

Conflict Assessment: A Review of the State of Practice

For: The University of Tokyo, Faculty of Law

Prepared by: Todd Schenk, under the supervision of Patrick Field The Consensus Building Institute, Inc.

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Introduction

Consensus building, or facilitated problem solving, is a powerful way to resolve complex disputes. When done successfully, it can foster more innovative and broadly supported agreements that satisfy everyone's key concerns. Because they are broadly supported and meet all parties' needs, agreements reached through consensus building processes are typically less fragile, leading to better implementation and lowering the probability of future disputes.¹

The consensus building process can be complicated, with a variety of parties and variables at play. The chance of success is greatly improved by recognizing this and following a methodological approach.² Conflict assessment is typically an early step in the process, particularly when dealing with public sector disputes. Conflict assessment serves to parse out who the stakeholders are, what their issues and concerns are, and whether or not (and in what form) a consensus building process might be used to foster a resolution that provides mutual gains.

This report serves as a review of the state of conflict assessment in practice in the United States. The conflict assessment process is briefly outlined for those less familiar with it. For further information, one should refer to the resources listed in the references section. Some general trends and unique findings based on the analysis of conflict assessment reports are then outlined. The bulk of this report is summaries of the 48 assessments gathered from a variety of practitioners working in the field (contained in the separate Conflict Assessment Summaries document). Whenever possible, the actual assessment reports themselves are linked to from the summaries.

This assessment collection

The first step in compiling this collection was identifying practitioners that conduct conflict assessments first when approached to take on a dispute resolution case.³ Efforts were made to identify a sampling of organizations working on a variety of issues from across the United States. It should be noted, however, that the collection is not comprehensive, nor perfectly representative of the practice of conflict assessment.

Practitioners identified were contacted, informed of the purpose of this project, and asked if they could send or direct us towards any assessments they had worked on. Assessments were collected and reviewed, and the appropriate data was extracted to populate the summaries. When data was missing, attempts were made to follow-up and collect it.

The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution was an important source, as they have contracted a variety of practitioners to conduct conflict assessments on a

¹ Susskind (1999) – See 'Resources' section.

² The literature on consensus building is significant and expanding. See the resources section for suggested materials.

³ Conflict assessments are not conducted by all dispute-resolution practitioners before they proceed with the mediation process. Others may use conflict assessments on occasion, but not all the time. In some cases, the stakeholders and issues are assumed, as is the fact that a dispute resolution process will definitely proceed, so an assessment is deemed unnecessary.

variety of environmental issues, and publish most of the resulting reports on their website (http://www.ecr.gov). Due to the relative ease of collecting in-house, Consensus Building Institute-conducted assessments also make up a significant proportion of assessments collected.

Most practitioners contacted were receptive and freely shared assessments with us. In only one case (The Orton Family Foundation - Little Equinox Wind Forum) was an assessment reviewed for the summary document, but withheld from being shared in its entirety due to confidentiality issues.

The assessment process

Some conflicts are relatively easy to frame, with clear parties and interests. Most, however, are complex, with uncertainty as to who the relevant stakeholders are, what they are looking for in the negotiation, what the chances of agreement are, and how a facilitated problem-solving process should be structured to foster agreement. Conflict assessments aim to clarify these issues for all parties involved, providing recommendations as to whether or not a facilitated problem-solving process should go ahead and, if so, who should be involved, what issues should be on the table, and what the process might look like.⁴

The core objectives of conflict assessments are fairly constant, but there are widely differing conceptualizations among practitioners as to what the process is called and how thorough it should be. Some prefer smaller processes in which only a few key stakeholders are interviewed and the findings are orally presented to the sponsor, while others feel that as many relevant parties as possible should be reached and the reporting extensive. Of course, differing situations also influence the appropriateness of different approaches. Public sector disputes are typically more complicated with multiple parties and perspectives, and greater public scrutiny, so generally require more extensive conflict assessments.

With regards to terminology, 'stakeholder analysis', 'issues assessment', 'situation assessment' convening assessment', and 'conflict analysis' are all used but mean essentially the same thing.⁵ We shall use the term conflict assessment throughout, as it seems to be the most commonly used in the United States at this time.

How to conduct a conflict assessment

Figure 1 illustrates one approach to conducting a conflict assessment. This is the approach used by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), and contains the key elements typically deemed necessary to meeting the core objectives of identifying stakeholders, their issues, a process for dispute resolution, and the likelihood of that process being successful.

Conflict assessments are typically initiated by a sponsor, which is a party interested in knowing whether or not a facilitated problem-solving process is an appropriate way to negotiate the issue at hand. The sponsor may be one of the parties involved or a third-party interested in seeing a resolution reached. The sponsor launches the process by

⁴ Susskind and Thomas-Larmer (1999) – See 'Resources' section.

⁵ Ibid.

retaining an independent assessor and introducing that assessor to the stakeholders. The assessor must be a neutral person or organization with no stake in the outcome of the process. More information on who conducts conflict assessments may be found later in this document.

Initiate

The assessor develops a preliminary list of issues to discuss, develops an interview protocol and arranges interviews with all relevant stakeholders. Interviews are typically conducted one-on-one to preserve confidentiality, but can be done in small stakeholder groups. They can be in-person, via the telephone, or even written and submitted either electronically or via post. Confidentiality is, however, almost always prioritized so that interviewees will be honest and comprehensive in their answers.

Gather

Interviews are conducted to gather information, exploring stakeholders' concerns and interests, and willingness to participate in a consensus building process. Assessors aim to collect as much information as possible from each stakeholder, so interviews can be over two hours in length in more complicated cases. They also aim to collect a wide breadth of information, so often seek recommendations on other people to interview when contacting stakeholders recommended by the sponsor. This is often referred to as 'moving out in concentric circles'.⁶

Analyze

The assessor takes all of the information collected through interviews and analyzes it. Interviews are sometimes supplemented with additional information, such as technical studies on the issue at hand, comments submitted through a Federal Register docket or equivalent, and comments collected from public meetings and other forums. Analysis involves summarizing the various issues and concerns; mapping areas of common and opposing interests, including possibilities for mutual gain; identifying obstacles that may stand in the way of agreement; and assessing the potential for success should a consensus building approach be pursued to resolve the issue.

Assessing the feasibility of a consensus building process is highly important, as there is no point in wasting time, money and other resources, and further frustrating tension between stakeholders by taking them through an extensive process when the chances of reaching an agreement are slim. Potential roadblocks include: No or few areas for potential agreement or tradeoffs; a key stakeholder refuses to participate; insufficient time for the process to be conducted properly; interests can be better met in other ways; the sponsor or another party cannot give the facilitator adequate autonomy; there are huge power imbalances among stakeholders; inadequate resources for the process; and there is no pressure to reach agreement. These barriers may be overcome, but necessitate consideration before a recommendation to proceed with a consensus building process is given.

Design

Should the assessor find that it makes sense for the consensus building process to proceed, the conflict assessment should also include design recommendations outlining

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

what that process would look like. Recommendations should include: What groups need to be involved in the process and how their representatives could be selected; goals for the process, and what issues would need to be discussed; a draft work plan, including a timeframe; draft ground rules covering such matters as how decisions will be made and how parties will interact; cost estimates and potential funding arrangements; and how the process will fit with other concurrent processes.⁸

The assessor should summarize the findings in a draft report and disseminate it to interviewees for their feedback. The report should be as value-neutral as possible, reflecting all comments submitted accurately and completely. Comments should, however, be aggregated and not attributed to maintain confidentiality. Interviewees should have the opportunity to comment on the draft, and their comments acted upon, before the report is finalized and shared more broadly. Generally speaking, one party such as the sponsor - should not be given the opportunity to edit the report, in order to

SPONSOR* DECIDE Retain a credible and non-partisan assessor Make a preliminary list of stakeholders to interview Invite stakeholders to Introduce the assessor to the participants SHARE Distribute a draft report ANALYZE ASSESSOR** Ask interviewees to verify its Identify stakeholder groups **GATHER** that would need to be Summarize concerns and INITIATE Incorporate suggested Explore stakeholders' key Draft a work plan for changes and finalize the Map areas of common and concerns and interests Make a preliminary list of addressing key issues report opposing interests Assess stakeholders Assist the sponsor and others Identify potential opportuni-Draft ground rules for willingness to "come to Develop an interview protocol in agreeing on whether to constructive communication the table' ties for mutual gain proceed with a facilitated Arrange confidential Estimate the costs of Identify obstacles to reaching problem-solving process Identify additional stakeone-on-one interviews agreements supporting the process holders to interview with all relevant stakeholders Estimate the potential success of a facilitated dialogue *A sponsor is any individual or organization interested in assessing the feasibility of a facilitated dialogue.

**An assessor must be neutral, impartial, and experienced in dispute resolution.

Figure 1 - How to Conduct a Conflict Assessment

maintain its neutrality and broad reflectivity.

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The practicalities of assessment

Putting the more theoretical framework of how one conducts a conflict assessment outlined above into practice requires answering some practical questions. These are questions that must be answered each time an assessment is launched, and can have a profound impact on the relative success of the exercise.

Number of interviews

The number of interviews conducted depends on: The number of stakeholder groups and organizations within each group that have (or claim) a stake in the issues at-hand; the perception of balance by stakeholders in terms of who is and is not interviewed; the time allocated for the assessment; and the budget for the assessment. In some cases, three to five parties may constitute the bulk of the directly engaged or affected stakeholders. In other cases, there may be ten or more broad stakeholder groups (such as environmental advocates, neighborhood associations, and local governments), with hundreds of organizations and their thousands of members interested in an issue. In these cases, there may need to be fifty or more interviews to ensure that the diversity of organizations within stakeholder groups is reflected. Even if after 25 to 30 interviews little new information is being gathered, there is value in being comprehensive and as complete as possible to reach out to all groups and build political and social capital. A general rule of thumb is that the assessment phase should be as open and inclusive as possible, recognizing that at some point - if consensus building proceeds - a narrower set of individuals will have to be identified to sit at the negotiating table.

Individual versus group interviews

The advantage of individual interviews is that people are free to confidentially express their full range of views, which are likely more complex than what they share publicly. Group interviews are advantageous because they allow you to reach out to more people at once and the dialogue among group interviewees can be quite rich in terms of witnessing the dynamics and diversity of opinion among a group of people. On the other hand, group interviews can result in "group think" in which the more complete and diverse range of individual opinions is suppressed by the group and its leaders. Though many practitioners tend to rely largely on individual or small group (two or three people) interviews, CBI believes that the ultimate consideration should be what the stakeholder groups are most comfortable with.

In-person versus telephone interviews

In-person interviews are preferable for several reasons: They provide a better means for relationship and trust building between the assessor and interviewees; they generally make the interviewee feel more comfortable and at ease; and they allow for the exchange of important non-verbal data - based on such things as facial expressions, surroundings, and documents or maps stakeholders may bring to share - that is not possible via the telephone. However, arranging meeting spaces, travel, and schedules for in-person interviews is more labor-intensive and costly. Most assessors thus make trade-offs between cost and in-person interviews. A good rule of thumb is that for less intense conflicts phone interviews may be fine, but for medium to high intensity, low trust situations, in-person interviews may be essential.

Where to hold interviews

When possible, the location should be selected by the interviewee. Homes, offices, and local restaurants are commonly chosen venues. The advantage of letting the interviewee choose is that they can be in a place where they feel comfortable. The disadvantage is that this can be time consuming and lead to delays or missed appointments as assessors

navigate typically unfamiliar places. A frequent compromise is identifying a neutral and trusted space relatively close to interviewees. Options include local government offices, a hotel conference room, or a room at a local college. This allows the assessor to better plan, fitting multiple interviews into a day. It should be noted that the choice of space can be very important; places carry symbolic meanings, so should be chosen carefully and wisely.

Who picks the interviewees

The sponsor typically helps the assessor to identify the initial list of interviewees. However, it is very important that the interviewees then 'verify' the list and suggest additions. Thus, within the scope and budget of the assessment, the interviewee list is ultimately developed jointly with the parties. The assessor has an important role in ensuring that the sponsoring agency understands the importance of being inclusive and helps the agency categorize potential interviewees into stakeholder groups. In some cases, trusted members of broad communities can be very helpful in identifying lesser known or more complex stakeholder group representatives. In addition, on-line surveys, newspaper advertisements, and other forms of public outreach can be used to ensure that all relevant and interested stakeholders at least have the opportunity to be interviewed or respond in some way.

The public's role in interviews

While many stakeholder groups, organizations, and individuals will be easy to identify and reach out to, there are typically many smaller, less known groups, as well as members of the general public, that are difficult to identify and gather input from. It is, therefore, important to both publicize notice of the process and collect information via multiple avenues. Some avenues utilize modern technology, such as on-line surveys, websites and blogs, while others are more traditional, such as public meetings and telephone surveys. Public meetings that anyone is welcome to participate in can, in fact, be one form of 'interview' during an assessment process. These open interviews can ensure broader input and build the credibility of the process itself.

Conflict assessment as a standalone process

Some practitioners conduct conflict assessments within broader consensus building processes they have been hired to mediate. In these cases, the assumption is that consensus building will proceed, and thus the assessment serves to identify the parties and their issues, and perhaps to more finely tune the broader process. CBI prefers to conduct assessments as separate processes, both to use them as genuine opportunities to consider whether or not a consensus-based dispute resolution process is appropriate, and whether or not the organization is a good fit as a mediator in the given situation.

It should be noted that some assessments are conducted in situations in which no consensus building process has even been proposed. These assessments are typically conducted to identify issues and collect opinions from a broad range of stakeholders as part of a process already underway or to 'test the waters' around a new proposal.

Identifying an assessor

A suitable assessor is key to a successful conflict assessment. As noted in *figure 1*, "an assessor must be neutral, impartial, and experienced in dispute resolution". The principles of neutrality and impartiality mandate that the assessor have no relationship to the issue at hand or any of the parties involved. Furthermore, the assessor must show no bias during the process.

There is no license or official course that recognizes individuals as conflict assessment and dispute resolution professionals in the United States. Some states have created certification standards for mediators engaging in court-connected alternative dispute resolution, and some organizations maintain rosters (including the American College of Civil Trial Mediators), but the standards for membership vary widely, including around how competency is measured (some base it on the number of hours spent mediating while others base it on acceptance by your peers). The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution also maintains a roster of practitioners with expertise in mediation, facilitation or consensus building; to be listed, one must have worked more than 200 hours on environmental or land use cases and obtain a certain number of points in the categories of: Additional case experience and complex case experience; experience as a trainer or trainee; and substantive work/volunteer/educational experience in fields related to alternative dispute resolution/environmental conflict resolution, such as law, science, or public administration.⁹

There are a commensurately wide variety of courses run by numerous organizations that can equip individuals from various backgrounds with the tools to engage in facilitated problem solving and dispute resolution.¹⁰ It should be noted that not all of these courses delve sufficiently into the process of conducting conflict assessments.

⁹ U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. National Roster of Environmental Dispute Resolution and Consensus Building Professionals – Roster Entry Criteria and Definitions (http://www.ecr.gov/pdf/r entry.pdf).

¹⁰ See the resources section for more information, but good starting points are the Consensus Building Institute (http://www.cbuilding.org) and the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (http://www.ecr.gov).

Collection summary and observations

Forty-eight assessment reports collected from various practitioners are included with this report. These assessments vary widely in many respects, including the issues they address, which range from the fate of a bridge to the effects of anthropogenic noise on marine mammals, from how outdoor advertising should be controlled nationally to facilitating cooperation in a metropolitan area. The table below provides a snapshot of how much they range in style while the summaries give an overview of each assessment individually, providing standard information and highlighting any unique features.

Number of assessments:	48		
Types of clients:	International organizations, government		
	departments and agencies (Federal and State),		
	commissions and management bodies,		
	municipalities, Indian tribes, stakeholder interest		
	groups, non-profit organizations, and private		
	foundations.		
Range of number of interviews:	rviews: 10 – 198 (individually and in groups)		
Topic areas:	Education, energy, environment, industry, land		
	use/municipal affairs, resource management, and		
	transportation.		
Timeline range:	e: 2 weeks – over a year		
Length range:	e: 8 – 86 pages		
Cost range:	2,000 – 150,000 USD		

It should be noted that the cost range field above is based on incomplete information aggregated from the few assessments for which we have cost figures, and from cost range estimates provided by others.¹¹

Observations

The assessments examined in this report vary widely not only in the issues they address and their technical characteristics, such as length and cost, but also in how they were conducted. The lack of an industry-wide single standard way of conducting assessments, the widely differing situations being addressed, and the limits presented (such as time constraints) result in significant variation among them. That being said, there are many common features found across most of the collection.

Commonalities and trends

In most conflict assessments, an initial set of stakeholders to be interviewed is recommended to the assessor by the sponsor. The assessor contacts these individuals or groups first, and, either before or as part of the interview, asks for suggestions of other parties that should be contacted. This process can be repeated several layers deep asking this second group whom they would recommend and so on - until all possible relevant parties are identified. The number of layers that the assessor digs to varies from case to case, and in some cases they do not go beyond the first layer, but this iterative

¹¹ The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution in particular could not give exact figures for each case study, as their accounting is not organized in this way, but did provide estimates based on experience.

process is fairly standard.

Interviews are typically conducted one-on-one. This supports interviewee confidentiality, allowing parties to be freer in their comments, and avoids the arguing and reactive commenting that might happen in a group interview session. Interviews are also typically conducted in-person, which serves to make the interviewees feel more comfortable, facilitates interactivity, and often gives the process a greater air of importance, which arguably all lead to better, more comprehensive, results.

Once an initial draft assessment report summarizing the findings from interviews has been compiled by the assessor (without attribution of comments), it is **typically given directly to those interviewed for their review and feedback**. Once it has been reviewed by these stakeholders and changed in light of any clarifications they have, it is given to the sponsor (and often though not always publicly disseminated) without further editing. The aim is to **ensure that bias does not enter these reports**, but rather that they accurately reflect the range of feedback collected.

Unique and notable elements

Examining the commonalities gives an idea of what is more or less standard to the conflict assessment process. A great deal can, however, also be learned by considering what is unique or notable in certain cases. It is by examining these aspects that we gain a more complete understanding of what is possible.

As noted previously, in most cases it is a sponsor related to the issue at hand that is considering whether or not mediation might be a viable option that hires an assessor, defines the conflict assessment process with them, and suggests the first round of people to be interviewed. However, in some cases a core group of stakeholders forms beforehand to hire the assessor and weigh-in on the process from the early stages. An example is the Federal Outdoor Advertising Control Program case, in which a core group of representative stakeholders, called the Assessment Resource Group, was formed at the beginning to represent diverse interests and help guide the process. In other cases an independent organization initiates the process. The Barriers to and Opportunities for Mutual Gains Negotiation and Conflict Resolution in Land Use Decision-making on Martha's Vineyard Island Regional Case Report in which the Lincoln Institute and CBI initiated the process is one such case.

Most assessments both examine the issues and perspectives held by the various stakeholders interviewed and consider the viability and potential structure of a facilitated problem-solving process to resolve the situation at hand. The One River, Two Bridges: A Conflict Assessment of The Existing and Proposed St. Croix River Bridges assessment is a good example of a comprehensive report coming out of an extensive conflict assessment. It includes both analysis of the situation and of options for proceeding with a consensus building process. The attached case study (prepared by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution) provides an excellent post-

¹² A Library of Congress summary of the Negotiated Rulemaking Act of 1990 can be found online at (http://thomas.loc.gov/cgibin/bdquery/z?d101:HR00743:@@@L&summ2=m&).

¹³ Available online at http://www.ecr.gov/pdf/BasicPrinciples.pdf.

process evaluation, shedding light on what happens with the information provided in the assessment.

The Calgary Regional Partnership is a good example of an assessment report that focuses more on examining the issues and perspectives held by the various parties with a stake in the situation than defining a facilitated problem-solving process. The bulk of the report is devoted to examining the opinions collected from stakeholders interviewed on the various issues of regional growth, cross-cutting problems, cooperation and conflict.

The Prospects for Mediated Negotiation of a Lake Management Plan for Lake Coeur d'Alene assessment report focuses on considering whether or not a consensus-based process is a viable way to proceed and what the process might look like, providing a great deal of information on options for moving forward. The comprehensive framework for lake management plan negotiations and decision-making is extensive and prescriptive on the details of how the process could proceed and thus serves as a good case study. The use of diagrams is particularly effective in illustrating the proposed framework.

While there are no concrete standards as to how conflict assessment, or facilitated problem-solving in general, is conducted, the scope is **bounded in some cases by rules and regulations**. Most assessments conducted for federal agencies are, for example, subject to the government's Negotiated Rulemaking Act of 1990. The act does not delve very deep, but does include some procedural prescriptions, including timelines, proper representation, and the requirement that the agency publish its intentions and collect comments via the Federal Register. The *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* assessment is a good example of a case bounded by the Act. This assessment was also subject to the 'Basic Principles for Agency Engagement in Environmental Conflict Resolution and Collaborative Problem Solving', which are outlined in a joint Office of Management and Budget – Council on Environmental Quality memorandum on environmental conflict resolution. The conflict resolution.

The facilitated problem-solving processes that assessments recommend vary widely. Some assessments focus on particular one-time or limited scope issues and thus prescribe ad hoc committees to address the issues using a facilitated problem-solving approach (e.g. Grand Canyons Overflights assessment). Other assessments are conducted around broader concerns or sets of issues that cannot be resolved but rather need to be managed indefinitely. These assessments tend to prescribe standing committees with indefinite or much longer-term mandates following a consensus-based approach. The latter is more common in resource management cases, such as the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee and the Lake Tahoe Basin Stakeholder Collaborative Process.

Spatially, some assessments revolve around a conflict in a specific place (e.g. Negotiated Rulemaking on Dog Management in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area) while others are not geographically-bounded (e.g. Impacts of Anthropogenic Noise on Marine Mammals). The types of stakeholders involved often vary somewhat depending on the geographic scope; neighbors and local community groups are much

more likely to play a role in the former while special interest groups representing certain constituencies are more likely to be the predominant players in the latter. This is, however, by no means always the case.

As can be seen in the summary table above, the number of people interviewed in assessments varies widely. The number of interviewees does not, however, always correlate to the comprehensiveness of the assessment. Some assessments involved shorter interviews – often in the 20-minute range – with more stakeholders, while others involved more intensive interviews with a smaller group. Only 20 people were interviewed within the very complex Situation Assessment and Recommendations for Government-to-Government Consultations between Interior Alaska Tribes and the U.S. Department of Defense on Military Impacts in Interior Alaska process, for example, but interviews ranged from two to eight hours in length. The reasons for choosing one approach over the other seem to include stylistic and sponsor preferences, the cohesion of stakeholder groups, and the nature of the situation. Some involve a smaller group more intimately while others touch a much wider group less intensely.

One-on-one personal interviews are the most common technique for assessors to gain information from stakeholders. A variety of other approaches are, however, also employed in many cases to broaden the base; confirm that opinions are more widely held by a stakeholder group and not just those of the representative(s) interviewed; save time and resources; and comply with regulations (e.g. Federal Register requirements in the Negotiated Rulemaking Act mentioned previously).

In some cases, such as the Land Use and Transportation Planning in the Cumberland Region of Middle Tennessee example, the interviewing phase is followed up with a clinic or workshop. This facilitates confirmation and expansion of the issues identified, but usually serves primarily to further flesh out how a facilitated problem solving process could proceed. This is particularly important in cases like this in which the process involves creating a longer-term standing committee.

The Federal Outdoor Advertising Control Program assessment process included many avenues for information and opinion collection. In addition to interviews with 103 individuals, the assessment team conducted **focus group discussions** with 50 invited stakeholders; had over 200 individuals attend **public "listening" sessions**; and received approximately 1,800 comments through the **Federal Register docket**.

The Collaborative Desert Tortoise Recovery assessment team utilized a web-based questionnaire, in addition to traditional face-to-face and telephone interviews. In order to more quantitatively understand public opinion and gather information from a wider range of stakeholders, statistical evaluations were also used in the broader Proposed Negotiated Rulemaking on Dog Management in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area process.

Some assessments go beyond reiterating information collected directly from stakeholders and **involve research on the part of the assessor**. While expertise in facilitated problem-solving typically serves to frame process recommendations, the *Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee* assessment team went a step

further by researching and including information on past collaborative efforts to address endangered species recovery issues. Similarly, the *Calgary Regional Partnership* report includes six case studies of other regions to shed light on the possibilities.

It should be noted that while most assessments seem to recommend some form of facilitated problem-solving for moving forward – often with caveats and warnings of potential road blocks along the way – not all do. The *BLM Resource Management Plan Amendment for Otero Mesa* report, for example, concludes that a mediated process is not feasible at this time. In all cases, the assessment report goes on to a higher body (often the sponsor, but sometimes a stakeholder group) for the final decision as to whether or not to launch a facilitated problem-solving process.

Conclusion

This section introduced the conflict assessment process and highlighted the observations made while compiling the collection of assessments. The following summaries for each assessment give a more complete idea of what conflict assessments are and how they are conducted and reported.

NOTE: SUMMARIES NOT INCLUDED HERE, BUT AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST FROM TODD SCHENK AT TSCHENK@CBUILDING.ORG.

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