ITAT Seminar Summary

Case Studies from a Coastal Ecologist Working at the County Scale
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- There is an inequity in the distribution of resources to deal with environmental planning that is evident to researchers, county representatives, and communities. Providing specific local information helps to build understanding about what problems particular counties are facing.
- Opportunities exist in these counties where there is a relative dearth of data and analysis to build goodwill among all parties and apply tried and tested as well as new approaches to restore degraded environments.
- The uncertainty surrounding the source of contaminants can be fertile ground to better track whether nutrient sources emanate from local point source facilities, septic tanks, or pollution upstream outside of the county's control.
- It is important to implement restoration practices where there is the greatest need, this means context and considering what is below head of tide (i.e. wetlands)
- With regards to funding sources, what lessons can be learned from drawing large grants for this type of applied research? Is this a model to win grants in the future in other locations?
    - I don't know if this was answered in the seminar specifically, but it's a really good question!
- County planners are an invaluable resource, and represented the choice of methods that the stakeholders desired (i.e., local inputs, different model) so that there would be buy-in from the community.
- Engagement with communities on environmental issues may resonate more when placing the problems in the context of human health, access to natural resources and community ownership, and the risks posed by recurrent flooding.
- ASPIRe is one model to replicate this type of connection and cooperative framework on a broader scale. Making further connections with local scientists who are more prepared to work with local planners and communities would be a key point to beginning this matchmaking. Other honest brokers outside of the Bay Program apparatus could also be helpful, such as extension agents.
- Any matchmaking effort should also consider training and geo-ethical considerations – these types of skills are not necessarily taught to scientists as part of their PhD training and go beyond "communication skills" that are currently in vogue.
- In filling technical capacity gaps at the local level, this is dependent upon engaged citizens raising concerns about issues. This could take the form of local organizations or motivated and knowledgeable citizens serving in a public capacity.
- Differing agendas among non-profit organizations and government agencies can potentially be brought together with the help of scientists and trained facilitators.
- Current tools available could also be presented and applied for local decision-makers, such as results produced by USGS and Penn State University.