

TRANSLATING GOALS TO PRACTICE: AN ANALYSIS OF U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PRACTICES

MAJA HUSAR HOLMES

West Virginia University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and thoughtful comments for this article.

ABSTRACT

A persistent mantra in twentieth century political discourse calls for increased involvement of the public in government decision-making. Public participation has been touted as a means to improved representativeness, better policy outcomes, and more efficient policy process. The environmental policy domain has been on the forefront of government agencies' experimentation with public participation. The normative, instrumental, and substantive rationales provide a framework for how public agencies articulate specific goals for public participation. This article examines how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers translate expressed rationales and goals for public participation to specific mechanisms to involve the public. The findings focus on five goals for public participation articulated in extant literature: 1) informing and educating the public, 2) incorporating public values in agency decision making, 3) building trust, 4) reducing conflict, and 5) improving substantive quality of outcome. The study findings suggest that public managers are generally indiscriminate in their choice of activities to meet specific public participation goals. However, public managers do define distinct roles and face discrete challenges based on their articulation of public participation goals.

RATIONALIZING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOALS

A fundamental principal of democratic governance is that government represents the interests and values of the public. How these interests and values are communicated

from the public at-large to government institutions represents the process of public participation. The most basic form of public participation is electing public officials that represent one's respective values and interests. Referendums on specific initiatives are another means of infusing the public voice in the public decision-making process. Yet as public decisions are increasingly guided by public agencies rather than through the direction of elected bodies, a call for increased accountability and responsiveness has spawned appeals for public participation in government agency decision-making. The rapid growth of the professional federal, state, and local governments, in conjunction with increased delegation of responsibilities in developing and implementing rules and regulations devolved from legislatures to public agencies, has resulted in a greater need for involving the public in government agency decision-making.

Public management literature has struggled to define the role of public managers given the three pillars of democratic governance—accountability, responsiveness, and efficiency. Public agencies operate within a complex array of demands. They are accountable to a diverse set of citizens and their respective elected representatives. Public agencies strive to maintain administrative efficiency by ensuring public activities are implemented in a timely and cost-efficient manner. Moreover, public agencies aim for administrative responsiveness by meeting public need. These public management principles guide conventional public participation rationales—normative, instrumental, and substantive. The rationales in turn shape how public agencies articulate public participation goals. Each approach is summarized in Table 1 and discussed in detail in the following sections.

Normative Basis

The normative rationale argues that public participation is both a right of citizens, and a route to a more healthy democratic society (Fiorino, 1990; Fischer, 2000; Dahl, 1987; Perhac, 1996). The underlying assumption is that if citizens become actively involved as

Table 1: Linking Public Participation Rationales to Agency Goals

Ideological Basis	Rationale	Citations	Agency Goal
Normative (Popular sovereignty Political equity)	Public participation is a right of citizens and necessary for healthy democratic governance.	Box 1998 Barber 1984 King, Feltey, Susel 1998 Dahl 1987 Fiorino 1990 Perhac 1996 Day 1997 Fischer 2000	Inform and educate the public Incorporate public values into agency decisions
Instrumental (Administrative efficiency)	Public participation facilitates policy and project formulation and implementation by dissolving conflicts and improving trust in government agencies, thereby allowing projects and policies to proceed.	Susskind & Cruikshank 1989 Susskind & Field 1996 Fiorino 1990 Thomas 1995	Reduce conflicts among competing interests Improve trust in public institutions
Substantive (Administrative effectiveness)	Public participation leads to objectively superior decisions by the inclusion of information, ideas, and alternatives.	Fiorino 1990 Beierle and Cayford 2002 Kweit and Kweit 1987	Improving substantive quality of decisions

participants in their democracy, the public governance that emerges from this process will be more representative and

effective (Day, 1997). The normative argument stems from what some scholars view as dissolution of the tenets of democratic governance. The increasingly complex nature of problems presented by a differentiated, technologically driven society (Dewey, 1927) and emergence of a highly specialized public bureaucracy has led to the “capture” of public policymaking by policy experts (Schneider and Ingram, 1997). Policy experts place faith in understanding policy problems through the application of scientific theories and empirical methods of exploration, not through the involvement of non-experts of the so-called “public.” In the process, policy experts have isolated themselves from the citizenry (Fischer, 2000) and are no longer accountable to the public (Dahl, 1987).

This approach assumes a fundamental dichotomy of reconciling the need for expertise in managing administrative programs with the transparency and participation demanded by a democratic society (Kerwin, 1999). The normative rationale posits that public participation is essential to healthy democratic governance. Specifically, public participation reintegrates public accountability into public decisions “by bringing the decisions of public bureaucrats much more closely under the control of public citizens” (Rourke, 1987, p.231). Some scholars argue that public participation is more than just a unilateral interaction between citizens and public administrators. The point of public participation is for citizens to understand their own interests and how those interests are connected to the interests of other citizens (Barber, 1984) through a deliberative process (Roberts, 1997). The normative approach asserts that to effectively incorporate public values in public decision-making the structures, roles, and administrative processes must be redefined (Box, 1998; King, Feltey, and Sussel, 1997). Legislation and policies promoting public participation have emerged in an effort to reconcile the tension between

managerialism and public accountability. The mandates affect all the policy domains, but quite notably the environmental policy arena (Kerwin, 1999).

Instrumental Basis

The normative rationale for public participation as a right of citizens and necessity of democratic governance has come under fire for ignoring the realities of implementing public participation (Olivo, 1998). Some scholars observe that public administrators play an important role in employing public participation to promote their policies and projects. The instrumental rationale for public participation emphasizes public agency legitimacy as a means for getting projects completed and policies accepted. The instrumental rationale argues that public participation facilitates policy and project formulation and implementation by resolving conflict, building trust, or developing interest group buy-in. Public participation promotes progress on an issue or project (Fiorino, 1990). This approach assumes that a lack of public trust and perpetual conflicts paralyzes government actions. The solution is to involve the public in government decision-making with the hopes of dissolving conflicts, improving trust in government agencies and thereby allowing projects and policies to proceed. This approach is akin to political suasion, whereby “the impetus for public involvement comes from a need to obtain acceptance as a prerequisite to successful implementation, not from a sincere desire to improve policy outcomes” (Thomas, 1995, p. 113).

For example, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has introduced several mechanisms in the past three decades to increase public involvement in agency decision-making with the intention of reducing subsequent litigious actions that may postpone projects or policies. The most noteworthy is the emergence of “consensus seeking” participation mechanisms such as negotiated rulemaking,

alternative dispute resolution (Creighton, 2003), and mediation to alleviate public disputes (Susskind and Cruikshank 1989; Susskind and Field, 1996). Another means of breaking political gridlock is through workshops and surveys to encourage compromise and solutions to previously intractable problems (Reich, 1990). A third example of this rationale is that public managers use public involvement to identify potential public backlash and actively anticipate responses to criticism.

Substantive Basis

Beyond the normative and instrumental rationales for involving the public in agency decision-making, another rationale emerged based on the premise that including the public in agency decision-making improves the substantive quality of the decision. The substantive rationale argues that public participation leads to objectively superior decisions by bringing valuable information, a deeper understanding of the problem or needs, or creative thinking in solving a particular problem (Fiorino, 1990; Beierle and Cayford, 2002). Improving the substantive quality of the decision includes several attributes. Public input in the decision-making process may improve cost-effectiveness, provide additional information or technical analysis, suggest innovative ideas and alternatives, or encourage a more holistic approach to meeting the needs of the proposed project (Beierle, 2000).

Summary

The normative, instrumental, and substantive rationales provide the basis for how public agencies articulate specific goals for public participation. Table 1 presents the relationship between the broad rationales and the specific agency goals for public participation. The democratic ideals of the normative rationale encourage public agencies to consider public participation goals as

informing and educating the public and incorporating public values into decisions. The instrumental rationale promotes public agencies to use public participation to build trust in public institutions and actions and resolve conflict among competing interests. The substantive rationale prompts public agencies to consider public participation as a means of improving the substantive quality of decisions. These five goals do not represent the full spectrum of public participation goals articulated by public agencies, but they do represent the most commonly cited purposes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This article focuses on an assessment of public participation in the environmental impact assessment process, mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA). The legislation requires federal agencies to complete an environmental assessment for all major federal actions that have the potential for significantly affecting the environment. One of the intentions of NEPA is to allow the public to be aware of and informed about environmentally damaging federal projects but also to have an active role in commenting on federal agencies' decisions. The statute and the respective regulations implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) operate like other "sunshine" laws (e.g. Administrative Procedures Act) in that they require full disclosure to the public as well as opportunities for commenting on a proposed federal project. Although the general parameters of NEPA are determined by CEQ regulations, a considerable amount of discretion is granted to the lead federal agency in implementing NEPA mandates. Therefore, the degree and type of public

participation in the environmental assessment process is primarily at the discretion of the federal agency proposing the action. This provides a useful framework for exploring how public managers articulate public participation goals and the types of activities that strive to achieve the expressed goals.

This article explores how public managers with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) articulate specific public participation goals and how those goals in turn influence their choice of public participation activities. To assess how public managers articulated the goals for public participation, the study evaluated several data sources – EIS documents, *Federal Register* notices, public hearings/meetings transcripts, workshop/advisory group minutes, and interviews with Corps staff. Generating the sample of EIS projects occurred in an iterative manner. I completed an initial identification of all the EIS projects completed by the Corps from 1997-2003. I chose the time frame from 1997-2003 because a five-year period generates a large enough population of EIS projects from which to sample, yet it allowed for increased reliability when interviewing project managers, since they were completed more recently. I sorted each EIS project based on the district that was responsible for the project. Then I ranked each district based on the number of EIS projects it completed. I excluded two districts from the sample automatically—Alaska and Honolulu Districts—given their location outside the continental United States. From the remaining 39 districts, located within the continental United States, I sought to identify four districts that represented divergent organizational structures and environmental conditions.

Initially I sorted each district based on the number EIS projects it completed in the five year period. The initial sorting process determined that the districts fell into two broad categories: (1) districts that completed a high

number of EIS projects (more than 10); and (2) districts that completed a low number of EIS projects (less than 10). The assumption is that districts that completed a larger number of EIS projects represented larger, more complex organizational structures and vice versa. Therefore, including two districts with a high number of EIS projects and two districts with a low number of EIS projects ensured diversity in the organizational structure.

An assessment of the documents and information collected during interviews of the sample of 32 EIS projects in four Corps districts (Jacksonville, FL, Huntington, WV, Los Angeles, CA, and Seattle, WA) identified 15 discrete types of public participation activities employed by the Corps' staff. Table 2 identifies and defines the public participation activities.

The article delivers several contributions—both methodologically and empirically. The emphasis on multiple original cases, rather than a single case study or meta-analysis of case studies, provides the opportunity for more generalizable conclusions. Moreover, the focus on public managers' decision-making process, rather than a distinct project or public participation activity, allows for analysis across contextual and organizational characteristics. The study uses inductive and deductive approaches to explore the relationship between public participation goals, organizational and contextual characteristics, and the choice of activities. The blended approach allows for the examination of the propositions based on empirical evidence, while accepting additional observations that emerge.

This article has broad implications for the field of public management. The fundamental challenge for

Table 2: Public Participation Activities

Scoping¹ letter—Usually referred to as the “Dear Interested Party” letter that announces the commencement of the scoping process for the Draft EIS. The letter is sent to all potentially interested parties the Corps has identified, usually with the help of local project sponsors Mailing list—Is a list of individuals and organizations that the Corps and local project sponsors have identified as potentially interested in the EIS. The list also includes individuals and organizations that have contacted the Corps independently seeking more information about the EIS. The mailing list is used to send progress reports and notices. Scoping public hearing—Formal meetings during the initial scoping process at which Corps officials present project purpose, plans, and alternatives, and the public is allowed to make formal oral comments that are recorded. Scoping workshop—Interactive and informal discussion forum held during the scoping process where the public is encouraged raise areas of concern, provide alternatives and relevant information for the project. Articles in professional newsletters—The Corps submits project progress reports to professional newsletters, such as ones published by regional water boards or environmental protection departments. Newspaper notices—The Corps publishes notices regarding the beginning of the scoping process, publication of a Draft or Final EIS. The notices typically solicit public comments at the various stages. Newspaper articles—The Corps contributes to newspaper articles covering the project, specifically addressing the need and alternatives for the project. Presentation at local events—The Corps presents formal or informal information sessions at town council meetings, festivals, or other events. DEIS² available at multiple locations—In the Notice of Intent filed in the <i>Federal Register</i>, the Corps lists all the locations a copy of the Draft EIS is available for public review, usually libraries, local agency offices, and the Corps district office. DEIS public hearing—Formal meetings when the Draft EIS is issued at which Corps officials present project purpose, plans, and alternatives, and the public is allowed to make formal oral comments that are recorded. DEIS workshop—Interactive and informal discussion forum held at the publication of the Draft EIS where the public is encouraged evaluate alternatives and raise concerns or ideas for the project. Issue group—Consists of representatives of key interest groups, both governmental and non-governmental, who become more educated on the project than the general public, and provides project concerns, ideas, and recommendations. The groups operate on an ad hoc basis. Advisory group—Consists of representatives of key interest groups, both governmental and non-governmental, who participate in a more committed manner and provide recommendations and alternatives to the Corps via formal report. Interagency group—Consist of only governmental agencies, generally a combination of federal, state, and local agencies, that have a stake in the project and its outcomes Website—The Corps develops a project website where Corps can issue notices of public meetings, availability of EIS related documents, maps, and even models of various alternatives.
--

democratic governance is reconciling the need for expertise in managing public programs with transparency and participation demanded by a democratic system. I posit that how public managers articulate their goals for public participation contributes to their choice of public participation activities. Further, the expression of these goals is a reflection of how public managers view their role in democratic governance. For example, if public managers identify that informing the public is their goal, then the implication is that they perceive their role in democratic governance more as experts relaying their knowledge. On the other hand, if public managers express their goal as a means to resolve conflict, they may perceive their role more as a mediator of public interests. Ultimately, defining the role of public managers is critical to resolving the tension in democratic governance.

ARTICULATING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOALS

The following section examines how the Corps translates their expressed goals for public participation to specific mechanisms to involve the public. The findings focus on the five goals for public participation articulated in extant literature: (1) informing and educating the public, (2) incorporating public values in agency decision making, (3) building trust (4) reducing conflict, and (5) improving substantive quality of outcome.

Informing and Educating the Public

Informing and educating the public is the most conventional goal for public participation. NEPA's key public participation concept stems from the notion of full disclosure of project alternatives and potential impact of each alternative. Many public managers interviewed observed that informing and educating the public is a goal

for public participation. Interestingly, public managers interpret the goal of informing and educating the public in several ways.

One approach is simply to inform the public when the Corps commences a specific project. In these cases public managers focus on informing the public early in the process, but there is little evidence of continued public involvement as the project progresses. Informing the public always includes a Notice of Intent filed in the *Federal Register*. Project managers also cite contributing to local newspaper articles as a means to spread the word about projects. Local and regional fairs, festivals, and other events serve as venues for public managers to distribute brochures and discuss proposed projects. The Corps' staff employed both of these techniques in a local flood protection project in Marlinton, West Virginia to inform and educate the public. The Corps contributed to a series of articles on the proposed project in the local newspaper, *Pocahontas Times* and set up an informational booth at the local festival, Pioneer Days. The emphasis on the information dissemination "was to ensure that the public was well informed of the proposed alternatives prior to receiving the recommendation and the decision document" (Miller, 2003).

An alternative approach to informing the public emphasizes that the public's right to be informed and educated continuously throughout the EIS process, not just at the project's inception. Several managers were adamant about the keeping the public informed through the duration of the project. "We didn't want to get into the situation that the public didn't know," explained the public manager for Broward County Beach Restoration Project (Haberer, 2003). In this case, there was a considerable amount of controversy over the project, and the Corps staff anticipated that a significant number of individuals and organizations would be interested in the project's progress. The public

manager for the Miami River Dredging Project noted that monthly public meetings “have been really good because they keep everyone informed” and were a useful mechanism for “rumor control” (Perez, 2003). The key agencies (both governmental and non-governmental) presented status reports at the monthly meetings, thereby allowing all the key stakeholders to be continually informed about various aspects of the project’s progress.

The Corps also used regional newsletters and professional email listserves to disseminate progress reports to key stakeholders. The Puget Sound Confined Disposal Site project manager contributed articles to *Soundwaves* (Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team newsletter) and *Confluence* (Washington Department of Ecology newsletter) and existing email listserves to discuss project alternatives and progress. Public managers also use websites to provide citizens access to up-to-date information, meeting minutes, and studies relevant to the projects. For example, the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow Protection project used websites to present a myriad of hydrological models based on the proposed alternatives, including detailed maps, water budgets (volume of water that enters and leaves a particular area, and inundation levels). The Cape Sable project involves water management for a complex set of interrelated hydrological areas for multiple uses, agriculture, habitat protection, and tribal interests. The website allows the multiple interest groups to compare the alternatives by selecting from a list of information sources, in essence making the website a dynamic, stakeholder-driven information source.

However, informing or educating the public is also one of the more challenging aspects of public participation. Public managers expressed that it is difficult to get the public and other agencies to participate early in the process. The public and other agencies are hesitant to get involved until the Draft EIS is completed. The Corps’ staff notes

several reasons why this might be happening. First, it is easier to attack the Draft EIS than to contribute early on in the process. The effect is that public managers have to “drag them [the public and other agencies] into the scoping process” (Jordan, 2003). Second, public managers observe that there is usually a high turnover rate during the process, resulting in constant re-education. Third, in some cases a project’s technical complexity may limit substantive public participation. Many public managers use charts, maps, brochures, and slide presentations to inform the public. But in some instances, this approach is too sophisticated. One public manager noted that the town council asked the Corps’ staff to keep their monthly meetings very low key, in other words no “razzle-dazzle,” such as the use of slides (Miller, 2003).

Public managers and the language in EIS documents expressed that informing and educating the public was a goal for public participation. Mailing lists, newsletters and presentations to local governments served as a useful tool to continuously keep a broad spectrum of stakeholders informed about the project. Public meetings and hearings on the other hand were more useful in presenting a general overview of the project. Interagency groups and workshops were also used to meet the goal of informing and educating the public, albeit generally to a more committed and interested group of stakeholders, because it required active and sustained participation on the public’s behalf.

Incorporating Public Values in Agency Decisions

The goal of incorporating public values in agency decision-making is expressed by scholars and citizens as an axiom of public participation (Beierle and Cayford, 2002; Rosener, 1981; Sewell et al., 1979). Equal with the goal for informing and educating the public, “hearing” public comments and soliciting public input is the second most

articulated public participation goal. The Notice of Intent (NOI) published in the *Federal Register* for initiating the scoping process and issuing a Draft EIS always includes language about “request for written comments.” This request is merely a reflection of the Corps meeting Administrative Procedure Act (APA) mandates, and does not necessarily suggest that the goals for public participation include incorporating public values.

Transcripts from public hearings and meetings provide additional explanations for involving the public, since APA and NEPA do not mandate public hearings and meetings. The majority of public meetings/hearings include some articulation by the Corps’ staff that the purpose of the meeting/hearing, in addition to informing the public, is to “listen” to the public, as illustrated by the Santa Ana flood protection project. The introductory speech at a public hearing expressed:

The primary purpose tonight is to try to hear your comments. We will respond for clarification or information; but basically we’re here to listen to your comments as you review or are in the process of reviewing the EIS. (Santa Ana Final EIS, 2000)

Public hearing transcripts noted that Corps staff also expressed that the goal of the public hearing was to allow the public to “speak freely and publicly, and to express their views about the proposed modifications and the concerns they may have” (Sunny Isles Final EIS, 1998).

In the process of listening to the public and allowing them to present oral comments, the public meetings/hearings allow public managers to solicit input about public values and incorporate them into the decision-making process and the final project proposal. In one of the most clearly articulated goals for public participation, a project manager explained that public involvement was

critical to establishing criteria for decision-making and a vision for the future. The EIS project involved establishing a new review process for regulating permits for filling wetlands in southeast Florida. An advisory group of development, agricultural, environmental interests was established because the Corps “needed a lot of input on what might happen in the next twenty years and what kind of issues are people facing concerning permitting” (Barron, 2003). The advisory group, dubbed the Alternatives Development Group, would spend twenty days (ten two-day sessions) hashing out criteria for reviewing subsequent wetland permits to meet the needs of all the interest groups.

For the most part though, public values are incorporated in the EIS process by identifying areas of public concern and evaluating project alternatives. During the Miami River Dredging project, the Corps collaborated with the Miami River Commission, comprised equally of river users and county representatives, who have been working on improving the Miami River navigation for the past ten years, to ascertain areas of concern and address specific concerns. The group is partially funded through state and county funds. Within the commission a subgroup met monthly to specifically address concerns and alternatives for dredging the Miami River. For example, one member of the group expressed concern that heavy metals in the Miami River’s sediment, disturbed during the dredging process, would affect the water quality. As a result, the Corps pledged to conduct an additional study to evaluate the impact of river dredging on heavy metal dispersal and potential environmental consequences.

Some public participation activities are more proactive in soliciting public input. Attempts to incorporate public values into the decision-making process transcend the specific Corps project. For instance, in the process of completing an EIS that examined stream restoration in the Northwest, the Corps staff identified public participation as

a means to incorporate public values on a long-term basis. As one staffer noted, the goal of the public workshop was “to win their hearts and mind, get them actively involved in the process, involved in the stewardship of the land . . . getting the property owners involved in the stewardship of the basin” (Gilbrough, 2004).

Previous studies of public participation suggest that public managers have been fairly successful in incorporating public values in agency decision-making through public participation processes. Public input has shaped the final product of the process by broadening the scope of project (Krantzberg, 1997), defining goals for restoration, identifying priorities for actions, and established “visions” for the project (Beierle and Konisky, 1999).

This study suggests that despite public managers’ intentions, the goal of incorporating public values in agency decisions is not always successful. For example, when the Notice of Intent is mailed out and there is a limited response, the Corps does not make an effort to conduct an elaborate public participation process. An illustration of this is the case of two analogous shore restoration projects, one on the west coast of Florida in Lee County and the other on the east coast of Florida in Broward County. The two projects had the same project manager. In both cases the Corps published a NOI and sent “Dear Interested Party” letters; however in Lee County there was no public response except from state and federal agencies. In Broward County the project generated over two thousand written comments. As a result the Corps did not schedule a public hearing for the Lee County project, citing a “lack of response from the public” during the scoping process (Haberer, 2003). Comparatively, the Corps held a public meeting at the issuance of the Broward County Draft EIS and hired a professional facilitator to conduct the meeting. The public meeting drew more than

150 members of the public, including condo owners, fishermen, and business owners.

Similar to the goal of informing and educating the public, the goal of incorporating public values is based on normative notions of political sovereignty and the citizens' right to participate. Projects that public managers articulated incorporating public values as a goal employed several additional techniques compared to informing and educating the public. Most notably the use of advisory groups, articles in professional newsletters, and presentation at local events. This finding suggests that when the Corps expresses interest in incorporating public values, they rely on additional mechanisms that either promote the involvement of a committed group of stakeholders or actively reach out to potentially interested individuals and organizations. Advisory groups by definition involve the committed participation of a group of stakeholders to address issues compared to issue groups, which are ad hoc in nature. Articles in professional newsletters engage an audience that is already familiar with and has a stake in Corps projects. Presentations at local events yield greater accessibility public managers for individuals and organizations to express their values and opinions to public managers.

Reduce Conflict

A hallmark of the environmental policy domain has been conflict and litigation. In an effort to curtail conflict and allow projects to proceed in a timely manner, government agencies perceive public participation as a panacea to resolving conflict (Conglianese, 1999). In reality though, public participation does not necessarily resolve conflicts among conflicting interests. This realization, however, has not stopped the Corps from actively involving the public to resolve anticipated conflicts.

The Lake Okeechobee Regulation EIS considered a range of water level alternatives to optimize environmental benefits, while attaining the primary project purposes—flood control and water supply. The three potentially conflicting project purposes implied that any project around Lake Okeechobee is bound to be contentious. To dissolve potentially disruptive conflict, the Corps held a workshop to bring people together to talk about “shared adversity.” Most of the workshop participants were previously involved in Lake Okeechobee projects, such as representatives of agricultural interests and environmental groups. But the project manager wanted to:

...put everyone together in a whole group and allowed them to hear each others concerns...so that they were not bringing the issues to us [the Corp] individually. This created an opportunity to hear each other concerns. They realized that not every one can win or get what they want. They realized that if I don't give a little we will be stuck. (Brooks-Hal, 2003)

In a potentially contentious atmosphere where equal and opposite passions for where water should go, public workshops produce an end to the gridlock. The program manager for the Lake Okeechobee project observed that generally the public at the workshops go through a period of frustration but then begin to listen to each other. Ultimately, the interest groups realize that “whether you hate or love the environment it is the source of the water that affects all the groups” (Brooks-Hal, 2003).

Prior experiences with similar types of projects shape project managers' goals for public participation. In the Seattle District, dredged material disposal projects that explored site-specific alternatives traditionally generated a great deal of conflict. Local communities opposed having a

disposal site in their backyard and fought vigorously to have their sites excluded. When the Puget Sound Confined Disposal Site EIS commenced, site-specific options were initially considered. Based on their past experience with communities, the Corps embarked on an extensive public participation process. The public outreach strategy consisted of traditional approaches, such as media releases, workshops, and public hearings. Additionally, public managers created a pool of citizen and scientific advisors to assist in the EIS planning and design; the development of volunteer community criteria to guide the selection of communities who actively sought a disposal site location, and coordinate public workshops and/or meetings in select areas based on a list of possible sites following the programmatic stage and community reaction.

To achieve this goal the findings suggest that public managers relied on traditional public participation activities, such as soliciting written comments and public hearings. When more elaborate activities were used, such as issue and interagency groups, they tended to convene on an ad hoc basis with no consistent commitment on behalf of the participants.

Improve Trust

Scholars frequently cite public participation as an antidote to declining trust in government agencies, actions, and decisions (Schneider and Ingram, 1997; Slovic, 1993). The goal for improving trust also is interpreted in various ways by public managers. There is the goal to improve trust in the Corps' outcomes or agency decisions. In this case, the Corps' choices of EIS project alternatives. Public managers also expressed that they hoped public participation would improve trust in the EIS process. The final goal expressed by public managers is the goal for improved confidence and trust in the specific agency or government as a whole.

The public participation literature notes that early efforts to involve the public are primarily implemented for public suasion. In essence, public participation serves as a mechanism to gain public buy-in for a project. This perspective, stemming from the instrumental rationale, is reflected in reality. Public managers view public participation as a means to improve trust in the Corps' decision and the final recommendation for the specific EIS action. It is an acknowledgement that without public buy-in, there is no hope for the Corps to complete the project. The response of the Corps official for the Rio de Flag flood protection project during a public meeting illustrates this point.

Our public involvement in the current plan is probably ten-fold what would normally be done, and than what is required. We don't want to do what is minimum. We want to go way above and beyond...Public buy-in on this, whatever the final project is. It's not going to get done if the public doesn't want it done. That is the bottom line. (Rio De Flag Final EIS, 2000)

Public managers also expressed an interest in improving trust in the decision-making process, specifically the EIS development process. Public managers explained that in some instances the traditional approach to public participation of relying solely on written comments and public hearings is inadequate in ensuring the public trust in the EIS process. Alternative public participation activities such as issue and advisory groups provide a solution to improving public trust in the EIS process. For example, the Lee and Collier Counties Improving Regulatory Process in Southwest Florida project in Florida employed an advisory group to improve trust in the EIS process. Dubbed the Alternative Development Group (ADG), the advisory group aimed to develop alternatives, evaluation criteria,

and impact assessments. The Corps solicited volunteers from the community and government agencies, but ultimately chose the group members to represent a balanced group of interests. The ADG consisted of 20-30 representatives of various interest groups, including developers, environmentalists, and water authorities. A key component of the group process was the level of commitment, in terms of time and staff resources and to the process itself.

Commitment to ADG consisted of two elements. First, they would be required to spend twenty working days (ten two-day meetings) over a period of five months plus special assignments and review time...the second element was commitment to the nature of what was needed to occur within the ADG...this required complete and honest delivery of information during the process at all times. Rephrased: Bring everything to the table. (Alternative Development Group, 1998)

Additionally, each ADG member had to assign an alternate in case he or she was unable to attend a meeting, ensuring continuity in the process. To support the “complete and honest delivery of information” throughout the process, the Corps hired a professional facilitator for the ADG meetings.

The [Advisory Group] meetings were facilitated by a professional facilitator for several reasons, including making the meetings productive, the Corps could participate equally...it was also important that the people [ADG members] felt that their time was not wasted and they felt that they had equal access to the process.(Barron, 2003)

By removing the Corps from the responsibilities of organizing and facilitating the meetings, the Corps was able to serve as an equal member of the ADG rather than as a target of malcontent. The Corps staff could focus on listening to the various alternatives and actively bring their own ideas to the table. Given that the ultimate purpose of the ADG was to generate alternatives to “help write the EIS” (Barron, 2003) then improved trust was necessary to generate all feasible alternatives.

Improving general trust in government agencies and actions also was cited as a goal for public participation. Public managers indicated that general mistrust in government agencies and actions were deeply rooted in some communities where a segment of the population felt that the government “was out to harm them in some ways” (Miller, 2003). The Local Flood Protection project in Marlinton, West Virginia, illustrated the most pronounced aversion to government in general and the Corps specifically. In an effort to “dispel myths and untruths” public managers reported project status reports to the Marlinton Town Council on a monthly basis, contributed to articles in the local newspaper, *The Pocahontas Times*, regarding the project and participated at a local festival to allow citizens to engage the Corps’ staff directly (Miller, 2003). The public managers for the Marlinton project were quick to note though that this approach did not improve trust in the Corps as whole and its proposed project. Public managers observed that “[opponents to the project] were not pleased with anything” and it was difficult to convince them that the government is not bad and out to get them (Miller 2003).

Public managers articulated that public meetings, hearings and websites improved trust because they provided access to Corps documents and description of project. Workshops and advisory groups improved trust because it built dynamic interactions and relationships

among the Corps and the various stakeholders. The findings suggest that even though the intention to use public participation as a means to improve trust in governmental decisions, process, or institutions, and developed activities to that end, the result of improving trust was not inherently achieved.

Improve Substantive Quality of Decisions

The final goal articulated by public managers is the goal to improve the substantive quality of the decisions. Scholars support this argument theorizing that public participation improves the substantive quality of decisions by incorporating “comprehensive information” (Kweit and Kweit, 1987; Beierle and Cayford, 2002; Deitz and Stern, 2008). To meet this goal public managers used public hearings/meetings, workshops, websites, and advisory groups. Websites were particularly useful in providing access to large amounts of information, which were previously only accessible at local libraries or Corps offices. Having documents, maps, meetings minutes, and other information available online, allowed the public to more actively engage in the EIS process and provide more constructive input on the project. Public meetings, workshops, and advisory groups provided written records in terms of either transcripts or reports that helped identify and evaluate various project alternatives.

Some managers observed that public hearings and meetings served an invaluable purpose in providing factual information regarding projects: “The public hearing was called . . . to obtain factual information on the effects of the proposed modifications, which will assist in arriving at sound conclusions” (Sunny Isle Final EIS, 1998). The use of factual information was particularly useful in developing project alternatives, which is a critical component of the EIS document. As one public manager observed, “It was powerful to go back and evaluate the alternatives based on

the comments and lessen environmental impacts” (Haberer, 2003). This statement reflects that the information and perspectives citizens provide yield substantive improvements to the EIS outcome.

Traditional methods of public involvement, such as public hearings and meetings, have sometimes proved inadequate in improving the substantive quality of Corps’ decisions. As a result, the Corps has broadened its repertoire of public participation activities, to include advisory groups, interagency workgroups, and public workshops to gain additional information, perspective, and potential solutions to “help write the EIS.”

For example, the Corps had concerns that they did not have enough information to generate feasible alternatives for an EIS project proposing rock mining in Dade County, Florida. In effort to generate and effectively evaluate alternatives, the Corps collaborated with the South Florida Everglades Task Force, a federally funded entity, to host a meeting to bring together the main actors—environmentalists, miners, farmers, and developers to assist in rounding out the deficiency of alternatives. The Corps provided the money, and hired an outsider facilitator, but the Task Force served as the meeting host.

They also employed existing groups to access information relevant to the EIS project. For the Lake Gentry Extreme Drawdown project, the Corps collaborated with the Upper Kissimmee Roundtable to identify and discuss options for improving flood protection and natural ecosystems in the Chain of Lakes. The group, which met monthly, included representatives of government agencies, Osceola County, Alligator Chain of Lakes Homeowners Association, and agricultural and aquaculture interests. The agencies and citizen’s groups leveraged their resources, shared information and data, reduced institutional impediments, improved communication and developed an

inter-agency, multi-disciplinary approach to address improvements to the water drawdown schedule.

The goal to improve the substantive quality of the decisions suggests that public participation leads to objectively superior decision by the inclusion of information, ideas, and alternatives. This concept is a departure from the traditional perspective of public participation in that it emphasizes that the public not only has a right to participation in public decisions, but is essential to creating effective public decisions and outcomes. One of the key findings on EIS projects that emphasized the substantive rationale for public participation was that they generally identified more alternatives, included additional assessments, and articulated a greater understanding of the need and purpose of the EIS.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study shed light on not only how public managers implement specific public participation goals, but also how the Corps staff defines their roles in interpreting specific public participation goals and the challenges they experienced implementing the respective goals. Table 3a and 3b summarize the frequency with which Corps staff articulated a public participation goal. The total number of responses exceeds 32 (the number of EIS projects examined), because in some EIS projects more than one public participation goal was articulated. Table 3 also identifies the public participation activities used in relation to the articulated public participation goal. The synopsis suggests that public participation activities are not exclusive to specific public participation goals. Rather the public participation activities are generally consistent across all public participation goals. The findings do suggest that Corps staff perceived a distinction in their roles in the public participation process

depending on the articulated goal. An analysis of the public participation activities and perceived roles in the process highlights several challenges Corps staff face in implementing specific public participation goals. The following sections discuss the implications of the findings.

Prevalence of Perceived Goals for Public Participation

Each of the common public participation goals were expressed in the EIS projects, however, the frequency varied. As Table 3 illustrates, only three EIS projects expressed that resolving conflict and building trust was a specific goal for involving the public. These two goals represent the instrumental rationale. This rationale suggests that public participation facilitates policy and project formulation and implementation by dissolving conflicts and improving trust in government agencies, thereby allowing projects and policies to proceed. The instrumental rationale emphasizes administrative efficiency in executing projects and policies. The findings suggest that public managers either do not view public participation as a means to improve administrative efficiency or that administrative efficiency as a whole is not goal to achieve democratic governance. If the former is true then contrary to conventional wisdom, public managers do not involve the public in decision-making in hopes of resolving conflicts among competing interests or building trust in public institutions.

Project managers for an equal number (11) of EIS projects expressed that informing and educating the public and incorporating public value were public participation goals. The frequency with which these goals were cited was considerably higher than the goals of reducing conflict and building trust. The goals of informing and educating the public and incorporating public value reflect a normative rationale for involving the public. The normative rationale

encompasses a traditional philosophy of democratic governance of popular sovereignty and political equity,

Table 3a: Prevalence of, Agency Role in, and Challenges to Implementing Public Participation Goals

Ideological Basis and Agency Goal	# of EIS	Public Participation Activities	Agency Role Interpreting Public Participation Goal	Challenges in Implementing Public Participation Goal
<i>Normative</i> Inform and educate the public	11	• Scoping letter, workshop, public hearing • Mailing List • Notices in local newspaper • DEIS access at multiple locations, public hearing, workshop • Interagency group • Issue group • Website	Selected appropriate mediums for disseminating information Identified key stakeholders and resource organizations	Matching appropriate message medium to stakeholder needs Message does not necessarily reach all affected stakeholders
Incorporate public values into agency decisions	11	• Scoping public hearing • Notices in local newspapers • DEIS access at multiple locations, public hearing, workshop • Articles in professional newsletters • Presentations at local events • Interagency group • Issue and Advisory Groups • Website	Translated public feedback to evaluate project alternatives Lightning rod for public support or opposition	Inconsistent public interest in Corps projects. Lack of clarity in how public values are reflected in changes to the project

Table 3b: Prevalence of, Agency Role in, and Challenges to Implementing Public Participation Goals

Ideological Basis and Agency Goal	# of EIS	Public Participation Activities	Agency Role Interpreting Public Participation Goal	Challenges in Implementing Public Participation Goal
<i>Instrumental</i> Reduce conflicts among competing interests Improve trust in public decisions	3 3	• Scoping letter, public hearing • DEIS public hearing, workshop • Articles in professional newsletters • Interagency group • Issue group	Gauged level of public controversy Convened active project stakeholders	Misinterpreting lack of public participation with lack of controversy relating to project Maintaining a consistent and iterative dialogue on the project issue
		• Mailing List • Scoping letter, public hearing, workshop • Presentations at local events • DEIS public hearing • Issue and Advisory group • Website	Mediated and clarified relevant information	Persistent distrust of government agencies, activities, and process.
<i>Substantive</i> Improve substantive quality of decisions	12	• Mailing List • Scoping letter, public hearing, workshop • Presentations at local events • DEIS public hearing, workshop • Articles in professional newsletters • Interagency, issue and advisory groups • Website	Created participation portals that supported communication and information sharing <i>among</i> stakeholders (rather than directed towards Corps staff)	Supporting and holding stakeholders accountable for their participation in negotiating project issues and alternatives Resources to hire consultants or design elaborate portals to guide public participation process.

specifically that public participation is a right of citizens and necessary for healthy democratic governance. The fact that the two goals representing the normative rationale were cited so often suggests that public managers view public participation as a means to maintain a representative democratic government.

The most frequently cited goal for public participation by public managers was the goal to improve the substantive quality of the decisions. This goal was cited by public managers in 12 EIS projects, suggesting that improving administrative effectiveness was an important objective. The substantive rationale for public participation suggests that public participation leads to objectively superior decisions by the inclusion of information, ideas, and alternatives. This concept is a departure from traditional perspectives of public participation in its emphasis on public participation as a means to improved public decisions and outcomes. In this study, the substantive improvement represents an EIS with more alternatives, the inclusion of additional assessments, and a greater understanding of the need and purpose of the EIS. The assessment suggests the perceived role of Corps public managers is to serve as solicitor of relevant scientific and social information, educator of proposed plans, and convener of multiple interests. On the flipside, public managers do not see their role in public participation as mediators of conflict and instruments to improve trust in public agencies and actions.

Agency Role in Interpreting Public Participation Goals

A significant finding of the study is, regardless of the goal articulated by public managers, the types of public participation activities do not vary greatly. There is striking consistency in the types of public participation activities Corps staff employ for each expressed public participation goal. The public participation activities employed

universally include: (1) a public hearing during the scoping process, (2) a public hearing after the release of the Draft EIS, and (3) the use of an issue group to bring together key stakeholders on an ad hoc basis. The fact that these three types of activities are universally used, regardless of expressed goal for public participation, reflects the precedence set for minimal public participation efforts in EIS projects. It does not necessarily reflect a conscious acknowledgement of the matching public participation activities with public participation goals.

Other public participation activities were represented in at least three out of the five public participation goals. These included: (1) sending scoping letters to notify the initiation of an EIS project, (2) conducting scoping workshops to solicit initial feedback on the purpose of the EIS project, (3) generating a mailing list to send updated information to stakeholders, (4) presenting at local events such as town councils, festivals, and fairs, (5) writing articles for professional newsletters, such as for Water and Conservation Districts, (6) participation in interagency and advisory groups, (7) conducting a workshop at the release of a Draft EIS, and (8) creating a website for specific EIS projects or a collection of EIS projects. The relatively consistent collection of public participation activities suggests that Corps staff is more cognizant of the range of mechanisms to engage the public. There is no evidence that the Corps staff discriminates among its choice of public participation activities to meet specific public participation goals. The one exception was the choice to publish notices in the local newspapers about impending EIS projects. This public participation activity was discrete to the normative goals of informing and educating the public and incorporating public values into agency decisions.

The lack of significant differentiation in activities to implement specific public participation goals suggests that

the choice of activities is not the primary driver for implementing public participation goals. In the analysis of how the Corps staff addressed their goals for public participation there was considerable distinction in how they perceived their roles respective to the expressed public participation goals. In meeting the goal of informing and educating the public, the Corps staff was cognizant of the idiosyncrasies of affected populations, in particular who would have direct interest in the project and the choice of the appropriate media to reach affected public. This is reflected in the diversity of media employed by the Corps staff to inform and educate the public, including participating in local festivals, sending scoping notices to all condo owners, not just to the condo board, and authoring articles for Water District newsletters. In meeting the goal to incorporate public values into agency decisions the Corps staff assumed two distinct roles. First, the Corps staff translated stakeholder interests and concerns to evaluate project alternatives through the creation and participation in formal advisory groups. The second role the Corps staff assumed in incorporating public values was to serve as a “lightning rod” at formal public hearings. The Corps staff initiated these public hearings with a commitment to listen to public comments and clarify information presented in the EIS. One of the characteristics that define the Corps’ roles in addressing the normative rationales for public participation is the emphasis on unidirectional communication. The difference is that the direction of the communication changes between the two goals. The Corps staff communicates information to the public for the former and the public communicates information to the Corps in the latter. The implication is that neither role attempts to create a multidimensional communication mode that embraces double-loop learning (Senge, 1990).

The instrumental rationale for public participation implies that the process serves to reduce conflict among competing interest groups and improve trust in public institutions. The rationale is that if public managers are proactive in addressing potential points of conflict and strive to improve trust in public institutions the EIS projects will not face protracted opposition to proposed projects due to legal disputes, community opposition, or limited resources. The Corps adopted two specific roles in implementing the goal to reduce conflict among competing interests. The first step was to gauge the expected level of public controversy during the scoping process. In the three EIS projects for which the staff emphasized reducing conflict the projects were part of a larger complex set of Corps projects that had a history of controversy, such as Everglades Restoration projects and disposal of dredged material from navigation harbors.

The second step was to identify existing groups of active stakeholders relevant to the EIS project. The Corps staff used workshops, issue groups, and articles in professional newsletters to identify a pool of key stakeholders to collectively define their concerns and criteria for guiding project alternatives. This approach required Corps staff to encourage the disparate stakeholders to convene and create a sustained dialogue. The Corps' role in developing a public participation process that improved trust in public institutions reflected the reactive and proactive forces inherent in the EIS process. The Corps used traditional, public hearings, and non-traditional approaches, presentations at a local events and formal advisory groups to mediate and clarify EIS project purposes, alternatives, and develop criteria for assessing alternatives. The reactive approach served to "dispel myths" and the proactive approach served to generate critical buy-in for the EIS project outcomes. Both of these approaches placed the Corps at the center of the public

participation process—guiding, directing, and facilitating the process.

The Corps' approach to improve the substantive quality of the decisions resulted in the Corps moving away from the center of the process. The Corps staff relied on a variety of participation portals, including formal advisory groups that met on a regular basis, websites that aggregated data sources, and external facilitators to guide public hearings and workshops. The result was the Corps shifted to the periphery of the public participation process by creating systems that encourage communication and information sharing among the key stakeholders, rather than directed towards the Corps staff. This approach required the Corps to devote significant planning, and resources to develop sustainable participation portals (both face-to-face and online). It also required the Corps to hold stakeholders accountable to contributing relevant information and demonstrating a high degree of commitment to the process. This included public distribution of stakeholder analysis of scientific studies and mandatory attendance of designated stakeholder representatives at advisory meetings.

Challenges to Implementing Public Participation Goals

The findings on the frequency with which the public participation goals are articulated, the choice of public participation activities, and the roles that the Corps staff assume in implementing the public participation goals illuminate a spectrum of challenges. A significant source of conflict for Corps staff was identifying and selecting appropriate mediums to reach out to the public and key stakeholders. Relying solely on public notices in local newspapers to inform, educate and solicit public comments was not adequate. The study illustrated that the Corps staff was cognizant of the value of pursuing alternative mediums to communicate with, educate, and invite comments from

the public. The challenge though was matching the appropriate medium to the message and outreach strategies. For example, the Corps staff used a variety of mechanisms to reach out to potentially affected citizens, such as booths at county fairs showcasing Corps projects, direct letters to condo owners (not just condo associations) for beach restoration projects, and project websites detailing the project purpose and alternatives. While these approaches did provide alternative means to access information and comment on the EIS projects there is no evidence that the approaches significantly improved the Corps capacity to inform, educate, and solicit comments from the public. The booth at the county fair served more to highlight the recreation resources at a dam operated by the Corps. The direct letters to the condo owners did not consider that the majority of the owners had primary residences in other locations, hence would not have timely access to the information. The project websites were useful for stakeholder groups that were already actively involved in the project, but they did little to elicit additional perspectives.

In the past two decades the argument for public participation as a means to reduce conflict among competing interests and improve trust in public institutions (Susskind and Cruikshank, 1989; Susskind and Field, 1996; Fiorino, 1990; Thomas 1995) has garnered increasing interest of public agencies. This study suggests that these goals for public participation are not pervasive. Given that only three EIS projects explicitly articulated the use of public participation to reducing conflict among competing interests and improve trust in public institutions, respectively, suggests that the Corps acknowledges some challenges in meeting these goals. There are three critical challenges in implementing the instrumental rationale for public participation. First, the Corps may be misinterpreting lack of public participation with lack of

potential controversy relating to specific projects. For example, one way the Corps gauged the expected level of controversy or conflict is by the number of written responses received when the Notice of Intent for the EIS scoping process is announced. In the Lee County Beach Restoration project and the Jacksonville Harbor Navigational Improvement project, the Corps received only a handful of written responses to the scoping notice. Furthermore, the vast majority of the responses came from federal and state agencies that must be consulted in the EIS process by law. There is no evidence that the Corps pursued additional sources of potential issues after the scoping process.

Second, the process of reducing conflict and improving trust requires maintaining a consistent and iterative dialogue on project issues. For EIS projects that had a history of controversy, the Corps staff relied on a process that spanned several months and involved a consistent set of stakeholders to identify evaluation criteria and alternatives. Third, in some communities there is a persistent distrust in government agencies, activities, and processes leading to limited public participation. This is most prominent in communities, such as the one served by the Huntington, West Virginia Corps district, where there is limited government capacity and an arms-length interaction with the federal government in particular. This translates to a public that is hesitant to engage the Corps in challenging the purposes and the alternatives for the EIS projects.

The most commonly cited goal for public participation was to improve the substantive quality of the project outcomes. This goal also yielded some of the most complex challenges. First, time and money limitations are significant obstacles to implementing public participation activities, and the perceived existence or absence of conflict can be the deciding factor in whether to pursue

public participation activities beyond what is mandated by NEPA. As one project manager explained:

We have to make a judgment whether public meetings will be helpful. At one time we did a cost analysis of how much a public meeting cost to conduct, and it came out to be about \$20,000 including the meeting space, transcription. So we have to make a judgment if it is going to be productive to do public meeting or not. The money for public meetings comes from project funds. For every hour a Corps staff works on a project, it must be documented and put towards the project costs. In the last two, three years the Corps budget has been on the decline, there is even concern that Corps staff will be reduced. One of reasons why we would have a public meeting is if there was a lot of controversy. In these cases public meetings can be quite exciting...some instances we have brought local sheriffs to meetings because we did not know how it would turn out.

The use of hired facilitators, renting neutral meeting spaces, and promoting the workshop or meeting requires significant resources. At the same time these strategies are critical to creating mechanisms for communicating and sharing information among the disparate stakeholders rather than exclusively directed towards the Corps.

Even more challenging than securing resources to meet the goal of improving the substantive outcome of the project is supporting and maintaining active participation in the public participation process. In some instances, the Corps mandated that interested stakeholders make commitments to each other to develop a collective proposal. It required the Corps to take a peripheral role in facilitation discussions, negotiations, and creating the

language for the EIS documents. Ultimately, this required the Corps to distance themselves from the decision-making process, yet maintain a firm hand on supporting and promoting a continuous process of deliberation and consensus-seeking.

CONCLUSION

This choice of public participation mechanisms matters. The questions are, how does it matter and what influences the public manager's choice of public participation mechanisms? The mechanisms matter in that they shape the context and conditions of participant interactions (March and Olson, 1984; Shepsle and Bonchek, 1997; Weaver and Rockman, 1993). The more challenging question is what factors influence the choice of public participation mechanisms. Extant research suggests several hypotheses, including the agenda-setting control, decision-making control, citizen leadership control and capacity, state official leadership quality (Stewart, 2007; Fung, 2006) and the efficiency of information flow among activity sponsors and public participants (Rowe and Frewer, 2005). This study sought to examine the relationship between the articulated goals for public participation and the choice of public participation mechanisms. These five public participation goals by no means represent an exhaustive set of public participation goals, but they offer a framework for understanding how public managers articulate their rationales for public participation. The findings suggest that there is *no inherent link* between what the public managers articulate as their goals for public participation and the selection of specific public participation mechanisms to meet the expressed goals. One explanation for this finding is that variation actually occurs within each mechanism (Rowe and Frewer, 2005), in that the implementation of the public participation

mechanisms may be more important than the definition of the discrete public participation mechanisms. Further research is needed to test extant hypotheses of what influences the choice of public participation mechanisms and more inductive research of alternative factors affecting the choice of public participation mechanisms.

Even though the link between the goal for public participation and discrete mechanisms was not substantiated, the study does offer two significant contributions to our understanding of the implementation of public participation. First, public managers do develop specific roles in implementing discrete public participation goals. This finding builds upon emerging research on collaborative environmental management that hints at a more diverse set of roles for public managers in engaging the public, including government as follower, encourager, or leader (Koontz et. al, 2004). The field would benefit from future research in clarifying the implications of these diverse roles.

Second, public managers face discrete challenges in implementing specific public participation goals. The challenges range from assessing the appropriate communication media to meet the goals of informing and educating the public to creating elaborate participation portals that require sustained resources, stakeholder commitment, and processes that supports iterative discussions. This finding builds upon extant research exploring barriers to effective public participation (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004). Practitioners would benefit from more explicit assessment of the challenges inherent in the diversity of public participation rationales and strategies to implementation barriers.

Involving the public in decision-making is a reality that public agencies face every day. The key issue for future research is how do public managers articulate their role in the public participation process and anticipate and

mitigate challenges in implementing public participation mechanisms.

¹ Scoping is the language used in the Council of Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA. Scoping is defined as “an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action.” Council on Environmental Quality. (1970). Regulations for Implementing NEPA. Sec. 1501.7 Scoping.

² A DEIS is an abbreviation for Draft Environmental Impact Statement which is a preliminary report that includes a description of the proposed action and why it is necessary; the environment that would be affected; and a comparison of alternatives to the proposal.

REFERENCES

- Alternative Development Group. (1998). *Alternative Development Group Final Report*. http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/permit/hot_topics/SF/LAEIS/adgrpt.htm (accessed September 17, 2003).
- Barber, B. (1984). *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for the New Age*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Barron, B. (2003). Telephone Interview. September 15.
- Beierle, C., and Cayford, J. (2002). *Democracy in Practice: Public Participation in Environmental Decisions*. Washington, DC: Resources for the Future.
- Beierle, T. & Konisky, D. (1999). Values, Conflict, and Trust in Participatory Environmental Planning. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 19(4), 587-602.
- Box, R.C. (1998). *Citizen Governance: Leading American Communities into the 21st Century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Brooks-Hal, K. (2003). Telephone Interview. September 12, 2003.
- Conglianese, C. (1999). The Limits of Consensus. *Environment*, 41(3), 28-33.
- Creighton, J.L. (2003). Public Participation in Federal Agencies' Decision-making in the 1990s. *National Civic Review*. 88(3), 249-258.
- Dahl, R.A. (1989). *Democracy and its Critics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Day, D. (1997). Citizen Participation in the Planning Process: An Essentially Contested Concept? *Journal of Planning Literature* 11(3): 421-434.
- Deitz, T. & Stern, P.C. (Eds.). (2008). *Public Participation in Environmental Assessment and Decision Making*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.
- Dewey, J. (1927). *The Public and its Problems*. New York: Holt.
- Fiorino, D. (1990). Citizen Participation and Environmental Risk: A Survey of Institutional Mechanisms. *Science, Technology, and Human Values*, 15(2), 226-243.
- Fischer, F. (2000). *Citizens, Experts, and the Environment: The Politics of Local Knowledge*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Fung, A. (2006). Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance. *Public Administration Review*, 66, 66-75.
- Gilborough, N. (2004). Telephone Interview. June 11.
- Haberer, Y. (2003). Telephone Interview. September 11.
- Irvin, R. A. & Stansbury, J. (2004). Citizen Participation in Decision Making: Is it Worth the Effort? *Public Administration Review*. 64(1), 55-65.
- Jordan, T. (2003). Telephone Interview. September 23.

- Kerwin, C. (1999). *Rulemaking: How Government Agencies Write Law and Make Policy*. Washington, D.C: Congressional Quarterly.
- King, C.S., Feltey, K.M., & Susel, B.O. (1998). The Question of Participation: Toward Authentic Participation in Public Administration. *Public Administration Review*. 58(4), 317-326.
- Koontz, T., Steelman, T., Carmin, J., Korfmacher, K., Moseley, C & Thomas, C. (2004). *Collaborative Environmental Management: What Role for Government?* Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future.
- Krantzberg, G. (1997). Quoted in: Statewide Public Advisory Council. Keys to Successful PAC Operations and Examples of Successful PAC Activities (Meetings Minutes, August 16). Houghton, Michigan: Statewide Public Advisory Council.
- Kweit M.G. & Kweit, R.W. (1987). The Politics of Policy Analysis: The Role of Citizen Participation in Analytical Decision Making. In J. DeSario and S. Langton (eds.) *Citizen Participation in Public Decision Making* (pp. 19-37). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- March, J.G. & Olson, J. P. (1984). The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life. *American Political Science Review*. 78(3), 734-749.
- Miller, K. (2003). Telephone Interview. September 15.
- Olivo, C. (1998). The Practical Problems of Bridging Civil Society and the State: A Study of Round Tables in East Germany. *Polity*, 31, 244-268.
- Perhac, R. M. (1996). Defining Risk: Normative Considerations. *Human and Ecological Risk Assessment*, 2(2), 381-392.
- Perez, L. (2003). Telephone Interview. September 17.

- Reich, R. (1990). *The Power of Public Ideas*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Roberts, N. (1997). Public Deliberation: An Alternative Approach to Crafting Policy and Setting Direction. *Public Administration Review*. 57(2), 124-132.
- Rosener, J. (1983). *User-Oriented Evaluation: A New Way to View Citizen Participation*. *Public Involvement and Social Impact Assessment*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Rourke, F.E. (1987). Bureaucracy in the American Constitutional Order. *Political Science Quarterly*. 102, 231-241.
- Rowe, G. & Frewer, L.J. (2005). A Typology of Public Engagement Mechanisms. *Science, Technology, and Human Values*. 30(2), 251-290.
- Schneider, A.L., and Ingram, H. (1997). *Policy Design for Democracy*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday.
- Sewell, W.R., Phillips, D., & Phillips, S.D. (1979). Models for the Evaluation of Public Participation Programs. *Natural Resources Journal*, 19, 337-358.
- Shepsle, K.A. & Bonchek, M.S. (1997). *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institution*. New York; W.W. Norton.
- Slovic, P. (1993). Perceived Risk, Trust, and Democracy. *Risk Analysis*, 13(6), 675-682.
- Stewart, K. (2007). Write the Rules and Win: Understanding Citizen Participation Game Dynamics. *Public Administration Review*. 67(6), 1067-76.
- Susskind, L. & Cruikshank, J. (1989). *Breaking the Impasse: Consensual Approaches to Resolving Public Disputes*. New York: Basic Books.

- Susskind, L. & Field, P. (1996). *Dealing with an Angry Public: The Mutual Gains Approach to Resolving Disputes*, New York: The Free Press.
- Thomas, J.C. (1995). *Public Participation in Public Decision: New Skills and Strategies for Public Managers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Weaver, R.K. & Rockman, B.A. (1993). *Do Institutions Matter? Government Capabilities in the U.S. and Abroad*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

AUTHOR PROFILE

Maja Husar Holmes, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in the Division of Public Administration at West Virginia University. Her research interests reflect the intersection of public leadership, public participation, and collaborative public management. She can be reached at maja.holmes@mail.wvu.edu.