Hill Country Conservation: A Network Approach

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Presentation
Preface
Two Questions:

1. How can we use the theories, tools, and insights from social science to develop innovative strategies that enhance our ability to achieve land and water conservation goals in the Texas Hill Country?

2. How can we develop and grow a network for large-scale social and environmental impact?
Growing numbers of conservationists, policy makers, and practitioners agree that new approaches are required to address the most important land and water issues facing North America.
Over 300 initiatives identified as and/or self-identify as “Large Landscape Conservation”

Large Landscape Conservation: wide-angle, systems view that sees every landscape as an intricately connected community of living entities sustained by a wide-ranging community of people
Conservation social network - a set of relationships between stakeholders involved in or affected by conservation/environmental initiatives (water, land, climate, biodiversity, etc.), including individuals, government and non-government organizations.
Hill Country Land and Water Conservation Network Research and Strategy

Research Questions:

❖ What does the current Hill Country conservation social network look like?
❖ How are people talking about threats and opportunities? And potential for working together better?
❖ What are drivers and drawbacks to collaboration?
Preliminary Results: Drivers and Drawbacks to Hill Country Collaboration

Drivers:
- Build support for initiatives – grassroots support is political power
- Increase capacity for communication
- Leverage resources to accomplish shared goals
- Relationship and trust building

Drawbacks:
- Sharing credit for accomplishments
- Takes time, takes resources, takes extra effort at communication
- Partnering requires more time and energy
- Balancing deliverables of organization with needs of group

“There is not enough local support for the scale of what we need to do...it requires money, money requires politics...to change politics you need grassroots support”

“This isn’t my grant – I support this, but I can’t lead a committee”
Hill Country Land and Water Conservation Network Research and Strategy

Activities and Objectives:

- Convene a Roundtable of interested peoples
- Make recommendations for strategic networking to strengthen linkages between organizations across scales and sectors
- Catalyze a conversation about prioritizing conservation actions using measures of social connectivity
- Build and sustain a dynamic network
Inform
Collect and share information on the theory, practice, policy, and performance of local and regional initiatives

Connect
Link people and organizations through workshops, events, peer-to-peer exchanges, and the web to build personal and professional relationships

Investigate
Examine needs and opportunities: identify gaps in knowledge and practice; examine policy and practical barriers; explore methods of assessing regional network performance

Support
Promote and support a network and large landscape approach as a solution to issues of human, wildlife, cultural, and ecological health.

Build and Sustain a Dynamic Network
Network Governance
A Continuum of Responses

informal
build relationships
exchange information
identify common interests

coordinate existing institutions
negotiate compacts
develop coalitions

create intermediary organizations¹
create regulatory agencies

formal

¹intermediary organization: an agent who acts as a link between parties
What Can You Do?

Please take the Network Survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/hillcountry-network

Give us your thoughts – come talk to us at Table Talk!