Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada | Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada

MEETING REPORT

Okanagan Invitational Drought Tournament
Debriefing the Experience

Kelowna, November 16, 2012

INTERSOL

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Section 1: Introduction and Context

1.1 Context

The Invitational Drought Tournament (IDT) is a simulation gaming concept under development at the Science and Technology Branch (STB) of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). The IDT is designed to help actors identify the gaps and vulnerabilities in past and current drought preparedness and response strategies, and support future drought preparedness and response. More specifically, it supports the improved assessment of policies, programs and management strategies at a range of spatial scales, from inter-provincial to the watershed. This is done through a competitive framework where multi-disciplinary teams of water actors are guided through a multi-year drought scenario in a fictitious watershed, for which they must consider alternative management strategies to minimize drought impacts on the environment, the economy and society. The IDT takes place in a workshop setting and provides an inclusive environment for alternative management strategies to be explored and discussed. Previous pilot workshops were held in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Colorado.

1.2 Objectives

On November 16, 2012 the Okanagan Invitational Drought Tournament was held in Kelowna British Columbia, with the following stated objectives:

1. To apply the Invitational Drought Tournament (IDT) framework to a practical pilot case study in the Okanagan Basin to determine the IDT framework's ability to support drought preparedness, recovery and response in a real policy context;
2. To facilitate multiple water actor and sector discussion around drought preparedness, response and recovery in the Okanagan Basin, with specific attention to in-stream/environmental flows, groundwater regulation and agricultural water reserves; and
3. To create a fun environment for water actors to explore management options under one realistic future drought scenario.

A list of participants and a full agenda for the Kelowna tournament are available in the Appendices. Also, the reader can find additional background information on the IDT at (insert URL?)

Purpose of this Document

What follows here is a report from the IDT. This report is intended as a record of the experience mainly from a process perspective. The report will provide observations, lessons learned and recommendations as noted by participants and the workshop facilitator on the conduct of the activity.

Section 2: Feedback on the IDT Tool and Experience

At the conclusion of the day, participants at the IDT Tournament provided feedback based on their experience as follows:

2.1 The Benefits/Value – What was Successful

The group was unanimous in their view that the IDT overall was a valuable experience, and that it achieved the objectives and desired outcomes as outlined above. More specific benefits included:

- The discussions (within the teams and between teams) resulted in a great deal of learning – around management choices to respond to drought scenarios and conditions.
- There was a sense of increased collaboration resulting from the activity. Some new relationships were built.
- The game forced trade-off conversations – similar to "real world" situations – in a context of climate uncertainty – and amongst diverse participants
- Decisions had to be made with insufficient information – again very similar to the "real world"
- The different solutions that were proposed caused additional thinking – there are no "right" answers in the "real world"
- Real and relevant data made the game real – the background work that was done was invaluable
- The innovations were most interesting – creative ideas were generated
- The immediate analysis feedback (WEAP) and November data (following April decisions) helped to structure future decision making
- The game reinforced the need for good solid operational models
- Considering the 3 sustainability pillars (environment, economy, society) at each stage was positive – forced the right conversations
- The game provided a context for thinking more strategically – to look at the "big picture" and not get bogged down in the details.
- The game demonstrated some of the fundamental weaknesses in how we manage water in B.C. and Canada
- Allowing innovation after a round or two (and not from the beginning - where the teams are choosing form a menu of options) – initially choosing from set options facilitated familiarity with the game, prior to adding the additional complexity of innovations.

2.2 Lessons Learned – Suggestions for Improvement Overall

In terms of overall construct, participants felt that the IDT works. It achieved the objectives and it is fun. A complete overhaul is by no means required. There were suggestions for improvement offered:

- Consider incorporating First Nations issues into the scenario
- The political environment existing in the scenario could be more explicit – as in "real world" situations
- Direct feedback from the community/society would have been helpful – consider building in negative consequences based upon community feedback, and consequences for poor decision making
- There are financial implications to water suppliers that lose revenue due to conservation measures. They require money to maintain/improve/adapt to improve quality – could we incorporate water quality issues to a greater degree – without making the game overly complex?
- Ground water information/risks were not well defined
- Scoring – generally it went well – the mix of external (referee)/team and qualitative/quantitative worked well. A few suggestions did emerge
  - Some did find it difficult to rate/score other teams – hard to compare quantitative charts/results quickly
  - The Utility score was a good concept – i.e. having a quantitative component to the scoring. However, a clearer explanation as to what it was doing and why different scores emerged would have been useful
  - It would have been useful to have greater definition of how environment/social/economic impacts were to be considered – what is the simple question that we are asking?
  - Data display (scale etc.) needs to be consistent
- The rules need to be clear. At the beginning, it would have been useful to explain clearly that investments/choices made at the beginning did not carry through to the end. For example, a new regulation that was purchased in round 1 had to be re-purchased in round 2 if it was to continue to be in play
- Consider incorporating the notion of cumulative effects to a greater degree
- Consider storm water capture
- Add information on water pricing
- The innovations were not implicated/accounted for in the analysis

2.3 Implications and Applicability – Drought Management in B.C.

Participants shared their views on the utility of the IDT as a tool to use in other parts of the Okanagan Valley and other parts of B.C.

- There was a general view that the game/activity would have utility across B.C. and Canada – as a means to learn, build consensus, build relationships
- It prepares actors to think about consequences – outcomes in relation to response actions
- Facilitating a dialogue between Actors within and outside the Valley was useful (learning, relationship building) – consider engaging broader stakeholder groups in B.C.
- The game/concept could be applied to other issues – not just drought
- It is a good tool to engage Actors before we are in a crisis
- Consider as a tool for use in schools
- There was a suggestion to expand the IDT to water management - applying the IDT to real world inputs and understanding choices and consequences

Section 3: Summary Considerations

Based on participant feedback and facilitator observations, the following are offered as considerations in the continuation of the IDT deign and development process:

3.1 Overall Value & Utility

The developers are clearly on the right track. Using a competitive game in order to facilitate meaningful conversations around real world problems really does work. In Kelowna participants were engaged, had fun, learned from each other and set the stage for real conversations that will occur in Kelowna and elsewhere in B.C. around drought management and response.

The central elements of the game are sound:

- Real world data
- A series of "rounds" – that introduce new data and include choices for teams to make
- Scoring – combination of participant/external (referee) and qualitative/quantitative
- Facilitated conversations between teams to discuss options and consequences

Improvements can of course be made – but the overall concept and construct/approach are solid. The following suggestions are offered in that spirit.

3.2 Activity Design

Pre-planning is critical to success. More specifically:

- The approach of using a local design team to develop the scenario and agenda should be maintained.
- Consulting with technical experts on content/data will help ensure validity and applicability.
- Pre-session meetings (in Kelowna the evening before meeting) with participants (and homework) help ensure that you can "hit the ground running" at the actual event.

3.3 Scoring

We are close to having a very good system. Consider:

- Maintaining the mix of individual and referee scoring
- Maintaining a "qualitative" component based upon the 3 pillars of sustainability – that is not too complex
- Clarifying the questions that are being asked with respect to environmental, social and economic impact – to add a bit more specificity
- Including a quantitative element like the Utility Model that was used in Kelowna – but keep it as simple as possible, and clear

- Maintaining the visual displaying of scores between rounds that was used – the graphs that were used in Kelowna were excellent
- Maintaining the clear mechanics – simple score sheets, colored paper to match the teams, identifying a person to pick up and enter the data sheets etc. – these details are very important
- Ensuring the referees have what they need to play their role in scoring – and that the referees don't get too bogged down in the details – they are required to make relatively quick decisions – like everyone else participating

3.4 Activity Elements

- The Flow in Kelowna worked very well – April data; team discussion and decision; WEAP and Utility Model analysis; November data and team discussion; Team presentations and; Scoring – as reflected in the detailed agenda/organizer's scenario
- But, to make this work there are several key success factors:
  - A very tightly managed agenda is required – neutral facilitation and focus on the agenda
  - Clear roles in the room – scoring, analysis, runners etc.
  - The separate room for scoring was excellent
- Structure the presentations that are made by teams – the Power Point format used in Kelowna worked well however to improve going forward:
  - Keep the format simple – Rational for strategy, choices, cost
  - About 3 minutes per presentation is enough time using this format – 2 minutes was tight
- A neutral facilitator who is focused only on the agenda is a must (internal or external) – in a large group, it would be relatively easy to get off track.
- A 1 day exercise is the right amount of time – more than 1 day would be too much
- A total of 4 rounds (in Kelowna and opening "strategy round" and 3 years of data) – seems to be the right amount level of activity

Appendix A: Participants

Name	Organization

Appendix B: Agenda

Agenda