

Northwest Environmental Forum

University of Washington
College of Forest Resources
March 2003

VISION

The Forum will play a vital role in shaping the future of the physical, natural, and economic environment of the Pacific Northwest, helping decisionmakers unite with specialists to resolve land and water resource management issues.

The Need

- ✓ New governance tools and a trusted convener institution that unites with other critical institutions to find solutions
- ✓ The best tools of science connecting with practical knowledge and public values to allow confident action
- ✓ Collaborative and structured involvement for multiple parties addressing complex problems
- ✓ Facilitation of social learning, where people are empowered to make facts-based choices
- ✓ An educational observatory where science and public policy come together in a cutting-edge collaboration that frames future public actions.

Goals and Objectives

- ✓ Integrate science and policy capabilities of the University of Washington and regional institutions (e.g. WSU) to address public environmental issues.
- ✓ Assist political leaders to use science, social, economic, cultural, and technological information about natural resources with confidence.
- ✓ Create a collaboration where scientific research can provide value to the people who need to make decisions about resources.
- ✓ Build a neutral and trusted interactive problem-solving environment and a new learning space, where information and analytical tools are used effectively.
- ✓ Create an educational physical and remote classroom where a cutting-edge collaboration can build trust and continuity in public decisions.

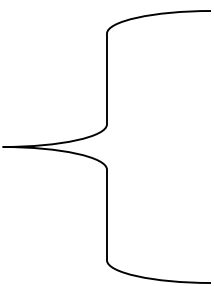
The Timing

- ✓ Many political and business leaders want to better use scientific, cultural, and economic information to manage natural resources.
- ✓ Scientific research often fails to inform decisionmakers, and scientists are frustrated that their knowledge is undervalued.
- ✓ New governance tools and credible, innovative institutions are needed.
- ✓ Medical science research model is needed, where research has a focus on public need (e.g. genomics and cell signaling research focus on saving lives).
- ✓ Current mediation models are based on political tradeoffs, rather than shared knowledge of resource values, and have limited long-term success.

*Potential
Users*

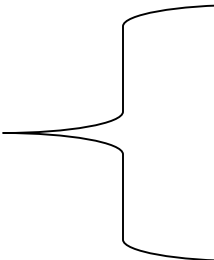
Invaluable Tools for Resource Managers, Policy Makers, Planners

Government



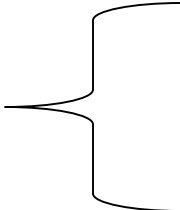
- Federal, State, Local Land Managers
- Fisheries Managers
- Urban Growth Planners
- Water Resources Managers

Industry



- Agriculture and Range Operators
- Forest Land Managers
- Oil and Mining Explorers
- Real Estate Interests

NGOs and Other



- Watershed Councils
- Tribal Resource Managers
- Land Conservancy Organizations

*Concept:
Physical
Setting*

- A neutral, information-rich setting
- ✓ Flexible group meeting space, adaptable for technical discussions and working meetings.
 - ✓ Skilled facilitation to support all discussions.
 - ✓ Visual analysis, decision support tools, presentation technologies to help participants compare ideas and solutions, understand and weigh trade-offs, and move toward resolution of complex issues.
 - ✓ Archives of data and remote access for participants and technical providers.

When we think, we often draw pictures and diagrams to illustrate ideas, relationships, and concepts. Ways to think with visual images will be central to the setting.

Collaboration with a purpose

*Concept:
Working
Together to
Strengthen
Decisions*

- ✓ Scientists and policy staff can collaborate on research and analytical work that supports decision making.
- ✓ Stakeholders and diverse organizations will be able to participate directly and use data displays and information analysis tools.
- ✓ Indigenous knowledge can be integrated and valued.

A shared perspective of concepts, values, and issues must be rapidly developed and communicated or discussions break down into disputes. “What we know” and “What we don’t know” need to be defined, in order to frame questions for “expert” discussion and stakeholder consideration.

Convening critical capabilities

*Concept:
Information
Continuity*

- ✓ Quick and remote access to information enable scientists, stakeholders, and policy makers to analyze and identify solutions.
- ✓ Continuity of technical expertise, computing, information retrieval, and classification requires expert management.
- ✓ Working space sustains on-going discussions, off-scene comparisons, and place-based data analysis.

In the work world, our memories are tightly bound to the visual environment. Every time we leave the room we erase information from the conference “white board.” Our visual space retains the information for on-going discussions.

An educational observatory

*Concept:
Education
and Case
Studies*

- ✓ Forum space will provide classroom interaction, student participation, and student work.
- ✓ Environmental projects and case studies will provide teaching and project opportunities.
- ✓ Cross-disciplinary learning and multidisciplinary teaching should emerge.
- ✓ The dialogue between technical people and decisionmakers will be improved long-term.

Resource conflicts are decided in political terms. When those who inform communicate with those who decide, we can create a classroom for teaching others how policy can work.

Cutting-edge research aimed at long-term public solutions

Concept: Research

- ✓ The Forum will be a portal for collaborative efforts to define and bring research initiatives into the University (and WSU).
- ✓ Innovations such as an “Earth Institute” will generate relevant “big” research.
- ✓ Organizations like the NW Geospatial Collaborative will add value to the Forum.

Clarifying research goals in terms of decision needs is important. When a decision process embraces knowledge, science will be more valued, and knowledge gaps can be filled through research.

To Date

- College of Forest Resources leadership
- Significant UW faculty support
- Other expressed interest at UW:
 - Oceans and Fisheries Sciences
 - Evans School of Public Affairs
 - Arts and Sciences (Geography)
 - Architecture and Urban Planning
 - Jackson School of International Studies
 - Joint Institute on Atmosphere and Oceans
 - Institute for Water and Watershed Studies
 - Program on the Environment
 - School of Marine Studies
- WSU College of Agriculture interest
- Some outside interest (e.g. federal and state agencies, foundations, NGO's)
- Business plan submitted for Forum center
- Evaluating first-choice issues for operations
- Fund raising goals being set.