

**Policy Internships and Fellowships Program
Final Report**

Support for a Ground-Up Approach to Public Policy Development

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PREAMBLE

Home Organization: *Wildlife Habitat Canada*

Wildlife Habitat Canada (WHC) is a national, non-profit, conservation organization, established in 1984 by Environment Canada, provincial wildlife agencies and conservation agencies within the Wildlife Habitat Coalition. WHC works through partnerships with communities, landowners, governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), and industry to find effective solutions to complex environmental problems facing wildlife habitat.

WHC's strategic approach to conservation is based on sound science which allows the organization to act as a catalyst to develop new and innovative conservation programs, assess policies and legislation that affect habitat, as well as the status of habitats in Canada, and support high-quality conservation initiatives across Canada to build capacity to conserve habitat on the ground.

WHC believes strongly in the stewardship ethic, that is the responsibility that Canadians - including landowners, private companies, voluntary organizations, and individual citizens - have to care for our land, water and air, sustaining the natural processes on which life depends and enhancing it for generations to come. At WHC we use the phrase, "conservation through stewardship," to articulate that we see stewardship as a tool through which we achieve our conservation objectives.

WHC's current involvement in stewardship plays out in a variety of projects. First, WHC and conservation partners run a series of stewardship recognition programs in the forested, agricultural and urban landscapes. These programs – Forest Stewardship Recognition Program, Countryside Canada and the Urban Habitat Stewardship Award – recognize citizens for their achievements in stewardship and conservation on the landscape. In addition, WHC is involved in the development of Canada's Stewardship Agenda (CSA), a multi-jurisdictional policy piece that sets forth a vision and an action plan for the future of stewardship in Canada. Related to the Agenda is the Stewardship Canada Web Portal, an online gateway to information, tools and resources for stewardship practitioners. WHC is also piloting a "citizen science" project with conservation partners in Ontario, to build the capacity of communities to monitor the environmental quality and health of their watershed. Finally, WHC has undertaken a peat forest stewardship project in Indonesia, in partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Wetlands International, that involves working with communities towards the conservation of peat forests. Peat forests act as essential carbon sinks and help combat global climate change.

One of the most important programs at WHC, in terms of building partnerships and supporting the capacity of conservation partners across Canada, is its granting program. The granting program commits funds to support habitat conservation initiatives across all landscapes. In partnership with Environment Canada, a portion of the revenues associated with the sale of the Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamp is forwarded to WHC to be allocated towards exceptional wildlife habitat conservation programs across Canada. The majority of these funds have come from waterfowl hunters who purchase the stamp to validate their migratory game bird hunting permits. Over the past 18 years, WHC has contributed over \$28 million through grant awards in support of hundreds of habitat conservation projects, programs, and associated partnerships across the country. (WHC *Annual Report*, 2001)

Host Department #1: Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is responsible for: policies and programs in support of Canada's economic, ecological and scientific interests in oceans and inland waters; the conservation and sustainable utilization of Canada's fisheries resources in marine and inland waters; leading and facilitating federal policies and program on oceans; and safe, effective and environmentally sound marine services responsive to the needs of Canadians in a global economy. The department's vision is one of safe, healthy, productive waters and aquatic ecosystems, for the benefit of present and future generations.

Within the Oceans Sector at DFO, there are two business lines: Fish Habitat Management and Oceans Management. The mandate of the Fish Habitat Management Program is to protect and conserve fish habitat in support of Canada's coastal and inland fisheries resources, and to conduct environmental assessments under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. The policy objective of the Fish Habitat Management Program is the net gain of habitat for Canada's fisheries resources to increase the natural productive capacity of habitats in order to benefit present and future generations of Canadians. The Oceans Management Branch aims to achieve an integrated, ecosystem-based approach to the conservation, protection and sustainable development of oceans and oceans resources. The objective, programs and priorities of the Oceans business line flow from the *Oceans Act* and contribute to conservation, sustainable development and integrated management of Canada's estuarine, coastal and marine waters.

The Oceans Sector at DFO also places an emphasis on stewardship and has taken the initiative to establish a Stewardship Framework that is aligned with, and supportive of, Canada's Stewardship Agenda. The framework provides the principles and key elements for engaging Canadians in the stewardship of Canada's oceans and fish habitat – Public Awareness and Education, Capacity for Action, Recognition, and Evaluation and Reporting. The Oceans Sector Stewardship Working Group comprises DFO representatives from all regions of Canada and works to advance the key elements of the Stewardship Framework and DFO's contribution towards Canada's Stewardship Agenda. (http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/canwaters-eauxcan/aboutus-anotresujet/index_e.asp).

Host Department #2: Environment Canada

The mandate of Environment Canada (EC) is to: preserve and enhance the quality of the natural environment, including water, air and soil quality; conserve Canada's renewable resources, including migratory birds and other non-domestic flora and fauna; conserve and protect Canada's water resources; carry out meteorology; enforce the rules made by the Canada - United States International Joint Commission relating to boundary waters; and coordinate environmental policies and programs for the federal government. The department's mission is to make sustainable development a reality in Canada by helping Canadians live and prosper in an environment that needs to be respected, protected and conserved. (<http://www.ec.gc.ca/introec/mandate.htm>)

Within Environment Canada (EC), the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) takes two main approaches to habitat conservation: (i) establishing protected areas for nationally and internationally significant wildlife habitats as national wildlife areas and migratory bird sanctuaries; and (ii) cooperating with others in the maintenance of wildlife habitats across Canadian landscapes and seascapes; for example, through environmental assessments, by promoting conservation-friendly land-use policies and practices and through direct stewardship programs.

The Stewardship Division of the Wildlife Conservation Branch at CWS looks after stewardship interests as they relate to the conservation of wildlife habitat. CWS defines stewardship as the wide range of voluntary actions that Canadians take to care for the environment. These activities range from monitoring and conserving wildlife species and their habitat, to protecting and improving the quality of soil, water, air and other natural resources. They view these types of activities, particularly those that protect habitat, as essential to the prevention and the recovery of species at risk (http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/index_e.cfm).

The Stewardship Division at CWS acts as the Secretariat for Canada's Stewardship Agenda and therefore oversees the development and implementation of CSA and its various elements. They handle the broader responsibilities associated with CSA, including: coordination of jurisdictional progress reports as part of the annual report back to Joint Ministers in September; meetings with stakeholders and other interest groups; and communicating the goals of CSA to other departments and jurisdictions. In addition to their work with Canada's Stewardship Agenda, three very important national programs are run from the Stewardship Division – the Habitat Stewardship Program, the Ecogifts program and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. These programs are incredibly valuable to the department in terms of assisting in the achievement of their conservation objectives, but they are also extremely supportive of the efforts of stewardship practitioners across the country.

INTRODUCTION

I began working for Wildlife Habitat Canada in September of 2001. At that time, WHC was just beginning a Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) funded project with the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS). The project was entitled the "Voluntary Sector Initiative National Stewardship Workshop Series." Between September 2001 and March 2002, workshops were held in 12 provinces and territories, with key stakeholder groups from across Canada. The purpose of the workshops was to ask stewards what was needed in order to build their capacity to deliver stewardship and conservation projects and programs in Canada. The findings of this workshop series would help to guide the development of Canada's Stewardship Agenda, a multi-jurisdictional policy piece led by CWS with the participation of the other four federal natural resource departments – Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Parks Canada – along with Wildlife Habitat Canada.

In addition to this new project, I was hired to work on WHC's national Stewardship Recognition Programs in the forested and agricultural landscapes and to develop a similar Ontario-based pilot program to recognize and honour stewards working in the urban landscapes of Ontario. Other major projects in which I have been involved while at WHC include the Stewardship Canada Web Portal and the 2003 national conference, "The Leading Edge: Stewardship and Conservation in Canada." These various projects are actually all intimately interwoven, in that they build upon the findings of the VSI National Stewardship Workshop Series, contribute towards the development and implementation of Canada's Stewardship Agenda and provide a forum in which the conservation community can build a long-term strategy for the conservation of natural heritage.

My position as Land and Water Stewardship Project Manager at Wildlife Habitat Canada is the first full-time position I have held since graduating from the University of Guelph in June 2000 with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science. At Guelph, I majored in Earth and Atmospheric Science and minored in Environmental Impact Assessment. Related jobs held

during my time at Guelph were in the field of land stewardship and led to an interest in working with landowners managing their land with economic as well as environmental interests in mind.

The position at WHC has allowed me to build upon this experience and develop my interests further to gain a broader view of how stewardship is defined and practiced throughout the various sectors – public, private and voluntary. In addition, employment in a charitable, non-government organization has led to an interest in non-profit management and in other issues related to the voluntary sector such as policy development, board governance, capacity building, volunteer management, advocacy, fundraising and marketing. This interest has been furthered through my involvement in the Voluntary Sector Initiative and related outputs from the Government of Canada's interest in, and support for, the voluntary sector over the last few years.

In addition to the satisfaction I derive from my involvement in WHC's core business, I enjoy the mental and physical atmosphere of the organization as well. My colleagues at WHC are intelligent and well respected in the conservation field. They are driven by common values and goals, which contribute greatly to a sense of teamwork and accomplishment in the projects and programs we deliver. As someone who is relatively new to the workforce, I appreciate the support that I receive from the organization in terms of my career development. Their willingness to expose me to a variety of learning opportunities has broadened my knowledge of the conservation sector and of the non-profit sector in general. They place a great deal of responsibility in me to communicate the goals of the organization and to deliver our projects to the public.

I find the work at WHC to be challenging, diverse and ultimately fulfilling. In particular, I've found that a "generalist" background is somewhat of an asset when working for a non-profit organization. Fewer staff and plenty of work require you to contribute to various other projects and programs within the organization, rather than concentrate solely on one file. While it can be beneficial to have expertise on one particular topic, wildlife biology for instance, project management requires a variety of skills: from business-oriented skills, such as planning, managing budgets and administrative work; to the more people-oriented skills like fundraising, marketing and communications; all the way to basic scientific knowledge related to flora, fauna and sound scientific principles of habitat conservation and land management. Some of these skills I already possess and others I will continue to develop through my work at WHC.

The physical set-up of the workspace at WHC is also an attribute of the organization. WHC finds its home in an old foundry just west of downtown Ottawa. Vaulted ceilings and plenty of large windows ensure a bright workplace environment. There is also plenty of space and common areas that lend well to both informal and formal discussions. The building is easily accessible by public transit and close enough to the Ottawa River Parkway to make cycling to work a pleasant experience. The neighbourhood offers plenty of restaurants, shops and amenities to allow for errands to be done at lunch-time. The office space is shared with other conservation-minded non-profit organizations like Natureserve and the Ontario Wetland Habitat Fund. As one might expect, the staff at WHC make an effort to follow principles of environmental sustainability within the office environment. This means that some consideration is given to the distance of an employee's commute and to the availability of public transit. The organization makes an effort to reuse, reduce and recycle office supplies, to use biodegradable detergents in the kitchen and to drink organic coffee. A pleasant physical work environment may not matter much to some, but I personally enjoy working in a bright and spacious environment where some consideration is given to employee values and comforts.

The Match

I found out about the Policy Internships and Fellowships (PIAF) Program through a colleague at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ted Cooke, with whom I had been working on the CSA Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group and the Stewardship Canada Web Portal. Ted contacted WHC and suggested that I apply to the program with a proposal that would see to the continued engagement of the voluntary stewardship sector in the development and implementation of Canada's Stewardship Agenda. In addition, Ted and colleagues at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment Canada and Wildlife Habitat Canada felt that the PIAF program would allow me to devote more time to some of the activities related to Canada's Stewardship Agenda as they moved into their critical next phases.

My application to the PIAF program was quite straightforward, as I had been working on the project for a year at that point and felt comfortable with the direction that it would take in the year ahead. The internship seemed to be a perfect fit for the ongoing work between DFO, EC and WHC. I hesitated for a moment when I saw the level of experience that the PIAF program required – senior managerial experience. However, I had confidence in the scope of the project and its fit with the PIAF program objectives, as well as in the commitment of the partners. The PIAF program came along at an opportune time and the staff at WHC encouraged me to apply. My project turned out to be unique to the program, in that I would divide my ten months between two federal departments, rather than one. My acceptance into the program came in August 2002 and I began to prepare for my move to DFO. I would spend approximately five months in the Habitat Management Programs Branch of the Oceans Sector at Fisheries and Oceans Canada (under the direction of Patrice Leblanc) and five months in the Stewardship Division of the Canadian Wildlife Service at Environment Canada (under the direction of Greg Thompson).

The Project: Background

In June 2000, attendees at a national conference entitled, "Caring for our Land and Water: Stewardship and Conservation in Canada," identified a need for greater integration within the stewardship community at all levels, in order to ensure a more concerted effort and voice in support of the conservation of our natural heritage. Federally, the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada took the lead, in collaboration with other federal departments and provincial and territorial agencies, on developing a Stewardship Agenda for Canada. As a first step in involving the voluntary sector in developing policy that would contribute to a Stewardship Agenda for Canada, CWS obtained funding from the VSI and contracted WHC to undertake a series of national workshops to discuss "building volunteer capacity to support stewardship." The VSI workshops took place from September 2001 to February 2002, in 12 provinces and territories and involved over 220 participants from a range of resource sectors, including Agriculture, Forestry, Fish/Hunt/Trap, Freshwater/Marine, Parks & Protected Spaces and General Stewardship. Discussions with Aboriginal groups from across Canada took place concurrently. Ten representative participants from these workshops and from Aboriginal discussions were then brought together for a two-day synthesis workshop to build on volunteer input and to outline next steps that would help guide what is now known as "Canada's Stewardship Agenda." What resulted was a summary that outlined priorities, policies, guiding principles, an emerging framework and a series of actions required to turn those concepts into reality.

The purpose of CSA is to provide a framework to strengthen and formalize collaboration between all levels of government, industry and the voluntary sector in support of environmental stewardship. The Agenda calls for four first-step collaborative initiatives, one of which is the Stewardship Canada Web Portal. StewardshipCanada.ca is an online community of stewards

across the country who have committed to sharing stewardship knowledge and information in the belief that information is essential to good stewardship. The VSI workshop reports are all available on the Stewardship Canada Web Portal. At the time when my internship began, our next step was to secure support for a multi-stakeholder implementation plan, so that CSA could be announced at a joint meeting of federal, provincial and territorial Resource Ministers in September 2002. All of the four first-step initiatives of CSA would require major policy participation from the voluntary sector if they were to become fully effective.

CONTEXT

At the time of my internship and in the couple of years preceding the internship, the concept of stewardship seemed to me to be receiving quite a bit of attention. First, the term “stewardship” seemed to be used more frequently, both in the conservation sector and in other sectors and disciplines. For instance, the term “stewardship” has traditionally been associated with the faith community. In a Christian sense, “stewardship” indicates a personal responsibility to exercise good will and obedience towards God (<http://www.yale.edu/environment/publications/bulletin/105pdfs/105scheffler.pdf>).

In financial circles, “stewardship” is used to indicate responsible planning and management of financial resources. The two circles – faith and finance – combine their usage of the term, “stewardship” to indicate a more holistic approach to giving or donating. This approach encompasses social and environmental concerns in faith-based financial issues (<http://www.pcusa.org/stewardship/stewardship.html>).

In the conservation sector, stewardship is an ethic whereby we care for the land, water and air as parts of a natural system and act to sustain and enhance that natural system for generations to come (<http://www.stewardship.ca>). Stewardship is a tool that allows us to achieve our conservation goals – *conservation through stewardship*. Of course, this definition will change slightly depending on the agency, organization, department, industry or individual - all this to highlight that the term “stewardship” is used more and more frequently in our society, but that the term means many different things to many people.

Internationally and nationally, the Kyoto Protocol is a hot issue in the environmental field. While the Climate Change Plan for Canada doesn't make direct mention of stewardship, it does refer to the need for voluntary and community-level action to reduce our impact on the environment (http://www.climatechange.gc.ca/plan_for_canada/plan/index.html). At the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in August 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa, the important role of environmental stewardship was highlighted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, who said, “The world today, facing the twin challenges of poverty and pollution, needs to usher in a season of transformation and stewardship...” (<http://www.stewardshipcanada.ca>).

The popularity of the term “stewardship” is also reflected in its inclusion in various federal conservation-oriented policies and programs – *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*, Canadian Biodiversity Strategy, Canada's Oceans Strategy, Freshwater Fisheries Strategy, Agricultural Policy Framework, National Forest Strategy and of course, Canada's Stewardship Agenda. Canada's Stewardship Agenda explicitly addresses the stewardship component within the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy, while strategies like Canada's Oceans Strategy and the Freshwater Fisheries Strategy are in alignment with the goals of Canada's Stewardship Agenda.

The Task Force on the Conservation of Natural Heritage of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE), in its *State of Debate Report* (due for release in June 2003) proposes a new vision for conservation. According to the NRTEE, this transition towards a new approach to conservation requires a broad suite of instruments that encourage stewardship (http://www.nrtee-trnee.ca/eng/programs/Current_Programs/Nature/NatureBulletin2-04-2002_e.htm).

With all these federal natural resource policies and strategies, the audience is largely the same. However, the methods for engaging this audience differ widely depending on the particular policy at issue. Policies related to the management of natural resources across the various landscapes of Canada primarily involve “the landowner” and implicate various other users or interest groups concerned with the management of a particular resource. Here, the term “landowner” is used broadly to describe any individual or group with a responsibility or mandate to manage a particular landscape or resource. This ranges from the private landowner (homeowner, farmer, woodlot owner, rancher, land trust and small- and large-scale business/industry landholdings) to the public landowner (governments). I would refer to these “landowners” as stakeholders in the various federal policies listed above. For the purposes of this paper, stakeholders are defined as those groups that are directly affected by changes in natural resource management policy.

Other interest groups vary from citizens with stewardship interests in a particular landscape or resource (anglers, hunters and naturalists, for example), to community-based groups and volunteers, to non-profit conservation organizations delivering stewardship programs and interacting with landowners, to lobbyist organizations. These groups might be considered “constituents” in the policy or strategy, in that they are indirectly affected by the outcomes of the policy. This is not to suggest that the position of constituents is any less important than that of the stakeholders, quite the opposite actually. These constituent groups often serve as the medium through which the stakeholders express or communicate their views on a particular issue. For instance, in the case of Canada’s Stewardship Agenda, resource user groups, landowners, volunteers, land trusts and smaller environmental NGOs were involved in consultations with Wildlife Habitat Canada that allowed for their input to guide the development of the Agenda. Similarly, lobbyist organizations and community groups often act as a voice for individuals and communities on policy issues at the municipal, provincial, national and international level.

Discussion on Citizen Engagement

The consultation process between governments, stakeholders and constituencies is not well defined. Several methods exist to allow governments to seek input from stakeholders and constituents and, alternatively, there are forums for citizens to voice their opinions on current policies at issue. Citizen engagement, as opposed to citizen participation or involvement, is a relatively new concept in the area of public policy development. Engagement implies that citizens share the responsibility for policy development and play an integral role in the overall process through open dialogue from beginning to end (Phillips and Orsini, 2002). Traditionally, citizens have had limited opportunities to engage in the process beyond voting, town hall meetings and consultation processes, where government often controls the attendance and agenda. In such cases, policies are already well on their way through the development process and outcomes are seemingly determined prior to obtaining citizen input. This method of closed consultation and the lack of opportunity for citizens to provide meaningful input, have led to a public distrust in the policy-making process. In response to this public distrust and in recognition that a more open dialogue between citizens and policy-makers will lead to better, more relevant policies, new and more inclusive pathways for engagement have been proposed.

As mentioned previously, in my internship the particular public policy being developed was Canada's Stewardship Agenda. CSA crosscuts sectors and landscapes, in that it doesn't focus on a particular resource or land/seascape, but rather on the broader issues related to effective land and water stewardship across Canada. Therefore, the stakeholders are not necessarily limited to landowners, but encompass any individual or group with an interest in stewardship. As mentioned earlier in this section, stewardship engages a wide range of citizens in a variety of ways. However, one possible way of looking at the stakeholders and constituents in this particular policy issue would be to examine what they all have in common. Stewards are volunteers. The act of stewardship is one that represents an ethical choice and a personal commitment to manage the land, water and air wisely, sustaining and enhancing it for generations to come. Therefore governments, industries, Aboriginals, farmers and ranchers, woodlot owners, anglers and hunters, stewardship groups, land trusts, naturalist groups, communities and citizens are all practicing stewardship voluntarily. For this reason, they might all be considered stakeholders in Canada's Stewardship Agenda. The consultation process becomes much more complicated when the engagement of such a large and diverse group is needed. However, with funding from the VSI, the Canadian Wildlife Service was able to contract Wildlife Habitat Canada to conduct consultations that would involve a number of these stakeholders. Like all consultation processes, the VSI Stewardship Workshop Series had its faults. Overall, however, a lot of valuable input was given by volunteer stewards in support of the need to build a better support system for stewardship and conservation in Canada.

Historically, the fields of urban planning and environmental policy have been heralded as "progressive" in terms of their record for meaningful citizen engagement (Phillips and Orsini, 2002). More recent studies on US environmental policy making have attempted to identify determinants of successful public participation in environmental decision-making and to use those to evaluate how meaningfully citizens have been involved in the process (Davies, Beierle & Konisky, date unknown). Here in Canada, environmental decision-making is set within the context of sustainable development – the consideration of economic, social and environmental factors in decision-making. As articulated in the *Canada-Chile Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, Public Consultation and Participation*, Environment Canada views the individual's role in the policy-making process as significant, whether that individual is a one-time participant in a consultation or an ongoing member of a group that implements programs in support of sustainable development.

Policy issues of a multi-jurisdictional nature, such as Canada's Stewardship Agenda and others that concern natural resource management, have led the federal government to make more formal commitments to open and transparent policy development (http://can-chil.gc.ca/English/Activities/Work/2000wp/canada_chile_agrmt.cfm). One such agreement is the *Social Union Framework Agreement* (SUFA). SUFA reflects an agreement between the Government of Canada and the provinces (except for Québec) and territories that recognizes the need to "ensure effective mechanisms for Canadians to participate in developing social priorities and reviewing outcomes." SUFA commits government to work in partnership with individuals, families, communities, voluntary organizations and business and labour, towards meaningful public policy. While SUFA does reflect federal government recognition of the importance and benefit of engaging Canadians in policy development, it does indeed have its criticisms. Perhaps most notably in terms of policy development, is the limitation implied in the clause above that only commits the federal government to citizen involvement in setting priorities and reviewing outcomes, rather than to actual policy development, design or implementation (Phillips, 2001).

Ultimate responsibility for how federal departments engage the public falls to the Privy Council Office (PCO). The mandate of the PCO includes responsibility for enhancing the capacity of the public service to effectively engage Canadians (Phillips and Orsini, 2002). PCO provides direction to departments in their consultation strategies, while the Treasury Board Secretariat establishes guidelines for evaluating federal consultation activities - in response to the Auditor General's request for "new ways of thinking and new approaches to engaging Canadians in public decision-making (http://can-chil.gc.ca/English/Activities/Work/2000wp/canada_chile_agrmt.cfm#3). We're all familiar with the traditional methods for public involvement in the democratic policy-making process – the electoral process, town hall meetings, consultations, membership in a political party, affiliation with an advocacy or lobbyist group, letter-writing, and attending rallies or protests. But what are some of these "new" ways of engaging Canadians in the process and how do they differ from the traditional methods?

Information technology and media present new opportunities for citizen engagement in the public policy debate. In recent years, television and the Internet have served as avenues for citizens to share their input on a particular issue. Deliberative polling is a relatively new form of public opinion research that utilizes television as its central communications tool. It differs from traditional polling in that it uses a random sample to bring participants together. In this way, it ensures that disengaged citizens become a part of the process, whereas traditional polling methods tend to attract only the most engaged citizens who often possess hardened opinions on the particular issue. The idea of deliberative polling first arose in a 1988 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. However, it wasn't put into practice until 1993, when Channel 4 in England took hold of the idea and conducted a deliberative poll on the issue of crime. Since then, the idea of deliberative polling has slowly been gaining ground. A 1996 Round Table on Citizen Engagement, hosted by the Institute on Governance, invited various Canadian government officials to discuss the idea of deliberative polling and the potential for its mainstream use in Canada. The results of that discussion suggested that, for the idea to advance, it would need to be institutionalized around specific events or times of the year, thereby regularizing it in the minds of the television media and the public (Institute on Governance, 1996).

The Internet is another forum for engaging citizens in public policy-making. A recent report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Engaging Citizens Online for Better Policy-Making*, recognizes technology as an enabler, not the solution to citizen engagement. The report suggests that integration with traditional "offline" tools for access to information, consultation and public participation in policy-making is needed to make the most of information and communication technologies. Challenges inherent in online engagement include the need for active promotion and competent moderation of online consultations. The OECD recommends advanced planning for online consultation and offers guiding principles to help ensure a successful process (OECD, 2003). The term "electronic democracy" is sometimes used to refer to online engagement.

A recent study by Beierle and Cahill (2000) sought insights into how US state environmental agencies are harnessing the Internet for citizen involvement. The study focused on the kinds of opportunities that agencies are providing to engage citizens, rather than on whether citizens were actually participating. In the United States, private dot.com companies, such as Speakout.com, Voter.com and Grassroots.com, have sprung up to solicit citizens' opinions online and transmit them to lawmakers (Beierle and Cahill, 2000). A similar online tool exists in Canada to encourage citizens to voice their opinions on environmental policy issues. WildCanada.net provides citizens with up-to-date information on environmental policy issues in their region, simply by having citizens input their postal code on the site. WildCanada.net then

provides templates for letters to send to their Member of Parliament and encourages citizens to input their own message.

Online forums were used during the VSI Stewardship Workshop Series to engage not only stewards from rural and remote areas of Canada, but also those who were simply unable to attend the regional workshops. This method of engagement encountered some of the difficulties mentioned above – lack of active promotion and limited moderation. I tend to think that online forums, while a convenient method of engagement, fail for more reasons than the two noted above. I believe that the exhaustive use of computers and the Internet in our everyday professional and personal lives – constant e-mails, instant messaging services, and visiting websites to obtain information – has lessened people's tolerance and capacity for using them to communicate their values and beliefs on important issues often reflected in public policy debates. Rather than sit at a computer and write a dissertation on the merits of supporting community stewardship initiatives that promote environmental and public health, a truly engaged individual might rather attend a session in person to hear the other arguments put forward and receive feedback on their own arguments. Yet another deterrent to online participation in public policy forums is the reality of the slow Internet connection. The Internet is a viable tool when one has high-speed access, but participating in an online forum through a slow and unreliable dial-up connection can be tedious for even the most engaged and committed individual.

Newer methods or tools for citizen engagement, such as technology and the Internet, afford policy-makers a valuable opportunity to create more relevant policies with broader buy-in and support from citizens. However, further research into these models is needed in order to determine whether more people are actually participating in online processes and, if so, whether new voices are being heard or whether the digital divide has excluded certain voices from the public policy debate.

The methods of citizen engagement discussed above differ from traditional methods because they encourage consistent and timely input from citizens and, for the most part, do not restrict citizens from engaging in the process. Regardless of the method used to engage citizens in the public policy-making process, the practice of citizen engagement should consistently reflect certain values or guiding principles. In its *Public Involvement Framework and Guidelines*, Health Canada (2000) offers the following values: trust and integrity; visibility and openness (transparency); honesty; mutual respect; inclusiveness; and two-way communication. It is these types of values that set citizen engagement apart from traditional models. Maxwell (1997) suggests that engagement models encourage reflection, learning and choices, rather than the venting and advocacy experienced in traditional models. Engagement models encourage interest groups to listen to citizens and to interact with other interests/interest groups on the issue, allowing for a focus to be placed on the common ground. Maxwell goes on to suggest that traditional models might easily be adapted to reflect what has been learned from engagement including dealing with a cross-section of interest groups rather than one at a time and providing feedback to participants so that they can see how their input fits with what others have said and how it influences the final outcome.

For the most part, these principles were followed throughout the VSI Workshop Series. Workshop processes were transparent, inclusive, encouraged two-way communication and ensured feedback to participants within the very real constraints of time and money.

INTERNSHIP CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the course of my internship, my broad task was to bring forth the voices and values of volunteer stewards (as heard through the VSI consultations), in an effort to guide the development of multi-sector public policy related to resource management. More specifically, it was expected that I would be engaged in the following aspects of the development of Canada's Stewardship Agenda:

- Participating in national teleconferences with CSA Working Group members, to continue the development of CSA
- Maintaining contact with volunteer stewards (involved in the VSI workshops) to give periodic updates on the development of CSA
- Encouraging discussions and forums amongst the VSI workshop participants (via StewardshipCanada.ca)
- Facilitating a dialogue between the VSI workshop participants and the CSA Working Group
- Assisting in preparations for the September 2002 and September 2003 Ministers' meeting where CSA would be endorsed and reported on (respectively)
- Ongoing communication with the voluntary sector following the launch of CSA in order to determine impacts of public policy on this sector
- Ensuring that CSA evolves to address these impacts and concerns
- Participating in all other aspects of the PIAF program

In addition to those tasks, my original application to the PIAF program committed me to maintaining my duties at WHC with respect to the VSI workshop follow-up actions and the on-going development of the Stewardship Canada Web Portal – a critical component of Canada's Stewardship Agenda. These duties included:

- Participation in teleconferences with StewardshipCanada.ca Founding Partners
- Acting as a representative voice for the environmental sector on the Public Mobilization Committee with IMPACS' (Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society) "Charities and Democracy" Project.
- Membership on the Program Committee for the upcoming National Stewardship Conference in June 2003 ("The Leading Edge: Stewardship and Conservation in Canada"). The conference would serve as an important venue for profiling, and moving forward with, Canada's Stewardship Agenda.

My duties changed somewhat upon arrival at DFO in September 2002. With the internship being an integrated, operational placement in the Habitat Management Programs Branch at DFO, it was expected that I would assist the branch in their day-to-day operations. This was not only a benefit to the Branch and a learning experience for me, but also an expectation of the PIAF program – the opportunity to learn more about the inner workings of the federal government and to experience first-hand the similarities and differences between government and the voluntary sector. My original internship application, which indicated (broadly) the delivery of Canada's Stewardship Agenda, translated into day-to-day activities like: conference calls with various federal/provincial/territorial working groups with interests that aligned with CSA; interaction with other VSI-funded projects at DFO in order to communicate about the national conference, "The Leading Edge: Stewardship and Conservation in Canada";

contributing to briefing notes about the VSI and Canada's Stewardship Agenda; and a much more involved role in the organization of the "Leading Edge" Conference, which was emerging as a landmark event for the stewardship and conservation community in Canada.

Similarly, at Environment Canada my broad goals remained the same, while more discrete tasks were assigned to my day-to-day activities. As the Stewardship Division at CWS acts as the Secretariat for Canada's Stewardship Agenda, I was able to assist in: the coordination of CSA Working Group teleconferences and meetings; the coordination of jurisdictional reports in a national roll-up of stewardship activities related to CSA as part of the scheduled report back to Ministers in September 2003; the drafting of Minister Anderson's keynote address for the "Leading Edge" Conference; the coordination of teleconferences and meetings for the Stewardship Canada Web Portal Working Group; and the development of a strategic business plan for the portal. My involvement in the organization of the "Leading Edge" Conference continued, but changed from a program focus to an overall focus on the strategic objectives and anticipated outcomes of the conference.

Work plans were developed for each of my federal assignments in order to provide focus to my activities and to account for my time. However, it was difficult to include and account for the variety of tasks that would contribute to the three deliverables of the work plan – the "Leading Edge" Conference, Canada's Stewardship Agenda and the fulfillment of the PIAF program requirements. During the second half of my internship, I was able to improve upon my work plan and delineate tasks to more clearly contribute to the deliverables of the project.

One of the primary challenges that I experienced with the internship and one that I hadn't anticipated was the adjustment to working in the federal government. As previously mentioned, I enjoy the working environment at WHC, so perhaps it shouldn't have come as a surprise to me that working life in the federal government might not live up to those high standards. It wasn't a "people" issue (my government colleagues were easy to get along with and interpersonal relationships do take time to build), but more a "culture shock" of sorts. For the most part, the work that I was doing in the federal government was a continuation of the work I had been doing at WHC, so that part of the transition was relatively easy. In retrospect, it was the actual work and the fact that there was plenty of it, that eased the challenge of adjusting to a new office culture. DFO and EC are both located in tall office towers, where employees work in cubicles (often with very little natural light). I didn't focus on the physical space of the office, but it certainly wasn't the most invigorating space in which to work. In the federal government, I also had a strong sense of being "just a number." Herding off the bus with dozens of other employees wearing government identification badges and filing into a dark tower with plenty of security, where you then sit all alone for the better part of the day, was a routine I had trouble adjusting to. On the positive side though, I did find my cubicles to be spacious (one was much sunnier than the other) and located in a relatively quiet area that was conducive to working independently. I was encouraged to attend meetings in both departments and found that this helped me a great deal to learn about the department or branch and its programs, staff and typical acronyms used in day-to-day conversations around the office.

Other challenges that I faced related more to the nature of the work and the methods of decision-making within the branch. I found it took longer to complete tasks, like memos and briefing notes, because of the sheer number of people who would want to have input into the particular work item. I also found it difficult to have to drop my work at a moment's notice to contribute to work items that had been requested from the higher levels. What I had anticipated to be my biggest challenge – liaising between the federal government and the voluntary sector on Canada's Stewardship Agenda – would prove to be much more straightforward.

The network that was developed through the VSI Stewardship Workshop Series was identified as the “voluntary sector”. The job of liaising with that community was made easier as a result of several different forums that emerged over the last few years. The first forum is the Stewardship Canada Web Portal. Outreach and word-of-mouth communication with the stewardship and conservation community over the last few years are now beginning to demonstrate the power of such technology. Through the portal, stewards are able to find and retrieve stewardship information relevant to their interests and, in addition, they are able to self-register on the portal and identify their contributions to stewardship. There remain improvements to be made to the Portal in order to ensure its usefulness and efficiency for stewards; however, throughout my internship it would prove to be a useful communication tool. The second forum for updating the conservation community on developments associated with Canada’s Stewardship Agenda is the national conference, “The Leading Edge: Stewardship and Conservation in Canada 2003,” to be held July 3-6, 2003 at the University of Victoria. In my role as an Organizing Committee member, I have been able to assist with the development of the conference and to work together with other members of the conservation and stewardship community in order to ensure that the conference will be regarded as a landmark event. It is anticipated that the “Leading Edge” conference will be the venue where stewards from across Canada will come together to collectively build a path forward for the future of stewardship and conservation in Canada.

The accomplishments of my internship, as I see them, are much more tangible than the challenges. Through coursework related to the PIAF summer institute, through opportunities presented by the PIAF program, such as conferences and workshops and through a related graduate course at Carleton University, I was able to gain a much better grasp of the voluntary/non-profit sector and to apply that knowledge to my home organization, Wildlife Habitat Canada.

I learned about the way public policy is developed in Canada in general and was able to experience it first-hand, from consultation to development and implementation. I expanded my knowledge of the Canadian political system and of the structure of the bureaucracy. I learned how to write a briefing note or at least how briefing notes are written in one federal department. I gained experience in consultation and facilitation through the VSI Workshop Series and I learned a great deal about issues that plague the volunteer stewardship and conservation community in Canada. Perhaps most importantly, I developed an appreciation for the challenges that bureaucrats face in their work – challenges which I did not fully appreciate prior to beginning the internship.

GOVERNMENT AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR: PARTNERS IN PUBLIC POLICY?

With respect to government-voluntary sector relations, I have doubts as to the true appreciation that one has for the other. I can say this with confidence now because I speak from experience. Before beginning the PIAF program, I had very little appreciation for the work of the federal government in terms of the relationship building needed to develop public policies. I didn’t have the sense that there was much being done at the higher levels to support the two-way communication that is so fundamental to the policy development process. At this stage of the internship, I can honestly say that there is recognition of this essential element. The bureaucracy operates under constraints that are not entirely different from those of the voluntary sector. Despite the apparent “wealth” of the federal government, civil servants also operate programs under budgetary constraints (albeit at a different level than that of the voluntary sector, but then again the work is at a different level as well). In addition, they deal with the transient nature of the public service, which challenges relationship building over the long-term, as well as with regular changes in government and its priorities. Having experienced working

life in the federal public service, I can acknowledge that these are real challenges. However, I cannot accept them as contributing factors to ineffective policy development. While there seems to be a general acknowledgement of the value of the voluntary sector to public policy development, there also seems to be an underlying belief that the voluntary sector is there to be consulted when it is convenient – when deadlines are coming up and Ministers are meeting to endorse a particular policy. The value – wisdom, experience and time – of voluntary sector organizations and their representatives needs to be given the utmost respect in order to help overcome some of these challenges and work towards a climate of understanding and open dialogue between the two sectors.

There is much to be said about the potential benefits to public policy-making that could be derived from a strong government-voluntary sector relationship. Initiatives such as the VSI hold promise for what the future might bring. However, there remains a need for the Government of Canada to ensure that the various Codes of Conduct, Guiding Principles and good faith coming out of the VSI permeate through federal departments and translate into meaningful partnerships with citizens.

While there will always be underlying biases at each end that work to inhibit this type of collaboration, the simple fact remains that trust takes a long time to build and such a short time to destroy. If governments want to create better, more relevant policies for citizens, then they must take the time to work through these engagement processes and most importantly, ensure that lines of communication remain open. On a day-to-day basis, this is a huge challenge. Turnover in the federal public service is quite high and relationships that have been established by one employee over a period of time can just as easily fall to pieces when someone new comes to the position. However, with proper departmental policies and strategies in place to ensure that planning for engagement in the policy-making process takes place, turnover can continue to occur with minimal disruption to public trust and stakeholder relations.

The voluntary sector plays a huge role in the delivery of programs and services to the public and therefore needs to be more highly engaged in public policy-making. Governments and citizens alike will benefit from this engagement, when relevant and meaningful policies begin to be developed. Citizens don't expect to be satisfied with every policy that is developed, but they can be more appreciative and accepting when their advice has been sought and they have had the opportunity to give their input, as individuals whose lives and livelihoods the policy will ultimately affect.

Education is the first step down this path towards a more mutually beneficial government-voluntary sector relationship. Education of the voluntary sector and citizens as to opportunities for engagement, the importance of this engagement, and the effort that the Government of Canada is putting forth to make this engagement happen, would go a long way to breaking down some of the biases of the sector towards the government. Alternatively, government education as to the role and importance of the voluntary sector in service delivery and the benefits to be derived for policy development by seeking advice from voluntary sector organizations and citizens, would help all involved to leave their assumptions behind and work constructively towards the betterment of Canadian society.

Programs such PIAF go a long way to achieving this understanding and should be further encouraged and supported in the future. PIAF has just touched the tip of the iceberg in breaking down these barriers. I am sure that all the fellows and interns are able to think of additional needs within their respective sectors, where a program such as PIAF could continue to help eliminate biases and allow for the kind of open dialogue where all stakeholders benefit. My experience has taught me that the two sectors – public and voluntary – are willing to work

cooperatively when given the time and the means to do so. My internship afforded DFO and EC an opportunity to build on the good relations established through the VSI Stewardship Workshop Series and to maintain the momentum from those workshops throughout the development of Canada's Stewardship Agenda. For the voluntary stewardship and conservation sector, my internship served as a means of encouraging two-way communication. There is much more work to be done in this regard. My internship has opened my mind to the seemingly limitless possibilities that a program like PIAF could have, not only in terms of building government- voluntary sector relationships, but also in forging links between: federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and Aboriginal governments; the business and resource industry; the voluntary sector; citizens; and landowners in support of the stewardship and conservation of Canada's natural heritage.

Upon my return to WHC, I hope to continue to advocate the need for these types of linkages within the natural resource sector. More specifically, I see a real opportunity to initiate a program that builds on the benchmark set by the Policy Internships and Fellowships Program and that would engage young conservation professionals in building linkages between all sectors – public, private and voluntary – in support of meaningful natural resource policy and program development. However, this program would serve another purpose as well, which would be to encourage the career growth and development of youth coming into the natural resource sector. It would address some of the needs that are prevalent right now, like the need for training, mentorship, skill-building and multi-sectoral collaboration and also the needs that will emerge in the future (most notably, the need for succession planning as the workforce ages and begins to retire). As is the case for the Policy Internships and Fellowships Program, the interns and their organizations will reap the benefits of a network that strongly supports a more inclusive approach to public policy development.

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