



“Building a Common Message: Moving the Ecological Goods & Services Agenda Forward”

Ecological Goods & Services Workshop Summary of Results

January 26, 2010
Convener: The Ontario Rural Council
Facilitator: Lisa Jenkins

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WORKSHOP ON ECOLOGICAL GOODS AND SERVICES

THE ONTARIO RURAL COUNCIL

BUILDING A COMMON MESSAGE: MOVING THE ECOLOGICAL GOODS AND SERVICES AGENDA FORWARD

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2010 | SPRINGFIELD GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB, GUELPH, ON



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The Ontario Rural Council gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Executive Summary

Through a facilitated workshop, diverse representatives from two dozen organizations worked to uncover areas of common ground relating to ecological goods and services, including the following themes:

It's complex

The concept of ecological goods and services represents a new way of thinking, and not everyone understands it. These are complex ideas and that makes it difficult to communicate to stakeholders, decision-makers and the public.

Everyone benefits

The group agreed that everyone benefits from ecological goods and services, but not in the same way. Concern was expressed that only some people are expected to pay the costs associated with generating EG&S, while all of society benefits.

We need clarity

Participants agreed that it would be helpful for both organizational stakeholders, elected officials and the public to have a better understanding of ecological goods and services. More specifically, they talked about the need to arrive at some agreement on how terms and definitions would be used.

Awareness and education is important, but...

There was a great deal of discussion about the need for, and the benefit of increased awareness and education about ecological goods and services. However, the group agreed that awareness and education must lead to understanding, commitment and action on the part of stakeholders and the public. They also talked about the need to better communicate the cost of inaction – choosing *not* to generate ecological goods and services. One specific issue raised was the lack of a high profile 'champion' to help raise awareness.

Big change

The group agreed that major institutional and behavioural change is required to move the ecological goods and services agenda forward in a meaningful way – and that includes the participants in the session. They described the current challenge as a 'clash of paradigms' where human centric vs. nature centric is at the heart of the discussion.

One of the biggest challenges identified was the ability to talk about this complex issue in a consistent manner. In spite of some key organizational differences, the group was able to collectively identify a number of elements that could be included in a common message about ecological goods and services, including:

- The value of EG&S is healthy ecosystems sustaining healthy people and a healthy economy.
- We all benefit. There are universal benefits and individual benefits.
- We value fairness and responsibility.
- Society must balance the books on natural capital, economic capital and social capital.

Participants were also able to agree on several process points, outlining how and why the group should continue to work together and a number of issues that will need further discussion. There was commitment to move forward collectively and the following next steps were established:

- Develop a high-level Vision that we can agree on;
- Create a Work plan with corresponding timeline to mobilize ourselves;
- Investigate social media tools to facilitate networking amongst the group; and
- Consider others who should be invited to the discussion.

Background

The Ontario Rural Council

The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) was formed in 1998 as a member-driven, multi-sector provincial rural organization with a mandate to act as a catalyst for rural dialogue, collaboration and advocacy. As a vehicle for rural engagement, TORC offers a vital venue for the province's collective rural voice. TORC provides a unique and important opportunity for multi-sector cooperation by encouraging effective partnerships for progress in an effort to inform an influence rural policy, programs and research development. Members include organizations and individuals from the public, private and not-for-profit sector with a common interest in building a more vibrant and healthy rural Ontario.

TORC is...

A Convenor: bringing together those with divergent interests and perspectives to address complex rural issues through open forums and an atmosphere of trust.

A Network: linking people, information and activities in support of rural community development and capacity building.

TORC Environmental Working Group

The TORC Environmental Working Group seeks to build a better environmental consciousness across all sectors engaged in The Ontario Rural Council. Specifically, the Environmental Working Group identifies and reviews issues related to the Environment in rural Ontario. Their focus is to identify gaps and overlaps and to explore and act on synergies that exist between multiple stakeholders. They work to identify areas of common ground and to promote collaboration and partnerships on environmental issues.

Members come from government, the private sector and a variety of non-governmental organizations across the province.

Workshop Overview

Purpose

The TORC Environmental Working Group determined that there would be value in bringing stakeholders together to identify the areas of common ground that exist across many organizations engaged in activities relating to ecological goods and services. Members of the working group wanted to give stakeholders an opportunity to explore the opportunities, advantages and possibilities of working together to advance the ecological goods and services agenda.

A Workshop was developed to address the following specific objectives:

- To identify areas of common ground and understanding between organizations committed to ecological goods and services;
- To develop a common message(s) for communicating the value of ecological goods and services; and
- To identify next steps.

The Workshop Agenda can be found in Appendix A.

Agenda and Process

Two speakers preceded the facilitated workshop to provide both context and food for thought about the potential value of non-traditional alliances.

Jeff Wilson, Project Coordinator, Ecological Goods and Services, Credit Valley Conservation gave an overview of terms, definitions and a general understanding of the field of ecological goods and services with the intent of setting the context for this conversation.

Deb Doncaster, Executive Director, Community Power Fund shared her experiences and lessons learned through the formation and subsequent work of the Ontario Green Energy Act Alliance. The Alliance was successful in bringing together a wide-range of organizations with an interest in moving the green energy agenda forward within the Province of Ontario. Their actions resulted in the Province of Ontario taking leadership in development the Green Energy Act. Workshop participants did find similarities and valuable lessons which could potentially be applied to the work around ecological goods and services.

The workshop was structured as hands-on, thinking, talking, synthesizing and processing, working session. Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions in advance in order to prepare both themselves and the facilitator for the day (see Appendix C). Ideas, questions, comments and next steps were processed in the room, resulting in points of consensus from the group and a list of questions that require further discussion.

Participants

Participants represented a broad cross-section of stakeholders from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Staff from municipal, provincial and federal government departments was in the room. Private consultants attended. Non-governmental organizations ranging in focus from environment and conservation to natural heritage and farmland preservation were well represented. General Farm Organizations added their perspective, and academics from two major post-secondary institutions provided expertise in diverse subject areas.

A complete list of participants can be found in Appendix B.

Key Results

Areas of Common Ground: Broad Strokes

Through a series of small group discussions, followed by a full plenary session, participants agreed on a number of areas of common ground relating to ecological goods and services. It became clear through those discussions that, on this issue, the difficulty lies in the details. Participants were challenged to focus on areas and outcomes that would benefit everyone, regardless of their individual or organizational focus. Collectively, the group agreed on the following themes:

It's complex

The concept of ecological goods and services represents a new way of thinking, and not everyone understands it. These are complex ideas and that makes it difficult to communicate to stakeholders, decision-makers and the public.

Everyone benefits

The group agreed that everyone benefits from ecological goods and services, but not in the same way. Concern was expressed that only some people are expected to pay the costs associated with generating EG&S, while all of society benefits.

We need clarity

Participants agreed that it would be helpful for both organizational stakeholders, elected officials and the public to have a better understanding of ecological goods and services. More specifically, they talked about the need to arrive at some agreement on how terms and definitions would be used.

Awareness and education is important, but...

There was a great deal of discussion about the need for, and the benefit of increased awareness and education about ecological goods and services. However, the group agreed that awareness and education must lead to understanding, commitment and action on the part of stakeholders and the public. They also talked about the need to better communicate the cost of inaction – choosing *not* to generate ecological goods and services. One specific issue raised was the lack of a high profile 'champion' to help raise awareness.

Big change

The group agreed that major institutional and behavioural change is required to move the ecological goods and services agenda forward in a meaningful way – and that includes the participants in the session. They described the current challenge as a 'clash of paradigms' where human centric vs. nature centric is at the heart of the discussion.

Points of Consensus: Moving Forward

In small groups, participants were asked to develop a message about the value of ecological goods and services on which they could all agree. They were asked to think about the mission and vision of their organization, and their own personal commitment to the environment. Participants were also instructed not to focus on 'word-smithing' – rather to focus on clearly articulating the concept.

The validation discussion resulted in a number of ideas that the group categorized as being either 'message' elements or 'process' elements. If consensus could not be reached within the large group, the ideas were included as items needing further discussion.

Elements of a Common Message

- The value of EG&S is healthy ecosystems sustaining healthy people and a healthy economy.
- We all benefit. There are universal benefits and individual benefits.
- We value fairness and responsibility.
- Society must balance the books on natural capital, economic capital and social capital.

The Process of Working Together

- We need to work together; we need to determine how
- Lots has been done... there is lots more to do
- We are stronger together (“one large knock is stronger than a bunch of little ones”)
- We need one consistent top-line message
- The message should include the value of EG&S, who benefits, what/who provides those benefits and what you (the audience/individual) can do

Future Discussion Points

About ecological goods and services...

How broken is the current system?

How do we balance rights and responsibilities?

Is reducing a 'bad' also an EG&S (like increasing a 'good')

About working together...

Does there need to be a stated target or goal in order for us to work together?

Do we need broader consultation about terms?

About messaging...

Can we reach everyone with the same message? Should we try?

What is the public-friendly definition?

Is the public the primary audience?

Is there value in audience segmentation and objectives for each specific group? If so, what are the audiences? What is the sequence for approaching each target audience? What are the messages?

Is restoration/protection of environment a negative message?

Next Steps

The group agreed that, in spite of some key differences of opinion, and diverse organizational mandates, there is value in working together and continuing to meet face-to-face. They asked that TORC consider acting as a convener for further discussions and identified the following next steps to move the process forward:

- Develop a high-level Vision that we can agree on;
- Create a Work plan with corresponding timeline to mobilize ourselves;
- Investigate social media tools to facilitate networking amongst the group; and
- Consider others who should be invited to the discussion.

Individually, participants encouraged each other to update their organizational networks about the results of the workshop and the recommended next steps to gain buy-in and build momentum.

TORC committed to producing a report summarizing the results from the workshop, and circulating it to all participants, including those who had to leave the session early.

Evaluation

Overall, participants were positive in their evaluation, and noted that the topic itself was challenging to address.

Participants identified the open dialogue as the most beneficial aspect of the workshop, indicating that understanding each others' perspectives and developing a better sense of the common ground that exists was a positive step. Most responded that the information resulting from the workshop would be useful to them in the short-term and made a commitment to share the information within their organization and networks.



TORC Workshop on Ecological Goods and Services

“Building a Common Message: Moving the Ecological Goods and Services Agenda Forward”

Tuesday, January 26, 2010 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Tamarac Room, Springfield Golf and Country Club

2054 Gordon Street, Guelph, Ontario

Objectives:

1. To identify areas of common ground and understanding between organizations that have a stake in the future of ecological goods and services
2. To develop a common message(s) for communicating the value of ecological goods and services
3. To identify next steps?

AGENDA

9:30 – 10:00 **Registration, Networking and Coffee**

10:00 – 10:15 **Welcome and Introductions**

Harold Flaming, Executive Director, TORC

Julie Cayley, Chair, TORC Environmental Working Group

Lisa Alderman Jenkins, Facilitator

10:15 – 10:25 **“Ecological Goods and Services: A Brief Overview”**

- Jeff Wilson, Project Coordinator, Ecological Goods and Services, Credit Valley Conservation Authority

10:25 – 10:45 **“Building Common Ground: A Strategy for the Future”**

- Deb Doncaster, Executive Director, Community Power Fund and Director, Ontario Green Energy Act Alliance

10:45 – 11:00

Break

11:00 – 12:00

“Building Common Ground on Ecological Goods and Services”

- Facilitated discussion (Lisa Alderman Jenkins)

12:00 – 12:45

Lunch

12:45 – 3:30

“Developing a Common Message on Ecological Goods and Services”

- Facilitated discussion (Lisa Alderman Jenkins)

3:30 – 4:00

Next Steps

- Facilitated discussion (Lisa Alderman Jenkins)

4:00

Adjourn

“Building a Common Message: Moving the Ecological Goods and Services Agenda Forward”

Participants:

Maxine Kingston, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Nathan Stevens, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
Jo-Anne Rzakki, Conservation Ontario
Jeff Wilson, Credit Valley Conservation
Ed Hanna, DSS Management Consultants
Julie Cayley, Ducks Unlimited Canada
Owen Steele, Ducks Unlimited Canada
Elizabeth Holmes, Eastern Ontario Model Forest
Gordon Miller, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario
Kathy Macpherson, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
Susanna Reid, Huron County
Eric Miller, Ministry of Natural Resources
Kristen Thompson, Norfolk ALUS Pilot Project
Kim Gavine, Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation
Bruce MacKenzie, Ontario Farmland Trust
Don McCabe, Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Paul Smith, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Amber Cowie, Ontario Nature
Steve Hounsell, Ontario Power Generation
Andy Graham, Ontario Soil and Crop Association
Wade Knight, Ontario Woodlot Association
Janet Wong, Region of Peel
Rob Black, The Centre for Rural Leadership
Brooke MacDonald, Trees Ontario
Dr. John Fitzgibbon, University of Guelph
Dr. Glenn Fox, University of Guelph
Dr. Shaski Kant, University of Toronto

Facilitator:

Lisa Alderman Jenkins

TORC

Suzanne Ainley
Harold Flaming



The Ecological Goods & Services Workshop requires your full participation in order to achieve the objectives for the day. In an effort to make the workshop as efficient as possible, we would like to synthesize information in a summary report to jump-start discussions that day.

To inform that report, we ask that you provide *brief bullet point answers* to the following questions by **January 22, 2010**. We anticipate you should need about 20 minutes to address all of the questions. If you cannot answer all of the questions, please provide feedback on those you can. Begin typing in the shaded boxes.

Your feedback is anonymous. Responses will not be attributed to the author or to his/ her organization. Please forward responses directly to the facilitator at lisa.alderman@sympatico.ca by January 22, 2010.

NOTE: You may have existing documents or publications that speak to these questions. If appropriate, please attach them as additional background information, and indicate if they are public documents that can be referenced as sources for the summary report

- 1 How do you define 'Ecological Goods and Services' when you speak about it publicly? Consider formal presentations and informal settings.**

- 2 When you are speaking about Ecological Goods and Services, how do you describe the value? Who benefits from EG&S? How?**

- 3. What is the single most important stakeholder group that needs to understand and support the value of Ecological Goods and Services?**

Appendix D: Transcription of Workshop Notes

Transcription of January 26, 2010 Workshop Notes

Summary of Feedback Provided to Questions in Advance (Compiled by Facilitator)

- Trouble with the concept of value vs. valuation (who benefits and how was a better question)
- Some weren't sure that EG&S was a useful concept and want a broader, bigger discussion
- Change the way society thinks about the environment

Themes re: Definitions

- Benefit to humans, society, people
- Supplied by ecosystems, natural heritage, environment
- Sometimes people are involved (management, intervention); sometimes we aren't
- Some described images or ideal conditions
- Some cited generally accepted federal/provincial definitions

Themes re: Value

- Cannot survive without it; Essential
- Supports life, health, spiritual, recreational well being
- Specific examples given (i.e. flood protection, water filtration, clean air, biodiversity)
- 'value' is something that people assign... so it changes depending on the person, location...

Themes re: Challenges

- Clarity around language; consistency around how different groups are using similar terms
- Clarity around valuation methods; quantifying value is abstract
- Not enough focus on measuring change/outcomes vs. just doing 'good work'
- People (public) recognize EG&S as 'free' now, so why would they pay for it?
- Desire for an integrated ecological/economic framework
- No one in the conversation from the finance sector, school of business or economics

Themes re: Goals

- better decisions
- clarity on language
- build on collective knowledge/experience
- increased understanding of the value of ecosystems, natural heritage; enhanced environmental protection; sustainable development
- more \$ for programs
- better defined partnerships
- more resilient economy

Themes re: Who Benefits

- society, public
- multi-stakeholder
- policy-makers
- media

Small Group Discussion (2 groups reviewed each section)

Value/Definition

- everyone benefits
- health & wellbeing (including economic and social)
- air, water
- ‘known’ definitions are valid, but is there a more simple definition we can all agree on that the public would understand and connect with?
- ‘who benefits’ should be balanced by ‘who should bear the cost’

Challenges

- Status quo creates a financial liability for landowners
- Issues of rights and responsibilities related to environmental services (public vs. private interest)
- Major change to institutional arrangements to use the ‘tool’ of EG&S i.e. law, organizations public and private
- Need for education and awareness – landowners and the public
- Rules/market mechanisms

Goals

- Be creative about facilitating exchange between willing buyers and willing sellers (i.e. PERC)
- Enhanced understanding
- ‘we all’ need to understand the limitations (i.e. terminology... not exclusive term)
- Proper use/guidance on appropriate use of the ‘concept’ of EG&S
- Economic understanding complements understanding of EG&S (not replace)
- Enhanced understanding of range of services and economic contribution
- Pilots to show how ‘trade off analysis’ could be used in making decisions
- Come to terms with the issue of scale (local to international scale)

Detours (questions/conversations that got us off track)

- Should the definition include goods?
- Landowners are a part of society
- Distribution of cost vs. distribution of benefit
- Economic models driven by short-term pressures force us to make environmentally bad decisions i.e. forest to ag to subdivision to condo
- Economy is a subset of ecology, now viewed the other way around (turned upside down)

Discussion Summary: Common Ground – “We all agree that...”

- Everyone benefits, but not the same
- Only some people pay the costs/contribute
- Enhanced understanding is important
- We need clarity on terminology/definitions
- Awareness and education must lead to commitment – ‘It’s the right thing to do. I understand it.’
- This is a new way of thinking; not everyone understands it
- There is a lack of connection with the cost of *not* doing something – inaction costs too; need to make the connection and communicate the connection
- These are complex ideas that are difficult to communicate

- We don't have a 'champion' (high profile)
- Major institutional change is required (including us); behavioural change – why? This is a clash of paradigms... human centric vs. nature centric

Message Elements

- Healthy ecosystems sustaining healthy people and a healthy economy
- We all benefit: universal benefits and individual benefits
- Values: fairness and responsibility
- Balance the books on natural capital, economic capital and social capital
- Message should include the value, who benefits, what/who provides those benefits and what you (the audience) can do

Process/Working Together

- We need to work together
- Need to determine how
- Lots has been done... lots more to do
- 1 large knock is stronger than a bunch of little ones
- Need one top-line message

Questions for Further Discussion

- Do we need broader consultation re: terms?
- Can we reach everyone? Should we try?
- Is the public the primary audience?
- Is there value in audience/market segmentation linked to outcomes or objectives for each specific group? If so, what are the audiences? What is the sequence for approaching each target audience? What are the messages?
- Suggested Message: we are here to support restoration/protection of environment for everyone – is that too negative?
- Does there need to be a joint target in order for us to work together? i.e. money, bill, 'ham/tuna'
- How broken is the current system?
- How do we balance rights and responsibilities?
- Is reducing a 'bad' also an EG&S (like increasing a 'good')
- What is the public-friendly definition?

Next Steps

- Feedback from those who left early
- Vision that we can agree on
- Work plan, critical steps, process to mobilize ourselves (including timeline)
- More discussion (including mechanisms)
- Face to face meetings are important
- Who convenes the process? ROI working group?
- Updated/advised our personal/organizational contacts about the day/results/next steps
- Network and stay connected; investigate social media tools
- Invite others... experts? i.e. Mike Leighton