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Author(s): Donna Vogler

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Practicing Stakeholder Analysis Using Current Environmental Issues

Donna Vogler

Biology Department, State University of New York at Oneonta, New York, USA

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After this exercise, students will be able to:

1. Identify a diversity of stakeholders relevant to a specific project and compare their varying viewpoints, degrees of influence, and interest for a particular project of conservation relevance;
2. Research an environmental project and select relevant evidence supporting an assigned stakeholder position; and
3. Explain the key factors of effective stakeholder engagement, why they are important, and analyze how these factors play out in the case of a specific conservation project.

1. EXERCISE OUTLINE

During this exercise, students will research a local or regional project with potential environmental or conservation impacts and then identify and research the stakeholders involved with the project. Equipped with the evidence collected from their research, students will fill out a stakeholder analysis table, complete a stakeholder grid, and select and act as a specific stakeholder in a public forum and a "face-to-face" stakeholder meeting. Students will work together towards a consensus regarding the proposed project and reflect on the participatory process in light of the key factors of engagement.

This exercise is designed to take two (90 minute) class sessions with approximately 20 students assigned to 3–4 working groups of 5–8 students. Please refer to the NCEP synthesis, Stakeholder Analysis in Environmental and Conservation Planning, for background information on the topics explored in this exercise. Additionally, suggested modifications of this exercise can be found in accompanying teaching notes online at ncep.amnh.org.

During the first class session, students will complete the following steps:

Step 1: Select a project and complete a project summary (~30 minutes)
Step 2: Identify a diverse pool of stakeholders and complete a stakeholder table (~30 minutes)
Step 3: Evaluate the relative positions of stakeholders by completing a stakeholder grid (~20 minutes)
Step 4: Select a stakeholder (~10 minutes)

After the first session, students will complete a homework assignment:

Step 5: Position statement (200–300 words)

During the second class session, students will complete the following steps:

Step 6: The public forum (~ 60 minutes)
Step 7: Stakeholders face-to-face meeting (~20 minutes)
Step 8: Post-process review (~10 minutes or as directed by the instructor)

As a concluding reflection, student will complete a final homework assignment:

Step 9: Assessing the process

2. STEPS FOR STUDENTS

2.1. Step 1: Selecting a Project (*30 minutes*)

You will be assigned to a working group that will be responsible for identifying and selecting a current local or regional environmental or conservation project from newspapers, magazines, trade journals or other materials. Your instructor may preselect materials for you

to decide from, or you may be assigned to complete your own search prior to class. Examples of environmental/conservation projects include proposed designations of roadless areas, construction of a dam, creation of a marine protected area, expansions of commercial developments or forestry plans, listing of species for protection, and changes in hunting/fishing/agricultural regulations. Ideally, the project should involve multiple stakeholders and the articles or online sources should provide sufficient background information about who will be potentially affected by the project and who is promoting the project. Choosing projects with a local focus is particularly encouraged as they may be relevant to your community and the information from public meetings may be current and useful for background. Appendix 1 provides some suggested resources for selecting an environmental or conservation project.

After confirming an appropriate project with your instructor, create a title for (e.g., Proposal for Dam on Pine River) and summarize the proposed project in a paragraph (4–5 sentences). In this summary, include details such as the timeline, who initiated the action, and what conservation or environmental goals will be supported or influenced by the proposed action, and who will have a role in final decision-making.

All members of your group should be listed on the document and provide input. One copy of the summary will be handed in to the instructor (and read out loud in class at a later date), but every group member should write down or get a copy of the finished summary for reference while writing your homework (described in Step 5). The summary copy handed into the instructor should also include citations for or copies of your information sources (e.g., newspaper articles, governmental documents).

2.2. Step 2: Identifying a Diverse Pool of Stakeholders (*30 minutes*)

Using the column headers shown in the example illustrated below (Table 1), construct a table of the stakeholders most relevant to your group's particular project. Considering the scope of the project selected, identify groups of people, agencies, or entities (e.g., downstream residents) that represent the different stakeholders. As you assemble the table, consider the following:

1. **Potential stakeholders** should be diverse and represent stakeholders from different sides of the issue as well as with different degrees of influence or interest. You should consider stakeholders that have great influence or power in the process, such as governmental agencies, as well as those who may have high interest in the project, but may lack significant power or regulatory authority such as individual landowners or conservation groups. Your list should include at least 8 different stakeholders, with 12 as an upper limit.
2. **Stakeholders interests** should indicate how they might be affected by the project or involved in the process of the project. For example, will the stakeholder group be economically hurt or helped by the action? Or, will the stakeholder group need to approve the project before it can proceed?
3. **A stakeholder's position** on the project (whether positive or negative) may be obvious from the source materials, but if not, speculate on their likely position with regards to the conservation action. Do you think they are likely to hold a strong opinion on the proposal (e.g., strongly in favor)? Or do you think they will have more limited interest in the project (e.g., neutral or mildly in favor)?
4. **Identify some strategies** or opportunities for the project proposal to be re-configured to take the stakeholders interests and risks into account, and hence gain or solidify their support. For example, cash payouts might compensate for lost economic benefits or narrowing the scope of the project might earn the cooperation of an otherwise antagonistic stakeholder.

If possible, create your stakeholder analysis table in an internet-based spreadsheet software program, such as Google Sheets, to allow easy group sharing and editing. Regardless of the format used, make sure every group member receives a copy prior to leaving class, as it will be helpful for the homework assignment. One copy per group needs to be handed in or shared with the instructor at the end of class.

Table 1: Template of a stakeholder analysis table with one example of a potential stakeholder listed for the proposal of a hypothetical dam on Pine River.

1. POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDER	2. STAKEHOLDER INTEREST(S) IN THE PROJECT	3. LIKELY POSITION	4. NOTES AND STRATEGIES FOR OBTAINING SUPPORT OR REDUCING OBSTACLES
DOWNSTREAM RESIDENT	CURRENTLY PAYS FLOOD INSURANCE COSTS	IN FAVOR	NO NEW TAXES WOULD BE USED TO SUBSIDIZE CONSTRUCTION

2.3. Step 3. Evaluating the Relative Positions of Stakeholders Using a Stakeholder Grid (*20 minutes*)

Working individually, create a stakeholder grid in Figure 1 by writing down each stakeholder from your table in the grid location that best describes that stakeholder's influence on the project, and interest relative to the other stakeholders represented. For example, a government budget office may have great influence on the final approval of the proposal, but have no particular opinion on the decision (i.e., high influence, low interest). The budget office's main concern is a balanced budget regardless of how the money is spent. Whereas a private citizen may be greatly affected by the project (positively or negatively), but lack the power to change the plan on his or her own (i.e., low influence, high interest). Your instructor may provide an example grid.

Where groups of stakeholders share the same position, and are clustered in the same block of the stakeholder grid, these are the stakeholders who would be expected to form coalitions. Draw circles around stakeholder clusters within the same grid block and with the same likely position that you would expect to work together towards a commonly shared goal.

Next, consider: which coalitions may be more aligned with each other, across the grid? Draw arrows from stakeholders or stakeholder clusters with low influence but high interest (lower right grid block) to those with high influence (upper two grid blocks) sharing similar positions on the project to identify potential influential allies for those groups of lower power. For example, low influence citizens often seek the assistance of a governmental or non-profit agency to use their power on behalf of a citizen's group.

Every student should complete this on his or her own grid and once completed, compare with group members and discuss differences.

2.4. Step 4: Selecting a Stakeholder (*10 minutes*)

In the next step, each group member should select one stakeholder listed on the stakeholder analysis table to represent. Keep in mind that members of your group must choose different stakeholders that collectively represent the major positions and key players in the conservation action (based on the four quadrats of the stakeholder grid). For example, your group needs to include those with high influence and those with low influence, those with high interest as well as low, and those with different positions (e.g., in favor of and against the project). You need not select stakeholders based on how close to your own position their views are likely to be; in fact, it may be more interesting to choose a stakeholder with positions different from your own.

Once you have discussed the selection of stakeholders with your group, write your name next to your chosen stakeholder on the stakeholder analysis table that will be handed in at the end of class. Once all members of the working group have made their choices, turn the stakeholder analysis table in to the instructor. You may turn in one copy of the stakeholder analysis table for your group, but make sure that each group member's name is listed next to their selected role and that each group member has a copy to assist in completing the homework. Your instructor may also have you turn in your individual version of the stakeholder grid.

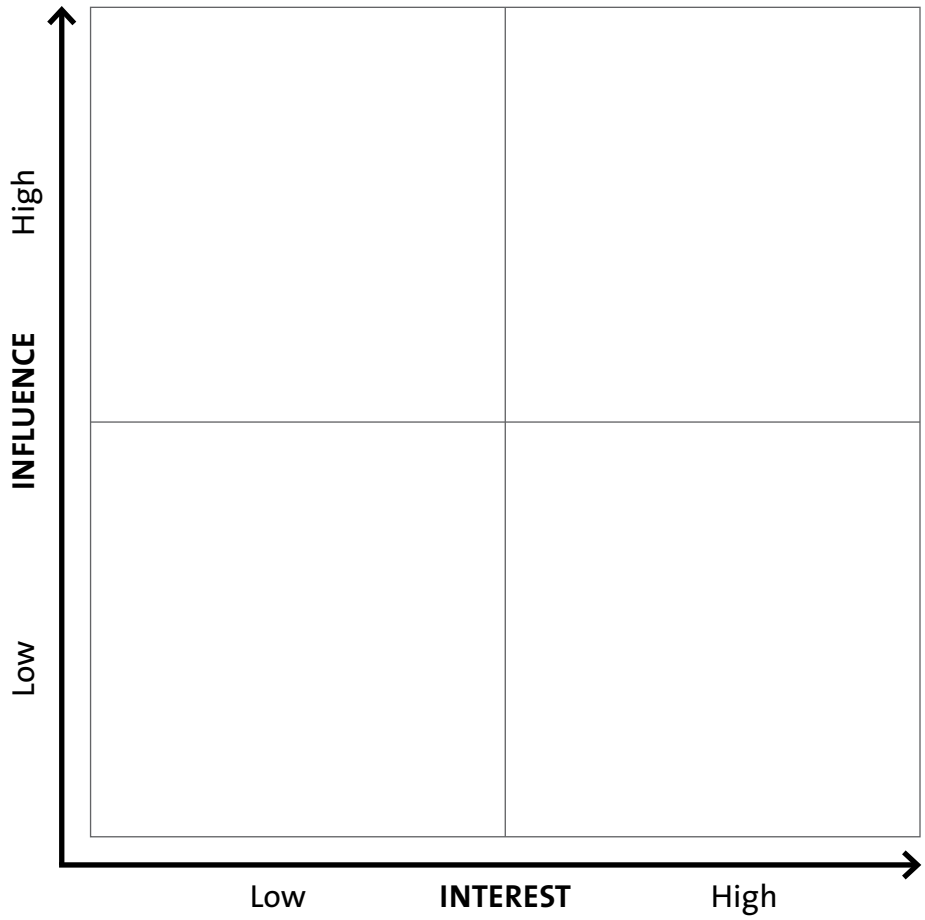

Figure 1. Template of a stakeholder (influence-interest) grid (to be completed by each student during Step 3).

2.5. Step 5: Position Statement (*homework due next class*)

As homework, each member of the working group should individually research the positions, views, and influence of the stakeholder they have selected. Taking the position of a person in your selected stakeholder group, compose a 200–300 word position statement. Identify which stakeholder you are representing early in the statement, and make your position clear. Be careful not to express your personal views on the project, but instead focus on what a representative of your selected stakeholder group would say. If your stakeholder holds a strong positive position then you should passionately advocate for the project. If you are representing a more neutral player, such as a government agency involved in the permit or budget review, focus on your responsibilities and obligations related to the project and provide a balanced view of the positive and negative aspects.

Your written position statement will be evaluated for use of proper grammar, organization, support of your position with evidence from cited sources, and clear recommendations for the future of the proposed project. Evidence in support of a position may include number of jobs lost or added, economic or environmental costs, examples of similar situations, or other plausible scenarios obtained from your selected articles or online research. Your recommendations may include modifications of a project to lessen harm or enhance the benefits to you (the stakeholder). Bring your position statement to the next class as you will be asked to read it aloud and hand it in to your instructor.

2.6. Step 6: Public Forum (*3 minutes per student: ~60 minutes*)

During the second class, stakeholders will be given an opportunity to provide input on their selected project via a public forum format. Governmental agencies or regional planners are frequently required by law to conduct scheduled public forums. Typically a neutral party facilitates the verbal input by individuals, and a

transcript is later made available to the public. Providing a written position statement helps the facilitators construct an accurate account of what was said.

Depending on the size of your class, the public forum may be performed in front of the entire class, with the instructor acting as the facilitator for all of the projects, or your class maybe split into multiple forums that occur simultaneously with different facilitators.

The facilitator will first read the project summary that a particular working group developed during the previous class (from Step 1), and call each stakeholder of that working group to come forward (from the completed stakeholder analysis table from Step 4). Stakeholders will take turns stating their name, which stakeholder group they represent, and reading their statement (from Step 5 homework). Each stakeholder will have 3 minutes to read his or her statement.

As a representative stakeholder, your oratory will be evaluated on the clarity of delivery, tone, and civility towards other stakeholder groups. As you read your statement, make sure to periodically look at the forum participants and include sufficient pauses to allow them to fully understand your position. A good presentation will balance supporting evidence with relevant examples, and convince other stakeholders that your perspective deserves consideration.

2.7. Step 7: Stakeholders Meet Face-To-Face (*20 minutes*)

After the public forum, stakeholders rejoin their working group and attempt to develop a consensus plan for the proposed project during a mock stakeholder meeting. Stay within your respective stakeholder role as you suggest and discuss modifications or alternatives for the project. At the same time you should recognize the necessity of compromise in achieving consensus. Your instructor may act as a moderator or assign one student from your working group to act as a moderator to ensure a balanced and realistic discussion.

While your group may come to a consensus, more often, some contentious issues will remain unresolved and prevent a full consensus. Note what issues prevent consensus. It is not realistic to expect to come to a full agreement with a single meeting of stakeholders. Your group may end up with several alternatives that are worthy of consideration, but either more information is needed or the group has one or two holdouts whose views cannot be reconciled. Although this activity will not have time to follow this process further, your group should appreciate how the process works (or fails). Overall, the goal of this activity is not to force a consensus, but to examine the process of stakeholder meetings in revealing and resolving conflict.

2.8. Step 8: Post-Process Review (*~10 minutes or as directed by your instructor*)

Following the discussion by the stakeholders, all students should step away from their role representing a particular stakeholder and now evaluate the overall process and outcome. Re-examine your group's original Stakeholder Analysis Table and your personal Stakeholder Grid. As a group, discuss:

1. In retrospect, were additional stakeholders identified during your research, the forum, and meeting process that should have been included?
2. Were the positions of influence, interest, and level of support for the stakeholders initially identified correctly? If not, how were they different?
3. Many approaches and standards have been developed to guide participatory processes. As an example, review the Brisbane Declaration (2005) Core Principles of Stakeholder Engagement in Box 1. Did your process meet these four standards? How? How did it not? For example, concerning inclusion, were all stakeholders represented fairly? Who was not given sufficient input into the discussion? Were those who were potentially hurt by the project given sufficient opportunity to have their concerns heard?
4. Which stakeholders benefited the most from the final agreement (if an agreement was met)?
5. What role, if any, did scientific evidence play in the process? What role(s) did spiritual or cultural values, or emotions play in the process?

2.9. Step 9: Assessing the Process (*homework due next class*)

You will turn in written answers to the following

Box 1: Core Principles of Stakeholder Engagement*

Core principles of integrity, inclusion, deliberation, and influence apply in many situations where conservation goals and human needs may conflict, and reflect the following:

- **Integrity**: when there is openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of engagement
- **Inclusion**: when there is an opportunity for a diverse range of values and perspectives to be freely and fairly expressed and heard
- **Deliberation**: when there is sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice, and decisions; and when there is space to weigh options, develop common understandings, and to appreciate respective roles and responsibilities
- **Influence**: when there is the opportunity for stakeholders to have input in designing how they participate, when policies and services reflect the stakeholders' involvement, and when the stakeholders' impact is apparent.

**Derived from the Brisbane Declaration (2005), available at: http://www.ncdd.org/exchange/files/docs/brisbane_declaration.pdf*

questions, according to the guidelines provided by your instructor.

1. Reflect on your written position statement, your presentation of your position statement in the public forum, and the presentations of the other stakeholders. What are the most important aspects to include in a strong position statement? What are the most important attributes of a good presentation?
2. Did any coalitions emerge during your stakeholder meeting? If yes, what were they and why did these stakeholders work together? Were any stakeholders difficult for you (as a stakeholder) to work with? why?
3. During the deliberations among all members of your working group, what alternatives or modifications of the project plan are possible ways to move towards consensus? Describe one or two that were mentioned during the discussion, or develop one of your own.
4. For your group to have the best possible process and outcome, what additional information would have been helpful to know? For example, could research or some kind of professional expertise address important unanswered questions? Did you identify any missing stakeholders?
5. If you were to continue this stakeholder engagement process, what might you do next to best promote an outcome beneficial to your stakeholder group?
6. Imagine that rather than the small group of stakeholders used in this exercise, there were 100 citizens, business representatives, and government officials with some interest in this action. If you were asked to facilitate a stakeholder meeting of that size, how could you organize the process so that it would adhere to the Core Principles of Engagement (see Box 1)? In particular, what could you do to ensure integrity, inclusion, productive deliberation, and authentic influence for a very large group of very diverse stakeholders?
7. What do you see as the advantages and limitations of this stakeholder participation process, overall? Discuss at least two advantages and two limitations.

APPENDIX 1. USEFUL SOURCES TO FIND ENVIRONMENTAL OR CONSERVATION PROJECTS THAT INVOLVE MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

Listed are several websites that can be consulted for examples of environmental or conservation projects. However, consider looking outside of major news outlets and international organizations because smaller and more local projects may not be covered by those sources.

- **Local newspapers.** We highly recommend trying to find an environmental or conservation project in your area. In local newspapers, most articles will be too brief to stand on their own, but a news story can then be linked to a municipal proposal,

or an agency that is conducting the activity.

- **NCEP modules**: ncep.amnh.org. Of the 150+ modules provided, several case studies involve issues or controversies with multiple stakeholders. Particularly relevant ones include:
  - Environmental and Climate Justice along the Brahmaputra River in Northeast India
  - Community Buzz: Conservation of Trees and Native Bees in Urban Areas
  - Marine Protected Areas and MPA Networks
  - How the West was Watered: A Case Study of the Colorado River

- **National and international news outlets**. In general, most major news outlets can be a source for breaking news that can lead the reader to other sources for more detailed accounts. Depending on the outlet, news stories vary from short summaries to lengthy investigations. Examples of these outlets are:
  - The Guardian: https://www.theguardian.com/us/environment. The Environment section provides news articles on many global issues related to conservation or environmental management.
  - New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/section/science/earth. The Environment section frequently offers articles on wildlife, climate change, and environmental policies.

- **World Wildlife Fund/TRAFFIC**: www.traffic.org. TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, works to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature. TRAFFIC documents wildlife trade information used by CITES and IUCN, much of which is available to the public.

- **World Commission on Dams**: http://www.internationalrivers.org/node/348. The mission of the WCD is to review the development effectiveness of dams and assess alternatives for water resources and energy development, and develop internationally accepted standards, guidelines, and criteria for decision-making in the planning, design, construction, monitoring, operation, and decommissioning of dams. The website provides examples of recent controversies.

- **United Nations Environment Programme** includes several reports that can be used. For an example, see this report on sustainable development of fragile mountain ecosystems: http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=52&ArticleID=61&l=en