

A resource manager's guide to working with people

YOU ARE ABOUT TO ADDRESS a potentially hostile audience at a public meeting. Are you ready? Do you “know” your audience?

You get out of your vehicle, about to start a day's work in the field, and see an angry person approaching. Do you have a plan to defuse the situation?

A program you are passionate about needs resources. Do you know the “tricks of the trade” to get your program funded?

You need access through private land to repair a flood-damaged bridge and trail. Will you be able to negotiate with the landowner?

Your duties include working with the public, managing a budget, and supervising a field area the size of Vermont. How can you most effectively manage your time?

You need to fill an important GS-5/7/9 position. How can you plan for hiring the best person? How will you know whether a candidate will work well with your staff?

You are the project leader for inventorying thousands of acres of prairie, using numerous crews and many volunteers. Will you be able to set the right tone in the field? How will you motivate your crews to get the job done by the end of the field season?

The Conservation Professional's Guide to Working with People, by Scott A. Bonar, provides communication tools to address all of these situations. Bonar presents practical tips for working with colleagues, funders, supervisors, and the public. As stated in the preface, "This book should be on the shelf of environmental professionals who want to improve their 'people skills.' Those who are already good at working with others will learn new tips. Those who are petrified of conducting public meetings, requesting funding, or working with constituents will find easy common-sense advice about how to begin." The book includes examples from history and current events as well as real-life scenarios that resource managers are likely to face, which illustrate how to apply the techniques described.

The Conservation Professional's Guide to Working with People is based on the assumption that applied science and law enforcement, by themselves, are insufficient for managing natural resources and are greatly enhanced by interpersonal skills and flexibility. Director Duane L. Shroufe (Arizona Game and Fish Department) explains in the foreword, "Just as organisms in natural systems must evolve to survive in changing environments, so too must we as professionals responsible for public trust resources evolve to address new challenges and greater expectations." Bonar's book provides the tools necessary for helping resource managers evolve in this changing world of resource management, which most assuredly includes working with people.



Reference

Bonar, S. A. 2007. *The conservation professional's guide to working with people*. Island Press, Washington, D.C., USA.

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