Lessons Learned from the 2020 Bitterroot Community Readiness Assessment

DEQ MONTANA

BITTER ROOT Water forum

5IFTH HOUSE CONSULTING
community through communication

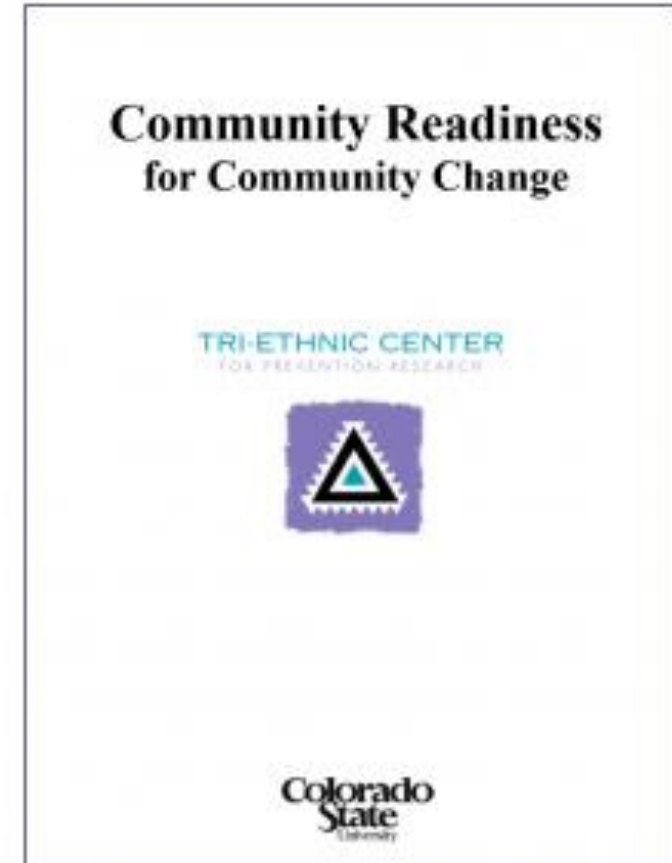# What is a Community Readiness Assessment?

Identify Your Issue

→ Define "Community"

→ Conduct Key Respondent Interviews

→ Score to Determine Readiness Level

→ Develop Strategies/Conduct Workshops

→ COMMUNITY CHANGE!

Community Readiness
for Community Change

TRI-ETHNIC CENTER
FOR PREVENTION RESEARCH

Colorado State University

http://www.ndhealth.gov/injury/nd_prevention_tool_kit/docs/Community_Readiness_Handbook.pdf

Stages of Community Readiness

View recommended outreach actions for each readiness level here:

http://mtwaterqualityprojects.pbworks.com/w/page/134520603/Bitterroot%20Focus%20Watershed

Why do a Community Readiness Assessment?

A change **=** Knowledge of Issue **+** Actions Taken **+** Time

Community Readiness Assessment:

- Measures social dimension of water quality, which may be a leading indicator of improvement

- Provides a metric for gauging progress

- Informs community-specific outreach

How was the CRA conducted in the Bitterroot?

Identify Your Issue | **Loss of riparian vegetation**

⇨ Define "Community" | **Ranchers in the Bitterroot Valley**

⇨ Conduct Key Respondent Interviews | **Sectors represented: rancher, farmer, engineer, nonprofit conservation, conservation district, government agencies, recreation/tourism**

⇨ Score to Determine Readiness Level

⇨ Develop Strategies/Conduct Workshops

⇨ COMMUNITY CHANGE!

Photo from the Bitter Root Water Forum project on North Burnt Fork Creek

How DEQ is using this CRA

- Considered a baseline measure.
- Including a communication strategy in the 2022 NPS Management Plan
- Back to the basics: statewide effort to *raise awareness* of the issue
- Continue supporting local outreach efforts

2017 Montana Nonpoint Source Management Plan

Steve Bullock, Governor
Tom Livers, Director, DEQ

What did we learn?

Dimension	Readiness Level	Readiness Stage	Description
Community Knowledge of Efforts	5.3	Preparation	At least some community members have heard of local efforts, are familiar with the purpose of the effort, who the efforts are for, and how the efforts work.
Leadership	4.0	Preplanning	Leadership believes that this issue is a concern in the community and that some type of effort is needed to address it. Although most may be passively supportive of current efforts, few are involved in developing, improving or implementing efforts.
Community Climate	3.9	Vague Awareness	Some community members believe that this issue may be a concern in the community, but it is not seen as a priority. They show no motivation to act.
Community Knowledge of Issue	3.9	Vague Awareness	At least some community members have vague knowledge about the issue, having heard of the issue, but little else. Among some community members, there may be misconceptions about the issue. Community members may be somewhat aware that the issue occurs locally.
Resources Available	4.0	Preplanning	There are some resources identified that could be used for further efforts. Some community members or leaders are looking into using these resources to address the issue. Funding for current efforts may not be stable or continuing.
AVERAGE	**4.2**	**Preplanning**	**There is clear recognition that something must be done, and there may even be a group addressing it. However, efforts could be more focused.**

What did we learn?

Perspectives varied: concern about the issue is landowner-specific and must resonate among competing priorities.

Photo from the Missoula Current, Clark Fork Coalition project on Miller Creek

"It's been a priority that also shares its space with a lot of other priorities. It's not any more important than a lot of other topics that are out there."

Ideas for how to apply it

- Invest in targeting specific landowners

- Integrate the importance of riparian vegetation into other water resource issues

What did we learn?

Outreach strategies the community appreciates:

- Word of mouth
- Local experts, neighbors
- Passive access to info
- Mailers

Photo from the Bitter Root Water Forum, Earth Stewardship Program

"I think if you seek it out, you can find as much information as you want. But it's how much effort is somebody willing to put in to find that out."

Ideas for how to apply it

- Find creative ways to encourage project landowners to share their story
- Local organizations, promote your expertise!
- Get stories and expertise out in a way that can be easily accessed.

What did we learn?

"*...breaking out of the routine... is the biggest obstacle. They have their grazing system or their routine on how they rotate cattle through certain areas...*"

Barriers:

- Lack of time to research or implement solutions
- Lack of funding
- Routines
- Distrust of government

Photo from the Bitter Root Water Forum, Earth Stewardship Program

Ideas for how to apply it

- Promote examples of riparian restoration that are:
  - simple and inexpensive
  - beneficial to the landowner's bottom line
- Continue providing funding and resources to local organizations

Can you identify other barriers?

What did we learn?

Misconceptions:

- It is always complicated/expensive to restore riparian habitat
- Only streamside landowners are affected
- Regulations are associated with accepting funding

Photo from the Ravalli Republic

Ideas for how to apply it

- Discover other misconceptions
- Create content to help dispel these misconceptions

Can you identify other misconceptions?

Questions for Local Organizations

- Where do you feel you are succeeding in your education and outreach efforts?

- What gaps do you see in your education and outreach efforts?
  - What kind of tools or resources would be helpful to you in your education and outreach efforts?

- What are your key messages?