DDC – NEST (Suldovsky, McGreavy, Lindenfeld)
Interview Data Summary

This document summarizes the results of the NEST Safe Beaches and Shellfish researcher interview project. The goal of this project is to understand stakeholder communication practices within NEST, researchers' perceptions of epistemic authority, and perceptions of NEST project goals/outcomes. During the interview, researchers responded to questions concerning their epistemic assumptions, stakeholder communication, and their view on NEST project goals and/or outcomes.

Total NEST researchers invited: 33
Respondents: 27
Response Rate: 82%

Epistemic Assumptions

When asked whether scientific knowledge is different from other knowledge types, participants responded in the following ways:

- Those who *affirmed* the authority of science (about ½) discussed:
  - The novelty of the scientific method
  - A commitment to objectivity, validity, and empiricism
  - The role of uncertainty
- Those who *denied* the authority of science (about ½) discussed:
  - Scientific knowledge isn't always as useful as other types (e.g. experience)
  - Science is not sufficient to address the problems we face; it doesn't provide the 'whole picture'

Interestingly, *every* participant, whether they affirmed or denied authority, asserted science's authority elsewhere in the interview

Stakeholder Communication

When asked about the purpose of stakeholder communication, participants discussed a variety of communication strategies. Results are summarized here according to the three science communication models (deficit, dialogue, participation) outlined in previous literature.

Deficit – Communication is one-way, where science is transmitted by experts to audiences perceived to be deficient in awareness and/or understanding. NEST researchers utilized diffusion in two ways:

1. To enlighten or correct stakeholders regarding scientific issues / topics: "My overarching goal is just to continually emphasize the message that intact ecosystems and conserved ecosystems are much healthier than exploited ones."

2. To provide stakeholders with scientific information / information about NEST: "The purpose is, first of all, a researcher owes society at multiple levels some kind of explanation of what you do because we get paid to do it, we should feel compelled to let people know what we do just generally."

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Dialogue – Communication is two-way, and takes place between experts and other groups to find out how science can be more effectively disseminated and/or made more applicable (i.e. two-way deficit model). NEST researchers utilized dialogue most often, and in three key ways:

1. To understand stakeholder perspectives: "Actually learning more about what's going on and their actual problems are, because what I think are problems might not be problems. They may be more concerned about other things. So getting that clarification and making sure we're working on the right problem and asking the right questions."

2. To reach mutual understanding: "So you just kind of come away with…that there's some clarity there that we both understand. You understand what I'm doing and I understand where you're coming from as well."

3. To establish/develop relationships: "But [communication] builds networks. It brings connections. You find out about other people doing similar work or different work or whatever. You see them in meetings and then bring up something. So it just, the web of humanity, it's a way of connecting"

Participation – Communication about science takes place between diverse groups on the basis that all can contribute, and that all have a stake in the outcome of the deliberations / discussion. Participation was the least utilized of the communication models. NEST researchers who utilized participation did so to supplement scientific perspectives:

1. Supplement scientific perspectives / knowledge: "I have a feeling that a focus on more than just accumulating knowledge and instead asking about what looks like a solution aiming out somewhere in that direction, engaging with stakeholders to get there, and mobilizing diverse ways of knowing will be part of many successful [communication] strategies."

2. To integrate stakeholder knowledge into scientific research: ""the people that are on the ground, for me, working with shellfish every day, they know of a heck of a lot more about this than I ever will, because they have the experience."

NEST Project Goals / Outcomes

When asked about the major outcomes of the NEST project, participants discussed:

- Giving back to stakeholder partners
- Improving natural resource management, promote policy changes, solve problems
- Advance the use of science in decision-making, promote "evidence-based" management
- Forming sustainable relationships with stakeholder partners / researchers, increase capacity for this kind of work in the future
- Increase our knowledge about the coast, both biophysical and social
- Academic Publications

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Interview Protocol

1. What is your role in NEST? Do you see yourself as part of any teams or sub-teams, and if so, which ones?

2. What is your area of expertise? How would you describe your work?

3. What does interdisciplinarity mean to you? How about integration?

4. What do you see as the *value* in doing scientific research?

5. Do you think scientific knowledge differs from other types of knowledge? If so, how?

6. What stakeholders have you communicated with the most throughout this project? (Limit to 5 individuals – to be used as a snowball sample)

7. What do you see as *the purpose* of communicating with stakeholders? What outcomes are you hoping for?

8. Thinking back about your experience communicating with stakeholders about your work, what are some communication strategies that worked well? What hasn't worked as well? Lessons learned?

9. What do you see as the major outcomes of this project? *How has this changed over the course of the project?*

10. Overall, how would you characterize the decision making on NEST?

11. How does the collaboration on this project compare to your experience on your Track I? Is it easier, more challenging, about the same? Why do you think that is?

12. FOLLOW-UP: Has your experienced on the project matched with your expectations? If so, how? If not, why not?