

PA Natural Resources Leadership Institute (NRLI) Planning Workshop

*Ramada Inn State College, PA
June 12th, 2015*

History of the Development in Pennsylvania

Matt Royer from PSU's Agriculture and Environment Center provided context about the origin of this effort including informal discussion with PSU's Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education Department, the creation of a planning committee and receiving financial support from AESE and CAS departments for the creation of the workshop. The goal of the workshop was explore the opportunities and challenges for collaborative leadership training and exploration of creating a vision, structure and delivery of this type of program.

Background on other state-based natural resource leadership programs

Dr. Kathy Brasier highlighted outcomes in natural resource-based leadership programs in other states including individual and collective outcomes. This included basic knowledge of leadership skills, facilitation and conversation skills, and techniques and strategies. Collective outcomes included building relationships and networks and skill transfer back to organizations. Participants ranged in backgrounds, age, and status within their organizations. Most individuals heard about the program through word of mouth and recommendations and included a formal application. The program content included leadership skills, state-specific environmental issues, and various pedagogical techniques including interactive strategies, site visits, and case studies. The program structure varied from state to state. Partnerships are important including relevant centers, agencies, universities and governmental officials. They were often housed at universities and involved faculty, agency staff, and alumni. Funding included various sources, including tuition, grants, public/private sources, money from state and federal governments, legislative funds, alumni, agency funds for dedication. Also, the university housing the project provides staff, resources, space and students.

Participants were curious about outcomes, costs to students, how programs measured success, and distinctions between natural resource-specific leadership programs.

Mary Lou Addor, North Carolina NRLI

North Carolina's NRLI is the longest standing institute in the country. Created in 1993, the NRLIs were primarily convened around forestry and clear-cutting in

particular in North Carolina, Kentucky, and Arkansas. This was spurred by a lot of faculty and partners got together and wanted to address the problem. The three programs were pulled together and funded by a Kellogg grant and developed by Cornell during their first 3 years. The training program is 18 months long with 6 sessions and a practicum component. They have 4 programs: 1) core program around leadership development 2) environmental decision-making, including case study development 3) research around leadership 4) needs-based training (offered to alumni and other partners).

NC NRLI is housed at NC State with College of Natural Resources with extension at UNC-Chapel Hill. They have found there is value in being housed a university in terms of neutrality. The program costs \$2,500 per person. They do not want cost to hinder participation, therefore they receive grants from both industry (ie. Duke Energy) and NGOs. They strive to be driven by the goals of NRLI, not driven by industry needs. They have found consistent leadership is important to sustain the program.

One of the things that sets NRLI apart from other leader development programs is that it is about developing leadership between organizations, particularly when there is conflict and/or a need to cross collaboration. These cross-sector interactions help to build understanding and awareness. There is an emphasis on an understanding of what problem and solution could get to a solution. They try to maintain diverse participation including affiliation, ethnicity, region, and demographics.

Curriculum focuses on people, relationships and processes and embedded in the center around natural resources. Transfer of learning and a co-learning model is very important. Skills range from communications, self-awareness, and facilitation. Participants range from public, private, and nonprofit individuals; these individuals are often mid-career. One example was training of extension agents to deal with public policy issues. Other benefits include personal value and public value, which includes more successful employees and better decision-making.

The practicums are applied learning projects and are relevant to communities, agencies, and organizations across the state. Some of the practicums involve public participation; others just involve collecting data from the people because situational assessments are sometimes needed to determine if a public solution is amenable to the conflict. The projects have ranged from hydropower licensing, assessing groundwater management, and developing deer management plan for state parks. They use a project that isn't successful as a learning opportunity.

After the program established itself, recruitment is often word of mouth with the division directors planning an important role. There are typically 20 to 27 people. Success is based on self-reporting; there is a need to do better evaluation. There is not a formal mentoring program, but it is informally present, particularly for the advisory board. Close to 500 fellows have gone through the program, and people

can use other participants as a resource. There are efforts to develop a dialogue structure to convene stakeholders for conflict resolution. All of the content is delivered face-to-face, but there is interest in developing future programs incorporating a mix of technology.

Don Baugh Environmental Leadership LLC

He has been involved with assessing the need for leadership development of local elected officials, particularly in the Chesapeake Bay. This assessment has included interviews from Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington DC, and Maryland. The priority training needs include: best practices, connection between local water quality and bay, connection between local water quality and quality of life, available funding sources, regulatory requirements and the consequences of noncompliance, roles of the many levels of government in the Bay restoration efforts, and communication/negotiation skills. Very few interviewees had participated in leadership trainings. Many people found value in local officials getting out on the water and having firsthand experience.

He highlighted some aspects of a VA Natural Resources Leadership Institute. This included partners from UVA Institute for Environmental Negotiation, VA Cooperative extension, VA Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Virginia Department of Forestry. It consists of 6 three-day sessions throughout the state, which gives it a statewide feel. There are 370 alumni from the program who were mostly mid to late career individuals who come from across state agencies and the conservation community. Participant diversity enables agencies and organizations that had not been speaking for awhile to come together. Having a range of ages helps to facilitate a mentor-mentee relationship between participants.

He supports the creation a PA NRLI and is inclined to think financial resource will likely be available. It is very important to think about the funding upfront and it's useful to consider setting up a partnership. He would argue that there is a niche of creating a natural resource-based program even though two good leadership development programs exist in PA.

In most leadership programs, 10-15% of the group consists of elected officials, which is usually due to time constraints. Focusing on local elected officials is important. To a certain extent, you have to go to them. A train the trainers approach could be useful.

During the follow-up discussion very few participants were private individuals at the convening; people felt it was important to get greater participation from that group. People thoughts it was really important that we recognize that some of what has been brought up that highlights the unique aspects of PA. Targeting retailers, like Bass Pro for example, could be really valuable. It might also be really valuable to include local elected officials. It is also useful to recognize that some things won't be resolved through collaboration.

Other programs could be helpful references. A program in Washington is a useful model. A lot of agriculture-based training programs exist. A program in Wyoming incorporated a collaborative component to their curriculum.

One question relates to what is meant by natural resources. PA is 24% is rural; urban is over 70%. Natural resources are not all rural based. Storm-water management, MS4, has had greater enforcement since 2003 and has made a lot of progress. Most programs have a mix of focus on urban and rural. They have prioritized ag and MS4. These programs are open to young professionals.

Opportunities & challenges for collaborative leadership training in PA

Small groups discussed the opportunities and challenges for creating a collaborative leadership-training program in Pennsylvania. There is unique history in the state due to farmer-to-farmer relationships, which has made collaboration in some contexts common. Good collaboration already exists but it's very focused on specific issues and often ends after the issue has been resolved. Environmental challenges in our state would benefit from greater collaboration to resolve problems because hardly any issue can be addressed with one set of expertise. Participants agreed that a program could help build morale, skills, and networks across the field of natural resource management, especially because there is currently no program specifically focused on natural resource leadership in the state. Consistently participants expressed the value of creating networks because relationships can transcend issues and roles. Some of the needs included collectively define natural resources because there is a range of environmental challenges across the state. There is also a need to define collaborative leadership development and set clear goals for a leadership program.

People had reflections on how to approach the learning and who the target audience should be. There is also a need to make room for emerging leaders and young professionals because many natural resource managers in the state will be retiring in the next few years. Having a range of different participants including elected officials and local watershed groups also seemed important. People thought it might be useful to have different tiers of the leadership program (ie. NRLL-light). In terms of learning methodologies, people felt that experiential and shared learning would be a helpful approach. They also felt it would be useful to take advantage of technology and social media, however a face-to-face component would be important initially.

Some of the challenges highlighted by multiple groups included finding initial and long-term funding, as well as means to make the program affordable for the target audience. Another concern raised included ensuring that the program added value and was not in competition with existing leadership training programs. Groups may wonder how this type of training will address internal problems within their organizations. It will be important to clearly identify the specific needs to be

addressed by the institute and to differentiate the program. Concerns were also raised about the development of topics, including Chesapeake Bay, storm-water, pipelines, and scope of an effective program. There will be a need to develop quality mentoring and systems to ensure that information is brought back to respective organizations. There is a strong desire to explore how to evaluate outcomes and determine metrics that will inform that process. It will also be important to bring in a wider set of participants.

Broader challenges exist related to natural resource management. This includes the challenge of fragmented local and state governments and a lack of shared projects. People do not view issues from a holistic perspective so there are many segmentations and different perspectives. There may also be an issue of trust and politics between different stakeholders including elected officials and NGOs. There may be a challenge of effective messaging because the framing that dominates is economics versus the environment. There is also a need to more effectively communicate Pennsylvania's story.

Many people felt that a number of the challenges were also opportunities, and participants felt like there was a statewide need for this type of institute. Although some people raised the question about expanding existing leadership programs to include a natural resource component, the group concluded that it would be useful to have a separate program.

I. What are the top 5 priorities for a PA-NRLI?

Small groups identified the top priorities for a PA-NRLI. These included having a clearly defined goal and vision statement with an emphasis on innovative leadership that involves cross-sector, cross-learning on natural resource issues and concerns of management community. They felt it was important to develop a diverse advisory team that is statewide and includes industry. Starting with expected outcomes that can be measured and documented could inform an impact assessment of cohorts over time. Completing a needs assessment and analysis of gaps in current training and leadership programs is necessary to inform the develop process. Key questions relate to the organizational structure including where the program is housed and governance structures. Curriculum development and the creation of a pilot program was an important need. People identified the importance of blend of theory and experiential learning, highlighting range of issues across the state (including rural and urban), and various training and delivery mechanisms. The audience for the training includes diverse stakeholders. There is a need to develop a sustainable and diverse funding plan, possibly including a tuition-based model to ensure a self-standing unique entity.

V. Vision, Structure, Content

Small groups discussed their vision for creating a Natural Resources Leadership Institute that would be a program individuals aspire to participate in. The overall vision was to help agencies and different stakeholders to build capacity to cooperate to have positive impacts on natural resources issues. There should be understanding of diverse issues through a modulated structure and develop toolkits of processes. People agreed that multiple training sessions should be held over 12-18 months in different locations across the state. The curriculum should integrate both experiential and technology-based tools to bridge the distance. A practicum tied to place-based networking would be a helpful addition. They wanted to empower a range of prospective leaders, including state and federal agencies, businesses with an emphasis on younger participants.

They thought that Penn State was an appropriate host for the institute as long as there was a diverse advisory committee. Having diverse funding would be helpful to ensure stability of the program. State resource agencies would be core partners in addition to exploring other university partners.

There was disagreement about whether or not the sessions should be one-day multi-day sessions. Some thought having a 3-5 day retreat would be useful. There was also some disagreement about who the target audience should be. Some felt like it was important to emphasize young participants, including college-aged individuals. Others felt like it would be important to have diverse ages and experiences. Some put more emphasis on engaging business and industry on all issues. The emphasis on grassroots leadership capacity also varied.

Applied leadership skills to be developed include problem management and solving, strategic communication (including persuasive and difficult conversations, electronic communication, messaging), outreach strategies, relationship building, personality styles, personal leadership philosophy, facilitation skills, mediation and negotiation, conflict resolution, collaborative problem solving, building trust, active listening, consensus building, how to influence authorities and policy, ethics/environmental values, stakeholder engagement, politics/policy/governance, Pennsylvania civics, fundraising, partnership building, strategic planning, organizational skills. People hope to have opportunity to practice skills, scenario building and foresight.

People discussed a range of different natural resource issues that would be important to highlight, including topics of regional interest and tailored to the audience. Energy resources, land-use impacts, and water quality and quantity could be broad focuses on the curriculum. Specific natural resource issues identified included energy and mineral extraction (including pipelines), water quality and quantity (including stormwater and abandoned mine drainage), invasive species, forestry, agriculture, recreation land-use, climate change/adaptation, air quality, road transportation, soil (health, building, legacy sediment), public health, and environmental justice.

Broader concepts included ecosystem services, jurisdiction and partners, economic structure, systems thinking, IT data sharing, principles of best management practices, land-use planning, and integrated resources. Some possible case studies to explore include health care, pipelines, Susquehanna, Chesapeake Bay, and flooding/stormwater.