

Afternoon Plenary and Workshop Reports

Bill: Workshop presented by William Pol with the assistance of Sally Colman. This report is presented by Tracey Boitson, a GIS expert who has been working on a work study project with the City of London on woodlot evaluation and making measurements of the representation on the landscape for size and quality.

Tracey Boitson: Our topic was on policy, given by William Pol. Originally William had intended that we would break up into three groups, have discussions, and come back and bring some points back to you guys, but we ended up giving all of the session as one big group and we kind of worked through three points. We were trying to develop natural heritage planning policies for an official plan, and assuming that no policies were in effect on natural heritage. So, we had three areas: we were to develop goals and objectives and then we were to identify and protect natural heritage features and how those features would be inventoried, mapped and shown on schedules. Then we were to assess land use changes and monitoring. So, in the area of developing goals and objectives, we tried to develop an end statement for natural heritage policies and things like maintaining a healthy environment, a self-sustaining environment. These were all kind of broad goals for our policies. Then, we also discussed good policies that would be clear, easy to follow, reflecting community values, reasonable, fair, and defensible to the public and to the Ontario Municipal Board. One of the good policy statements that wasn't initially there, but we added, was this idea of elevating the heritage system, like not including economic statements in our policies. It was just to deal with healthy environment, so we had to add that into good policies that would address this healthy environment. I will move to recommendations—we didn't get through all three sections.

Recommendations: Some of the goals were to elevate the value of the natural heritage system. It is an essential part of this green infrastructure as we started calling it. We need to impart this green infrastructure as being important, health-wise and economy-wise. An objective is to be able to identify measurable improvements every five years relative to a healthy natural heritage system. Now we discussed whether we could put a number on it and try to reach that number, but if that number was out of reach we could monitor every five years and maybe do a percent increase over time relative to the baseline data and decide where you want to go from that and set these number goals that can be reached over what period of time.

Policy
William Pol

*end statement for
natural heritage
policy: maintain a
healthy environment
and a self-sustaining
environment*

*measuring for
cumulative effects*

As for assessment, we decided assessment had to be measuring for cumulative effects. So, you can't just look at one application, you have to see the cumulative effects of all the applications, not just in one area, but we are looking at a whole landscape here. It must be a cumulative assessment, not just individual assessments. Also, on the topic of assessment, we spoke about building applications. A site may be zoned, and to get a building application you don't necessarily need to look at the effects on the natural heritage system, so we need to start looking at how a building application may affect. It may be zoned and, sure you can build, but there is not really that much assessment done on the effects of the building on an adjacent natural heritage feature and maybe that needs to be implemented into policies.

*monitoring goes
hand in hand
with policy*

Monitoring must be included in the assessment process and which identifies who will do it, for how long, and what. So, this monitoring in your subdivision agreement you may language such as "will continue to monitor for a set period of time; it may spell out who will monitor, for how long, and what you will monitor for. The other thing about monitoring was that it kind of goes hand in hand with policy. We have monitoring to make policy and policy dictates monitoring, so they all kind of work together. You can't just set a policy monitor.

Implementation

Gary Epp

The second workshop was on implementation. It was hosted by Gary Epp and Angus Norman. Chris Powell took the notes. Chris is a graduate student in the Department of Geography and his thesis interest is on storm water management and monitoring the quality and effects of storm water management planning.

Chris Powell: In our workshop session, we attempted to answer the question of how do we effectively implement policy statement on any program. The group of people in the room had a variety of backgrounds and they were there for a variety of reasons, the majority of which were to increase their knowledge base, communicate, gain new ideas as to how we can improve their situations and to get some feedback from other people with some expertise and experience in the area. We basically went through and attempted to come up with a set of ideas as to how to effectively implement different programs. There were a number of administrative and scientific and technological criteria or guidelines that can be followed.

First off, we need to set clear and definitive guidelines and objectives and have those objectives supported by guideline documents. There is a need for co-ordination among all the stakeholders who have a stake in what we are trying to achieve. The stakeholders range from public input and their ability to appeal decisions, the local MNR, MOEE, and other experts in the area. There is a need to educate landowners and politicians to try to get them on board as to supporting the guidelines and programs that are being put in place. A key to communication is through continued research and publishing of reports, visiting with the people you are actually trying to convince of the significance of your programs, conferences, such as this, where you can communicate your ideas, as well as using the media to try to put your message across. Education should begin with young people, but should include all members and all stakeholders, including landowners, planners, scientists and politicians.

set objectives

co-ordinate

educate

communicate

We should try and proceed using a cautionary approach. We attempt to protect more now until we actually understand what specifically needs to be protected. That way, if we do go wrong, it's better to err on the side of protection. We discussed a little bit about the OMB and how effective it is. We came to the conclusion that we shouldn't use the OMB as a way to implement our policies or programs. Rather, we should attempt to set guidelines and to make plans prior to any development proposals being proposed or to try to nip it in the bud before these problems or cases go to the OMB for appeal. It is easier to defend your position with these plans in place as attempting to argue over the science. It is difficult to do this when the plans come after the proposals. So you need to set your rules early. As well, you need to address the interconnectedness of the areas, so, not only look at a site by site basis, but try and implement these polices across a large region. As well as a rule of rehabilitation and retention of

*should not use the
OMB as a way to
implement our
policies or programs*

*developers can often
out study any
municipality*

significant areas, there needs to be a balance between this. So, yes, it's good to retain significant areas and try to protect them, but you also need to rehabilitate those areas that can be rehabilitated. With respect to scientific knowledge, there remains some scientific uncertainty. We are unsure of what actually will occur with developments, the impacts of which are kind of projected, but they are not definitely known. In some cases, science can be abused as in the case of going to the OMB where developers can often out study any municipality—they have the resources to do so and they can concentrate their focus on that one site-specific area, whereas the municipality is responsible for a larger area. As well, you need to recognize that science changes and adjust your policies and programs accordingly. We need to identify the features that we want to protect before we try to come up with a plan to protect areas, because there is no point in having a plan to protect significant areas if we don't know what those areas are.

The thirty percent protected natural area came up in discussion as well. Although this addresses the quantity of significant areas and where natural areas are that we want to protect, there is also a question or an issue of quality. Are we protecting the most significant areas rather than just trying to protect as much as possible? Due to financial constraints and cut backs to environmental, social, and health care programs, and of downloading of responsibility to municipalities, they are being asked to do more with less and these issues must be addressed. This comes into the idea of coordination between the various agencies and try to tackle the problem together rather than divided.

*base our
implementation on
valid technical theory
and science to have
adequate causal
theory behind
programs*

Suggestions for future actions: We need to take a realistic view of the full range of activities and programs and the impacts of those programs. We need to base our implementation on valid technical theory and science. We need to focus our efforts on the target groups so that we have an efficient approach to try to implement these policies to the people whose actions we are trying to actually change. We need clear and concise objectives. We need to have adequate causal theory behind why we're implementing these programs. We need to agree upon what we are trying to implement and why we're doing that. We need coordinated action, strong commitment of officials and staff as well as active and meaningful participation of citizens. We need to address changing socioeconomic and technological conditions. We need to educate the public to influence political will, which is often tied to financial and legal support for various agencies and policies and programs. We need to convince all people who have a stake in the environment, which is pretty much all of us, in the importance of protecting these significant natural areas.

The third session was on monitoring and Ken Ursic was the designated expert in the room and he was assisted by Hal Schraeder and note taking was done by Bridget Roche. Bridget is a student in the Geography Department, also in the Master's Program and her thesis interest is in the monitoring of the implementation of the Provincial Wetland Policy from 1992 and she is looking at the last 20 years in the City of London.

Bridget Roche: The session that I was in was looking at monitoring and cumulative assessment. Actually, we raised more questions than answers, I think, which is probably true of a lot of break out sessions.

The first thing I wanted to deal with is to actually decide what monitoring was. We went around the table and, I think, the general consensus was that it is a collecting of information to examine change relative to initial conditions, but also with the desired condition in mind so that is a baseline and there is also a target. Monitoring has to have spatial and temporal aspects to it.

We decided to use the formative approach for our evaluation process perspective, considering that we have no policy originally, so what is needed, or what problems will we run into, and who is responsible. We got through most of them, I guess. We have lots of problems to talk about. I think the largest one is that it isn't done very often, so that is obviously something that has to be initially looked at. Often it is considered as a rationalization for development or a justification for development. Monitoring may also be in house, so there is a lot of potential for bias there. Maybe only the basics would be carried out, so going beyond the minimum may not be done, and also resources available, both in time and funding. Also, problems of theory versus practice—what is supposed to be done, but then what is actually done on the ground. There are some examples of where practice didn't follow the theory.

One of the first things we looked was data collection, looking at this baseline idea. We need to have access to the baseline data. We identified opportunities for improvement or problems. From the community's point of view, access to knowledge and access to the database of baseline information is a problem. How is the public supposed to know what information has been learned from monitoring? Also, the idea of legislation for a public watchdog, as well as accountability for the people who are doing the monitoring. We moved on to measuring the outcome, both positive and negative, of monitoring and of the data collection and reporting. We are identifying sensitivities or significance of the area, how it has changed. Collecting the baseline data will lead to critiquing of the reports—did the monitoring actually occur on them from that analysis, what was found? We moved on to diagnosing the reasons for problems which included, as I mentioned before, lack of resources and lack of understanding

Monitoring

Ken Ursic

*monitoring is
collecting
information (spatially
and temporally) to
examine change
relative to initial
conditions with the
desired condition in
mind...a baseline and
a target*

*baseline data
measure outcome
analyze
report*

of the consequences of development, and as well as properties that change hands, so moving from the developer to the construction, to the landowner. How do you ensure that monitoring is implemented throughout all those phases and beyond?

establish a standard of practice for monitoring

We didn't really get too far into solutions, but I think one of the key things that came out is that we have to establish a standard of practice for monitoring and that the policy may enable us, to some degree, to monitor, but we need to go beyond that and actually determine standards of monitoring for people to follow.

Bill: Thank you Bridget, Chris and Tracey. Your notes will assist in the preparation of the proceedings for this year's conference. The proceedings from last year's conference are available as a PDF file through the Carolinian Canada website, and if you want a hard copy you can also ask for that as well.

green infrastructure for a healthy environment to create healthy communities

What I wanted to do in the next few minutes is to open the floor to talk about what are the things that you heard that were common, and are there things that we think that all municipalities should be doing. For myself, I heard from policy group that they think that the green infrastructure should have a special status or an elevated status greater than it has right now and that a healthy environment will create healthy communities. That is another provincial objective: healthy communities, so we can build on that.

implement a natural heritage system by changing how people think about it

Very interesting discussion from the implementation group. It was actually, what I heard in the group was a fair bit different than what I would have imagined had taken place in there, but it was the nuts and bolts of an environmental impact study. They were able to talk about the need for coordination and communication, good reporting, application of a precautionary principle and trying to influence decision-making and in education of this generation and subsequent generations. I thought that a very interesting way to implement a natural heritage system was by changing how people think about it.

evaluation and analysis to gauge how close we are getting towards the targets

In the monitoring session, the key words there, for me, were that they would do a baseline monitoring and collect lots of information on what's there right now. But the key part that I heard was that there would be some form of evaluation and analysis to gauge how close we are getting towards the targets that are being set for the health of the environment. Again, they talked about the need for reporting, and the quality of reporting that is in a style that is understandable and usable by people in the community who are going to express their own personal values, and that expression of values will influence the decision-making process at the political level.

That's what I heard. I wonder what you heard?

Angus Norman: One thing that came across to me is that municipalities have a great need for guidance, and that's guidelines from experts, a variety of opinions. I also heard a need for considerably more involvement of ministry staff who have expertise.

need for considerably more involvement of ministry staff who have expertise

Bill: Angus mentioned the need for guidance documents, and I recall that was also mentioned in the monitoring session, about establishing standards of practice for the data collection and having some sort of consistent and comparable means of evaluation, regardless of where you are in the Province, that an independent auditor, as it were, would be able to look at those documents and make an informed assessment of whether or not the right data is there, and if you are getting on track to reach the targets.

Gloria McGinn-McTeer: What I heard today is that there is lots of information and policies, broad sweeping and also very specific policies. But what I tend to see complicating the process is fragmentation, not just between levels of government, but between governments themselves-between municipalities and provinces. So it just causes confusion and so there is no cohesiveness; there is no accountability; there really is no one for a citizen to go to for one answer. You are bounced from one to another. Some cohesiveness and consistency would be helpful.

cohesiveness and consistency would be helpful

Bonnie Bergsma: One thing that we discussed was about building monitoring into policy. Monitoring isn't the end of the process, it is part of the interim process, it should be the beginning and it should be conducted as an important to develop and set policies, as it is to contribute policy then implement it and to give us some assurances that as development proceeds that our goals and objectives are being met. We should see that the monitoring is part of the process and needs to be elevated in terms of municipalities and governments and everybody needs to get focussed on monitoring and what it can do to help guide policy.

monitoring to help guide policy

Hal Schraeder: I was going to ask a question that was directed to Gary. The need or appetite to form new policy all the time and to you say that we have to have a clear and defensible policy to explain our societal need for the natural heritage system. Yet, I wonder whether it is really more important integrating policies. Maybe what we know today about the shape of the landscape and natural heritage assets, should be more of catalyst for both renewal or urban growth policies. It seems to me that every time we admit to developing policies we just harm ourselves and do more battle amongst ourselves. Maybe we should be all consolidating around a more elegant, singular, sweeping policy that integrates natural heritage with smart growth and not be positioned, at this stage, to worry about getting blood from a stone. The same tests that Gary identified here for clear and defensible natural heritage policies could be applied to existing

consolidating around a more elegant, singular, sweeping policy that integrates natural heritage

urban growth policies. They should be reviewed as well. That's where I come back to this natural heritage thing should be more of a catalyst to update or revive its existing policy, not causing new policy.

Gary Epp: I think there is a lot of truth to what Hal said in terms of the need for integrating different policies together in hopes of having natural heritage policy be different than urban growth policies. Particularly where it leads to where and what form of development we promote. If we promote urban expansion in terms of types of growth forms we are advocating and allowing other forms of policy that directs us to not protect the natural heritage system then we have to support protection in other ways. If we don't have consistent overlapping policies and coordination then we also have to consistently have a need to deal with natural heritage protection and put out fires...that needs to be done.

*success of policy is
measured by not going
to the OMB*

I think we also need to have sufficient feedback in the system so that policies do get modified and I think that we do need new policies where they are missing. I think most of the municipalities are in need of developing those types of policies and guideline documents.

Tracey Boitson: Our discussion group identified that when we develop new policy that all stakeholders have a role in the development of that policy. We measure the success of the policy by not going to the OMB.

Bill: At this time, I'd like to acknowledge the generosity of the people who brought their expertise here today. We have Brian Potter, who came all the way from Peterborough to represent the Ministry of Natural Resources on the Technical Heritage Manual, and Gary Epp, from Waterloo and Earth Tech to speak to us about implementation, William Pol from Municipal Affairs and Housing on policy, and Ken Ursic from Guelph with Dougan and Associates to present on monitoring. I appreciate what they did and I think that you did, too. As a token of appreciation for their efforts I would like each of them to come forward to receive a product from the Carolinian Canada life zone. On behalf of Carolinian Canada I thank our speakers and please join me in extending our appreciation.

References

Natural Heritage Reference Manual for Policy 2.3 of the Provincial Policy Statement, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, June 1999, 128 pp.

Provincial Policy Statement, Revised February 1, 1997, Order in Council No. 764-96, 18 pp.

Web Links

Visit our website <www.carolinian.org> for links to dozens of web sites of government and non-government environmental and naturalist organizations

Visit <wwf.ca/en/res_links/rl_resources.asp> for a recent review of municipal natural heritage policy which is the result of a joint project with World Wildlife Fund, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, MNR, MOE and MMAH

Appendices

Workshop Evaluation

Conference Evaluation

Conference Participant List