# Chapter 2 -The Multiparty Monitoring Process

This chapter explains how to develop a multiparty monitoring process, tools and skills required of monitoring team members, and how to conduct outreach and communication.

## Developing a Multiparty Process

There are five steps to developing a multiparty monitoring process:

1. Identifying and engaging stakeholders;
2. Building a common understanding;
3. Revisiting project goals, defining measurable outcomes, and identifying indicators;
4. Developing and funding a monitoring plan; and
5. Learning from monitoring and assessing the process.

As you proceed through the steps, it is important to see the process as iterative, flexible, and adaptive. It is clearly necessary that someone take the first step before proceeding to step two. However, it may also be important to revisit step one as others join the process so that they have an opportunity identify additional parties that might not be at the table and help to shape the process (figure 2).

### Step 1: Identifying Stakeholders

The first step in developing a multiparty process is to identify stakeholders and clarify everyone's interests and concerns. A *stakeholder* is any person, group or institution that affects or is affected by a particular issue or outcome. Stakeholders may be private landowners, individual citizens, non-government organizations (NGOs), businesses, public agencies, church and school groups, labor organizations, or others who have a commitment to the community. Ideally, a multiparty group will have at least one individual who broadly represents each of the different identified interests.

#### Examples of Stakeholders

- Individual community members and groups
- Landowners
- Local, county, state, and federal agencies
- Tribal governments
- Mobile and in-place forest workers
- Environmental and conservation organizations
- Academic institutions and researchers
- Commodity interests
- Industry and small businesses
- Recreation and sporting interests
- Faith-based organizations

Stakeholders may want to participate in monitoring because the monitoring results will ultimately influence decisions that affect their lives or mission. These interests may center around aesthetics, recreation, influence on local economies, commodity use, jobs, implementation of policies, effects on the health and condition of the environment, and worker rights, among others.

Additionally, by participating in monitoring stakeholders can expect to gain a better understanding of how the project may affect issues that concern them and help determine future project decisions. To identify stakeholders, project participants should ask:

- **"Who is affected by project activities and outcomes?"**
- **"Are political or institutional change agents represented?"**

In some cases, however, stakeholders may choose not to participate because of financial or time limitations, bad past experiences with group processes, or other reasons. Engaging these stakeholders may require active efforts on the part of the project leaders to ensure that, to the extent possible, representatives of all stakeholder groups – men and women, young and old, rich and poor, all races – become involved. Project leaders and participants should ask themselves:

- **"Are there stakeholders who should be involved, but may need support to participate?"**
- **"What support is required and how can it be provided?"**

While it is important to reach out to all who may have an interest in the project, multiparty monitoring groups will need to be creative and flexible about involvement. A thorough identification of stakeholders does not necessarily translate into active participation by all of those interests. Involvement in monitoring may wax and wane over time due to changes in funding, time constraints, work focus, etc. Such change may affect the structure and functioning of a multiparty monitoring team.

The process may include people representing a particular affiliation and those who do not identify with any group. Clarity about where a person is speaking from can reduce assumptions, confusion and conflict. A representative has the responsibility of two-way information flow with his/her constituency, to ensure that the entire group is in agreement with things the representative says and does. All participants should be reminded that the process should focus on interests as opposed to positions. It is important to ask the questions:

- "Is the person speaking as an individual, or as a representative?"
- "If the person is speaking as a representative, who is being represented?"

Regardless of why parties choose to be involved, it is crucial that their values and concerns be treated with respect. A diverse group of interests is more likely to develop a comprehensive list of issues to be monitored. Bringing diverse parties into the process early on, therefore, can help a group avoid potential conflicts later. Engaging diverse parties in the multiparty monitoring process can also help avoid duplication of efforts and unnecessary competition among interests, may promote greater efficiencies, and could help build beneficial relationships among those involved.

An effective vehicle for providing a level playing field that has worked in several circumstances is to establish the multiparty monitoring effort through a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational partnership or cooperative foundation.

## Step 2: Building a Common Understanding

The first step toward building a common understanding is to ensure that all stakeholders have access to the same information. If a project does not have mechanisms in place to ensure that all participants are provided with the same information, then there is the risk

that a few members will dominate the process. In some cases, the group may need to obtain specific information from outside sources.

There are many dimensions to equitable access to information. Care must be taken to discuss technical and political information in language that all stakeholders can understand. "Powerful" agency and academic stakeholders can end up controlling the process, particularly when activities and information are shared using the language and approaches they have developed. Therefore, an important precursor to sharing information is determining the different backgrounds and areas of expertise of each stakeholder. Once the participants' different areas of knowledge and familiarity with specific language have been identified, the group can redesign the process to be more inclusive of different perspectives and skills, and/or provide support to enhance capacity.

A second important factor to ensuring a broad collaborative process is to require that different types of data be accepted as useful and important. The relevant body of knowledge might include indigenous, local, ethnic, cultural, and anecdotal information, as well as published scientific literature. Often, local sources of knowledge are able to report on detailed and specific changes that occur at a micro-ecosystem level and over a long period of time. Integrating local and indigenous knowledge into monitoring activities can save limited financial and human resources.

Questions that can be asked to help build common understanding:

- **Is the language (scientific, cultural terms, English) being used understandable to all?**
- **Do all stakeholders recognize and respect the different individual and cultural approaches to communication?**
- **Do some stakeholders require technical support or training to participate more fully? How can that assistance be provided?**

## Step 3: Revisiting Project Goals, Defining Measurable Outcomes, and Identifying Indicators

Once stakeholders are identified and relevant knowledge has been shared, the next step is to clarify project goals, measurable outcomes, questions, and overall concerns. This process, while time consuming, will ensure that all stakeholders have similar expectations and that they remain invested in monitoring the project. During this process, it is important to develop a common definition of what "success" looks like, so that the group can agree when it has achieved its goals.

Multiparty monitoring groups must also collaboratively choose the indicators of change that they will monitor. Monitoring groups may be faced with limitations of time and money, and they will have to carefully consider which indicators will provide them with the most useful information.

A good place to start is by examining project goals, as defined by the local community and other interests, including project funders and managers.

Multiparty monitoring groups may also want to consider whether they are most interested in monitoring project implementation, monitoring project effectiveness, or validating project assumptions.

*Implementation monitoring* is important for multiparty monitoring groups because it simply asks, 'did we do what we said we would do?'

*Effectiveness monitoring* helps determine whether or not the project goals were attained by asking the question 'did it work?' Reducing the small trees that compete with old-growth ponderosa pine, and increasing forage for deer are examples of project goals that can be measured through effectiveness monitoring.

*Validation monitoring* involves checking the assumptions upon which our restoration efforts are based. 'Did reducing crown cover actually reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire?' is a validation monitoring question.

Once the group has identified the goals that it wants to monitor, it must select one or more indicators that can be used to measure change in that goal. An *indicator* is a unit of information measured over time that documents changes in a specific condition. A good indicator meets the criteria of being measurable, precise, consistent, and sensitive.

When selecting indicators, multiparty monitoring groups will want to ask themselves,

Is the proposed indicator:

- Relevant for the site and treatment?
- Sensitive to change so that it can detect change within the monitoring timeframe?
- Measurable with available methods that multiparty groups can use to generate accurate, standardized data?
- Defensible and not subject to individual or organizational bias?
- Able to be measured by methods that are professionally accepted and understood?
- Integrated so that the whole suite of indicators provides a reasonable picture of change?

Where appropriate, groups should try to identify multidimensional indicators that reflect connections between economic, environmental, and social goals and measure potential changes simultaneously. This will improve monitoring efficiency by reducing the number of indicators to be measured.

## Step 4: Developing and Funding a Monitoring Plan

Once project goals and monitoring outcomes and indicators are clear, the group must develop a monitoring plan, including who will collect what information and when. Special care should be taken to ensure that the eventual plan be easily understood and implemented by all stakeholders.

It is important to include collection of baseline data in the monitoring plan. All monitoring depends on baseline documentation of the conditions existing before the restoration effort takes place. The baseline information is necessary to have some basis for comparison later. Many monitoring efforts skip over this most important of activities.

The monitoring group should also consider the availability of quality data and what it will take to gather quality data where it is not available. Quality data includes quantitative and qualitative measures and information about the data source.

Ideally, monitoring teams should develop plans for adapting management in response to each goal or indicator being monitored. For each of these measures, there should be a contingency plan in

place to change treatment should harmful trends be found. The contingency plan will allow the project team to quickly adapt management before the entire project is completed.

Adequate long-term funding for all parties is essential to establish and maintain monitoring. It may be necessary to provide compensation to community members to offset the costs of involvement (e.g., child care, travel, loss in income, meals, etc.). Therefore it is essential to build monitoring and evaluation costs into project and program budgets, keeping in mind that such costs will vary based on the project, type of landscape, and complexity of the social and economic issues. Public funding sources that have proved useful include legislatively appropriated funds, special levies, trust funds, rate-payer funds, taxes, fines and penalties, lottery funds, casino revenues, tax incentives. Private funding sources may include corporations, foundations, and other non-government organizations.

### Step 5: Learning From Monitoring and Assessing the Process

The monitoring plan will outline data collection and analysis procedures.

### See chapters 5 and 6 for detailed guidance on data collection and analysis.

It is important to remember that multiparty monitoring is a **group** process. The stakeholders should review the different data and results *as a group*, together reflecting on the interrelatedness of the outcomes and what they can learn from the data. Perhaps most importantly, stakeholders need to collectively determine what, if anything, they will change (at either the policy or project implementation level) in response to what they have learned.

Multiparty monitoring efforts should be designed with enough flexibility to allow for periodic adjustments to criteria, measures, data collection processes, and composition of the team as necessary. If the parties involved are not acquiring the necessary data, not acquiring the data in a scientifically credible manner, or are providing data by means that are not accountable or replicable, then the multiparty monitoring process has lost its value within the greater realm of adaptive management. Similarly, there is no credibility in a monitoring program that continues to provide monitoring results (i.e., data) that are no longer useful. When a monitoring team determines that its monitoring is not meeting its needs, it should be flexible enough to revisit and revise its monitoring plan.

## Examples of Multiparty Monitoring Processes

There are a number of approaches that have been field tested to defining a team and what to monitor within the multiparty setting.

- A simple procedure for selecting items to monitor is to follow requirements in Forest Plans, area guides, and project environmental assessments. Within the *USDA Forest Service Stewardship Contracting Pilots*, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation established a set of monitoring criteria based on brainstorming exercises among Stewardship Pilot project leaders and partners. These criteria are annually adjusted based on the input of stakeholders, Congress, agencies, and those involved in monitoring at all levels.

- For the *Yale Creek Community Project*, an 8-acre neighborhood thinning project in the Applegate Valley of Oregon, the monitoring team asked the local residents what concerned them the most about the project and based the monitoring criteria on their responses.

- In their forest health restoration project, the *Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership* used a ½-day brainstorming session to identify the effects of forest restoration causing the greatest concern. These concerns were then evaluated against current monitoring and scientific studies currently ongoing to see if they were already being addressed. The list was further reduced by identifying those actions that could not be reasonably accomplished by the multiparty group due to limits in funds, time, scientific equipment/knowledge, or the ability of the group. Design details were then added to the remaining items, and incorporated into the subsequent project. In this manner, an implemental monitoring plan was produced that focused on issues most important to the group, creating a vested interest in seeing the monitoring accomplished.

- On the Applegate Ranger District of the Rogue River National Forest, a self-directed work group used the community as a sounding board to develop and rank monitoring criteria. A series of community meetings extracted feelings and visions about forest management that were depicted as a "value tree". The multiparty process identified those items of greatest value to the community, and, through Bayesian Belief Networks, project leaders correlated project activities to issues of greatest concern to the community to identify key criteria for monitoring. In other words, monitoring criteria matched the highest priority concerns.

## Skills and tools

Multiparty monitoring processes will undoubtedly vary greatly among projects and communities. For example, such processes can be used for simply testing local citizens' hypotheses about a forest health project in their neighborhood or for tracking complex activities within the larger landscape or watershed. With this in mind, the depth of skills, capacity, and tools required for effective implementation of a multiparty process will vary with the intensity of monitoring required and the desired level of citizen involvement in such efforts.

Nonetheless, there is a basic set of skills and tools that facilitates the involvement of a community in collaborative forest health management. Too often, agencies expect both the community and their own employees to participate on multiparty monitoring teams without the capacity to be an effective team member. Essential capacities include a basic knowledge of forest management processes, communication skills, and a framework or plan that makes clear why the monitoring is occurring in the first place.

Another important element for a successful multiparty team is a close connection to the resource—including physical, cultural and philosophical connections. Sustaining these connections to the land and the surrounding community are essential to motivating participation in multiparty monitoring and understanding the impacts and results of a particular activity.

Some of the skills and tools required for multiparty monitoring are described below. It is likely that training will be needed for all parties engaged in the monitoring process.

### Communication

The field of forest management is riddled with technical jargon and bureaucratic procedures. In addition to having an understanding of ecological and social processes, parties must also be able to communicate effectively amongst themselves, with decision-makers (agencies, political leaders, and constituents), and with the general public.

### Leadership

When using a multiparty monitoring process, it is important to establish a leadership role for a key member(s) or a steering committee. The role of this person or group is to translate community visions and informational needs into a meaningful design that meets the requirements of credible monitoring. Such a representative can act as a liaison among the community, agencies, and other interests. Those individuals charged with leadership responsibilities should have an understanding of agency procedures and policies, support and commitment for the multiparty monitoring process, and an ability to explain complex issues in easily understood terms. Good team leaders are willing to build their skills in these areas and may be members of the community.

A successful team will attempt to include a broad spectrum of viewpoints, so team leaders must also have the communication skills to ensure that every team member has a meaningful contribution Some multiparty groups have also found that having a professional facilitator helps provide “clarity and efficiency” to the process (Pinchot Institute, 2002).

### Knowledge of Issues

Effective members of a multiparty monitoring team are open to learning about the issues and other stakeholders’ perspectives. They have knowledge of the issues, or soon develop this understanding. This knowledge is important for collaboration, improved data gathering, and shared learning.

### Commitment

A community’s interest in multiparty monitoring develops from its desire to learn. A vested interest in the outcome of monitoring equates to a commitment to see the project through. Generally, organizations, neighborhoods, and individuals who have differing views on forest management or whose resources are affected by a management action tend to have a vested interest in project outcomes. A large part of this commitment results from an educational process that can provide a foundation for why the monitoring is occurring in the first place. Both the community and the agency must commit themselves to the multiparty concept and long-term maintenance of the team.

### Flexibility

Participation in multiparty monitoring requires a great deal of professional and personal flexibility. For example, agency personnel will have to be comfortable with periodic work at night or weekends. Community members must also commit their time for strategizing, organizing and implementing the monitoring. Such efforts may often result in competition with one’s free time. This is why high levels of interest and energy are paramount.

## Outreach and communication

Multiparty teams must strive to maintain strategic outreach and communication with people who are not part of the multiparty monitoring team throughout the monitoring process for several reasons, including:

to attract and engage diverse parties, including skeptics and critics

- to raise the visibility and openness of the monitoring process

- to keep everyone informed about monitoring progress and issues that arise during implementation and monitoring

A two-stage outreach and communication process is identified below.

### Stage 1 - Identify Information Needs

Find out what information and data are relevant to the various stakeholders. Stakeholders should know and care about the issues and questions asked during monitoring. For many stakeholders, it's not a project – but a part of their lives.

To identify stakeholders' information needs, start by identifying categories of stakeholders - such as local, mobile, regional, and national, - based on their need to participate and their level of interest in the daily workings of a multiparty monitoring team. Then identify each stakeholder's specific interests and the information they will need for informed engagement. Third, assess these informational needs and develop a strategy to obtain and analyze such data and information.

### Stage 2 - Information Dissemination

Making information and data accessible to stakeholders is essential to the success of multiparty monitoring. This means the multiparty team must create and maintain an accessible data repository and mechanisms for summarizing and explaining data for the general public (i.e., maintain process *transparency*). Everyone should have easy access to monitoring data—even those not engaged at the local level. By ensuring transparent data collection and analysis, the multiparty monitoring team will help build trust (Kusel et al, 2000).

Some ways to provide process transparency include:

- Work directly with rural communities and local interest groups to synthesize and distribute information that is relevant to specific local needs.
- Identify information needed by scientists and resource managers.
- Use a variety of tools to disseminate information, including community and town meetings, face-to-face discussions, private consultations, field trips, newsletters, progress reports, websites, and listserves. Information can also be shared in non-traditional ways, e.g., through performance art.
- Give special consideration to ways to reach ethnically diverse and geographically dispersed residents of rural areas, e.g., by providing information in multiple languages.
- Outreach methods that involve elements of training are particularly effective. For instance, a project can incorporate training workshops to help build stakeholders' capacity to monitor ecological and social conditions. This could encourage and facilitate peer training among stakeholders.
- Publicize where observation records are housed and who is responsible for maintaining those records (e.g., stored on Internet, at local libraries, public schools, government offices, or institutions of higher education) (Bliss et al, 2001). When considering storing information on the Internet, make sure that all stakeholders have access to on-line resources (Kusel et al, 2000).

- Site visits are a good way for stakeholders to reflect on new techniques and learn from one another (Biodiversity Support Program, WWF 1998). Consider involving not only team members but also the media, outside interests, policymakers, etc.

- Share lessons learned with other communities, other project managers, and government officials (Biodiversity Support Program, WWF 1998). Encourage team members to present what they have learned at national or regional meetings, submit articles or editorials to local publications, actively communicate their findings with other agency offices, and to utilize existing professional networks to disseminate their lessons learned.

## Credibility of the monitoring process and results

Monitoring efforts are most credible when they maintain flexibility in response to social, economic, cultural or biological conditions and, where appropriate, modify the monitoring cycle to address changing conditions. Efforts to increase the credibility of monitoring efforts need to begin with the design phase of the program, and ultimately relate to all steps in the monitoring cycle.

Diversity and transparency help create credibility. The more diverse the coalition of parties on the monitoring team, the greater the potential for broad social acceptance of the monitoring results. Similarly, the more open and accessible the monitoring process, the more likely people are to trust it.

Ultimately, the accountability of monitoring efforts can be minimized through monetary, legal, ethical, and bias-based lines of questioning. A defense against such questions of accountability is the "checks & balances" concept inherent in multiparty monitoring. The greater the diversity of thought, concepts, approaches and perspectives, the greater the legitimacy the monitoring efforts will have.

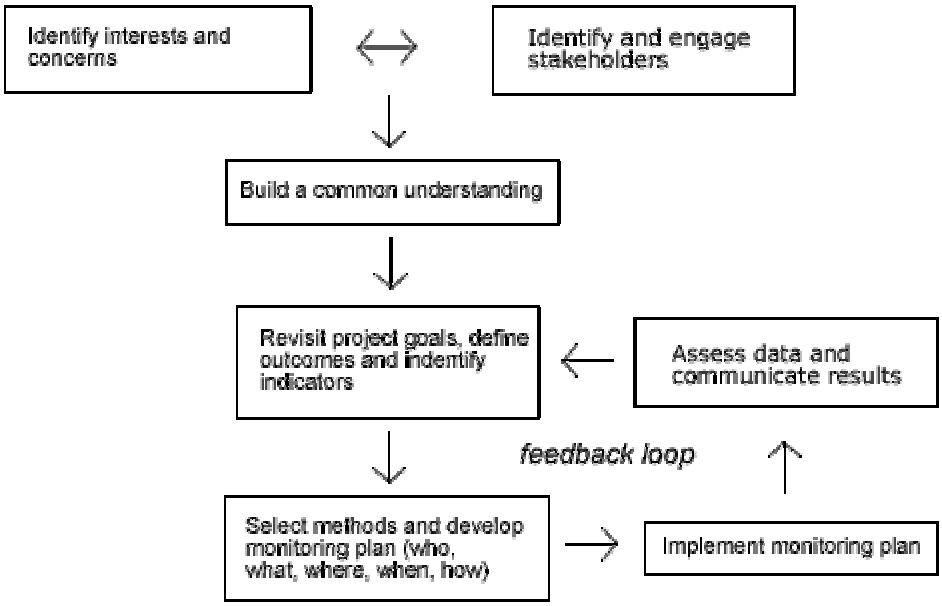


**Figure 2. The Multiparty Monitoring Process.**