Who We Are

► Steve Armstead, Environmental Planner
  - Open Space and Mountain Parks
  - City of Boulder, Colorado

► Heather Bergman, Facilitator
  - Peak Facilitation Group
  - Facilitator of the West Trail Study Area process

► Doug Thompson, Senior Mediator
  - The Keystone Center
  - Facilitator of the Middlesex Fells process

► Paul Jahnige, Director Greenways & Trails
  - MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
  - Here in spirit
Panel Goals

► To share two recent experiences in collaborative recreation planning
► To identify key considerations in whether to pursue a collaborative process and how to design it
► To identify key lessons from these two cases
► To answer your questions based on our experience, such as it is
Presentation Outline

► Background and Planning Needs:
  ▪ West TSA (Boulder)
  ▪ Middlesex Fells (Boston)

► Process approach, conflicts, and outcomes:
  ▪ West TSA
  ▪ Middlesex Fells

► Overarching thoughts and lessons on collaboration

► Discussion
To Collaborate or Not: Audience Thoughts

► How many of you have tried collaborative approaches to recreation planning? Were those efforts successful?
► How many think engaging the community in a collaborative process is an intriguing idea?
► How many think it’s the purest form of professional insanity?
West TSA Planning Area

Here is the area we are planning for WTSA,

Large area, over 11,000 acres, straddles the mountains and plains.
Mostly forested, but grasslands exist south of Shanahan and on the eastern flank of Sanitas.
Many city neighborhoods and individual properties back up to the West TSA.
Purpose of TSA Plans

To recommend actions which will protect natural and cultural resources, improve the visitor experience, and provide a physically and environmentally sustainable trail system.

TSA’s planning focus on the existing designated trail system, undesignated trails, activities on the trail and recommendations which will protect....
A Considerable History
Natural Resources
Natural Resource Protection

**Key Planning Issues**

- High trail densities
- Undesignated trails
- Need for special resource protection measures
Of course “Adventure” varies from person to person but here it takes on many forms- finding refuge from our city lives, walking our dogs, facing physical challenges on rock and trail both and simply luxuriating in the sheer beauty of the places we find.
Recreational Access and Opportunities

Key Planning Issues

- Bicycle access
- Dog access (leash or voice and sight control)
- No-dog trail opportunities
- Equestrian access
- Climbing access
- New trail connections
- Undesignated trails
- Degraded trail conditions
Key Issues and Conflicts

Issues of Greatest Conflict

- Bike access desires and fierce opposition—Bike access prohibited since the 1980’s and bike advocates wanted a trail connecting town to southern bike trails through the core of the long-term hiker-only trail system.
- Equestrian trails never designated even though charter required; expectation for open access.
- User-created “social” trails—close or designate.
- Off-Leash dog access and dog-free trails.
Something like five miles northerly from Boston lies a great tract of country, all stony hills and tablelands, almost uninhabited, and of wonderful picturesqueness, and wild rugged beauty.

Sylvester Baxter, Boston Herald Supplement, December 6, 1879
Middlesex Fells Historical Background

- Underlying geology and glaciers shape the Fells landscape
- ~12,000 BP – Present: Native American land use
- 1660 – 1890: the area was settled, cleared and developed for industry, agriculture and residence
- Efforts to protect the Fells were foundational in the formation of both the public land conservation and regional land protection movements.
Middlesex Fells Reservation

Features

- 2,575 acres of protected open space
- Public water supply lands
- Over 120 miles of trails
- Diverse natural plant communities
- Nine rare species
- Important bird area
- Rocky outcrops and summits
- Historic buildings, towers and sites
- Over 100 vernal pools
- Sheepfold meadow
- Spot Pond
- Flynn Rink
- Stone Zoo

"The landscape pleases chiefly by reason of the intimate mingling of many types of scenery and objects of interest. Here is a cliff and a cascade, here a pool, pond or stream, here a surprising glimpse of a fragment of blue ocean, or again a faint blue vision of a far distant mountain."

Boston Parks Guide, by Sylvester Baxter
Visitor Activities

- Hiking / walking
- Dog walking
- Mountain biking
- Running
- Skiing
- Scenic driving
- Nature observation
- Boating
- Fishing
- Orienteering

Sheepfold Meadow photo by David Monahan
RMP Requirements

Management plans are prepared for “all reservations, parks, and forests under the management of the department”

M.G.L. Chapter 21; Section 2F

MA DCR Mission: To protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources.
RMP Requirements

“shall include guidelines for the operation and land stewardship of...reservations, parks and forests”

“shall provide for the protection and stewardship of natural and cultural resources”

“shall ensure consistency between recreation, resource protection and sustainable forest management”

M.G.L. Chapter 21; Section 2F
Management Challenges

- Enforcing regulations
- Managing the recreational trail system and trail uses
- Infrastructure maintenance
- Protecting and maintaining priority species and habitats
- Protecting water supplies
- Limited staff resources
Recreational Conflict, Access and Opportunities

**Key Planning Issues**

- Pedestrian vs. extent of bicycle access
- Off-Leash dog access and trail opportunities
- Areas where public sex occurs
- User-created “illegal” trails
- Culture of non-compliance
West TSA: Need for a New Approach

- Boulder’s history and expectation of extremely high levels of civic engagement
- Past planning processes led to increased polarization over the use of open space.
- The typical response to polarization was to increase the number of opportunities for public input. While logical, more public process seldom addressed the underlying problem.
- More public process raised expectations among community groups that OSMP would develop plans that satisfy their interests. The more public input, the greater the expectations.
Need for a New Approach
(Caught in a Trap)

- Actively engage stakeholders/community to better understand perspectives and interests
- Planners carefully craft and propose a reasonable solution
- Stakeholders attack the compromise decision
- Contentious issues have to be resolved by board/council
- Agency defends decision
- Stakeholders feel betrayed
- Agency feels unappreciated
The Allure of the Community Collaborative Planning Process

- Build the plan together in partnership with the community
- Usual planning model is staff-driven instead of community-driven—*take off conductor’s hat*
- **Benefits**
  - Less contention, broader base of community support
  - New way to work with community, community dialog-based solutions
  - Polarized community groups to work together
  - Creativity of the community
  - More efficient way of completing the plan
  - Support for implementation of plan outcomes

The **essence of the collaborative process** is for staff and the board to work with a community collaborative group to develop a consensus-based plan designed to improve natural, cultural, and recreational conditions.

**Different than the usual staff-drive model:**
Usual model…staff creates various plan products…staff gets public input and decides how to revise…staff writes the plan and decides how to finalize the plan.
CCG is a community-driven process rather than a staff-driven process.

**Why Decide to Do a Community Collaborative Process?**
Bottom line…we think there are several benefits over the typical way we involve the public in our planning:

**Produce a Plan with Less Contention and a Broader Base of Community Support.**
Motivate organized groups to step out of their more narrow interests and work together to develop creative workable solutions that protect natural and cultural resources and provide high quality recreational experiences.
Consensus recommendations produced by a community collaborative process will foster buy-in for difficult planning decisions.

**Demonstrate a New Way of Working Together Based on Dialog.**
Create a dialog among members of the community with diverse and sometimes conflicting interests, get them to roll up their sleeves and produce a plan that becomes stronger from the crucible of debate.
Intent is to demonstrate the success of the collaborative process and apply it future planning projects.

**Discover More Efficient Way to Complete TSA Plans.**
This process will help staff avoid unnecessary contention and narrow advocacy of interests that can slow forward momentum toward plan completion and bog down the process.
Building buy-in along the way generally takes more time to develop the plan, but it will likely pay off with more expedited plan adoption at the end.
We should decide whether and how to address the DFC discussion. In my mind, the DFC bit was where a) we learned that the group didn’t share and couldn’t agree on a common set of interests, and b) where we took a turn toward more compromise than collaboration. Not sure we need to address it, but there it is.
Selecting CCG Representatives

Options:
- City Council or Board appointment
- Interest group selection
- Ad hoc committee selection
- Peer group selection
  ✓ Communities of interest caucuses
Caucus Process

1. Selection is driven by the community, not by the department, governing boards or interest groups.
2. The CCG will represent community interests, not organizational interests.
3. Groups that can quickly mobilize members do not have an advantage over average citizens.
4. The process legitimizes representation and cannot be challenged later.
5. The process encourages representatives to seek to resolve differences when they are found to exist.
6. More knowledge, experience, and creativity are brought to bear, producing a better product.
West TSA
Community Collaborative Group

The CCG’s charge was to come up with consensus solutions that balance competing interests and support the long-term health of the land and the quality of the visitor experience.

Recreation  5
Conservation  5
Cultural Resources  1
Neighborhoods  3
OSMP  2

16

Didn’t ask CCG to solve everything, find practical and beneficial improvements and make recommendations on complicated and contentious issues
Could the CCG Succeed

**Critical Success Factors**

- Support from OSMP, trustees, and council,
- Acceptance of mission and goals,
- Internal champions,
- Willingness among parties to try process,
- Recognized legitimate representation,
- Enough decision space to compel participation, and
- Openness to unimagined solutions.
Biggest Issues: Dogs and Bikes
CCG Proposals and Deliberations

Trails area by area (---then recreational activities)
- Trail improvements, social trails, key destinations
- Sensitive resource areas
- Access for dogs
- Access for equestrians
- Access for bikes

Undesignated Trails
- Designated 14.6 miles  |  Closed 42.0 miles

Designated Trails
- To be Repaired 10.4 miles  |  To be Rerouted 15.6 miles
CCG Recommendations

- Undesignated trails
- Key destinations
- Trail rebuilds and reroutes
- New trails
- Recreational opportunities
  - Dog access
  - Horse access

Delicate Balance
Changes to CCG Recommendations

- No dog trails
- Horse access
- Bike access *(no CCG agreement)*
Middlesex Fells: Need for a Facilitated Approach

- 20-year history of polarization between bike, pedestrian and dog-owner stakeholder groups
- Previous planning process focused on Trail Plan which was criticized by state-wide environmental groups as being insufficient to protect critical resources
- Fells seen as a precedent for planning for parks and forests state-wide
- Widespread perception that “Friends” group had an over-amplified voice in past decision-making
- Stakeholders not necessarily coming to the table in collaborative spirit.
“So, does anyone else feel that their needs aren’t being met?”
Time Frame (2011-2012)

January: Initial public meeting on RMP process
January-March: Initial public input solicited
February-April: Public informational workshops
Small group mediation process
June-August: Additional data collection and analysis
September: Public Meeting; release of Draft
RMP and 30 day comment period
November: Final Draft Plan posted, submitted
to DCR Stewardship Council
January (2012): Stewardship Council approves RMP
Some Conflicting “Frames”

► **Resource Stewardship.** A protective and precautionary approach for fish, wildlife and other environmental values.

► **A Fair Balancing of Interests.** An approach that properly integrates interests such as resource protection, two-footed, four-footed and wheeled recreation and enjoyment of the Fells.
Interactive Workshops

► Initial kick-off meeting/open comments
► Wetlands and water resources
► Flora and fauna
► Cultural resources
► Recreational
► Education and interpretation
► Enforcement
Some Dynamics

► Issues involved a mix of substance (e.g., trail management issues), process (e.g., legitimacy of RMP process) and human factors (e.g., powerfully held perceptions).

► Shared sense that aspects of current situation are undesirable (“Dr. Phil” question*) although diagnosis of causes differs.

*“So, how’s this working out for ya?”
Friends of the Fells feel they love the Fells for “what it is,” have acted as stewards while the state has been largely in absentia, and receive more grief than appreciation for their efforts.

Bikers and dog owners feel that, despite having every bit as much right as anyone else to enjoy the Fells, it has been a constant struggle to gain access and their reasonable efforts have been rejected and mischaracterized.
From Characterizing to Caricature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A on Group B</th>
<th>Group B on Group A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecological illiterates</td>
<td>Crazy old guys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disrespectful</td>
<td>Disrespectful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boorish</td>
<td>Ignore the rules</td>
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<td>Potentially violent</td>
<td>Unscrupulous</td>
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<td>Defamatory</td>
<td>Impossible to work with</td>
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<tr>
<td>Favored by DCR</td>
<td>Favored by DCR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitators not neutral</td>
<td>Facilitators not neutral</td>
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The Facilitation Challenge

The diagram illustrates the facilitation challenge with a 2x2 matrix. The x-axis represents Interest Set(s), and the y-axis represents Mutual Gain. The matrix is divided into four quadrants:

- Top right: Mutual Gain
- Bottom left: Lose-Lose
- Top left: Status Quo
- Bottom right: Interest Set(s)

The diagram suggests strategies for navigating the facilitation challenge by moving towards areas of mutual gain while avoiding lose-lose situations.
Some Engagement Lessons

► Some situations are inherently messy—don’t let the perfect become the enemy of the good (or even good the enemy of the adequate)
► Consider an initial “situation assessment” to understand issues and design process
► Clarity about roles; hyper-transparency about process
► Mediation sidebar sessions useful but better if begun sooner
► Utilize bridge-builders who are well respected by disputing parties
Day’s End: A Few Key Findings

► Seventy-six priority recommendations
► Close “rogue” trails.
► Pedestrian and biking impacts substantially similar. Increase opportunities for both pedestrians and bikers with trail designation/segregation.
► Allow leashed dogs on all trails. Pilot off-leash area recommended (“Sheepfold”) but no off-leash dogs allowed on trails.
► Multi-pronged efforts to increase compliance (e.g., education, enforcement, self-regulation, park watch)
Collaboration – A Definition

► People working together, literally meaning to “co-labor”

► Can include a broad range of activities, from information sharing to joint decision making

► Requires hard work, focused attention, adequate time, and considerable dedication of time and other resources by all participants and the sponsoring government agency
**Interests vs. Positions**

**Positions**
- **What** I want or need
- Often binary/absolute (yes/no, more/less, right/wrong, etc.)
- Distributive (resources can and will be divided)
- Involves stakeholders claiming their piece of the pie
- Involves win/lose dynamics
- Stakeholders seek to maximize their own gains and minimize their own losses

**Interests**
- **Why** I want or need it
- Describes the motivation for a need or want
- Integrative (stakeholders’ interests can be integrated for shared gain)
- Involves stakeholders creating new solutions and new “pie”
- Involves win/win dynamics
- Stakeholders seek to maximize joint gains
Components of Collaborative Problem Solving

- Include diverse interests, affected communities
- Address key issues of concern to stakeholders and to public interest or welfare
- Base choices and recommendations on the best available information
- Analyze impacts and consequences
- Weigh social, economic, and environmental values
- Work toward agreements with long-term efficacy and durability
When Collaboration Works Best

- Parties prepared to make it a priority
- Sufficient decision space among alternatives
- Support from agency or agencies in a leadership role
- Parties likely to have a continuing relationship
- Parties rely on one another for their success, lack a better alternative for meeting their interests
- External drivers or deadlines providing incentives to get to work
Potential Benefits of Collaboration

- Increased social capital
  - Relationships, seeing the people behind the positions
  - Cooperation or consultation now and in future
  - Trust, or willingness to consider trust
  - Recognition of validity of others’ perspectives
  - Understanding of others’ interests, needs
  - Shared identity – “us-ness”
Potential Benefits of Collaboration

► New agreements/outputs (policies, plans) with more support
► Substantive outcomes (improved water quality, new food labeling, safer street design)
► Less time defending a policy or plan at the back end
Potential Risks of Collaboration

► Parties might agree to something the agency does not support
► Parties might not want to agree and may waste countless hours and dollars performing collaboration w/o actually doing it
► With or without agreement, collaborative process may diminish trust for agency
► Parties may agree and higher power (councils, commissions, boards, trustees) might overturn agreement
Lessons from the Trenches: Lessons from the Trenches: Critical Considerations in Collaboration

► How members are chosen
► Who is chosen (who they represent, as well as their personalities, interests, connections, willingness to recognize other interests, and capacity for collaborative behavior)
► The role and point(s) of engagement of “the public”
► The role of science vs. politics vs. compromise
► The role of the agency (at the table or not)

S and D – These are some thoughts on critical aspects of a collaborative process. They are some lessons learned from the WTSA. I imagine expounding on them verbally rather than writtenly. Steve, add, subtract, or refine.
Lessons from the Trenches: Critical Considerations in Collaboration

► The buy-in of staff and political leadership
► Careful framing, guiding, constraining of the problem or challenge for the group to address
► Availability of resources (staff time to assist group, funding for a third-party neutral)
► Timeline— a hard deadline that is flexible
► Skills, personality, and “vibe” of the neutral
► The definition of “success”

S and D – These are some thoughts on critical aspects of a collaborative process. They are some lessons learned from the WTSA. I imagine expounding on them verbally rather than writtenly. Steve, add, subtract, or refine.
At the end of the day...

- Understand that there are lots of ways to engage the public
- Be strategic about when to use collaborative approaches to planning
Questions?

For more information...

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Informational Slides
1. Groups that quickly mobilized members have an advantage.

2. Selection driven by stakeholder groups.

3. Selected representatives were individuals who assertively advocated for and aligned with group interests.

4. The process was perceived to have been “gamed” and called to question legitimate representation.

5. The process did not result in a forum for ongoing caucus group representation.