensitive
Negotiable	Not negotiable
The tip of the iceberg (the part above the waterline)	The greater part of the iceberg (the part below the waterline)

and well being, beauty and order, autonomy, privacy, and respect. It is common for one party to attack an interest of the other party as a way to support a position on an issue, such as when one party questions or impugns the other party's credibility or integrity. For example, contemporary fish managers are routinely asked to intervene in disputes over fish allocation, a question about the issue of dividing up harvest between competing parties; however, when the negotiations start, they often find they are mediating accusations of data manipulation or misuse. At this point the negotiation grows confusing because the topic shifts from fish allocation to reliability of data, but more importantly, the conflict will most likely escalate because it touches on an important underlying interest: professional reputation. Very commonly the parties get stuck in their positions, which are solutions that will work from their own points of view, and they may resort to a variety of unproductive methods to defend them. Uncovering interests allows all parties to simultaneously take responsibility for their needs and to see the conflict as a mutual problem to be solved. Further, getting at the interests that are underneath the issues can allow even the most opposed parties see each other's humanity and move out of their positions and into to a more flexible and creative problem-solving mode.

While interests are not negotiable, they can serve as the foundation for durable agreements. For example, two opposing natural resource professionals cannot be expected to negotiate away their need for credibility and respect (interests), but they can negotiate the issues of credible data and how they will behave and communicate with each other (e.g., defining the meaning of data quality and acceptable interpersonal behavior). In addition, their mutual interests, both personal (credibility and respect) and professional (appropriate protection of natural resources), can serve as important common ground for building not only durable agreements but also an effective working relationship beyond the current conflict.

THE SEVENTH SKILL—
Understand Some Common Sources of Conflict

Once you have an understanding about the underlying interests of the parties, unraveling a conflict is aided by exploring specific sources of natural resource conflict. Expect to encounter five commonly recurring sources (Figure 2; Moore 1996). The strategies we suggest below for dealing with each of these sources are practical whether you are a party to the negotiations or acting as a third-party facilitator.

Data conflicts arise when the parties have failed to share all relevant information or agree on its relevance and interpretation. An example is failure to agree on the true extraction costs associated with timber harvest in a roadless area because there was not a prior agreement on the data and assessment models to be used. Seek resolution by getting the parties to agree beforehand on the process for sharing and evaluating data and what process will be used to resolve any differences.

Figure 2. Five common sources of conflict (after Moore 1996).

Data
• Lack of information
• Misinformation
• Different views on what is relevant
• Different interpretations
• Different assessment methods

Material interests
• Perceived or actual competition
• Substantive (material) issues
• Resource limitations

Relationships
• Strong emotions
• Misperceptions
• Stereotypes
• Poor communication skills
• Missed communications
• Repetitive behaviors

Structural
• Interaction patterns
• Unequal power and authority
• Unequal control of resources
• Time constraints
• Poor process management
• Geographic, physical, or environmental factors

CONFLICT SOURCES

Values
• Different evaluation criteria
• Exclusive, intrinsically valuable goals
• Different ways of life, ideology, and belief systems

Material interest conflicts arise when the parties perceive competition for scarce resources. An example is disagreement over commercial versus recreational allocation of a quota from a limited fish stock. One party's gain is perceived as a loss by the other party (i.e., zero-sum game). Seek resolution through additional information, explicit dialogue, agreement on fairness criteria for all stakeholders, including those who are not in the negotiation room, considering the options for trading value between the parties (timing of the harvest, fish size, etc.) inside the overall harvest limit, and, if possible, increasing the total value of the negotiation (i.e., breaking out of the zero-sum game).

Structural conflicts arise when the working relationship of the parties is deficient. An example is one party recruiting a third party with substantial power (e.g., a legislator) to intervene on his or her behalf to pre-determine a policy for riparian zone protection. Seek resolution by careful design of and agreement about ground rules for the conflict resolution process and about how decisions will be made, including the parties' responsibility to work through their disagreements on their own.

Relationship conflicts arise when stereotypes and negative assumptions exist between the parties. An example is harvesters (commercial fishers, loggers, hunters, etc.) and government managers holding negative impressions of one another. Seek resolution through discovery of broader information about each party (e.g., underlying interests), establishing ground rules for decision-making, and careful design of the conflict resolution process.

Value conflicts arise when different worldviews come into contact and become conflicting justifications for a decision. An example is differing beliefs about the correct way to use a resource like a declining fish stock, old growth timber, rare native grasslands, etc. Usually this debate is about a utilitarian justification for commodity production versus articulating an aesthetic, spiritual, moral, or ecological justification for foregoing resource exploitation. Seek resolution in understanding how to work with differing values (see

the next section) and by community building around the issues.

As a conflict resolver, one of your jobs is to creatively identify, using neutral language, the specific sources of conflict in dispute so the parties can do something about them. Again, there is an art to this skill that moves the conversation to specifics but does not artificially constrain or preempt the emergence of other legitimate topics in dispute. While data, material, structural, value, and relationship disputes are commonly encountered, do not assume that these are all that you will see.

THE EIGHTH SKILL—
Working With Values

People view the natural world quite differently. Kellert (1996) devised one typology of nine different values categories (worldviews) that describe how people relate to the natural world (Table 4). Often these values are opposites. When the opposites collide, conflicting parties use their polarized points of view as "objective" criteria for judging the merits of each other's positions and for making "good-person" versus "bad-person" value judgments about each other.

People also hold many values at the same time and rank these, usually unconsciously, in a hierarchy of importance (Figure 3) (IPMP 1994). These values are often in conflict, creating a bit of a predicament: how does one choose when attaining one positive value necessarily means compromise to another? But in reality, therein lies the opportunity. When the dilemma of two positive values being in conflict is recognized, a party may willingly forego a lower-order value to achieve the higher-order value. When people get stuck, back them up to a discussion of higher-order values and you may find a basis for agreement. For example, cattle ranchers and environmentalists in the West often argue about the appropriate level of grazing fees on public land. A common debate is about the social value of restricting riparian zone grazing for native fish protection versus allowing grazing on this more productive land for beef production. Yet these

Table 4. Typology of values about the natural world (after Kellert 1996).

Value	Definition	Words people use to explain their values
Aesthetic	Physical appeal and beauty of nature	Inspiration, harmony, security
Symbiotic	Use of nature for language and thought	Communication, mental development
Humanistic	Strong emotional attachment and "love" for aspects of nature	Bonding, sharing, cooperation, companionship
Moralistic	Spiritual reverence and ethical concern for nature	Order, meaning, kinship, altruism
Naturalistic	Direct experience and exploration of nature	Curiosity, discovery, recreation
Ecologistic-Scientific	Systematic study of structure, function, and relationship in nature	Knowledge, understanding, observational skills
Utilitarian	Practical and material exploitation of nature	Physical sustenance, security
Dominionistic	Mastery, physical control, and dominance of nature	Mechanical skills, physical prowess, ability to subdue
Negativistic	Fear, aversion, alienation from nature	Security, protection, safety, awe

diverse players usually agree about the desirability of preserving large blocks of undeveloped landscape. Backing the parties up to a discussion on how to achieve this larger-order, commonly-held value can open the possibility of cooperation when there is an impasse about grazing fees.
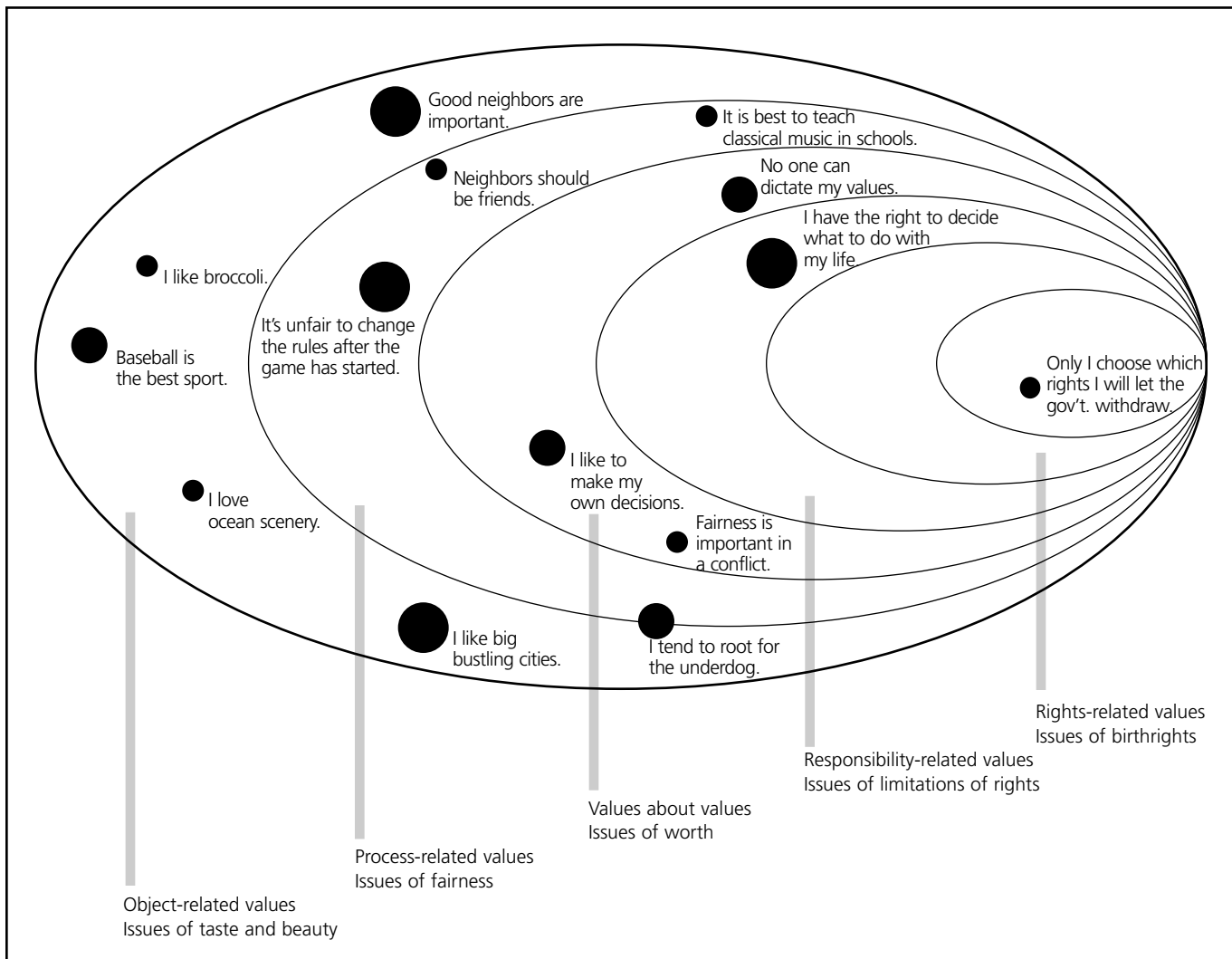
The diagnostic challenge in dealing with conflicting views of nature is to expand understanding of how the parties ascribe meaning to the natural world and how they derive their judgments about the correct way to interact with it. Guard against the parties pigeonholing each other into categories such as those outlined in Table 4. The diagnostic challenge in dealing with the hierarchy of values is to get a fix on how the parties rank their values so you can help them identify the higher-order values they might agree upon and thereby break impasse. This usually takes time so plan for this when you can. When you can't seek immediate solutions to the short-term issues, begin some kind of community building around the larger, long-term interests. Progress, when value systems collide, can be each

party simply understanding the other party's point of view and then shifting the dialogue from, "I'm right and you're wrong!" to, "Now that we understand one another, how do we work together in spite of these differences?" The conflict resolver's challenge is to make respectfully known each party's experience of nature and his or her hierarchy of values rather than to referee a dismissive debate between the conflicting parties. During this discussion the confidentiality needs of the parties, particularly about the ranking of their values, should be observed.

Resolution

How do you help parties find resolution? The trick is to combine results from the diagnostic skills we have described and use this accumulated information to help the parties craft solutions that meet multiple needs. For example, you may be working with parties who are seemingly intransigent because they have radically different perceptions about the value of the nat-

Figure 3. The Bleiker Hierarchy of Values (after IPMP 1994). More dearly held values reside nearer the core and toward the right.

Good neighbors are important.

It is best to teach classical music in schools.

Neighbors should be friends.

No one can dictate my values.

I have the right to decide what to do with my life

I like broccoli.

It's unfair to change the rules after the game has started.

Baseball is the best sport.

Only I choose which rights I will let the gov't. withdraw.

I love ocean scenery.

I like to make my own decisions.

Fairness is important in a conflict.

I like big bustling cities.

I tend to root for the underdog.

Rights-related values
Issues of birthrights

Responsibility-related values
Issues of limitations of rights

Values about values
Issues of worth

Process-related values
Issues of fairness

Object-related values
Issues of taste and beauty

ural world (i.e., in the sense of Kellert's typology, Table 4, Kellert 1996). But these parties may hold other values in common (e.g., preserving a rural lifestyle). In addition, perhaps the parties are talking past one another because there is a data conflict that, when resolved, allows both parties to maintain their credibility and sense of self-respect. On top of that, the parties could be addressing the conflict as if it is an issue about harvest but the underlying interest is economic stability. Using the complex of diagnostic skills we have described can help you identify, for everyone, the real scope of the problem. If the parties understand all the dimensions of the conflict there is a richer array of options for resolving the conflict than simply focusing on the single point of apparent intransigence.

Rich Lincoln (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Olympia, pers. comm.) reviewed this article and provided insight into how you might view our advice on diagnostic skills:

Table 5. Conflict diagnosis worksheet, revisited.

Ground Rules: Redefine the meaning of the conflict. Suspend judgment.

Step One: Assess the dominant conflict management styles being used (Table 2).

Step Two: Assess where the parties are in the anger arousal cycle (Figure 1).

Step Three: Assess the power differences between the parties.

Step Four: Assess and list the issues versus interests of each party (Table 3).

	Party One	Party Two
Issues		
Interests		

Step Five: Assess the kind of conflict (Figure 2).

Step Six: Assess the worldviews of the parties (Table 4 and Figure 3).

Step Seven: Prepare yourself to communicate with the other person.

Using the knowledge you gained in steps Three to Six specifically list what you want the other party to give you that you think they can live with. List what you are willing to give to the other party that you can live with. If this is a conflict between others, what is the common ground between the parties?

Does this diagnosis look different than the one you developed in Table 1?

Redefine conflict—Challenge your general perceptions about conflict in order to be open to its possibility for positive consequences.

Suspend judgment—Don't jump to conclusions about a specific conflict so you can seek to understand the underlying basis for the conflict.

Understand conflict behavior—Challenge your own typical approach to managing conflict and use the best style to respond to a specific conflict situation, taking into account the behaviors/styles of others involved. Generally, seek to collaborate to maximize opportunities for successful and lasting outcomes.

Understand conflict reactions—Effectively diagnosing and responding to the cycle of anger often involved in conflict can improve the reasoning ability of yourself and others.

Analyze power dynamics—Fostering a reasonable balance of power among parties in a dispute will help ensure that individuals' interests are fairly represented in resolving a conflict and thereby increase the likely durability of its resolution.

Distinguish between issues and interests—Recognizing the difference between surface issues in a conflict and the underlying needs and values (interests) that generate the issues (conflict) is essential to finding lasting solutions that serve to meet higher needs and values of those involved.

Define the specific sources of conflict—This will help you and others involved see the conflict in common terms that may not have been understood or considered before and, thus, will help you find the key(s) to unlock possible solutions (remember you can do this best once you've suspended judgment).

Search to understand values—When parties' apparent positions collide, finding higher common values can avert good- versus bad-person value judgments and help individuals prioritize the values that are most important for them.

As a conflict resolver you are attempting to empower everyone with as large a decision space (i.e., breadth of options) as possible. The goal is to move the communication from a one-dimensional, right-versus-wrong debate to a dialogue that identifies and considers multiple reasons for agreeing to a course of action. It is all about shifting the discussion from "me-against-you" to "us-against-the-problem." Diagnosing the real problem is often the hardest part. Trust is also usually eroded with un-managed conflict. As a conflict resolver you are in the trust-building business. Creating a shared commitment to "us-against-the-problem" is a necessary first step to rebuilding trust.

You can apply your diagnostic skills right now by reproducing Tale 5 and using this expanded diagnostic worksheet to re-examine the conflict you analyzed in Table 1. Hopefully, this second diagnosis will give you a richer picture of the conflict than your first impression. While we encourage you to use the sequence in Table 5 as a learning tool, we do not want to imply that there is a cookbook approach to diagnosing conflict. Use the principles implied in Table 5 rather than a rigid application of the form.

Practice these diagnostic skills in any conflict, whether personal or professional—but these skills are only a beginning. Possessing a substantial array of communication skills and process strategies is essential for facilitating productive dialogue and decision-making among conflicting parties. Outlining these intervention skills would require another article as well as opportunities for hands-on practice. We recommend that training in conflict resolution become an essential part of the preparation and ongoing career development of a natural resource professional. We believe these skills will improve your ability to contribute to your field of expertise, enhance stewardship of natural resources, and provide for the greater good of all parties involved in Public Trust issues where so much is at stake. ➤🐟

Acknowledgements

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