Policy: Gatekeeper to Change

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Overview

• Our Motivation

• A Definition of Policy

• Policy: What the “…” is the Problem??

• Policy: The Good, Bad, and the Ugly

• Where Do We Go From Here?
“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

Ecclesiastes 4:12
“A policy is typically described as a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve rational outcome(s). The term is not normally used to denote what is actually done, this is normally referred to as either procedure or protocol.”

Policy Definition (Wikipedia.org)
Policy “Help”

• Media & voters expect policymakers to fix problems
• Policy makers demand scientific bottom lines for decision making, even though they don’t use them
• Scientists are committed to improving knowledge, so hold out unrealistic expectations to policymakers
• The “hammer problem”
  – Success of rational choice for solving simple and complex problems exacerbates expectations
  – Claims that there are “no alternatives” to rational choice tools
  – Bottom line: ill-conceived policy created

WICKED PROBLEMS: CLUMSY SOLUTIONS (Steve Rayner)
“No one ever gets far unless he accomplishes the impossible at least once a day.”

Policy Self-Help Support Group
Thinking Ahead

• Policy should be encouraging and leading change...why does it fail?

• Policy can be developed from the top down, or be conceived from the bottom up...how do we ensure it has the most (positive) impact?

• Policy should help guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes, not stymie creativity and innovation...what's your role?
Does Passion Count?

“Enthusiasm is the greatest asset in the world. It beats money and power and influence.”

Henry Chester
NWS Policy - Hurricane Preparedness

• Place all buoyant possessions safely in the basement

• Throughout the hurricane season, call your relatives each day and let them know you are still alive

• Florida residents: Vote “Yes” on proposition 84 to put a hurricane-proof dome over your state

• Listen to your local radio station for weather updates; if needed, do like Forrest Gump: “Run Forrest, run.”

• If you see a suspicious looking hurricane sitting unattended, notify the National Weather Service immediately

• If you live in a mobile home, break it up into small, non-lethal debris BEFORE the storm hits
Equity and efficiency in policymaking

An Example: Coastal Habitat Restoration

Economic and social impacts must be considered when weighing the benefits of an environmental action or policy.
Executive Order 13514 specifies that every federal organization and agency must produce a sustainability plan including specific goals concerning:

- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Energy efficiency
- Water efficiency
- Pollution prevention and waste elimination
- Regional and local planning
- Sustainable federal buildings
- Sustainable acquisition
- Electronics stewardship
- Environmental management
The Clumsy Imperative

• Democracy (policy) is not merely a design problem: It is a challenge to the imagination

• Embracing clumsiness moves us from techniques for selecting among well-defined alternatives towards new skills for creating imaginative solutions

WICKED PROBLEMS: CLUMSY SOLUTIONS (Steve Rayner)
NOAA -- Does It Even Exist?

• Formed by executive order in 1970, NOAA created as part of Department of Commerce
  ▪ NOAA’s products and services support economic vitality and more than one-third of America’s domestic product

• No statutory basis for its existence to conduct its activities and missions

• Operated under 200 different authorizations: voters expect policy makers to address problems

• NOAA Organic Act sent to Congress in 2005
NWS Public-Private Policy

• Policy on “Partnerships in the Provision of Environmental Information”
  ▪ NRC study, "Fair Weather: Effective Partnerships in Weather and Climate Services”
  ▪ Circular A-130: Management of Federal Information Resources

• Policies are based on the premises that:
  ▪ Government information is a valuable national resource
  ▪ Benefits to society are maximized when government information is available in a timely and equitable manner to all

• Does this policy work?
“The best place to succeed is where you are with what you have.”

Charles Schwab
Opportunities to Excel

• **NWS Social Media**: Where to draw the line? How/when/where to use FB/Twitter?

• **Climate Product and Services**: What’s the right Focus/Mix?

• **Public/Private/Academic Partnership**: How can we maximize our collective ability to affect change and maximize impact?
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“Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.”

Sir Winston Churchill
Final Thoughts on Making Change Through Policy

1. Everyone Has a Role in Policy

2. Policy Can Help…it may take some time

3. Hold policymakers accountable

4. Communicate problems/challenges in current policy, work to create a “climate” for creation of/changes to policy