

Barriers to integrating science into policy and practice

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INTRODUCTION

Developing community consensus on resource use is complex. People often develop a solution to a perceived problem in isolation from the parts of the community responsible for its implementation. Collective development and use of knowledge (let's call it "community wisdom") can often help groups work towards solutions.

Our initial perceptions of forest research investments in the southern Interior were that:

- the forest industry needed more research;
- research currently under way was not focused on operational needs; and
- current policies did not reflect the complete scientific picture.

To determine the accuracy of these perceptions, we conducted a series of analyses of client needs focusing on information needs, preferred information sources, barriers to using information, and barriers to using science in operations and policy development. Here we summarize our methodology and results.

METHODS

The methods used included focus workshops, comprehensive mail survey, one-on-one consultation, and small-group topical working sessions. The needs analyses focused on natural resource professionals, aboriginal natural resource leaders, policy developers, researchers, and educators in the southern Interior and in Victoria.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 outlines the important barriers that impede the link between science, policy, and practice.

REFERENCES

Dickie, A. 1999. Preliminary results from the Southern Interior aboriginal natural resources information needs analysis. Southern Interior Forest Extension and Research Partnership, Kamloops, B.C. Internal Report.

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TABLE 1 Summary of broad and specific barriers^a

| Broad barriers | Specific barriers |
|----------------------|--|
| Information Sources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowing “who’s who” in the policy, research, and operational arenas • knowing what information is available • trusting the quality and source of the information • lack of local problem-solving initiatives • lack of synthesis |
| Information Access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowing where to find “who’s who” • having the information in a form that is readily accessible • having the information in a form that is useful • having access to timely and interim information • access to extension professionals |
| Cultural Differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of flexible and open policy process • lack of an open regulatory framework • lack of time to learn • fundamental reality differences between and within the research, policy, and operational communities • centralized control of decisions • acceptance level of new innovations • organizational inertia • lack of respect and trust in experiential and indigenous knowledge |
| Technology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited access to emerging communication technologies • limited knowledge of how to use emerging communication technologies • lack of incentive to use new technology • fast pace of technological change and ability to adapt |
| Capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time • money • skills • desire |

a Adapted from Dickie (1999), Gregory and Satterfield (1999), and Hollstedt et al. (1999).

Gregory, R. and T. Satterfield. 1999. Southern Interior Forest Extension and Research Partnership client survey. B.C. Ministry of Forests and Southern Interior Forest Extension and Research Partnership, Victoria, B.C. Working Paper 40.

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<http://www.siferp.org/infofr99-6.pdf>

Personal Communication. SIFERP Extension Team Client Outreach.

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