

Ho Gary,

Some after-the-visit thoughts:

I believe those who adopt the “environmentalist” mantle - and especially those who choose or agree to represent “environmental interests” (whether that be represented by a species or a wilderness or a River, etc.) in social-political contexts, e.g. a collaboratives – have a responsibility to the interests they represent. For purposes of that representation, their positions should, in my view, be governed, not by what is best for harmony, or best for the group, or the best that we can do right now, but by what – according to the best information and judgment available – is best for the environment, for the fish, for the River.

I see Mary X, someone I know well and care about on a personal level, as not fulfilling this requirement. Instead her presence on the Scott River Watershed Council as a representative of Mt. Shasta Audubon, allows the RCD to claim that it has environmental support, that it is taking care of the problems, that it deserves a take permit, that it should continue to receive lots of salmon restoration and water quality money...and meanwhile the Scott River is being dewatered, choked to death, the Chinook are being extirpated, and the Quartz Valley Indian Reservation is being ignored. I see her sometimes active and sometimes passive acquiescence in this deceit as a betrayal of the River and its creatures.

Some would call what Mary acquiesces in a form of greenwashing. I think it is a form of exploitation. Mary’s divided loyalties (pioneer family and nature lover) and primate nature are being exploited by those who control the RCD. But they are not the only ones responsible: My aggressive questioning and confrontation of the myths, lies, half-truths and deceptions made it easier for Mary to become a “collaborator” in the WW II sense – and, I would guess, to write off Felice’s criticism because it came from a “bi-polar” individual.

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A problem with the stakeholder collaborative approach to solving any community issue or problem which we did not discuss is that the participants do not have equal power. In this context I am defining power as any of the following: time, financial resources, expertise/access to experts and political influence. So the collaborators are not meeting on an even playing field. The result is that the interests with more power will, all else being equal, tend to dominate the group and therefore achieve more of their agenda. KFA had more power/capacity to participate in collaboratives than Mt. Shasta Audubon because KFA had paid staff. But we always had less power than the industry folks across the table. I always sought to make up for this by being smarter and working harder (being prepared). But that was a stopgap and not always sufficient to level the playing field – a result, no doubt, of my personal limitations.

Related to the issue of unequal power is the problem of authority. Who has the authority (as opposed to the power) to negotiate a water settlement for the Klamath? I believe the group that is currently meeting has the authority to negotiate dam issues but not the authority to negotiate a water management agreement. They are essentially illegitimate. To have that authority they would need to open up the process to any resident of the Basin who chooses to participate as well as to the Quartz Valley and Resighinee Tribes, the Shasta and Siskiyou RCDs, the Restoration Councils and maybe other interests.

The problem of authority bears on your (and Kemmis's) notions of democratic local control. How much inherent authority do local residents have to decide the fate of, for example, a national forest or wilderness area? I do not think, for example, that you would favor devolving national defense or the printing of money or the regulation of banking to the local level – would you? So why is it that you think some locals - most of whom only moved to the area a few years or a few generations ago - should have authority to govern a nearby national forest or wildlife refuge? I don't even think the natives have that authority and the traditionalists agree. The medicine man does not have the authority to fix the world unless and until the creator gives it to him and then he is only acting for the Creator, not under his own inherent authority.

In this sense no human has the authority to determine the fate of a river because the river is a Public Trust Resource, i.e. part of the common heritage of all humans. Now in the collaboratives around rivers there are agencies which are charged with (and paid for) protecting the public interest; environmentalists choose this responsibility, it goes with the territory. But when those with the charge are not fulfilling that responsibility to represent the Public Interest and those who volunteer as environmentalists are also not protecting the Public Interest. ...well then we get a situation like the Scott where a Public Trust Resource is destroyed while those destroying it claim they are restoring it.

Put into the "authority" context, Mary's authority in the SV Watershed Council derives from the river and the fish and she is abusing the delegation of authority.

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Maybe you can help me with something: I can't for the life of me figure out why folks who learn about the situation on the Scott are not outraged. Why do Americans – even Americans who consider themselves "environmentalists" or "salmon advocates" – not become outraged when they learn that the Scott is being strangled to death and that the funds to save/restore it are being ripped off for the benefit of local landowners? I explained the situation to you; I gave you several examples and showed you the Powerpoint. You did not appear to become outraged. Can you tell me why?