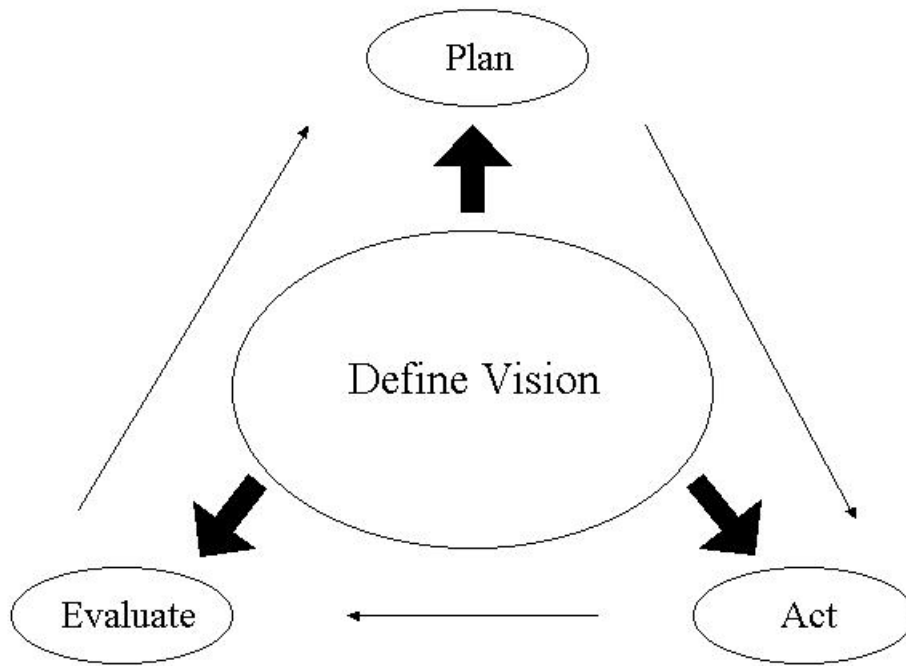


Chapter 3: DEFINING A VISION AND GOALS

Defining a community vision is an important part of the process of becoming a sustainable community. This step allows local residents to look into the future, think creatively and ask themselves what they want their community to be in 20 or 50 years. A vision describes an ideal picture. The vision guides goal-setting, policies and actions by providing context for understanding community concerns, prioritizing issues, determining action steps and identifying indicators to measure progress.



There are many different ways to develop a community vision for a sustainable forest community. What is most important is that the vision be created by the entire community. An example of a community-developed vision from the case study of Gogebic County described in Appendix D is as follows:

“Sustainable forestry is [forest management] that contributes to the [economic health] of Gogebic County while maintaining the [ecological and social/cultural values] for the benefit of present and future generations in Gogebic County” (Gogebic County Steering Committee on Natural Resource Strategy, December 6, 1999).

The words in brackets were terms for which the participants couldn't agree on precise definitions, but there was a general agreement that these were important components of the vision. Using the bracketed terms allowed the participants to reach initial agreement and continue to work together.

Appendix A includes a number of definitions of sustainable forestry and sustainable forest management. It is important to note that all the definitions refer to the three main pillars of sustainable forestry – ecological, social and economic. As McDonough et. al. (2002) points out, these components work together and compromising any of the three for the sake of the others can not be sustainable in the long run. No community can remain viable without ecological balance, economic options and socio-cultural integrity. The three work together and need to be in balance.

Hart (1999) points out that the most successful sustainable community initiatives have three characteristics in common:

- The community created vision of its future that balances economic, environmental and social needs. The community viewed its future in the long term: not on the order of years but on the order of decades or generations.
- The vision incorporated the views of a wide cross-section of the community.
- The community figured out how to keep track of its progress in reaching the future.

Discovering the needs of the community and defining a common vision is not difficult but it does require some effort and reaching consensus among people with different interests and views. For communities that are not ready to go through this process using indicators first allows them to identify key issues and problems, which in turn help define common goals and vision.

Always think about your community as a system when defining long-term goals. These goals should link at least two of the three pillars of sustainable forestry. For example, a goal such as *“to increase overall forest cover in the community”* is not a sustainability goal, because it does not look at the community as a whole and its three key aspects – ecological, social and economic. A better goal would be *“achieve forest cover that will help preserve biological diversity while at the same time provide non-declining resource base for local economic development.”*

When defining goals always aim to involve the wider community. Defining a few system-level goals linked to your community vision will help a) inspire the community for the process, b) guide you on your journey to sustainable forestry, and c) select appropriate indicators to measure progress.

Useful Indicator-Related Exercises to Apply

The following exercises can be useful in helping diverse groups of stakeholders in a community develop a common vision and set of goals for sustainable forest resource management in their community. Exercises 1 and 2 are particularly useful for communities that have not gone through a visioning exercise. Exercise 3 is useful for

communities that have a vision statement and set of goals that was developed without explicitly addressing sustainable forestry issues.

1. Round Robin Using MPC&I to Categorize Issues – Appendix C, Section 3 and Appendix E. There are a number of different ways that this exercise can be used to define community goals and vision. Two examples using the MP C&I are described below.

*a. Using the Montréal Process **Criteria** as the stations* – set up one station for each of the seven Montréal Process Criteria. At each station, participants are asked to describe their vision of the community related to that specific Criterion. How the questions are phrased will depend upon the local culture, but possible phrasings include:

- To what extent does this criterion matter in this community?
- How important is this criterion to forest resource management in this community?
- How is this criterion important to sustainable forest resource management in this community?
- What are some of the key issues/challenges for the community within each criterion?

*b. Using the Montréal Process **Indicators** as the stations* – set up one station for each of the seven Montréal Process Criteria. List the indicators for that criterion at the station. At each station, participants are asked to write down a possible target value for each indicator that would help to explain their vision of what the community should look like in 20 or 50 years. Since the actual value for a particular indicator may not be known, participants can use phrases that relate the future value to current conditions such as ‘as much forest-related employment as we have now,’ or use relative measures such as ‘no more than X percent of the housing for second homes.’ It is important to emphasize to the participants that the object of the exercise is not to reach agreement on a particular target, rather the objective is to use the numbers to draw a picture of what each participant's vision is so that others can see it more clearly.

Another way to use the Round Robin exercise with Indicators is to list all the Montreal Process Indicators under each criterion and ask the groups to check-off those indicators most relevant to the community. Leave space for writing additional indicators within each criterion (not included in the Montreal Process but important to the community).

2. Goals for Sustainable Forestry and Sustainable Forest Management – Appendix G – In addition to using the sample goals to engage stakeholders in thinking about sustainable forestry as described in Chapter 2, the goals can also be used as a starting point for a community to develop their own vision and goals for sustainable forestry. In small groups that have been set up to include diverse viewpoints and stakeholders, have participants

use the sample goals in Appendix G as a starting point and develop a proposed vision and goals for the community's sustainable forest management.

3. *Aligning Vision and Goals to Sustainability – Appendix C, Section 5* – Many communities already have a defined vision and goals for their future. However, if the visions and goals were developed without explicit consideration of sustainable forestry issues, the community should consider how the vision and goal could be modified to incorporate sustainable forestry principles. The worksheet in Appendix C, section C-5 can be used to review a community's existing vision and goals in terms of sustainability.

Useful Resources

Sustainable Forest Management Community Handbook for the Great Lakes Region, by Maureen McDonough, Leigh Ann Spence, and Wendy Hinrichs Sanders, May 2002. An excellent guide to developing a community-based, sustainable forestry initiative. In addition to the section on who to engage in the process, the guide includes a number of case studies of communities in the Great Lakes Region that have developed sustainable forestry initiatives and has detailed information about sources of data for indicators. Available at http://www.lsf.org/pub_SFM_handbook.html.

Guide to Sustainable Community Indicators, 2nd Edition, by Maureen Hart, 1999. Although not specific to forest communities, this guide includes useful material for communities just beginning to work on sustainability and indicators. Much of the information in the guidebook is available online at www.sustainablemeasures.com. The website also includes an order form for those interested in a hardcopy version of the book.

Sustainable Community Indicators Trainer's Workshop, by Maureen Hart, 1998-2000. Available at <http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/Training/Indicators/index.html>. This online training course includes useful material for communities just beginning to work on sustainability and indicators. The material can be downloaded.