

The Importance of Engaging Local Peoples and Stakeholders in Recovery Planning: Examples from Western and Northern Canada.

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Canada's Species at Risk Act (SARA: 2002) prescribes recovery action plans be prepared in **cooperation** among provincial, territorial, and federal ministries with authority over federal land or other areas where a species is found, and with people or organizations considered appropriate by authorities. Furthermore, to the extent possible, SARA prescribes an action plan must be prepared in **consultation** with landowners, lessees and other persons directly affected by, or interested in the plan. Cooperation among federal and provincial ministries is necessary to avoid or overcome possible legal barriers to SARA and to achieve practical harmonization of regulatory and management actions. In addition, I suggest both levels of government would have difficulty in achieving practical, on the ground recovery of species without the cooperation and indeed participation of private sector affected interests, particularly where rural land areas and peoples are involved. Consultative approaches could fall short of attaining meaningful results in such areas. Indeed, there is a growing body of evidence that failure to achieve meaningful community participation in decision making is a major weakness of integrated conservation and development initiatives. People who derive their livelihoods from natural resources have a stake in conserving ecosystems and local biodiversity and can be important allies in conservation. Meaningful community participation entails local people playing a central role in designing and implementing actions, and evaluating outcomes and policies affecting their livelihoods. Mechanisms and processes for achieving cooperation or participation are not prescribed in SARA, nor in the *Canadian Strategy for Species at Risk*. New and innovative techniques, institutions, and policies are required for valuing, prioritizing, and addressing such complex ecosystem problems as the recovery and conservation of species at risk. A substantial body of theory and practice can be drawn upon for designing effective participatory recovery planning processes for rural communities and other stakeholders. I propose **Collaborative and Adaptive Resource Management** provides an appropriate planning framework for achieving participation, integration of multiple values and knowledge sets, and the application of science to measure results against objectives. Special reference is made to the involvement of ranchers in Western Canada and Aboriginal communities in Northern Canada.