MINNESOTA TIMBER HARVESTING ROUNDTABLE:
A CASE OF NEGOTIATED NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Paul V. Ellefson, Michael A. Kilgore and Donald G. MacKay

January 1997

STAFF PAPER SERIES NUMBER 121

MINNESOTA TIMBER HARVESTING ROUNDTABLE:
A CASE OF NEGOTIATED
NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY
DEVELOPMENT

by

Paul V. Ellefson, Michael A. Kilgore and Donald G. MacKay [1]

January 1997

Contents

i

Tables

MINNESOTA TIMBER HARVESTING ROUNDTABLE:
A CASE OF NEGOTIATED
NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Policy and Program Development Process

Conflicts over the use and management of natural resources are resolved within the context of policy making. Central to most government actions, policy making is the means by which competing interests of society are addressed and the values associated with such interests are ultimately allocated. Conceptually, it has been suggested that the process of developing and implementing policy involves seven major events or stages, namely agenda setting, formulation, selection, legitimation, implementation, evaluation, and termination (Brewer and deLeon 1983, Ellefson 1992). These events are not the exclusive domain of or under the control of a single individual or institution. Rather they are engaged in by interacting players who embrace distinctly different sets of conflicting perspectives on what natural resource issues are worthy of government attention, what is the appropriate range of policies to be considered, exactly what natural resource policy (or group of policies) should be selected, how should the preferred policy be authenticated (law, rule, custom), how and when should the policy be implemented, what should be evaluated and when, and should we scrape a certain natural resource policy and move to something new and different.

The specific event or stage being considered in the policy process can determine the way in which a conflict is presented and the type of techniques used to resolve it. Agenda setting is likely to involve concerned citizens that express their dislikes in a voiceful but unorganized fashion. Surfacing with a vengeance may be conflicts over the relative importance of issues and the most appropriate government agenda on which to place them (e.g., legislative, judicial, administrative). Policy formulation may generate conflict over problem definition and the ability potential policies to effectively address the issue in question. At this stage there may enter a host of administrative and technical players that disagree over procedures and the technical feasibility of potential policy options.

Policy selection can surface intense disagreement over personal and organizational value sets that somehow must be reconciled. Once that later has been accomplished, the move to implementation can reveal latent resistance to a selected policy and may create organizational disputes over where program authority and responsibility should lie.

Enforcement actions required for implementation may lead to a regrouping of aggrieved parties and a seeking of their political goals through legal means. Evaluation activities may cause among evaluation specialists a host of technical disagreements over linkages between a policy and the expected results of that policy. Parties having a stake in the implemented policy may press their conflicting concerns over how the program should be changed or re-framed for the future. Those not having access to an evaluation staff may press their concerns thorough other means (legislative action). And the policy termination stage is likely to raise concern over the definition of the original problem or issue and how it should have been addressed. In sum, for persons intent on intervening in natural resource conflicts, an awareness of the influence of where in the policy process such conflict is occurring and the appropriateness of certain tools for the management of that conflict would seem most appropriate (Harter 1982, Stephenson and Pops 1989).

Minnesota Timber Harvesting: A Case in Policy Development Conflict

The policy development case described here is an important example of conflict management at four stages in the policy development process, namely agenda setting, formulation, selection and legitimizing. A special focus, however, is on conflict management involving the formulation of policy options via a facilitated roundtable process, and the legitimizing of the roundtable's recommendations in a legislative setting. Throughout the case, special emphasis is on the role of various units of state government as they facilitated or detracted from the development of effective consensus-based, forest resource policies and programs.

MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL SETTING

Forest Resources

Minnesota is consistently ranked high in terms of various environmental health and quality-of-life indicators. It also enjoys an exceptionally good reputation as a leader in creating and maintaining quality natural environments. In this respect, the state's forest resources are no exception. Forests cover nearly 17 million acres of Minnesota's land area and are important for a variety of economic, social and environmental values. Minnesotans spend nearly 850 million hours per year participating in outdoor recreation activities, most of which occurs in forested areas. In addition, the state has more than 1,500 privately-owned resorts which are part of a tourism and recreation industry that is responsible for 3 percent of total statewide employment. Minnesota sport hunters spend almost $280 million annually for the pursuit of wildlife, most of which are located in or near forests. Watchers of wildlife spend an additional $303 million annually to watch and photograph birds, deer and related wildlife. The state's forests are also an important source of raw material for the manufacture of pulp, paper, particle board and lumber. Second largest in the state, this manufacturing industry provides more than 110, 000 jobs (directly and

indirectly), $2.8 billion in employee compensation, and over $10 billion in industrial output (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources 1995a).

Organizational Landscape

Minnesota's public and private forests are owned by a rich variety of local, state and federal land managing agencies which exercise often differing mandates to meet a range of expectations of various client groups. Unique in many respects are the state's county governments which are responsible for the management of 2.8 million acres of forest land located primarily in the Northeastern part of the state. State government owns and manages 4.4 million acres of forestry land, most of which is located within the confines of designated state forests. In addition, the federal government (two National Forests and a National Park) is responsible for more than three million acres of land, most of which is forested. From a private perspective, forest ownership in Minnesota is primarily nonindustrial, namely nearly six million acres of forest. The use and management of these forests reflect the individual resource goals and objectives of 131,000 landowners. Industrially-owned forests total about 800,000 acres and have the production of wood fiber as their primary management objective.

The state has a number of agencies that have legal mandates to engage in various aspects of forestry. For example, the Pollution Control Agency is responsible for certifying the state's nonpoint source water pollution management program, while the Department of Agriculture has some authority over the use of chemical as might be used in forested areas. The state's Environmental Quality Board has broad responsibility for initiating environmental studies, fostering cooperation among state agencies, and reviewing major proposed actions, programs and legislation to ensure compliance with the state's environmental quality laws. The Department of Natural Resources is responsible for management of most state public domain and the delivery of a variety of natural resource-related professional services to the public and to other units of government as they seek to wisely use and manage their natural resources. The lead forestry unit within the Department is the Division of Forestry.

Minnesota has number of local, state and nationally affiliated private and non-profit organizations that have an interest in the use, management and protection of forests throughout the state. They have a history of active participation in issues involving forestry, a condition reflects the openness of Minnesota's political processes. National environmental and conservation groups with local affiliates in Minnesota include the Sierra Club, Izaak Walton League, Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy. Unique to Minnesota is the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, which has joined with four other particularly active environmental groups to form the Forest Action Network (FAN). Groups concerned with forests for their commodity possibilities include the Timber Producers Association, Minnesota Forest Industries, Inc., and the Minnesota Wood Promotion Council. Also expressing an active interest in the state's forests is the

Minnesota Resort Association and the Minnesota Deer Hunters' Association.

FOREST RESOURCE ISSUES IN DISPUTE: SETTING THE AGENDA

Conflict over Minnesota Forest Resources Generally

Minnesota has a history of significant disagreement over the use and management of forest resources. These conflicts have often been symptoms of more fundamental, deep-seated differences over how to use, manage and protect such resources. Advocates arguing from a biocentric resource-centered perspective assert the need to preserve forest wilderness and to sustain the diversity of forest ecosystems, while those viewing the world from an anthropocentric human-centered perspective urge expansion of wood-using industries and greater access to forests by intense recreational uses (e.g., all-terrain vehicles). Superimposed on these differences are struggles involving fairness and equity, including competition among various recreational uses of specific forest areas (snowmobiling versus cross-country skiing) and opposing perceptions of forest resource use based on location of residence (urbanites often interested in preservation while rural interests often seeking intense use and management of forests).

Minnesota's most visible forest resource conflicts have been over the establishment of Voyagers National Park and the allocation of land to wilderness status within the Superior National Forest. Subsequent to these land allocation conflicts have been periodic but intense disagreements regarding the appropriate use and management of these dedicated forests. From a state agency perspective, competing interests have engaged in a number of intense but short-lived conflicts over the use of pesticides for forest management purposes, the dedication and management of old-growth forests, and the appropriateness of regulatory programs focused on private forestry practices. All these concerns have been enmeshed within the context of significant expansion of the state's wood-based industry and subsequent increases in demand for wood fiber.

An appropriate characterization of the Minnesota scene might be a series of forestry conflicts carried out in a seemingly endless series of incremental disputes about a variety of specific policies and programs. While the resolution of each dispute has often determined the political balance between competing interests for the moment, in reality there has occurred a never-ending series of conflicts that have resulted in policy decisions that move back and forth between competing positions. Enter the late 1980s when the political balance was again upset, this time is a manner and scope not before experienced in the state.

Origin of Statewide Timber Harvesting Impasse

Over the past 30 years, at least four major legislative or gubernatorial initiatives had

sought to promote the state's economic development interests via programs focused on the state's forest resources. Fostered by new technological innovations in wood processing and manufacturing, an unprecedented $1.5 billion of capital investment were made in pulp, paper and particle board facilities in the 1980s. The associated wood fiber demand from the state's forests was unprecedented -- a 70 percent increase in harvest activity between 1980 and 1991. In the early 1990s, additional capital investments totaling nearly $2.2 billion were being considered. If realized, these investments would have required an additional one million cords of wood fiber annually (Kilgore 1992).

Forestry professionals, interested citizens, and environmental activists recognized that dramatic changes were occurring in Minnesota's forests. Harvest rates were dramatically increasing, especially the harvest of aspen and oak. Statewide forest inventory information was seriously out of date, raising uncertainties about the long-term sustainability of the state's forests. The consequences of timber harvesting were uncertain, especially complex ecological interactions occurring over large geographically broad areas. And citizen interest in the value of forests as a source of recreational opportunities, aesthetic beauty, and diverse populations of plants and animals was growing at a rapid rate. Together, these issues heightened concern to the point where public action was unavoidable.

One of the first signs that timber harvesting as an issue had reached a critical point, was a letter from the Sierra Club to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (February of 1989). The letter explicitly questioned plans for further expansion of the state's wood-based industry. Under the guiding hand of two very active environmentalists, the state's Environmental Quality Board (EQB) was subsequently presented (July 1989) with a petition (signed by 400 citizens) requesting a statewide generic environmental impact study (GEIS). Both activists were from northern Minnesota, one was a freelance writer, the other a carpenter and head of Preserve Our Land (a locally-based, grass-roots environmental group). Entitled a *Citizen Petition for a Comprehensive Study of Forestry Impacts on the Environment of Central and Northern Minnesota*, the petition cited a number of concerns with expanded timber harvesting in the state and specifically requested that "the Environmental Quality Board produce a generic environmental impact statement to assess the resultant environmental effects."

The request was initially met with substantial resistance, with many interests arguing that such a study was unnecessary or, if necessary, should be dealt with by the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR). After lengthy discussion and support from a variety of interests, the EQB unanimously commissioned the GEIS -- government's formal agenda had been set. While recognized as a form of environmental review under the state's Environmental Policy Act, a GEIS had never before been prepared in Minnesota. The uniqueness of a GEIS lie in the fact that broad geographically distributed impacts are examined (not site-specific projects), cumulative consequences of actions are evaluated, and policy and program recommendations are made (not simply assessment

of consequences of current or proposed actions).

INTEREST OF GOVERNMENT: FORMULATING POLICY OPTIONS

Government Interests and Concerns

The agenda had been set; attention was now directed toward the formulation of policy options to address the concerns expressed in the citizen petition. At this point, the interests of state government in the successful outcome of the GEIS process were numerous. Of special concern were:

- Preventing an extended and intense and potentially destructive conflict over the use and management of forests in Minnesota.
- Avoiding a moratorium on the harvesting of timber, an action that would result in serious adverse economic consequences for communities throughout the state.
- Broadening stakeholder involvement in resource management, thereby recognizing and accommodating the breath of citizen and organizational interests in the state's forests.
- Designing and implementing effective public programs focused on the use and management of forests.
- Resisting programs that regulate forest practices applied by private owners of forest property, thus avoiding government's involvement in costly and politically divisive command-and-control programs.
- Ensuring the long-term biological sustainability of forests, a resource considered essential to the health of the state's communities and their economies.
- Fostering strong and sustainable forest-based economies (e.g., tourism, forest products), especially at local and regional levels.
- Maintaining some control over the destiny of state agencies that are responsible for public forest resource programs.
- Establishing stakeholder institutions (for example, a citizen council) that are capable of addressing and processing major forest resource policy issues.
- Coordinating multi-agency (authority) forest resource programs, thereby improving the efficiency and focus of such programs.

Government Formulation Efforts

Preparation of the GEIS

The EQB identified three primary objectives for the Timber Harvesting GEIS; namely (a) determine the extent of timber harvesting and related timber management activities in Minnesota, (b) identify and assess the environmental and related impacts of timber

harvesting, and (c) recommend strategies to mitigate adverse impacts where such are found to be significant. Furthermore, the EQB was to accomplish these objectives within the context of three levels of annual statewide timber harvesting: the current level (four million cords in 1991); the level expected if all plant expansions announced or under consideration became operational (4.9 million cords)(level at the time the GEIS was commissioned); and the level expected if timber harvesting approximated the maximum biological yield of the state's forests (seven million cords).

With the aid of a citizen advisory committee and a series of public hearings around the state, the EQB identified ten major issues for analysis. These included water resources, forest soils and productivity, wildlife populations and their habitat, state and regional economic impacts, plant and animal diversity, recreational opportunities, and aesthetic and cultural resources. The GEIS was actually prepared by an EQB-employed consulting firm that assembled more than 60 scientists representing a wide range of disciplines. Given the study's scope, the task was enormous. Especially challenging was defining thresholds beyond which timber harvesting was considered to have a significant adverse impact on natural environments. By carefully combining technical information with the values and perceptions of the citizen advisory committee, these thresholds were ultimately defined (e.g., water quality standards, changes in wildlife habitat). As for mitigating strategies, detailed consideration was given to the effectiveness, efficiency and administrative and financial feasibility of various policy and program options to address the adverse impacts identified.

GEIS Recommendations

After spending nearly one million dollars, working for almost five years on the study, and preparing 14 technical documents (totaling more than 4,000 pages), the Environmental Quality Board approved the Timber Harvesting GEIS (Minnesota Environmental Quality Board 1994). The GEIS recommended dozens of tactical prescriptions for modifying land management practices -- for example, buffer strips along streams, even distribution of tops and limbs across a site -- as well as numerous strategic recommendations focused on four major policy areas. A *forest practices program,* through which management prescriptions needed to mitigate the adverse impacts of timber harvesting at the site level would be voluntarily delivered, was recommended. Also recommended was a *sustainable forestry program* through which monitoring and coordinating actions could be undertaken for purposes of sustaining the integrity of large forest ecosystems involving multiple owners. Sensitive to resource information voids, the GEIS also recommended a *forest-based research program* that would provide the information required to successfully implement the forest practice and sustainable forestry programs. Finally, it recommended a forest resources board with non-regulatory program authority to secure broad stakeholder involvement in forest policy decision-making.

In general, the 14 technical documents and the GEIS focused attention on the need

to consider forestry practices at both the site level and the landscape level. Furthermore, they highlighted the complexity of the state's forest ecosystems and limited understanding of the long term consequences of timber harvesting in these ecosystems.

Prominent individuals spoke in surprisingly positive ways of the study, but most were looking ahead to the future. Wayne Brandt, Vice President of Minnesota Forest Industries and member of the GEIS Advisory Committee, stated "What the [study] shows is that there's not a need for a revolution in logging and forest management, but rather a continued evolution." Don Arnosti, Minnesota Director of the National Audubon Society stated that the study was a "reasonably good start." However, he also stated that "this is just a report." The Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Rod Sando, called the report "a very positive conclusion for the future of Minnesota's forest management," but he too acknowledged that "admittedly, there are many issues to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction." (Meersman 1994).

INTEREST OF GOVERNMENT: FORMULATING AGREED TO POLICY OPTIONS

Unfulfilled Expectations

Expectations for implementation of the study's findings were high. Unfortunately, the EQB faced serious challenges as it turned attention toward implementation. For example:

• Lack of a clearly prescribed (automatic) process for translating the GEIS produced recommendations into public policy.
• Incomplete and often sketchy policy and program recommendations contained in the GEIS (only 28 of 8,000 pages were devoted to potential policies and programs).
• Concern over the source of the GEIS recommendations, namely a consultant that was not universally accepted by all segments of Minnesota's forest resource community,
• Uncertainty over how to secure the support of important stakeholders for the recommendations of the GEIS; broad stakeholder involvement and consensus had not led to the GEIS recommendations.
• Short period of time available for preparing recommendations for legislative action (six months); failure to act quickly could dely action for two years given MN's biennial legislative process.
• Serious negative political implications; failure to implement the GEIS after investing nearly one million dollars in analysis could pose enormous problems among those that supported such an investment.

These challenges were heightened by the reality that segments of the state's forestry community were becoming increasingly aware that, as a technical document, the GEIS was not going to solve the many contentious value and political differences that existed over the use and management of Minnesota's forests. Technical information was one thing; incorporating differing sets of values into agreed to and effective policies was another. Also being acknowledged was the fiction of continuing searches for certainty about the consequences of using and managing the state's forests. The benefits produced by greater and greater investments in information gathering and its analysis were beginning to wain.

Failure to effectively implement the GEIS could spoil an otherwise successful effort involving technical analysis. Conflicts among long-time adversaries could again surface; legal and judicial entanglements were a very real possibility, and a series of independently developed legislative actions fostered by opposing interest groups could result in poorly designed and potentially ineffective forest resource policies and programs.

Anticipating the uncertainty over the future of the GEIS, and reflecting on its potential importance, a small group of individuals from the Department of Natural Resources, the Environmental Quality Board and the University of Minnesota began to informally meet to examine how best to enhance the policy recommendations in the GEIS and how to secure support for their implementation. Meeting for the first time over a year before the GEIS was completed, the group agreed that there was a need for a process that would acknowledge the GEIS's many useful recommendations; creatively expand the GEIS's policy and program recommendations; and secure the involvement and support of important stakeholders. The group's ultimate conclusion was a need for a roundtable composed of key interests that would forage a set of consensus-based policies and programs.

Roundtable Assigned Formulating Responsibility

The GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable was sponsored by the state's Environmental Quality Board and Department of Natural Resources. The Chair and Commissioner, respectively, charged the roundtable with "... reviewing the major recommendations of the recently completed Timber Harvesting GEIS and developing a comprehensive implementation strategy" (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources 1994). The roundtable was to recommend to the Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources, a consensus-based report in advance of the 1995 session of the Minnesota Legislature.

Membership and Organization

Successful Roundtable Characteristics. The ultimate success of the GEIS Roundtable would be dependent on a number of conditions. To ensure this success, the

roundtable appointment and management experiences of others were sought. Some of the more salient suggestions for an effective roundtable structure and process were (Ehrmann and Lesnick 1988; Harter 1982; O'Leary 1995):

• Interests that could be affected by the outcome of roundtable deliberations must be represented on the roundtable.
• Members must be truly representative of their constituencies and willing to keep their constituencies informed of roundtable progress or lack there-of.
• Number of members should be limited (10 to 15 frequently cited), although evidence suggested a small size was not always critical to the outcome of deliberations.
• Members must have a strong motive to participate in roundtable deliberations, believing they will gain more from negotiation than from continued conflict with opposing interests.
• Members must bring unique and important perspectives to roundtable deliberations.
• So as to create a sense of interdependence, equal power must be perceived among roundtable members. At the same time, however, members must have sufficient power to exercise some sanction over the unilateral actions of others.
• Government officials must be involved in roundtable negotiations (give legitimacy to the roundtable process).
• Members must be in a position to play a role in implementing roundtable agreements.

GEIS Roundtable Characteristics. Selecting roundtable participants was one of the most critical aspects of the process. Participation in the process would clearly be voluntary, and the stakeholders represented on the roundtable represented important stakeholder groups. As suggested by previous research and experiences, they had to have credibility, either scientifically or politically. If a stakeholder group was not represented, the group's contributions would be missing and it would likely oppose the roundtable's deliberations and conclusions. Looking ahead to implementation, broad stakeholder participation would increase legislative favor toward enacting new laws and allocating funds. The importance of careful selection of members to be involved in roundtable deliberations has been well stated (Ehrmann and Lesnick 1988 pg 95):

The goal is to involve in the process persons who can assert an important perspective during the dialogue, who can exert influence over their peers, and who can play a role in furthering the implementation of agreements reached during the process. The greater the diversity of perspectives involved in reaching consensus, the greater the credibility and likelihood of implementing dialogue recommendations.

The Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources, and the Chair, Environmental Quality Board, requested (by letter) of more than 40 organizations, nomination of two representatives for the roundtable. The Commissioner and the Chair used the following

criteria to select Roundtable members:

- Interest in the management, use and protection of Minnesota's forest resources.
- Identified by an organization as a designated representative of that organization.
- General working knowledge of forest resource issues in Minnesota.
- Basic understanding of the Environmental Quality Board's Timber Harvesting GEIS.
- Willing to work with individuals representing diverse interests.
- Interest in seeking and reaching consensus agreements with competing interests.
- Willing to acknowledge and respect the roundtable's role in the GEIS implementation process.
- Able to commit the time and effort necessary to fully participate in the roundtable's activities.

The roundtable member selection process was made easier by the tendency of several groups with similar interests to nominate the same individual. Given the importance, high profile nature, and intensity of the roundtable's work, it was not surprising that the same names would appear many times -- the various stakeholder groups would want to nominate some of their best, most dedicated representatives. Ultimately, 26 individuals representing various stakeholder groups were selected (Table 1). One stakeholder (Native American representative) failed to participate in any of the roundtable's activities. The chair of the roundtable was appointed by the Chair of the Environmental Quality Board and the Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources.

Table 1. Membership of GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable, by Member Category and Organization.

Member Category	Organization
A. Owners of Forest Land	
State Land Management	Division of Forestry, MN Department of Natural Resources
County Land Management	MN Association of County Land Commissioners
Federal Land Management	Chippewa and Superior National Forests
Nonindustrial Landowners	MN Forestry Association
Forest Industry	MN Forest Industries
B. Users Forest Resources	
Primary Manufacturing	Champion Paper Company
Secondary Manufacturing	MN Wood Promotion Council
Loggers	Associated Contract Loggers

	Timber Producers Association
Environmental Organizations	Center For Environmental Advocacy
	Audubon Society
	The Nature Conservancy
Sporting Interests	MN Deer Hunters Association
Resort and Tourism Interests	MN Resort Association
Labor	Wood Fiber Council

C. *Government Process Organizations*

State Interests	MN Environmental Quality Board

D. Education and Research Organizations

K-12 Education	MN Environmental Education Advisory Board
Higher Education and	
Research	University of MN, Natural Resources Research Institute
	University of MN, College of Natural Resources

E. *Professional Organizations*

Forestry	Society of American Foresters
Wildlife	The Wildlife Society

The organizational ties of roundtable members were not the only possible linkages among members. Within the context of the charge assigned the roundtable, some members were *veteran stakeholders*. For example, members representing forest industry and certain environmental groups had a long history of participating in discussions about the use and management of the state's forest resources. Conversely, some members were *new participants*. The K-12 education member and certain environmental groups had not previously engaged in intensive dialogue over the use and management of forest resources. There were also a number of *senior players* that were looked to for counsel, guidance and maintenance of "a steady course." Such included some representatives of higher education and research, certain land management representatives, and some interest groups (e.g., The Nature Conservancy). Many members were strictly representative of *organized interests*, doing their best to ensure that the product of the roundtable reflected their group's preferences for the management and use of forests.

Roundtable Process

Successful Process Characteristics. As with the roundtable appointment process, insight as to how the roundtable might effectively operate was gained from the experiences of others. Acknowledging that the process would be voluntarily engaged in and would involve some sort of consensus building, joint problem solving and negotiation, a successful outcome would be more likely if the roundtable focused on the interests brought to the negotiating table, not the personalities or positions of each player ("get tough on the problem, not on the participants") and on the devising of solutions that are mutually satisfying and acceptable to each player ("achieving workable and durable solutions"). Within such an interest-based context, the process had to be perceived by participants as fair (procedure), foster an expectation that they will get what they came for (substantive), and provide opportunity for them to be heard in a respectful manner (psychological). Other elements recognized as important to a successful roundtable process were (O'Leary 1995):

• Involving participants in the design of the process, especially in the development of ground-rules used to guide their actions.
• Fostering the development of well-defined goals that are shared by participants.
• Promoting access to technical information needed for technically-resolvable issues, yet discouraging efforts to engage in time-consuming and often fruitless searches for certainty.
• Avoiding experts whose opinions and goals are often rigid and widely divergent (may foster distrust and confusion among participants).
• Encouraging open communication (including reporting on the validity of rumors) that will foster accurate images of participant interests, positions, and actions.

Dynamics of Roundtable Meetings. Initial meetings of the roundtable were used as a venue for members to become acquainted and to secure agreement on important matters of procedure. Examples of the latter include selection of suitable and acceptable meeting locations; scoping of the breadth of issues and programs to consider; and development of acceptable ground rules. A draft of subjects that might be included in ground rules was developed by the staff and presented for discussion at the group's first meeting. After much discussion and extensive reworking, the roundtable adopted a set of ground rules (Table 2). Also during initial meetings, roundtable members were briefed on the magnitude and nature of the state's forests and the recommendations contained in the Timber Harvesting GEIS. An especially important decision of the roundtable was to expand its search for innovative policy and program ideas beyond those recommended by the Timber Harvesting GEIS.

Roundtable deliberations occurred within the context of actions needed to sustain ecological, economic and social interests in Minnesota's forests. Relying in part on the site level and landscape level structure recommended by the GEIS (although discarding the recommendation for a research program), the roundtable proceeded to define site and

landscape level goals and to subsequently identify specific programs that would accomplish such goals. The process can be characterized as: identifying current programs (description of existing programs); identifying potential programs (description of possible programs); brainstorming for programs (generating additional program possibilities); grouping common programs (placing common thoughts together); labeling program groups (naming categories of programs); reflecting on the results (modifying to reflect reality); and tentatively agreeing on the results

At any one meeting, the staff would begin by briefing the roundtable on current and potential programs, and then turn the meeting over to the roundtable chair and facilitator to guide the roundtable members through a program brainstorming process (aided by "snowball" or "snow card" techniques). Working with roundtable members, the facilitator grouped the program suggestions into common subjects and proceeded, with advice from roundtable members, to label groups of common programs. Once accomplished, the members were given an opportunity to reflect on the product of their actions -- usually during the period between meetings. At the beginning of the next meeting, member suggestions for modification were made, deliberated, and, as appropriate, adopted. The chair inquired as to whether the members could tentatively agree on the product of their deliberations. If so, the subject was set aside and another round in the process began. This process was fundamentally followed at each meeting -- tentative agreement after tentative agreement. At the last two meetings, the entire package of tentative agreements was subject for review and subsequent action.

Roundtable deliberations were cordial but intense. Although members had strong feelings about the importance of issues and the most appropriate approach to their resolution, they were generally willing to listen and reflect on the views of others. Issues and activities not central to the mission of the roundtable frequently distracted its deliberations. Legislative forestry study tours, forestry conferences involving roundtable members, and media stories investigating forestry generally or prematurely reporting on tentative roundtable agreement are examples. As meetings of the roundtable progressed, however, strong personalities and even stronger views on forestry issues began to soften. People that seldom discussed forestry issues in other than a very formal setting (e.g.,

Table 2. Ground Rules Adopted by GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable (abbreviated version).

Mission: ... to advise the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on how to implement the strategic recommendations identified in the Timber Harvesting GEIS.
Membership: ... appointed by the commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources and the EQB chair.
Alternates: ... member may designate an alternate to serve in his/her absence ... chair has the authority to limit the participation of specific alternates if it becomes apparent that their

participation is not consistent with the intended use of alternates.

Chair: ... role of the chair will be to work with staff and the facilitator to develop meeting agendas and help focus the Roundtable's discussion and direction.

Facilitator: ... role of the facilitator will be to ensure all points of view are expressed by Roundtable members and considered on particular issues, and to help the Roundtable to reach consensus in all its deliberations.

Staff: ... responsible for administering the GEIS Implementation Roundtable and providing relevant background information to the Roundtable for their consideration.

Meetings: ... chair, facilitator and staff will establish meeting agendas. Staff will prepare brief summaries of all Roundtable meetings, which will be approved as the official public record of the meeting.

Roundtable Member Input: ... members may submit background information to the Roundtable process ... material made available at a particular meeting will be listed in a bibliography attached to the meeting summary. ... chair has the discretion to use or summarize the materials submitted.

Public Input Opportunities: ... individuals wishing to address the Roundtable can do so at each meeting ... chair has the discretion to determine when during the course of a meeting this public input opportunity will be provided, as well as the amount of time allocated to such input.

Media Relations: ... members may express personal opinions to the media ... chair will be the designated spokesperson for the Roundtable on matters related to its official position.

Roundtable Agreement: ... goal is to make recommendations all members can live with ... reach decisions through broad agreement ... where possible, agreement will be made by consensus... at the discretion of the chair and facilitator, roll-call voting can be used to arrive at agreement ... decision will be identified if no more than one-fourth of the members dissent ... roundtable decisions will identify minority opinions authored by holders of those opinions ... agreements will be made each step of the way, but prior agreements will be tentative pending a final package agreement.

Ground Rule Support: ... roundtable members agree to abide in good faith by the ground rules ... ground rules may be revisited by the Roundtable as deemed necessary.

---

legislative hearings) began to more openly communicate their concerns and expectations for Minnesota's forests. In addition to their verbal comments at the roundtable meetings, members were given the opportunity to make available to their colleagues reports of their choosing. Such reports were placed on a separate table in the meeting room; titles were recorded on an attachment to roundtable minutes.

Involvement of Third Parties. Especially important to the roundtable's success was the chair, facilitator and staff. In additional to their professional responsibilities, they worked intensively to create an air of trust between them and the members of the

Roundtable. For instance, the chair, facilitator, and staff declined to share transportation to or from roundtable meetings with any member of the roundtable. Doing so was a signal to roundtable members that no one member had special influence over the process. Because roundtable members varied tremendously in their understanding of the often complicated policy options available for addressing forest resource issues in the state, the third parties in the roundtable process proved invaluable in clarifying issues, identifying program options, and packaging recommendations into similar groupings.

The chair (appointed by the DNR Commissioner and EQB Chair) assumed a counseling or instructive role rather than a detached or totally neutral role. Especially important was the chair's role in establishing meeting agendas, which gave a focus to the group's deliberations; prodding the roundtable to make timely progress in light of looming deadlines; appropriately injecting special knowledge about potential forest resource policies and programs; and maintaining a sense of order during especially intense deliberations. The chair also periodically reminded the members of the potentially disastrous political consequences of failure to agree on policies and programs for addressing the state's important forest resource issues. Although difficult at times, the chair worked hard to engender a sense of trust between the chair and roundtable members. The chair made it known that agreed to processes would be followed; all would be heard. As part of administrative responsibilities, the chair convened the staff and facilitator after each roundtable meeting to review actions to date, define problems and solutions to them, and to plan for the next meeting. Such meetings were critical to the efficient operation of the roundtable process.

The GEIS Roundtable was a facilitated process. After considering the professional education and prior experience of various candidates, the chair and the roundtable staff selected a qualified facilitator. The facilitator played a number of roles, including the fostering of trust and collaboration between roundtable members and the reduction of power inequities among members (e.g., curbing the dominating personality; soliciting comments from the newly informed member). But of special value to the roundtable was the facilitator's ability to organize ideas presented during roundtable deliberations -- in contrast to the chair, who focused the group on discussion of policy options to deal with especially troublesome forest resource issues. These facilitating technologies were invaluable for focusing the roundtable's often rambling thoughts into a cohesive package of programs that made both technical and political sense. Although the facilitator was not a professional natural resource manager, this knowledge was quickly absorbed (from staff presentations, working with the chair, and contact with members) such that the facilitator was able to lay claim to substance as well as process skills. The facilitator's focus, however, was on process, a sense of neutrality, and on securing member agreement.

The roundtable was supported by staff from the MN Department of Natural Resources and the University of Minnesota. The staff played an especially critical role in bringing forth information about policy and program options, especially their technical and

economic feasibility and their social and political acceptability. At the beginning of nearly all roundtable meetings, the staff presented well-researched background papers, void of any advocacy statements or single-minded policy stances. This information was the springboard from which roundtable members began their informed debates over policy and program options. Since the senior staff person had also been the manager of the EQB's Timber Harvesting GEIS, roundtable members were quite trusting of the GEIS information brought forth for use in their deliberations At the request of the roundtable, the staff also played a critical role in crafting statements (based on roundtable deliberations) that would be the basis for deliberations at the next meeting. The staff also assumed responsibility for general administration of the roundtable (e.g., meeting location and minutes).

The roundtable process also engaged the media and the general public. At the end of every roundtable meeting members of the public were given an opportunity (time controlled by the chair) to express their views to the roundtable. However, extensive dialogue and discussion with roundtable members were not allowed. Additional opportunity for public involvement occurred between meetings when roundtable members met with their constituent groups to explain progress to date and to agree on the positions that should be brought to the next roundtable meeting. As for the media, the written press prepared at least four stories reporting roundtable progress. Some of the stories were critical of the slow progress and the likelihood that the roundtable would eventually fail to agree on important policies and programs.

Closure and Agreement. The roundtable's actions were focused on defining broad sustainability goals for Minnesota's forests and subsequently fleshing out a series of agreed to programs that would effectively address site-level and landscape level concerns that were an integral part of the sustainability goals. Once tentative agreement had been reach on programs, attention turned to establishing an administrative structure that would be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the programs on a statewide basis. Among the structures debated were boards, commissions, councils, and coordinating committee. After further dialogue and tentative agreement, a structure was selected (i.e., forest resources council). At such time, the roundtable members began to realize that they were close to completing their task.

The roundtable staff proceeded to merge the various tentative consensus agreements about specific topics into a proposed final report. Although having previously reached tentative agreement on each segment of the merged document, members continued for at least two additional meetings to debate various aspects of the proposed report. Finally at their last meeting, and after especially intense discussions, 24 of 25 members signed a statement signifying their "general agreement with the direction and substance" of the report. The policy selection process had been completed. The effort concluded 19 day-long meetings occurring over seven months throughout the state. One member failed to sign the agreement (National Audubon Society), preferring to have a minority statement included with the report. Among the concerns stated in the minority

report was lack of specific recommendations and deadlines, and a coordinating structure the lacked authority to force change. Failure of the member to sign was viewed with some concern by many roundtable members, especially when the member willingly agreed to all the previous tentative agreements of the roundtable.

<u>Reflection on Structure and Process</u>

The facilitation process that ultimately led to the agreed-to roundtable report was not carried out without challenges. For example, some members initially focused on the personalities and the positions of other roundtable members rather than focusing on their mutual interests in a "problem" (i.e., being solution-oriented). Time tended to soften the personality clashes, but never entirely so. There were also very subtle power struggles occurring between members, especially between representatives of different levels of government. Some members had hidden agendas("maybe I can get funding for my program by being part of the roundtable process"), while others were intent on sabotaging the process, believing that their policy and program preferences would be harmed by the roundtable's success ("if forested riparian areas are not protected, I will agree to nothing"). The short period of time available to carry-out the roundtable's work was perceived by some as a major deterrent to a more carefully crafted roundtable product ("how can we possibly change Minnesota forestry in six months?"), as was the threat of policy options that were especially disagreeable to some ("government regulation of forest practices is a must"). And some members initially voiced strong opposition to the large group facilitation process, preferring instead a process of hard-core intense negotiation involving far fewer stakeholders. In reflecting, however, these same members spoke highly of the facilitation process.

The roundtable was also distracted by peripheral issues that some members found offensive (timber supply forecasts reported by the media, legislative forestry study tours in which only some roundtable members were asked to participate). A potentially very distracting concern was the possibility of a national organization coming to Minnesota and engaging roundtable members in a separate consensus-building process focused on forest landscape issues. After much effort, the staff and the chair were able to have the effort postponed until the roundtable's work was done. Also a challenge to carrying out informed dialogue was the reality that some roundtable members were grossly misinformed about Minnesota's forests and had little appreciation for the many public and private programs that could be used to address forest resource issues. Their perspective on government policy tools was narrow (most likely, regulatory programs), and their view of Minnesota's forests was geographically very small (a single forestry incident in a specific township).

The roundtable also struggled with dissenting and minority views. Many members were irritated by the one minority view that was formally presented. They assumed that the tentative agreements made along the way were signals that positive progress was being made toward overall agreement, and that only minor adjustments would be made in the

report at the roundtable's last meeting. Of greater concern to some was that a minority report would signal to legislators that the report really did not represent agreement and that legislators would then be reluctant to enact laws that were based on the roundtable's report. Such proved of limited concern to legislators. However, the minority opinion as an issue continues to periodically surface among some segments of Minnesota's forestry community.

Midterm dissatisfaction with the roundtable's progress also diverted the roundtable's attention. At one point, timber harvester and wood-based industry representatives said "enough-is-enough, we must deal with economic issues." The intensity of the concern lead the roundtable leadership to move economic topics farther up on the agenda of subjects to be addressed. Member dissatisfaction with the roundtable's progress was also voiced through the written press. For example (Meyers 1994), "we've created a lot of words on paper that don't say a whole lot. It's been a rather frustrating drawn-out process," said the industrial representative to the roundtable. Or "everything is bogged down. And any time we try to bring up something specific, it's swept away without serious consideration," said an environmental representative on the roundtable. These concerns were addressed by private consultations with the chair or were challenged by other roundtable members that were comfortable with the approach and direction being taken.

Government played as especially important role in the roundtable process. Leadership in the Department of Natural Resources and the Environmental Quality Board gave legitimacy to the roundtable -- it created the roundtable and appointed its members. Government saw fit to provide the staff and the financial support necessary to operate the roundtable. Without such support, the roundtable would never have been able too successfully carry-out its work. The employment of a facilitator enabled roundtable members to organize their thoughts on extremely complex matters of policy development, and gave the chair and staff greater opportunity to focus on the substance of the policy options to be deliberated by roundtable members. Via strong staff involvement, the roundtable also benefitted enormously from exposure to creative information about potential policy options. Some members of the roundtable most certainly had innovative ideas, but most were simply not in a position to carefully search the state, the nation or other countries for creative policy and program options.

Substance of Agreed to Policies and Programs

The recommendations of the roundtable reflected its interest in accomplishing important site- and landscape-level forest resource goals and establishing programs and coordinating structures that would ensure their accomplishment. In sum, the following recommendations were made: harvest and management guidelines based on best available technical information to be voluntarily delivered to landowners and timber harvesters with the aid of technical and financial assistance; for major forested landscapes, strategic stakeholder-developed plans that foster coordinated management

across ownerships; monitoring programs that assess forest resource conditions statewide, compliance with forest practice guidelines, and the effectiveness of such guidelines; coordination of forest resources research via a policy-level research advisory committee; coordination of information gathering and analysis via an information cooperative; certification and continuing education of timber harvesters and resource professionals; and forest resource educational opportunities for the general public. All of these activities to be implemented via coordinating activities of a state Forest Resources Council composed of 12 stakeholder groups. In addition, the roundtable recommended a forest resources partnership composed of public and private organizations that have direct responsibility for implementing policies and practices recommended by the Council (GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable 1994).

LEGALIZING ROUNDTABLE AGREEMENTS: ACTIONS TO LEGITIMIZE

Characteristics of Successful Actions

The recommendations of the roundtable were one thing -- incorporating them into state law (legitimizing the recommendations) and subsequently securing their implementation was another. Fully recognized was that if roundtable members perceived that implementation was unlikely to occur, there would be no incentive for them to remain committed to the agreement. Previous experience had clearly demonstrated that successful implementation implied that implementing activities had to be monitored and reported back to roundtable members; if necessary, a means had to be provided to remake or re-decide the agreement; and people with authority to implement the agreement must have directly participated in the roundtable process (Blackburn 1995, O'Leary 1995). The tone for implementation was set by the chair in the letter transmitting the report to the Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources (GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable 1994):

> The Roundtable is proud of its accomplishments. When fully implemented, the recommendations will further solidify Minnesota's position among states that have an abundance of innovative and progressive forest resource policies and programs. The members of the Roundtable are committed to ensuring that such a condition becomes a reality.

Government and Roundtable Roles

The recommendations of the roundtable needed to be legitimized by a body more authoritative that the roundtable if the recommendations were to be respected and acted upon by policy implementors and resource managers in the state's forestry community. As such, the roundtable agreed that a new state law (legitimized policy) was required and that financial resources were necessary. Consequently, attention was focused on the state

legislature. The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources directed the Department staff, namely the lead staff person to the roundtable, to draft a bill that could be introduced in the Legislature at its Winter 1995 session. This was accomplished with the advice and counsel of the roundtable chair.

The roundtable was reconvened to review the draft and discuss legislative strategy. Members made a number of changes in the draft, an action which furthered their commitment to the proposed law. Roundtable members agreed that the chair would make presentations on behalf of the roundtable at all legislative hearings, although members could individually make presentations if they chose to do so. The proposed law and associated funding were favored by the Governor and became part of the Governor's legislative and fiscal recommendations to the Legislature.

Roundtable members choosing to testify at legislative hearings generally spoke favorably to the proposed law. When such was not the case, members policed themselves or reported breaches to the chair who reminded outliers to stay aboard. To the surprise of many, the member who did not sign the roundtable report testified in favor of the proposed law. Some members worked diligently behind the scenes to gain legislative support for the proposed law. Recognizing agreement among powerful stakeholders in Minnesota's forestry community, a number of legislators in key leadership positions sought to sponsor the bill. Because of legislative leadership struggles in the Senate, an alternative (but fundamentally the same) to the roundtable agreed-to bill was introduced. It was, however, short lived. During the legislative process, the chair and staff of the roundtable sent weekly status reports to members of the roundtable.

At the conclusion of the legislative session, the Governor signed into law the MN Sustainable Forest Resources Act and a biennial appropriation of $1.7 million (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources 1995b). The law was consistent with the roundtable's report and nearly identical to the draft bill prepared by the roundtable. The only important change was the addition of a labor representative to the Forest Resources Council. The roundtable convened after enactment of the bill for purposes of celebrating and reflecting on its work.

Reflections on Legitimizing Process

The process of legitimizing the roundtable's recommendations through legislation occurred without any major problems; the product therefrom was certainly consistent with the roundtable's wishes. This consistency was facilitated by the power inherent in the roundtable's consensus document. In this respect, the most forceful points that the roundtable chair and staff were able to make at legislative hearings were that the proposed law was based on recommendations agreed to by a broad-based spectrum of forestry interests, including a variety of industry and environmental groups, and that these interests supported the legislation as a "package " -- all provisions were necessary as crafted. This

message was also a plus for sponsoring legislators that were operating in political environment of "less government is best." For example, when the House of Representative's sponsor of the bill was challenged to demonstrate "who supports this bill for more government," the sponsor methodically read the list of interests represented on the roundtable. The impressiveness of the list led to the support of skeptical legislators. As the proposed law proceeded through the legislature, this message of agreement among a broad range of stakeholders became a significant deterrent to substantiative changes in the proposed law.

Communicating the status of the legislative initiative to the roundtable was extremely important. A single reporting voice (chair and lead staff) served to quell suspicion and uneasiness among roundtable members. Incorporating the roundtable's recommendations into law was also facilitated by the Governor's support of the proposal (and associated financing). Such enabled representatives of the Commissioner's office, Department of Natural Resource, to speak solidly in favor of the proposal.

The legislative legitimizing process was not without problems. Most notable were modest attempts by some members to break ranks. Some members were advocating other legislative initiatives not directly related to the roundtable's recommendations. These proposals mildly detracted from the roundtable's interests and were steered away from the roundtable's main legislative agenda by the chair and staff.

PROCESS AND SUBSTANTIVE POLICIES: EVALUATION OF SUCCESS

Roundtable Actions and Involvement

Possible Measures of Success

Success of the roundtable process and subsequent policy development events can be measured according to a number of standards. Commonly acknowledged are: agreement was ratified by participants; process was perceived to be fair and equitable; deliberations focused on outcomes (not positions); agreement was substantively sound (wisdom); participants were given opportunity to be heard in a respectful manner; and the process was efficient (Mangerich and Luton 1995). Not all of these standards were addressed in post-roundtable reviews. However, the general success of the roundtable from a participants perspective was assessed at two points, namely at a concluding meeting of the roundtable and via a questionnaire mailed to individual participants. The roundtable staff and leadership also had perspectives on the success of the process.

Participant Perspective on Success

The roundtable's final meeting presented an opportunity for members to reflect on

their involvement in the roundtable process and the products of their deliberations. In sum, the members were of the opinion that:

- Communication among diverse stakeholders had been significantly improved.
- Access to policy development by multiple interests of diverse stakeholders was better (more balanced).
- Political institutions capable of addressing important issues in the future had been set in place.
- Processes had been established for involving a broader array of interests in the search for solutions to important issues.
- Informational needs required for informed policy decisions had been elevated in priority.
- Integrated package of programs had been developed for implementation, none of which could stand alone.
- Public as well as private actions and programs had been called for, reliance would not be on only government initiatives.
- Movement down the road of getting action and making change had begun.

Greater insight to the perspectives of individual roundtable members was gained via a questionnaire that was distributed approximately two months after the last roundtable meeting (Table 3). Roundtable members appeared to be quite pleased with the member selection process and the usefulness of the synthesizing services (and products) provided by chair and staff. The background material provided by the staff apparently proved quite useful, as did the sense of order provided by the ground rules. On the neutral to moderate side of the equation was comfort with their role in implementing roundtable recommendations. Of all the items they were asked to respond to, the usefulness of the GEIS technical documents in assisting their deliberations was rated the lowest.

More spirited insight to roundtable member perceptions about the process can be gained from their responses to open-ended inquiries. Consider the following: *Effective/ineffective aspects of the process*? "Tough issues were not covered in order to achieve a consensus," "reminding the group that the community together was the key to having policy makers pay attention to the product," "effective when we worked from good information (drafts) developed by staff; not effective when we freelanced and lacked focus," and "getting to know people and listening to their ideas." *Alternatives (if any) to roundtable process*? "Honestly don't know," "not sure," and "direct implementation of forest practices on state lands." *Impact of recommendations on forestry?* "It depends on impacts made by partnership and council," "will be incremental change if community keeps communicating," "jury is out -- no effect so far, an excuse instead of action," and "most interested parties will continue to pursue their agenda through the political process."

Perspective on roundtable membership? "Roundtable was too large," "fringe groups were not represented," "environmentalists and public sector were over-represented as

usual." and "stakes of some stakeholders was not apparent beyond their own personal opinion." *Your constituency's view of process?* "We met on a bimonthly basis," "not deeply involved," "I solicited and received little input," "constituency view roundtable with some skepticism -- kept them informed," and "sent fax summary to 25 constituents after each meeting; received more than 25 comments and suggestions; wrote four articles for my organization's newsletter." *Usefulness of background material prepared by staff?* "Made sure participants were playing on level field," "not much of the information was new," "sometimes was too much," and "gave focus for discussion and expanded intellect of members regrading possible policies and programs; without background, group would have been less creative," and "surprising (alarming) how uninformed and misinformed some members were -- especially citizen members."

Table 3. Process and Substantive Impressions of Participants in GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable Activities. 1995.

Characteristic	Median Response (scale of 1 to 5)
Clarity of charge/purpose to roundtable (very unclear to very clear)	3.93
Long-term impact of roundtable recommendations on use and management of Minnesota's forests (very negative to very positive)	3.83
Appropriateness of roundtable member selection process (very inappropriate to very appropriate)	4.60
Effectiveness in participating in process (very ineffective to very effective)	4.05
Importance of ground rules (very unimportant to very important)	4.45
Usefulness of background information provided by staff (very unhelpful to very helpful)	4.37
Usefulness of GEIS technical documents to roundtable deliberations (very unhelpful to very helpful)	3.84
Usefulness of chair and staff synthesis of roundtable ideas for roundtable consideration at subsequent meeting (very unhelpful to very helpful)	4.50
Appropriateness of reliance on consensus rather that voting for roundtable decisions (very inappropriate to very appropriate)	4.37
Comfort with roundtable role in implementing recommendations (very uncomfortable to very comfortable)	3.53

Results based on response from 20 members of the roundtable or their alternates. Scale is 1= very (unclear, negative, inappropriate, ineffective, unimportant, unhelpful,

uncomfortable), 2 = moderately (unclear ......etc.), 3 = neutral, 4 = moderately (clear, positive, appropriate, effective, important, helpful, comfortable), 5 = very (clear, ... etc.)

Usefulness of GEIS technical documents? "Set the context and provided the substance," "seldom referred to them -- too thick, too inconclusive," "disappointed in low interest in implementing GEIS findings," and "was a tactical document -- not a strategic document." *Appropriateness of facilitation technologies?* "Development of lists was to time consuming," "very useful -- facilitator skills essential to roundtable's success," and "needed in order to keep our thoughts in order." *Usefulness of synthesis of ideas by chair and staff?* "Had to be done to maintain some sense of objectivity," "excellent work in this area," and "steered us into a mushy feel good language that left this high powered group underachieving." *More voting as a decision tool?* "Would simply polarize group more than already evident," "voting would allow for no support," "would have created losers and greater opportunity for sabotage," and "consensus approach must have been the preferred route since none of the members asked for a vote on any issue." *Comfort level with implementation activities?* "Could have done more with individual legislators," "one point where end run seemed to be in progress -- could have derailed implementation and threatened sense of community," "not enough time to really work together in legislature," and "industry, labor and loggers were at every hearing; not so the conservation and environmental communities. Made me suspicious of their support of roundtable's work."

Staff and Leadership Perspective on Success

The roundtable process (policy selection and legitimizing) was an intense and extremely time consuming series of activities. There is little question that the staff, facilitator and the leadership of chair played a role in its successful outcome. Some observations in this respect seem appropriate. The application of facilitation technologies was critical; the members of the roundtable were simply not capable of organizing their thoughts in a systematic fashion that would enable them to move toward agreement on fundamental forest resource goals and policy directions. Of similar importance was the staff's role in providing potential policy options and, subsequently, synthesizing and refining the ideas and perspectives generated by roundtable members. Likewise, the staff gave structure (a path) to the charge assigned to the roundtable by the Environmental Quality Board and the Department of Natural Resources. An overarching element to the positive operation of the roundtable was the high degree of trust placed in the staff and the chair. Roundtable members were charting new directions that involved significant risk for their constituents. They appeared willing, however, to follow the leadership provided.

The role of the GEIS technical documents was disappointing, probably because the information they contained was more tactical, while the roundtable was interested in the

development of strategic visions and directions. Some roundtable members were desirous of seeking action on site-specific forest practices as described in the GEIS. The staff reminded them it was "more important to determine rules for playing all football games, than to determine how a single play was to unfold in a single game." Similarly, some roundtable members urged action on a particular subject about which little science had been developed (e.g., forested riparian areas). This scientific void was clearly made known by some members, thus moving the roundtable's actions away from policies and programs that would have been technically unsound and would have involved investments that produced doubtful benefits. As for implementing the roundtable's recommendations, relatively few members of the roundtable played a role. In part this was because the activity had been delegated to the chair and the staff. Noticeably absent in the implementing phase, however, were roundtable members from the conservation and environmental groups. This led to concern about the strength of their support for the roundtable's recommendations.

Participation in the roundtable process enabled members to broaden their understanding of the many policy tools that government has available to encourage the application of sound forest practices. A number of members came on board with strong "command-and-control" regulatory approaches in mind, while others were convinced that investments in obscure "educational" approaches were going to save the day. Their exposure to the roundtable process sensitized them to, first, specifying desired policy outcomes and then searching for the policy tools that would make such an outcome a reality (e.g., education, technical assistance, financial incentives, tax incentives, regulatory actions).

Appropriateness of Forest Resource Policies and Programs

The success of the roundtable's activities cannot be justified by the efficiency of its operation alone. Its success must also be judged in the context of the substantive policies and programs that now guide the use and management of Minnesota's forests. Without question, Minnesota has a number of new and creative policies and programs which are being aggressively implemented (Kilgore, Ellefson and Rose 1996). The state is often looked to as a model of creatively in this respect. Equally important is the reality that the state legislature allocated more than $1.7 million to implement these programs. These two points (new programs and money invested) are especially significant at a time when government bureaucracies are being reduced in size and funding for new programs is being severely limited.

Also a major substantive success of the roundtable process was the establishment of institutions that are capable of dealing with future conflicts involving the use and management of forests in Minnesota. Via a Governor-appointed Forest Resources Council composed of representatives of major stakeholders, the state now has in place an organization to which aggrieved interests can bring major issues of forest policy for debate

and possible resolution. Prior to the Council, an agreed to and politically effective focal point for dealing with major issues of forest policy in state government did not exist. Frustrated stakeholders and the potential for poorly defined policies and programs were often the result.

Also of significance is that partnership arrangements involving public and private concerns have been established in response to the roundtable's recommendations. Government is not the sole actor and implementor of the new policies and programs. For example, a privately established Forest Resources Partnership composed of major land mangers and timber harvesters is operational; a privately initiated timber harvester educational and certification program is in place; a private certification program involving professional foresters is being developed; and a center for the continuing education of natural resource professionals (ultimately to be privately supported) is operational. In a major way, the roundtable's recommendations have led to private initiatives that here-to-for did not exist.

REFLECTION ON GOVERNMENT ROLE IN FOREST RESOURCE CONFLICTS

The involvement of government in initiating and facilitating actions to deal with major forest resource issues in Minnesota has been significant. To argue otherwise would be to ignore reality. Without the leadership of the state's Environmental Quality Board and the Department of Natural Resources, conflict over the use and management of the state's forests would have heightened, positions would have polarized further, and poorly designed public and private policy most likely would have been put in place. From a government involvement perspective, much can be learned from Minnesota's experiences. Consider the following:

Exercising a Social Obligation. Government often has a social obligation (in some cases a mandate) to help citizens resolve their differences over the use and management of forests. Minnesota has a history of open and active government; it also has environmental laws that direct government to address major environmental issues brought forth by citizens.

Monitoring Issues. Government has a leadership role to play in monitoring the status of potentially divisive issues regarding the use and management of forest resources; in bringing issues to the attention of broader segments of potentially affected stakeholders; and, as appropriate, bringing the stakeholders together for dialogue and possible resolution of issues. The issue observing actions (formal and informal) of the MN Environmental Quality Board and the Department of Natural Resources were extensive during the buildup of concern over the use and management of forest resources in the state.

Place for Appeal. Government has a role in being available as a place where disagreeing stakeholders can first air their grievances and seek suggestions as to how and where their conflict over the use and management of forest resources can be resolved. The MN Environmental Quality Board was a place where aggrieved citizens could (and did) bring their concerns, in expectation that such concerns would be heard and seriously considered.

Providing Needed Resources. Government has a role in bringing its financial and professional resources to bear as supportive elements needed for disagreeing stakeholders to effectively resolve their issues. In contrast to the MN Department of Natural Resources, stakeholders simply may not have, for example, the finances required to employ a facilitator or hire professional staff that can suggest innovative policies and programs.

Undertaking Large Investigations. Government has a role in organizing and undertaking the exceptionally large technical investigations that are simply beyond the capabilities of an individual stakeholder (or all stakeholders combined), but that are necessary if the information required for effective resolution of issues involving the use and management of forest resources is to be available. Stakeholders simply cannot, for example, undertake extensive generic environmental impact analyzes of the type developed by the MN Environmental Quality Board.

*Establishing Issue Resolution Process*es. Government has a role in identifying aggrieved stakeholders and getting them (or their representatives) to a formal process where resolution of forest resource use and management issues is possible. The MN Department of Natural Resources has extensive networking arrangements, whereby staff know the stakeholder landscape and can suggest potential representatives for involvement in roundtable-type processes.

Judging Policy Feasibility. Government has extensive experience in the use and management of forest resources and has a role (obligation) to use that experience as a basis for suggesting creative policies and programs for resolving issues. The MN Department of Natural Resources can, for example, reflect on the technical appropriateness of policy options and make recommendations accordingly.

Focusing Stakeholders. Government has a role in focusing stakeholder involvement in the policy process, beyond their simply setting a government agenda. These roles include encouraging stakeholders to participate in the selection of policies (possibly via roundtable processes), the legitimizing of selected policies, and the implementation of policies and programs. For example, the Department of Natural Resources alerted roundtable members to legislative hearings and invited citizen involvement in monitoring the application of forest practice guidelines.

Ensuring Timely Action. Government has a role in encouraging timely action to address issues that could languish for unacceptably long periods of time. Acknowledging the adverse economic and environmental consequences of delaying action on important issues, government can encourage and inspire disagreeing parties to avoid lengthy and time consuming wrangling that may or may not lead to resolution of their differences. The MN Department of Natural Resources fostered timely action by bring stakeholders to the table and keeping them focused on the issues at hand.

Securing Credibility within Government. Government has a role of ensuring that agencies which comprise government view the policy products of negotiations as worthy of implementation. Without government active intervention and participation in negotiation processes, serious commitment by government to the products of the negotiation may not occur. Having the MN Department of Natural Resources participate in the roundtable gave the roundtable's recommendations legitimacy among the agency's staff (discarding the recommendations as "not invented here' has been avoided).

Implementing Policies and Programs. Government has a major role in implementing policies and programs agreed to by stakeholders. As reservoirs of financing and professional talent, and often mangers of large tracts of public land, forest resource agencies have an obligation to bring such resources to bear for purposes of implementing stakeholder agreements. For example, public forest land managed by the Department of Natural Resources can be a showcase for the future application of forest practice guidelines.

Cultivating and Solidifying Trust. Government has an obligation to cultivate trust among disagreeing stakeholders; provide reasonable assurance that they will be heard and that a venue will be found for dealing with issues of concern. The MN Environmental Quality Board was viewed as a trustful place for citizens to seek resolution of issues regarding forest resource use and management.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Minnesota's forests and the communities that are dependent on them for economic, environmental and community values are better because of the Timber Harvesting GEIS and the GEIS Implementation Roundtable (Kilgore, Ellefson and Rose 1996). Uncertainties regarding the existence of quality forest resources and access to them have been significantly reduced. In a significant way, this occurrence is the result of government actions. Although often financially and politically taxing, the analytical and political processes fostered and nurtured by government has placed Minnesota in a much better position to deal with forestry issues and forest resource conditions in the future. And it has made nearly all members of the forestry community a bit more humble in their reported understanding of forest ecosystem functions, yet much more understanding and

appreciative of the strength of consensus-building processes.

LITERATURE CITED

Blackman, J. W. 1995. Environmental Mediation Theory and Practice: Challenges, Issues, and Needed Research and Theory Development. Pg 267 - 280. In: *Mediating Environmental Conflicts: Theory and Practices* by J. W. Blackburn and W. M. Bruce. Quorum Books. Westport, CT.

Brewer, G. D., and P. DeLeon. 1983. *The Foundations of Policy Analysis*. The Dorsey Press. Homewood, IL.

Ehrmann, J. R. and M.T. Lesnick. 1988. The policy dialogue: Applying mediation to the Policy-making process. *Mediation Quarterly* 20: 93-99. Summer.

Ellefson, P. V. 1992. *Forest Resource Policy: Process, Participants and Programs*. McGraw-Hill, Inc. New York, NY.

GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable. 1994. Report of the GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable. MN Department of Natural Resources. St. Paul, MN.

Harter, P. J. Negotiating Regulations: A Cure for Malaise. *Georgetown Law Review* 71(1): 1-118.

Kilgore, M. A. 1992. Government Response to Sensitive Timber Harvesting Issues: Minnesota Generic Environmental Impact Statement. *In:* Conference Proceedings Multiple Resource Values in Forest Resource Management. University of Alberta. Edmonton, Alberta.

Kilgore, M. A., P. V. Ellefson, and G. A. Rose. 1996. Innovative Forestry Initiatives: Minnesota Prepares for the Future. *Journal of Forestry* 94(1):21-25.

Mangerich, M. K., and L. S. Luton. 1995. The Inland Northwest Field Burning Summit: a Case Study. Pg 247-265. In: *Mediating Environmental Conflicts: Theory and Practices* by J. W. Blackburn and W. M. Bruce. Quorum Books. Westport, CT.

Meyers, J. 1994. Committee Created for Compromise is Big in Size and Cost, Short on Solutions. *Duluth-News Tribune*. October 2, 1994. Pg 8A.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. 1994. Report of the GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable. St. Paul, MN.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. 1995a. Minnesota Forest Resources Plan: 1995 Assessment. Division of Forestry. St. Paul, MN.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. 1995b. Minnesota's Sustainable Forest Resources Act of 1995: GEIS Legislative Outcome and Implementation. Division of Forestry. St. Paul, MN.

Minnesota Environmental Quality Board. 1994. Generic Environmental Impact Statement Study on Timber Harvesting and Forest Management in Minnesota. St. Paul, MN.

Meersman, T. 1994. Timber Study Gives Good Report and a Warning. *Minneapolis Star Tribune.* April 22, 1994. Pg. 3B.

O'Leary, R. 1995.Environmental Medications: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It? Pg 17-36. In: *Mediating Environmental Conflicts: Theory and Practices* by J. W. Blackburn and W. M. Bruce. Quorum Books. Westport, CT.

Stephenson, M. O., and G. M. Pops. 1989. Conflict Resolution Methods and the Policy Process. *Public Administration Review* 49(5):463-473.

APPENDIX

Members and Staff of MN GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable

<u>Roundtable Members</u>

Donald Arnosti. National Audubon Society
Eric Bloomquist. MN Wood Promotion Council
Wayne Brandt. MN Forest Industries, Inc.
Edward Buchwald, MN Environmental Education Advisory Board
Donald Christian. The Wildlife Society
Daniel Dessecker. The Ruffed Grouse Society
Paul V. Ellefson (Chair). Department of Forest Resources, University of Minnesota
James Erkel. The Nature Conservancy
Janet Green. MN Ornithologists' Union
Lansin Hamilton. MN Forestry Association
Judy Hewes. MN Resort Association
Alan Knaeble. MN Timber Producers Association
John Kvasnicka. MN Deer Hunters Association
Steven Laursen (Vice-Chair). MN Society of American Foresters
Eric Mayranen. Associated Contract Loggers, Inc.
Gerald Neimi. Natural Resources Research Institute, University of Minnesota
Kenneth Nickolai. MN Center for Environmental Advocacy
Robert Oswald. MN Wood Fiber Employees Joint Legislative Council
Jack Rajala. Rajala Lumber Company
Gerald Rose. MN Department of Natural Resources
Patricia Schmid. Izaac Walton League of America
Alfred Sullivan. College of Natural resources, University of Minnesota
David Thom. Superior and Chippewa National Forests
Paul Toren. MN Environmental Quality Board
John Vogel. MN Association of County Land Commissioners

<u>Staff and Facilitator</u>

Michael A. Kilgore. MN Department of Natural resources
Donald G. MacKay. Department of Forest Resources, University of Minnesota
Mirja P. Hanson. Consulting and Facilitating, Millennia International, Inc.