Primer Part Four

**Understanding the Role of Research in Parks and Protected Areas and Applying Evidence**



Primer Readings and Resources

López-Rodríguez, M. D., Castro, H., Arenas, M., Requena-Mullor, J. M., Cano, A., Valenzuela, E., &

Cabello, J. (2017). Exploring institutional mechanisms for scientific input into the management cycle of the national protected area network of Peru: Gaps and opportunities. *Environmental management*, *60*(6), 1022-1041. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-017-0929-x>

Module Content

*How Can We Mitigate the Challenges?*

The elements that support and facilitate using research in management are not simply the opposite of the components that are considered challenges. Lopez-Rodriguez et al. (2017) remind us that this is a challenge that is long-standing as they state “Understanding how to improve decision makers’ use of scientific information across their different scales of management is a core challenge for narrowing the gap between science and conservation practice” (p. 1022). They go on to say that despite an interest in addressing the challenges related to incorporating research into decisions, “scientific knowledge remains underutilized in supporting conservation actions” (p. 1023). However, there is hope for improving the situation.

The challenges that were identified earlier fell into two categories of personal and organizational challenges. We will look at those challenges through the lens of what can be done at an individual level, and what the organization or agency could do to increase the practice of applying research evidence to management.

There are some basic blocks which support a culture of incorporating research, data, or facts into planning and managing. While these building blocks do not guarantee that research will automatically be considered, they are steps to increase its use.

Other facilitators could be:

* Better relationships, communication channels, platforms, and collaboration between researchers, decision- and policy- makers (including trans-disciplines)
* Encourage researchers to publish in more accessible journals and make their research more accessible to decision-makers.

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| What Individuals Can Do to Facilitate Evidence-Based Decision-Making | What Organizations, Agencies, and Groups Can Do to Facilitate Evidence-Based Decision-Making |
| Increase personal awareness of where to look for evidence/data/information (cultivate a network)  Increase personal skills for searching for data  Increase critical thinking skills for the purpose of evaluating research/evidence  Increase skills in communicating evidence to decision-makers  Take charge of the things that are within your sphere of power or influence and advocate for those that are outside that sphere | Allow adequate time for the process of applying evidence to decisions  Initiate a repository for evidence/data/research findings  Advocate for open access to data  Share organization’s research with others  Make it easier for researchers to communicate and collaborate with agencies  Initiate incentives for incorporating evidence into decisions (i.e., performance reviews)  Empower individuals to make ‘leaf’ decisions  Provide resources for researchers to produce materials that communicate their research  Develop clear processes for incorporating evidence into decision-making  Streamline information sharing within and between organizations, agencies, and groups  Conduct a social network analysis to learn how information is shared within and between agencies |

Self-Directed Activities

*For Your Own Understanding*

Describe at least three things you could do to reduce the challenges you identified earlier. What can you do as an individual and what can you advocate for within your organization, agency, or group could do to improve the incorporation of research into practice? **Write a paragraph or two describing your approach.**

What else could you add to the list of facilitators for evidence-based decision-making?

What facilitators do you observe in your organization, agency or group and how do they support the incorporation of research? Give examples.

*For Your Learning*

**Seek out another professional and conduct an informal interview** to learn about how they deal with these challenges. How does their experience compare with yours? What did you learn from this activity?

**Continue to develop your presentation product** and continue preparing your presentation.