

The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds: A Progress Report



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The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds: A Progress Report

Executive Summary

Overview

During the Winter of 2009/2010 the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR) and the Coos Watershed Association (CWA) invited local landowners, technical advisors, and interested individuals and organizations to join them on a new approach to managing coastal watersheds. CWA and SSNERR leaders envisioned a partnership that would focus on the 35,155 acre area of the South Slough watershed and several small watersheds that drain to the Pacific Ocean between Cape Arago and Bullards Beach (the coastal frontal watersheds) in Southwestern Oregon. The PCW, the conveners hoped, could provide local communities (such as Charleston and Coos Bay) with a way to anticipate and respond to the local effects of climate and land use changes (Coos Watershed Association).

Announced initially on the Coos Watershed Association's website, the PCW was formed to address ecological, economic, and social needs of the area. As stated on the CWA website:

Large-scale changes in land uses and climate-related impacts have the potential to alter our community's quality of life and its long-term economic viability. Changes will come from a variety of sources including proposed mineral sands mining, expanded golf-course and residential developments, shifts in Dungeness crab, rockfish and salmon fisheries, and possible increased potential for fire in Coast Range forests. These changes overlies the effects of more traditional land uses, such as timber harvesting, fishing and public recreation, as well as the day-to-day management of the South Slough NERR, a 4,800 acre area dedicated to research and education. (Coos Watershed Association)

From January 2011 to the present, nine PCW meetings have taken place. Meetings generally have included a mix of technical talks (e.g., watershed conditions), small group interaction, and large group discussion. Small group interaction has been typically tied to specific tasks. For example, the second meeting was devoted primarily to the development of a "Commitment to Collaboration Compact" (Walker and Daniels, 2011). Later meetings featured the development of a vision statement and discussions about coastal ecosystem, watershed, and sustainability topics. Small group discussions at some of these meetings were facilitated by members of the Oregon State University consultative team.

This report assesses the progress of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds (PCW) Project from its inception through the summer of 2012. First, the PCW is described and PCW meeting activities are discussed. Following this foundation information, the report describes its assessment methods and presents the results of those methods. The report concludes with a presentation of observations and recommendations.

Assessment Approach

An assessment team from Oregon State University (also members of the facilitation team) has conducted this work. The assessment employs a multi-method approach. First, conversations have been held (individual and group interviews) with PCW members. Second, PCW members were asked to complete a survey on the PCW and its future. Third, meeting notes and feedback were reviewed to provide a basis of comparison with the information gained from the interviews and survey.

Observations and Recommendations

Observation One. *Diversity and inclusiveness are valued.*

- Recommendation. *Continue the inclusive approach and maintain the diversity of the group.*

Observation Two. *PCW members appreciate opportunities to learn.*

- Recommendation. *Maintain a collaborative, community learning focus.*
- Recommendation. *Draw significantly on local knowledge as well as technical knowledge.*

Observation Three. *The PCW is more consultative than collaborative.*

- Recommendation. *The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds should transition from a consultative group to a collaborative partnership.*
- Recommendation. *The PCW could become a more formal and recognized partnership.*

Observation Four. *The PCW has devoted significant time to matters of process or procedure.*

- Recommendation. *The PCW should meet to develop a collaboration action strategy.*

Observation Five. *The PCW conveners and members communicate capably about the Partnership.*

- Recommendation. *Continue the investment in communication.*

Observation Six: *The organizational capacity and identity of the PCW could be improved.*

- Recommendation. *Strengthen organizational capacity through training and collaborative action.*
- Recommendation. *Refine the PCW organizational structure.*

General Conclusion

This assessment of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds indicates that the PCW has the potential to be an important and enduring multi-stakeholder community organization for dealing with the local challenges of climate change and sustainability. The PCW draws its strength from its membership; their knowledge, skills, and caring for the coastal region. It can develop the capacity to address climate change adaptation issues and related community concerns and opportunities regarding sustainability. It can do so collaboratively, with flexibility and inclusive participation. It has made good progress procedurally and can move forward on substantive work.

The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds: A Progress Report

Coastal ecosystems and communities throughout the world are on the front lines of climate change. The coastal regions of the United States offer no exception. A recent NOAA report notes that “Our nation’s coasts are particularly susceptible to climate change” (NOAA, 2010) and that the implications of climate change are expected to be far reaching for coastal communities, economies, and ecosystems. According to the report, *Resilient Coasts: A Blueprint for Action*, produced by the Heinz Center and Ceres:

Sea level rise, temperature increases, changes in precipitation patterns and other climate related changes are expected to occur and to become increasingly more severe over the coming decades. The need to adapt to these climate-driven changes and to better manage existing coastal risks is obvious and immediate. Changing climatic conditions pose an unprecedented threat to U.S. coastlines, where the majority of our population resides and the majority of our economic activity occurs. (2009, p. 3)

As Hale and colleagues (2011) observe, “Coastal communities and decision makers urgently need to develop pragmatic, cost-effective strategies to protect both natural and human communities from the dramatic changes that are already underway due to climate change” (www.thesolutionsjournal.com). They advocate “ecosystem-based adaptation” which includes a “range of actions for management, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems that help reduce coastal community vulnerability and increase resilience.” They surmise that adaptation can be cost effective and generate a number of benefits, including (1) cost-effective shoreline protection, (2) sustaining local livelihood and contributing to local economies, and (3) carbon sequestration and reinforcement of mitigation efforts. (www.thesolutionsjournal.com)

The *Resilient Coasts* report and *Solutions Journal* article point to the significance of coastal impacts from climate change and the need for adaptation strategies. While climate change adaptation strategies and action plans can emerge at any scale, work at the local, community level is essential. In a recent report on the importance of an ecosystem-based approach to adaptation, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) includes local community concerns in its recommendations, such as:

- Restoration activities should be promoted through participatory community agreements established at local levels.
- Community networking is the key to effective Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA).
- Development of a social framework allows for permanent interaction among all kinds of actors and stakeholders, as well as local communities. In this regard, the development of appropriate institutions at local, regional and national level is vital to the success of EbA in a social context.
- Initiatives should include the establishment and consolidation of networks of relevant stakeholders and the development of local community agreements that focus at management of natural resources (e.g. water), ecosystem restoration and conflict resolution.
- A special effort is required to raise awareness of capacity building needs, and to better resource and implement capacity developments. (Perez et al., 2010, pp. 162-164)

Recognizing the impacts of climate on coastal ecosystems and communities in Southwest Oregon, the Coos Watershed Association (CWA) and the South Slough National

Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR) have initiated a project, the “Partnership for Coastal Watersheds,” to involve local people in discussions and actions related to climate change, healthy ecosystems, and sustainable communities.

This report assesses the progress of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds (PCW) Project from its inception through the summer of 2012. First, the PCW is described and PCW meeting activities are discussed. Following this foundation information, the report describes its assessment methods and presents the results of those methods. The report concludes with a discussion of recommendations and possible next steps.

Project Background

During the winter of 2009/2010 the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR) and the Coos Watershed Association (CWA) invited local landowners, technical advisors, and interested individuals and organizations to join them on a new approach to managing coastal watersheds. CWA and SSNERR leaders envisioned a partnership that would focus on the 35,155 acre area of the South Slough watershed and several small watersheds that drain to the Pacific Ocean between Cape Arago and Bullards Beach (the coastal frontal watersheds) in Southwestern Oregon. The PCW, the conveners hoped, could provide local communities (such as Charleston and Coos Bay) with a way to anticipate and respond to the local effects of climate and land use changes (Coos Watershed Association).

Announced initially on the Coos Watershed Association’s website, the PCW was formed to address ecological, economic, and social needs of the area. As stated on the CWA website:

Large-scale changes in land uses and climate-related impacts have the potential to alter our community’s quality of life and its long-term economic viability. Changes will come from a variety of sources including proposed mineral sands mining, expanded golf-course and residential developments, shifts in Dungeness crab, rockfish and salmon fisheries, and possible increased potential for fire in Coast Range forests. These changes overlies the effects of more traditional land uses, such as timber harvesting, fishing and public recreation, as well as the day-to-day management of the South Slough NERR, a 4,800 acre area dedicated to research and education. (Coos Watershed Association)

Formation

As the South Slough and Coos Watershed Association staff began to conceptualize the PCW, they asked Gregg Walker of Oregon State University to work with them on matters of organizational design, agenda, facilitation, and evaluation. They wanted to ground the PCW approach in Collaborative Learning (Daniels & Walker, 2001). Walker organized a team of faculty and graduate students to assist the PCW, particularly as facilitators and evaluators. The paper’s authors have served on this team.

In developing applications to fund the PCW, Coos Watershed Association and South Slough leaders identified two core premises and questions for the project.

- *Project Premise 1:* The local effects of climate change and changes in land use have the potential to affect coastal communities’ our community’s quality of life and long-term economic viability. *Corresponding Question:* How can the coastal communities plan ahead to address these potential changes?

- *Project Premise 2:* The coastal communities do not have an effective way to collaborate or make decisions about the opportunities and issues that need to be addressed now and in the future. *Corresponding Question:* How can our community effectively address opportunities and issues?

The conveners of the PCW invited participation from a wide variety of groups, including Tribes, landowners, scientists, government leaders and staff, private industry personnel, non-government representatives, and interested citizens. They hoped that the PCW participants would identify voluntary watershed management actions designed to characterize and respond to the many pressures that changing climate and land uses present and discuss incentives to encourage implementation of these practices.

With climate change as a driver, SSNERR and CWA staff focused on watershed issues as they extended PCW invitations. The watershed emphasis featured four interrelated elements: (1) Watershed Assessment and Visioning, (2) Watershed Management, (3) Watershed Status and Trends Monitoring, and (4) a State of the Watershed Information Website (Coos Watershed Association).

The Website would be a key communication tool for PCW members and the broader public. It would include meeting schedules, agendas, minutes, visual materials, and monitoring data along with the State of the Watershed assessment. A biennial report would summarize project progress and help the project team and our community to understand changes in the watershed, and help plan future management actions.

The PCW project is ongoing, led by a steering committee that represents the diversity of the coastal region. The first two years of the project have been funded by a grant from the Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology with additional funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the Laird Norton Family Foundation. (Coos Watershed Association)

Activity

The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds held its first meeting in January 2011. Approximately thirty people attended the initial four hour gathering. The Conveners (CWA and SSNERR) introduced the group as the PCW “Steering Committee.” The first meeting featured presentations from the Conveners about the general purpose of the PCW, a technical talk, and an introduction to the Collaborative Learning Approach. Following presentations, PCW participants engaged in group discussion.

From January 2011 to the present, nine PCW meetings have taken place. Meetings generally have included a mix of technical talks (e.g., watershed conditions), small group interaction, and large group discussion. Small group interaction has been typically tied to specific tasks. For example, the second meeting was devoted primarily to the development of a “Commitment to Collaboration Compact” (Walker and Daniels, 2011). Later meetings featured the development of a vision statement and discussions about coastal ecosystem, watershed, and sustainability topics. Small group discussions at some of these meetings were facilitated by members of the Oregon State University consulting team.

Assessment Methods and Results

The assessment employs a multi-method approach. First, conversations have been held (individual and group interviews) with PCW members. Second, PCW members were asked to complete a survey on the PCW and its future. Third, meeting notes and feedback were reviewed to provide a basis of comparison with the information gained from the interviews and survey.

The Interviews

Interview Participants

All past and current Partnership for Coastal Watersheds members were invited to participate in small group or individual interviews during March 2012. The PCW conveners (South Slough and Coos Watershed Association staff) provided the Assessment Team with a list of members and their contact information. Initially twelve PCW members volunteered to participate and were interviewed in small groups or individually based on their schedules. A Coos Watershed Association staff member helped schedule the interviews.

Some PCW members expressed interest in participating, but were unable to attend the March 28-29 group interviews. The Assessment Team extended an interview invitation via email to PCW members who did not participate in the March conversations. Subsequently, two PCW members were interviewed via phone. Consequently, over the 29 PCW members contacted, 14 were interviewed. The participants were affiliated with government agencies, non-government organizations, local Indian tribes, the business community, and citizen groups.

Interview Materials

The group interview portion of the study consisted of a semi-structured interview format and a demographic survey. The paper-and-pencil survey collected demographic information and information about participants' PCW meeting attendance.

Interview Procedure

Partnership for Coastal Watersheds past and current members were contacted via email by one of the PCW administrative leaders. Members were asked if they would be willing to take part of an evaluation conversation with the Walker Consulting team. PCW leadership then scheduled small group, pair, or individual interviews in two hour time blocks over a two day span, March 28-29, 2012.

Two members of the Assessment Team, Miriah Russo Kelly and Julie Elkins Watson, traveled to Charleston, Oregon to conduct the group interviews. Twelve of the interviews were held at the Charleston, Oregon R.V. Park. This was a neutral, central location in the community.

At the start of each group interview, the interviewers read a script explaining the purpose and scope of the study. The interviewers informed participants that the conversations would be audio recorded and participants gave their consent to do so. Each participant subsequently provided written demographic information.

After obtaining consent and giving the participants time to complete the demographic survey, the interview began. Using a semi-structured interview approach, the interviewers asked questions according to the guide the Assessment Team (Walker, Russo Kelly, Elkins Watson) had developed. The topics on the interview guide were supplemented with clarifying

questions based on the flow of the group conversation. For each group, one team member (Russo Kelly or Elkins Watson) led and facilitated the discussion while the other served as note-taker and co-facilitator.

At the end of each group interview, Assessment Team members gave each participant the opportunity to speak freely about anything he or she wished to discuss that was not brought up during the interview. The interviewers also asked participants if they had any questions for the Assessment Team, and provided them with contact information in case they wished to follow up with additional questions, information, or concerns.

Two additional PCW members participated in phone interviews. Phone interviews followed the same format, included the same questions, and followed the same procedure as the in-person group interviews.

Interview Results

After each group or individual interview, the interviewers (Russo Kelly and Elkins Watson) debriefed and discussed themes that emerged from the conversation. They recorded their impressions from the debriefing in notes. After the conclusion of the interviews, the Assessment Team discussed the range of opinions represented and key impressions from the focus group interview process. Assessment Team members reviewed notes and recordings to compare statements and identify key quotes from the interviews.

As a framework for interpreting the interview comments (and, as noted later, to help structure survey questions), the Assessment Team employed the Progress Triangle. This Progress Triangle framework, developed by Steve Daniels and Gregg Walker (2001; see also Walker and Daniels, 2005), presumes that any complex conflict, decision, or management situation consists of three dimensions: substance, relationship, and procedure. These dimensions provided a lens through which the interview data could be examined.

Matters of “substance” reflect the fundamental issues, causes of tension, levels of complexity, sources of information, and options for mutual gain. Substance comments focused on the issues at hand (generally, the condition of coastal watersheds; social, ecological, and economic concerns of PCW members).

Through the “relationship” lens, assessment focused on the key stakeholders, their unique statuses, interests, values, and positions. Additionally, through the relationship lens, relational histories, issues of trust were explored. Relationship questions also identified relevant knowledge and skills, and the extent they were present in the group or needed.

Finally, the “procedure” lens highlighted the status of the situation, the procedural history, the decision space, process resources, and available options. Consequently, procedure accounted for matters of organizational capacity.

Each of the interview questions related to one or more of the Progress Triangle lenses, and thus, the Assessment Team could discern the significance of the responses in each of these three areas. Though sometimes overlapping, the interview analysis results were divided into these three general categories.

Interview Responses

Presented here is a representative sample of statements PCW members made during the group or individual interviews. These interviews statements are organized according to the Progress Triangle dimensions.

Statements of Substance

- “I think it [the PCW] should be twofold... community education about water and how to have clean water and work towards not having things that create climate change, and also an analysis of what we have already because we could be almost at a catastrophic event already and we don't even know it.”
- “You [have to] move [the PCW meeting] along. It was too drug out on the technical stuff that nobody really cared about that much.”

Statements of Relationship

- “I think the people that started coming... had different interests around the table.”
- “This was probably the first time in 159 years that offer has been presented [for the Tribes to participate]”
- “it was incredible on the front end when everyone was talking about their different fields of discipline and business involvement and so on- Hearing that spoken in a space where there were other organizations that had not heard that before... I thought would open up opportunities to allow the process to continue... to be able to talk through process instead of what we experienced.”

Statements of Procedure

- “The people who come have to be who sets the rules and all that, and that isn't the way it went down. And so, people left... They saw the group going nowhere... Four hours here and what did we accomplish? We're spinning our wheels.”
- “I wouldn't have made it so complicated.”
- “Simplify things... If they continue, there needs to be clear goals... and then there needs to be attempts to educate the community.”
- “If you don't work all the way through the process and allow each individual to state their position, their interest, their philosophies, and respect and acknowledge it, then I think we're missing the mark.”

Interview Analysis

The interviewees presented a variety of perspectives that highlighted several themes relevant to assessing the progress of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds. These themes feature issues related to substance, relationships, and procedure.

Substantively, most participants agreed that the partnership should focus on issues related to climate change adaptation. Participants enjoyed presentations by researchers and community members about local watershed conditions, cultural heritage, and ecological issues in the study area. However, many participants were confused about what action the Partnership would take related to these issues and issues related to climate change adaptation.

Particularly, many participants were confused or had divergent views about their role in the Partnership and the PCW's role in the community. Many viewed the Partnership as lacking in action, and several wanted to employ their unique skills and resources to contribute to the group and the community. Some participants discussed wanting to conduct hands-on restoration work, while others called for more active community education and outreach.

Although most participants felt that significant - even excessive - time has been devoted to discussing and establishing a vision and goals for the PCW, participants expressed ambiguity about what they individually and as a group were and would be doing.

In the area of relationships, the Assessment Team learned from the focus group interviews that many of the PCW participants had interacted before, sometimes negatively and not via face-to-face discussion or dialogue. Some stakeholders noted their positive working relationships with other organizations or stakeholder groups represented in the PCW, but others seemed to have relational histories marked by conflict, litigation, or disappointment.

While a couple interviewees expressed skepticism, most felt that the Partnership allowed them to meet and have conversations with diverse stakeholders in the study area. Several participants mentioned that they feel more time should be spent developing relationships and building trust and conciliation amongst participants. Additionally, the Assessment Team determined from the interviews that several stakeholders in the region were not included in the Partnership, and others had left the process due to a variety of factors. Thus, a theme emerging from the interviews is that continual relationship and trust-building was needed both within the Partnership and within the broader community of study-area stakeholders.

Despite the expressed need for more trust-building, many participants labeled the PCW as a collaborative group. When asked to explain how the group was collaborating, many cited the discussions in which the group worked on creating a community vision and goals for the Partnership. However, since the drafting of these goals, the participants cited little additional collaborative activity. Rather, the lack of understanding and consensus about what the Partnership was doing, where it was going, and how Partnership members would contribute to the goals belies a lack of collaborative progress.

Finally, the PCW group interviewees provided a wealth of feedback related to the process. While the group's process - in name - is collaborative learning, stakeholders described their roles rather passively. Some spoke in a way that demonstrated a lack of agency: not knowing what the group was doing, referring to the group activities in the third person (they) rather than first person (we), and not claiming ownership or involvement of the PCW's current or future activities. Some expressed frustration that the group needed to "do something" rather than just talk and receive information.

Nonetheless, many enjoyed the informative presentations given by PCW leadership. Most described the meeting format and space as good or adequate, though a few participants suggested having field trips and rotating meeting locations. Partnership members enjoyed learning during the meetings, and most were eager to learn more about their community and watershed conditions, but some also expressed a desire to learn more from one another and from shared experiences (i.e., collaborative learning) rather than only from a top-down (experts and leadership to participants) flow of information.

In sum, the interviews highlighted a passionate group of stakeholders interested in collaborating to address the local impacts of climate change and local watershed conditions. Despite prior relational barriers, stakeholders were eager to participate and contribute their knowledge and skills to the group. Many expressed frustration with stalling and lack of collaborative progress beyond the vision statement and goal-setting progress.

According to the interviewees, the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds is an admirable, ambitious, and critically important effort to bring together stakeholders to address critical needs in the community. PCW participants believe in the capacity of the group and think it should continue if it overcomes the period of collaborative inertia, confusion, and frustration perceived by many members.

The Survey

Survey Participants

In August 2012, about four months after the interviews took place, the Assessment Team developed a survey and sent it to PCW members using the “Survey Monkey” platform (www.surveymonkey.com). The interview contact list was used to distribute the survey. The survey was sent to 29 PCW members, including PCW leadership. 14 surveys were completed for a 48% response rate.

The Survey Design

The survey was designed to account for interview findings, the Progress Triangle, and the interests of the organizations that convened and funded the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds.

The survey includes a set of Likert scale questions to assess the nature and progress of the PCW on matters of substance, procedure, and relationships. A second part of the survey seeks information on knowledge about coastal watersheds issues and factors. The survey also asks respondents to provide feedback about the future of the PCW; whether the PCW should continue and if so, what it might do as an organization. The survey is available in an attachment (a Survey Monkey document).

Survey Procedure

After the Assessment Team designed the survey, it was constructed and distributed via Survey Monkey, a subscription service web platform. Participant confidentiality was maintained. The survey was sent to PCW members the survey on 20 August with 01 September as the desired return date. A survey request reminder was distributed on 27 August.

Survey Results

Given the number of survey responses, survey results are condensed at times for efficiency and clarity. The detailed survey results are available in an attachment (a Survey Monkey document).

Response Rate. 14 people completed the survey; a response rate of 48%. Of the 14 respondents, 10 were male (71%) and 4 were female (29%).

Respondent Affiliations. 12 survey participants self-identified as follows:

- South Coast Development Council
- Landowner/citizen
- Local resident
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Coos Waterkeeper
- Recreational/commercial fishing, tourism, shellfish growers
- Natural resources – forestry

- Forest Industry
- Charleston Community Enhancement Corporation
- Citizen and business owner
- Economic Development
- Tribal member (cultural resources, human history, ecological change)

Participation in PCW Meetings. The PCW held 9 meetings from January 2011 to May 2012. The 14 respondents' attendance ranged from 2 to 9 meetings, with an average of 6.

Reasons for Missing Meetings. The survey asked PCW members why they did not attend some meetings. Respondents reported the following reasons:

- Lack of diversity, group not inclusive enough, meetings held at times that limited certain stakeholder participation, too much time devoted for not enough action, lack of equality amongst members, not transparent enough.
- Lack of focus and action
- Business conflict
- Out of town
- Time conflict with other work
- Not enough input from organizations, too much oversight from leadership
- Scheduling
- Lack of communication about meeting times, not enough action, agenda too broad

The PCW in the Future: Should it Continue? The PCW Assessment Survey asked respondents if the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds should continue.

Yes	8 (57%)
No	3 (21%)
Not sure	3 (21%)

The Future of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds. The survey posed open ended questions on the future of the PCW, assuming that it continues.

When asked what the PCW should address in the future, respondents wrote:

- Watershed improvement
- Watershed sustainability
- Central location for compilation of scientific and socio-economic information about the coastal frontal watershed related to the PCW vision and goals
- South Slough zone only
- Noxious weed control and improving salmon habitat in watershed streams
- Any issues that affect the watershed
- More of the same: water quality, fisheries, alternative energy, climate change
- Land use planning and regulations- current and future

Respondents were asked to identify activities the PCW could conduct.

- Financial report to maintain the organization's "transparency"
- Planning and zoning changes to support watershed sustainability
- Grant writing

- Outreach to local residents
- Restoration
- Public involvement and education
- Workshop to discuss changes and socio-economic impacts
- Future scenarios (i.e. – land use, growth, natural disasters)

An additional question asked respondents for ideas on how the PCW could improve as an organization.

- Form a 501c3
- Develop clearer picture about how assessment will be acted upon
- Engage “diverse citizen members who understand the PCW and agree on a common path forward.”
- Better data collection
- More task and results orientation, encourage more mingling of ideas and opinions
- Get more diverse groups involved
- More action less talking
- Clearer objectives, more balance of groups in terms of interests
- Find “a problem to solve”

The Nature of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds. The questions below are categorized according to substance, relationship, and procedural elements of the project. Twenty statements were presented about the nature of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty on a 1-7 scale with 1 being “strongly agree” and 7 being “strongly disagree”. For the purpose of simplifying the responses, answers were coded into 1, 2 and 3 indicating agreement, 4 indicating indifference or not sure, and 5, 6 and 7 indicating disagreement. The more detailed breakdown (the full survey) is available as an attachment (as a Survey Monkey document). The condensed responses are in Table 1, identified as S, P, and R; the Progress Triangle dimensions. Percentages have been rounded to the closest whole number.

Strong percentages are noted in **bold**. Most of the strongest areas of agreement are in the relationship and procedural areas, suggesting that the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds should devote more attention to matters of substance. Climate change issues, for example, have not been addressed to the extent that some PCW members would prefer.

Table 1. The Nature of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	n
The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds provides good opportunities to learn about the local effects of climate change. (S)	38% (5)	46% (6)	15% (2)	13
PCW meetings and activities have increased my knowledge of watershed conditions. (S)	69% (9)	23% (3)	08% (1)	13
The PCW has a clear purpose and direction. (S)	38% (5)	38% (5)	23% (3)	13
PCW members understand well the purpose of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds. (S)	31% (4)	36% (6)	23% (3)	13

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	n
The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds provides good opportunities to learn about watershed science. (S)	62% (8)	23% (3)	15% (2)	13
The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds has accomplished a lot in its first year and one-half. (S)	38% (5)	38% (5)	23% (3)	13
The PCW can serve to help vulnerable coastal watersheds adapt to climate challenges. (S)	46% (6)	38% (5)	15% (2)	13
The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds website is a useful resource. (S)	58% (7)	33% (4)	8% (1)	12
The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds needs to be more active and visible in the community. (S)	77% (10)	8% (1)	15% (2)	13
Partnership for Coastal Watersheds members view each other as equal partners in coastal watershed issues. (R)	31% (4)	38% (5)	31% (4)	13
The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds is a diverse group. (R)	85% (11)	8% (1)	8% (1)	13
Through PCW meetings and activities I have developed new relationships with people who care about this area. (R)	69% (9)	23% (3)	8% (1)	13
I understand my role in the Partnership for coastal watersheds. (R)	77% (10)	15% (2)	8% (1)	13
I am satisfied with my role in the partnership for coastal watersheds. (R)	62% (8)	31% (4)	8% (1)	13
The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds uses procedures and agendas that inhibit collaboration. (P)	31% (4)	7 (54%)	15% (2)	13
The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds is a collaborative organization. (P)	69% (9)	23% (3)	8% (1)	13
All PCW members have the opportunity to participate in Partnership for Coastal Watersheds decisions. (P)	69% (9)	31% (4)	0	13
Through PCW meetings and activities I have had opportunities to contribute my knowledge and experience. (P)	77% (10)	15% (2)	8% (1)	13
The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds discourages new members. (P)	0	54% (7)	46% (6)	13
The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds has a clear organizational structure. (P)	33% (4)	25% (3)	42% (5)	13

Knowledge of Coastal Watersheds issues. Participants were asked about the knowledge that they may have gained from participation in the PCW. Respondents were asked to note whether their knowledge did not change, changed slightly, changed moderately, or changed significantly. These results have been condensed into “increased” and “did not change” categories. The issues have been organized according to number of respondents reporting increased knowledge. The detailed survey results are the Survey Monkey attachment. All 14 survey respondents participated in this section (n=14).

As Table 2 illustrates, knowledge increased among PCW members in all areas. The greatest number of people reported increased knowledge on the issues of “salmon wildlife and habitat”, “salmon fishery”, and “water quality.”

Table 2. Knowledge Change on Coastal Watersheds Issues

Issue	Increased	Did Not Change
Habitat – salmon and wildlife	57% (8)	43% (6)
Salmon fishery	57% (8)	43% (6)
Water quality	57% (8)	43% (6)
Sea level rise	50% (7)	50% (7)
Tourism	43% (6)	57% (8)
Forest ecosystems	36% (5)	64% (9)
Invasive species	36% (5)	64% (9)
Health and human safety	29% (4)	71% (10)
Coastal shore erosion	21% (3)	79% (11)
Stream bank erosion	21% (3)	79% (11)
Water quality	21% (3)	79% (11)
Wildfire risk	14% (2)	86% (12)

Comparison to the Winter 2011 On-line Survey. In January 2011 Coos Watershed Association staff reported the results of a survey of potential PCW members. This survey asked respondents to rate the importance of a variety of coastal watersheds issues. Table 3 presents the results. The seven issues that generated strong agreement (70% or greater when combining “very important” and “extremely important”) are noted in bold.

Salmon habitat (95.3%), water quality (90.4%), water supply (76.2%), forest condition (76.2%), stream bank erosion (76.2%), wildlife habitat (71.5%), and invasive species (71.4%) were the top seven issues of concern.

This list of important issues corresponds well with the August 2012 survey results (Table 2) regarding increased knowledge on PCW issues. Knowledge increased most on habitat and water quality issues, matters that potential PCW members deemed important when the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds began.

Survey Analysis

The August 2012 survey results are consistent to the conclusions drawn from the March interviews. Respondents regard the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds positively and see its potential to be a productive organization on behalf of coastal communities, both human and ecological.

The respondents appreciate the diversity of the group and opportunities to participate in discussions and the PCW’s work (e.g., developing a shared vision). The survey indicates, too, that PCW members would like to focus future work more directly on matters related to climate change. They want to move beyond work on process (procedure) and participate in discussions and activities on more tangible, substantive matters.

Table 3. Importance of Coastal Watersheds Issues (January 2011 survey conducted by the Coos Watershed Association)

Instructions: Consider each item below and rate each for how IMPORTANT they are to you.

ITEM	Not at all important	Very little importance	Somewhat important	Very important	Extremely important	Rating average
Stream bank erosion	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	23.8% (5)	61.9% (13)	14.3% (3)	3.90
Coastal shore erosion	4.8% (1)	0.0% (0)	42.9% (9)	38.1% (8)	14.3% (3)	3.57
Flood inundation	4.8% (1)	4.8% (1)	42.9% (9)	38.1% (8)	9.5% (2)	3.43
Rising sea level	9.5% (2)	4.8% (1)	38.1% (8)	28.6% (6)	19.0% (4)	3.43
Water quality	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	9.5% (2)	33.3% (7)	57.1% (12)	4.48
Wildlife habitat	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (6)	42.9% (9)	28.6% (6)	4.00
Salmon habitat	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.8% (1)	52.4% (11)	42.9% (9)	4.38
Forest condition	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	23.8% (5)	47.6% (10)	28.6% (6)	4.05
Invasive species	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (6)	52.4% (11)	19.0% (4)	3.90
Wildfire risk	4.8% (1)	14.3% (3)	38.1% (8)	28.6% (6)	14.3% (3)	3.33
Road conditions	0.0% (0)	4.8% (1)	47.6% (10)	33.3% (7)	14.3% (3)	3.57
Air quality	4.8% (1)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (7)	33.3% (7)	28.6% (6)	3.81
Aesthetics	4.8% (1)	0.0% (0)	52.4% (11)	42.9% (9)	0.0% (0)	3.33
Water supply	4.8% (1)	0.0% (0)	19.0% (4)	33.3% (7)	42.9% (9)	4.10
Noise	9.5% (2)	9.5% (2)	38.1% (8)	33.3% (7)	9.5% (2)	3.24
Traffic level	9.5% (2)	23.8% (5)	23.8% (5)	33.3% (7)	9.5% (2)	3.10

n=21

Meetings

As part of this evaluation, the Assessment Team has reviewed the notes from the monthly meetings that are posted on the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds website (<http://www.partnershipforcoastalwatersheds.org/steering-committee/>) and notes Assessment Team members generated as part of their observation and participation in select PCW meetings.

The Assessment Team and colleagues (other members of the facilitation team) thought that the PCW meetings were productive. The PCW convening team (staff from the SSNERR and CWA) spent sufficient time designing clear agendas for the meetings and announced meetings well in advance. Comprehensive notes were taken, distributed to PCW members, and posted on the website.

The Assessment and Facilitation Team members from Oregon State University participated in “debrief” discussions after each meeting they attended. Team members observed that, while the meetings were participatory, the PCW members did not assist in design meeting agendas. The CWA and SSNERR staff who organized and convened the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds controlled the agenda and meeting content. Although the organizers/conveners intended the PCW to interact consistent with a collaborative learning

approach, the PCW functioned more as a consultative group; one that participated in an “inform and educate” process than as a shared, community learning group.

Mid-Point Survey. Following the fifth meeting, the SSNERR and CWA organizers conducted a survey of PCW participants. Those results are summarized in Table 4. Questions 1 through 7 asked respondents to provide a rating of 1 (least) to 4 (most). Question 8 asked for a response of “yes,” “no,” or “uncertain.” Respondents were also asked to provide comments related to these questions.

Table 4. Mid-Point Survey Questions and Results (n=17 unless otherwise noted)

QUESTION/TOPIC	Rating Average (1=least, 4=most)	Comments
Do you have <i>access</i> to the process? Rank your sense of opportunity, or potential, to express your ideas and opinions safely within the group.	3.71	Some people choose to remain quiet though. It's interesting to have occasional round table input. Good job getting this off the ground! Somewhat time constrained. More group (small) is useful. I think all the breakout groups and interactions offer a better understanding of each other. New, unable to determine as of yet. Do not understand what you are asking.
How does the process support <i>standing</i> ? How well do you feel your contributions are valued, respected and honored within the process?	3.47	Very open. I think it's personally the way each person thinks.
Do you have <i>influence</i> on the process? Rank your sense of opportunity to affect outcomes, to learn, and to develop improvements within the process.	3.41	The group is too big for anyone to really have much influence.
Rank how well you feel the PCW Steering Committee is an appropriate and reasonable representation of the stakeholder community.	3.35	I realize people are busy, but too frequently some individuals miss meetings. I wouldn't want that to have a negative impact in that there's a perception the group wasn't balanced and it's decisions not collaborative. How well will we affect the community. This is the true strength of PCW, very representative of the larger population of diverse stakeholders.
Rank how satisfied you are with the current progress of the PCW project.	2.93 (n=15)	It seems slow, but these things take time. Good things always do. I am a product oriented person. I find process with no defined outcome challenging. Would have been nice to nail down mission and compact at meeting 5. I would like to spend less time with college seminars and more time doing something. Mission soon!

QUESTION/TOPIC	Rating Average	Comments
Rank how well the PCW project is currently meeting your expectations of what the group would do.	3.36 (n=14)	It is taking longer than I thought it would. I expected a bit more give and take on the actual issues that divide us and less on "the process" we are using. I did not have expectations at the start because I was not confident in the purpose. It's a very interesting process. Very interesting that folks are staying involved. Good groundwork is being laid, a foundation.
Rank how well you think the PCW meetings and subsequent products, to this point, are meeting project goals and objectives.	3.06	We are getting there. Yes, but pretty soon (i.e. next meeting) need some tangible products. Progress towards goals/projects are bogged down in meetings and exercises that produce little or no results. We are getting some substantial products, i.e. good reports and mission statement, goals.
Do you feel the committee is missing important people or representation that would otherwise result in a different outcome or achievement level at this point in the process?	7 - Yes 9 - No 1 - Uncertain	City government, business leaders/owners Tourism, Charleston retail business community School teachers and others who have regular work hours during the week Political leadership Sea Grant May need to even things out. Uncertain as of yet. Seems well rounded, Greg is a solid contributor. Medical community, doctors, nurses, technicians, etc. It would be nice to have some people who represent our fishing industry, oyster industry, etc. I tried to get some key people but they were too busy. Having said that, I do feel those interests are represented by others.

The May 2011 survey also asked the respondents two open-ended questions.

Do you have suggestions or comments on how to improve the PCW meetings?

- *I like the fact you are taking the time to listen to everyone so we get it right. That is very important.
- *We could use less monologues and more group debate as exemplified by the discussion of the linkages among watershed health, communities, economic development, etc.
- *Start taking some action asap.
- *More sub groups. Limit discussion time then vote.
- *Engage each participant at each meeting then some Q & A exercise same as today.
- *More small group work. Less talking at people.
- *Break long deliveries by individuals with response in small groups.

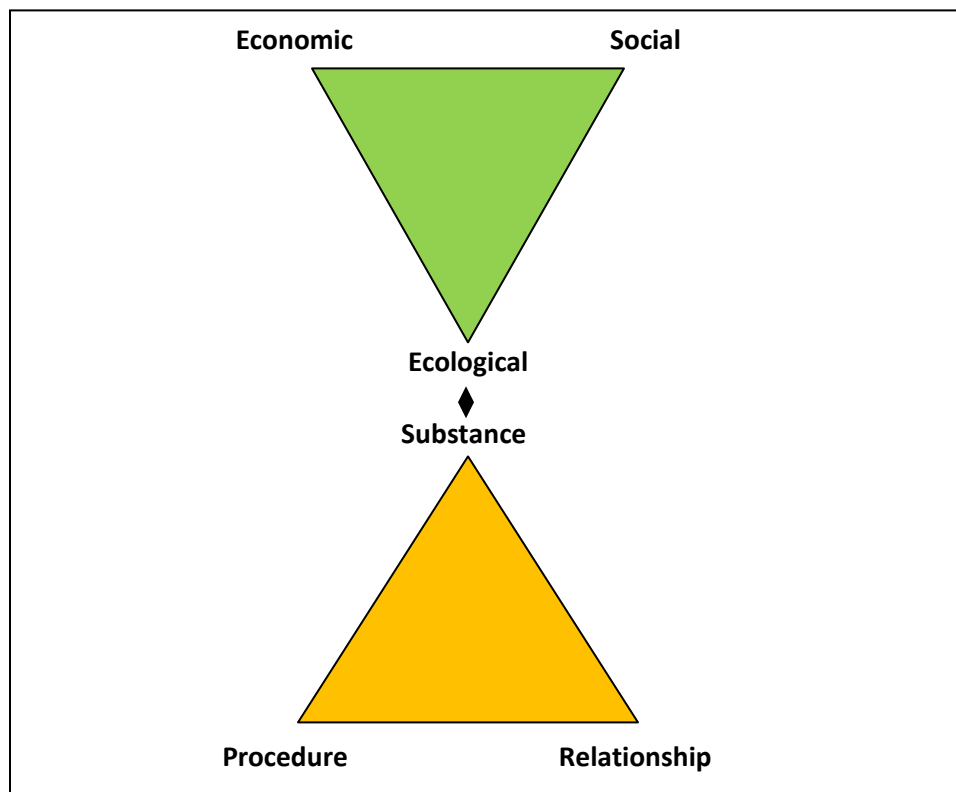
Is there anything else you would like the PCW staff to know?

- *Thank you for all the effort.
 - *Economic overview at today's meeting was very valuable.
 - *Need to move away from concentrating on process and move towards decisiveness.
 - *Need to move towards structuring results.
 - *Thank you.
 - *Good work, all. Thanks for effort
 - *More diversity.
-

Observations and Recommendations

Observations and recommendations presented in this report correspond to two "triangles;" The Progress Triangle presented earlier and a "sustainability" triangle. Taken together, the two triangles provide useful way to interpret the data that the assessment team and the PCW conveners (e.g., the Coos Watershed Association staff) have gathered.

Figure 1. The Sustainability and Progress Triangles



The two triangles are joined at the “ecological” and “substance” points, reflecting what the Assessment Team learned from the interviews, survey data, and experiences as participant-observers at PCW meetings. The SSNERR and CWA conveners (South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve and Coos Watershed Association) were concerned primarily with ecological-substance and procedural issues. PCW members, too, were concerned with substance, but many wanted to address more than ecological issues. They wanted to focus on sustainable communities, within which ecological matters could be addressed.

Furthermore, some PCW members began to lose patience with the PCW investment in procedural work. PCW members saw value in the procedural tasks (e.g., the Collaboration Compact and Vision Statement) but were anxious to work on visible and tangible substantive projects. PCW members wanted the Partnership to contribute to coastal Watershed communities by addressing, in addition to an ecological agenda, economic, social, and cultural needs. Some members also hoped to broaden the discussion of ecological issues (e.g., habitat, water flows) and address climate change factors more directly.

Based on its review of the data gathered, the Assessment has organized its evaluative comments into “observations.” These are paired with actions the Assessment Team recommends that SSNERR and CWA leaders consider, along with PCW members.

Observation One. *Diversity and inclusiveness are valued.* PCW members have commented frequently about the diversity of the group. They consider this attribute to be a core strength of the Partnership. The conveners (SSNERR and CWA staff) deserve recognition for their excellent recruiting work.

- Recommendation. *Continue the inclusive approach and maintain the diversity of the group.* Continue to recruit new members to provide voice to interests in the community that may not be at the table. Draw on the knowledge, experience, and networks of PCW members to expand participation.

Observation Two. *PCW members appreciate opportunities to learn.* The PCW meetings have been information, featuring excellent presentations from SSNERR and CWA staff and from some PCW members. The presentations have been evaluated well and meeting participants have noted that their knowledge has increased on a variety of substantive coastal watersheds topics.

Participants have also learned about one another, and as they have done so, their relationships have improved. They have enjoyed interacting with one another and sharing their ideas about their coastal communities.

- Recommendation. *Maintain a collaborative, community learning focus.* Look to PCW members for discussion and presentation topics. Draw on the skills of PCW members to lead learning activities, both at PCW meetings and in the community.
- Recommendation. *Draw significantly on local knowledge as well as technical knowledge.* PCW members are knowledgeable and experienced in the sustainability areas. They can provide valuable information and provide guidance and leadership on specific topics and projects.

Observation Three. *The PCW is more consultative than collaborative.* PCW members have engaged successfully in collaborative work on procedural tasks. They have developed a collaboration compact (<http://www.partnershipforcoastalwatersheds.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Compact-revise-6-23-11.pdf>). The group has generated a community vision – a set of vision statements about a desired future for the coastal watersheds region (<http://www.partnershipforcoastalwatersheds.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/PCW-Vision-Statements-2012-10.pdf>).

PCW members, though, have pursued the tasks that the convening and facilitation group (SSNERR, CWA, OSU) have presented to them. SSNERR and CEWA have constructed the meeting agendas and determined what substantive issues (often in the form of a presentation) would be discussed. Consultative groups participate in discussion activities; they receive information and provide feedback (Daniels and Walker, 2001). They do not, though, play an active role in decision-making. At this point, the PCW members have participated in decisions about process but have shared decision-making on matters of substance.

- Recommendation. *The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds should transition from a consultative group to a collaborative partnership.* To do so, the PCW substantive agenda needs to be set by the PCW members themselves. PCW members have generated a lot of ideas about issues to work on, but have yet to develop and implement action plans. As they do so, they can evolve from consultation (providing feedback) to collaboration (making and implementing decisions).
- Recommendation. *The PCW could become a more formal and recognized partnership.* A partnership typically includes a substantive purpose and agenda and a group of actors or parties. The PCW has identified parties for membership and has addressed tangible issues, particularly ecological. A partnership, though, also includes a management structure, assets or resources, and networks (connections to other organizations). The PCW needs to invest in all five areas (substance, actors, management, assets, and networks) to become a true partnership.

Observation Four. *The PCW has devoted significant time to matters of process or procedure.* While meetings have included a number of well-regarded presentations on technical issues, PCW members look forward to taking concrete action.

- Recommendation. *The PCW should meet to develop a collaboration action strategy.* This work may be best accomplished via a one-day meeting or retreat. The action strategy should address issues of feasibility, implementation, and monitoring. The collaborative actions can address sustainability -- ecological, economic, social, and cultural concerns pertaining to the coastal watersheds area. They might involve field work, community outreach, and learning activities.

Observation Five. *The PCW conveners and members communicate capably about the Partnership.* The website is well designed and serves as a valuable tool for communicating the work of the Partnership. Agendas are well designed. Notes are thorough and distributed well. The communication work models access and transparency. Communication interaction at PCW meetings is constructive with all parties have opportunities to share their views.

- Recommendation. *Continue the investment in communication.* Maintain the website, distribute notes, and provide meeting facilitation. The PCW may reach a point where it wants to provide meeting to local media on a regular basis.

Observation Six: *The organizational capacity and identity of the PCW could be improved.* The initial PCW meetings were well attended. Participants were enthusiastic and looked forward to working together on coastal watersheds issues that were important to them. Over time the PCW seemed to lose some momentum. Attendance at PCW meetings decreased. Although PCW members developed a share vision, some members were not clear about the PCW’s purpose.

- Recommendation. *Strengthen organizational capacity through training and collaborative action.* Conduct a workshop that develops collaborative skills, refines the PCW’s purpose and goals, and develops a work plan (see observation four).
- Recommendation. *Refine the PCW organizational structure.* Rather than referring to all PCW members as “steering committee” members, select a core team (possible names - leadership, executive, or coordinating). The core team guides the PCW. For example, it may design meetings and agendas and represent the PCW in the media.

Conclusion

The Partnership for Coastal Watersheds is a unique and innovative group that brings together a variety of stakeholders for the purposes of sustainability and climate change adaptation. This assessment highlights the PCW’s progress as well as areas for improvement. The PCW has been successful in getting people to work together, but needs to clarify its purpose and develop a collaborative action strategy. PCW participants are eager to engage in more activity-based projects, either through education and outreach or conservation and restoration.

Although this report recommends a number of actions to strengthen the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds, the PCW has made progress. At its seventh meeting in September 2011, Bessie Joyce of the Coos Watershed Association reviewed the primary PCW objectives and the status of each one.

1.	Develop a Mission Statement	Done
2.	Develop a Collaboration Compact	Done
3.	Develop a Shared Vision	Done
4.	Develop a shared understanding of current conditions.	In progress / Cyclical
5.	Develop a shared understanding of the issues or impediments to progress towards the vision.	In progress / Cyclical
6.	Identify voluntary actions towards the vision.	In progress
7.	Prioritize actions based on collectively agreed upon criteria.	Upcoming
8.	Contribute to implementing actions.	Cyclical
9.	Contribute to a program to evaluate progress.	Cyclical
10.	Contribute to State of the Watersheds assessment.	Upcoming

As Bessie Joyce's report illustrated and as this assessment has confirmed, the PCW's fundamental accomplishments have been in the procedural area. The procedural work comprised an appropriate first step and has provided a foundation for work on substantive tasks to improve the coastal watersheds region in all areas of sustainability.

As a community-based collaborative organization, the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds is still in its infancy. It has achieved some success as a collaborative learning organization but still needs to create a clear identity and sense of purpose as a collaborative group that can provide leadership regarding adapting to climate change.

A recent International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) report, *A Framework for Social Adaptation to Climate Change* (2010), asserts that "climate change will also bring opportunity – positive changes are likely to occur somewhere, sometime - but flexibility and responsiveness will be needed to realize potential benefits (p. 1, citing Howden et al. 2007). Consistent with this call for flexibility and responsiveness, the United States Agency for International Development (2009) advocates a six-step model for the development and implementation of adaptation plans: (1) Assess vulnerability, (2) select a course of action (3) mainstream that action into coastal policy, (4) implement the adaptation action strategy, (5) evaluate the plan for adaptive management, and (6) make adjustments. Critical to this process, the USAID report points out, is an "inclusive and participatory process" (p. 73). More specifically, USAID recommends:

- Gain the support of those with the biggest stake in coastal adaptation.
- Design policy to incorporate participatory management.
- Increase social capital and interpersonal networks to build community resilience against natural hazards.
- Promote community involvement and leadership of projects to build a sense of ownership.
- Implement small, achievable actions that build support for a larger effort.
- Educate the public and property owners and encourage them to be active in the stakeholder process in order to keep coastal adaptation on the public agenda.
- Seek top-level government support and leadership to build trust and make participation and negotiations with stakeholders worthwhile.
- For actions that need formal adoption by multiple entities (e.g., special area management plans).
- Treat the process as a major, serious public policy formulation effort right from the start. (USAID, 2009, pp. 74-75)

This assessment of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds indicates that the PCW has the potential to be an important and enduring multi-stakeholder community organization for dealing with the local challenges of climate change. It can address tasks and exhibit characteristics that IUCN, USAID and similar reports emphasize. The PCW draws its strength from its membership; their knowledge, skills, and caring for the coastal region. It can develop the organizational capacity to address climate change adaptation issues and related community concerns regarding sustainability. It can do so collaboratively, with purpose, flexibility, and inclusive participation.

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