

Sensing: A Tool for Improving Partnerships and Collaboration

A scenic landscape photograph of a large lake with mountains in the background and a forest on the right side. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The mountains are rugged and brownish-grey. The lake is calm and reflects the sky. The forest on the right is dense with green trees. A person is visible sitting on the shore in the lower right corner.

2013 Partnership and Community
Collaboration Academy,
John Titre, US Forest Service

Why is This Important to You?

Sensing can strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration through deep understanding

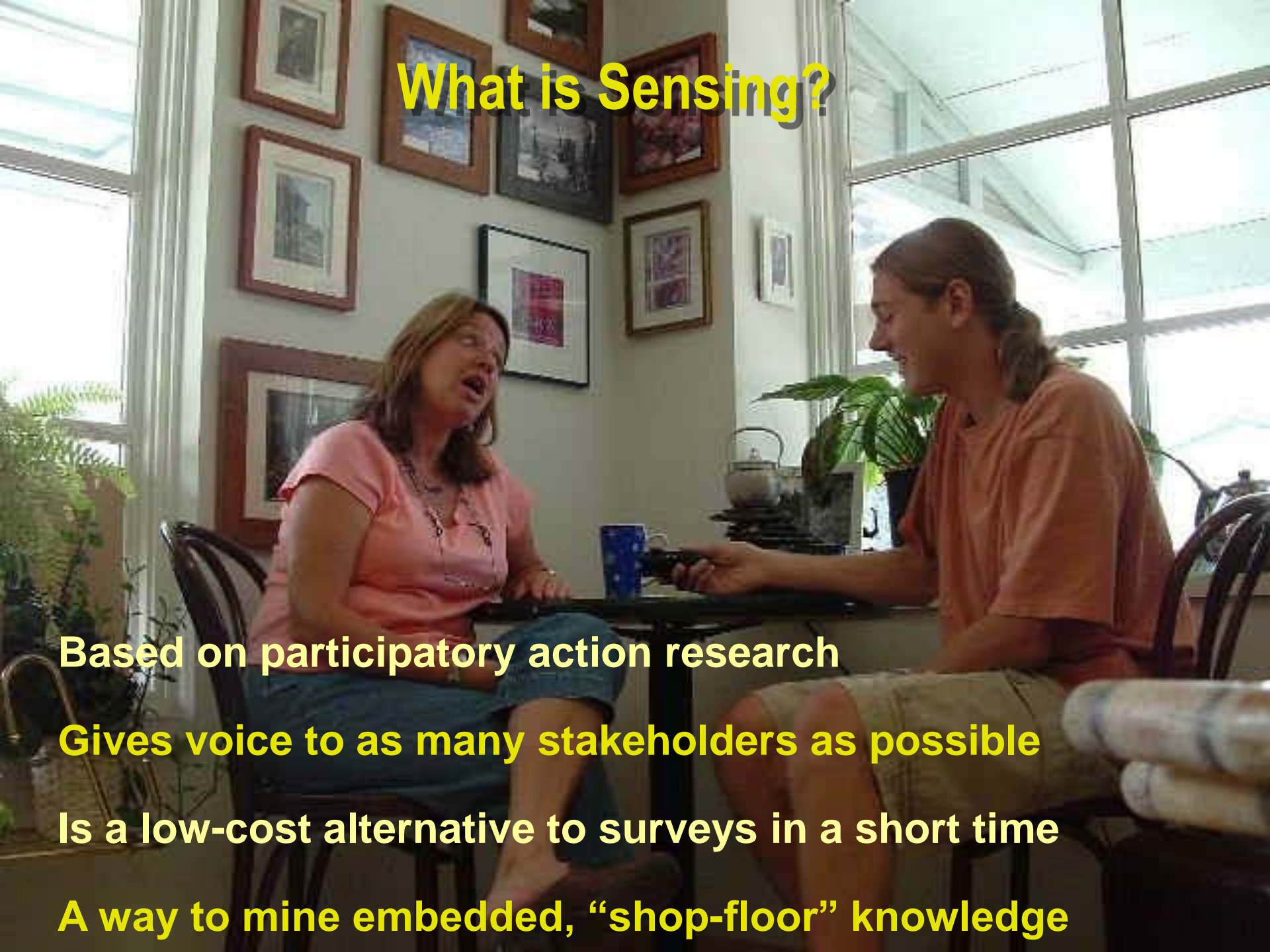
It can provide insights into issues and people ahead of their resolution in NEPA

By focusing on the emotional connection people have to each other it builds trust

It can provide sideboards for workshops

It can give credibility to those facilitating civic engagements and build relationships

What is Sensing?

A photograph of two women sitting at a small table in a room with many framed pictures on the wall. The woman on the left is wearing a pink shirt and blue pants, and the woman on the right is wearing an orange shirt and khaki pants. They appear to be in a casual conversation. The room has large windows and a potted plant on the table.

Based on participatory action research

Gives voice to as many stakeholders as possible

Is a low-cost alternative to surveys in a short time

A way to mine embedded, “shop-floor” knowledge

Some segments of our visitors do not attend public workshops, join partnerships, or otherwise participate politically



What are the Four Methods Used?

1. Participant observation
2. Semi-structured interviews
3. Key informant interviews
 - a) Snowball sampling → moving from informant to informant based on their networks of knowledge
4. Focus group interviews



Participant observation



**Semi structured
or in-depth
interviews**



**Focus group
interviews**



Key Informant Interview with Campground Host



Some Organizational Learning Assumptions...

We are a World Class Learning Organization!!!

Organizations seek knowledge and ideas for their very survival

We take risks

We accept failure as part of learning



People in Learning Organizations...

Share knowledge and ideas freely

Seek a deeper understanding over superficial knowledge

Trust each other

Believe in the greater good and purpose for humankind is to make the world a better place



**Cable Route
Longs Peak, Colorado**

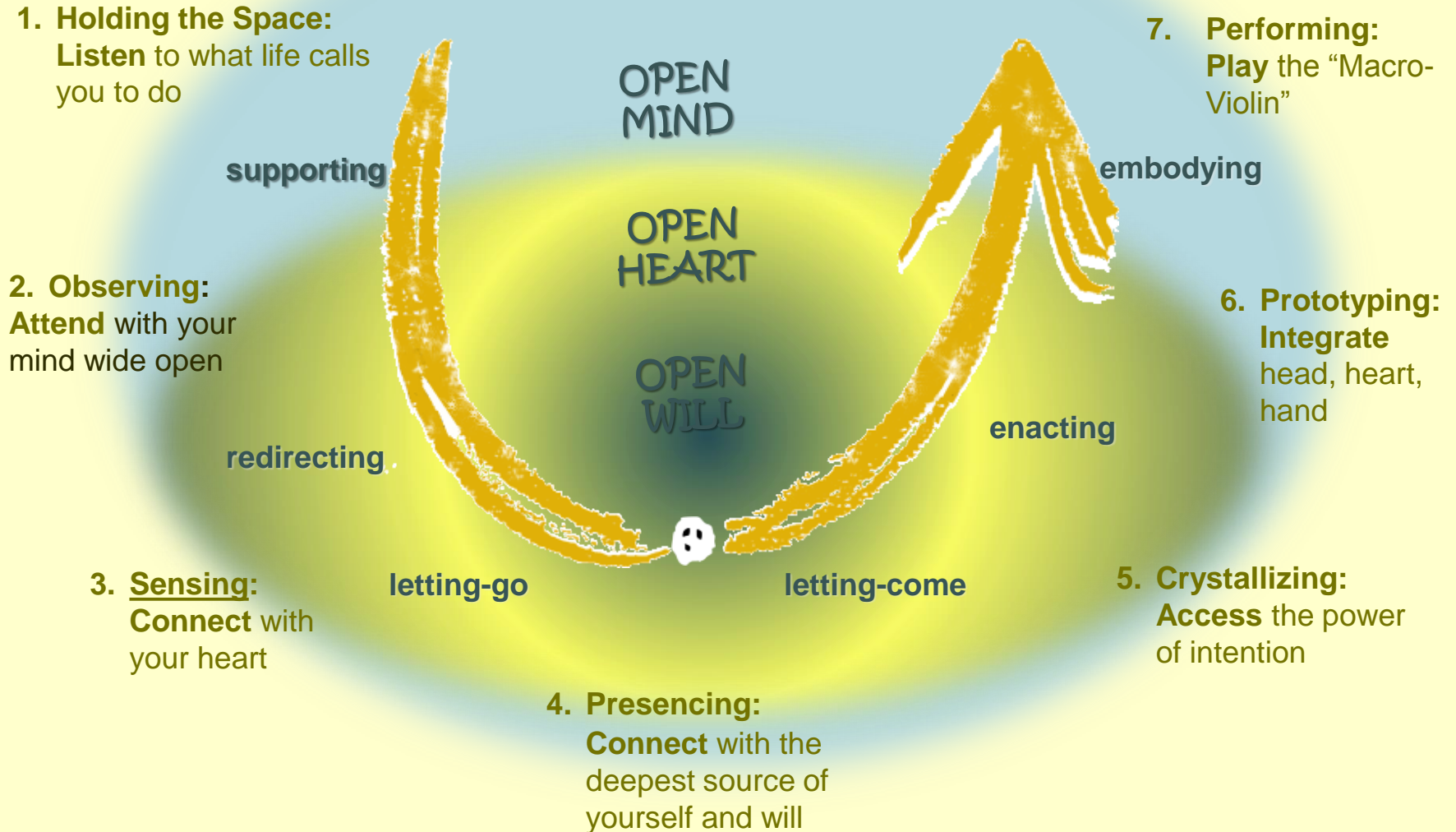
Surfacing Knowledge and Ideas

Organizational hierarchies can impede the flow of knowledge and ideas because people:

- ✓ Engage in turf battles
- ✓ Work in stovepipes
- ✓ Have a fear of speaking up
- ✓ See knowledge as power

**So knowledge and ideas stay hidden
And need to be dug up and surfaced**

Theory U



A scenic view of a mountain valley. In the foreground, there are green trees and bushes. In the middle ground, a small town with colorful buildings is visible. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains under a blue sky with white clouds.

A System Perspective

“A system perspective initially considers all aspects of a local situation, but quickly moves toward the definition of a model that focuses on only the most important elements and their relationship to each other.”

James Beebe, 1995

Gathering Systems Data

System → Silverton community

Topic → camping in the immediate area

Time → summer, weekends

Relationships → Venn diagrams for the niches that each campground service provides

Values → trends, place meanings for each campground

Decision → community leaders, key informants, population segments, decision makers, NEPA process



Triangulation

The use of two or more methods to crosscheck responses and establish reliability and validity

Example: Informal mapping --- Asking someone to describe a typical daily routine on the forest using a large map



A map can often focus the conversation



Sampling

The aim is for diversity over representativeness

Sensing is about context

Surveys are about generalizing to a population

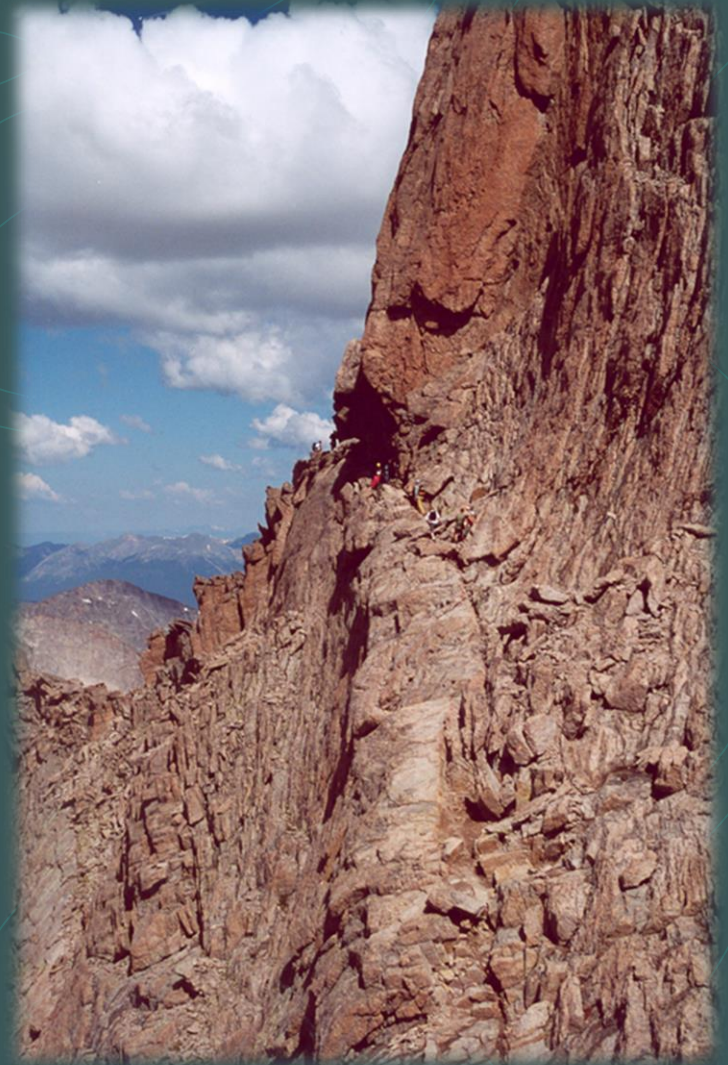
Often, I talk to about 20 people

Remember...

People are creative and capable. They can and should do much on their own investigating, analysis, and planning

Don't judge a book by its' cover. Many knowledgeable people may be timid and unassuming

Be ready to employ a variety of methods



Keyhole Route
Longs Peak, Colorado

Some Useful Tips

Be a facilitator and extractor of – local – knowledge while gathering participation from all sectors of the community

Learn the correct questions in unfamiliar settings and pay attention to language

Ask questions to produce different types of information and put all the questions on one page

Focus on variability – seek out people with different apparent backgrounds and perspectives to achieve a diverse sample

Key Informant Interviews

Snowball Sampling

Here we identify people through networks of local knowledge

We ask locals if they know someone who has key information about the place, topic, or issue being studied

I've talked to people in hardware stores, libraries, fly fishing shops, hair salons, etc.



Focus Group Interviews

A focus group consists of two or more individuals that share a common a interest or place of interest

The setting is often a round table, or chairs in a circle, so that all can see and talk to each other

Participants should engage with each other as well as the facilitator



Go where they are comfortable like this OHV store



Iteration of Data and Saturation

It is best to have as least two or more people interviewing from different disciplines

Data analysis occurs after the first few interviews (iteration)

Sampling ends when results are being repeated frequently AND diversity has been achieved (saturation)

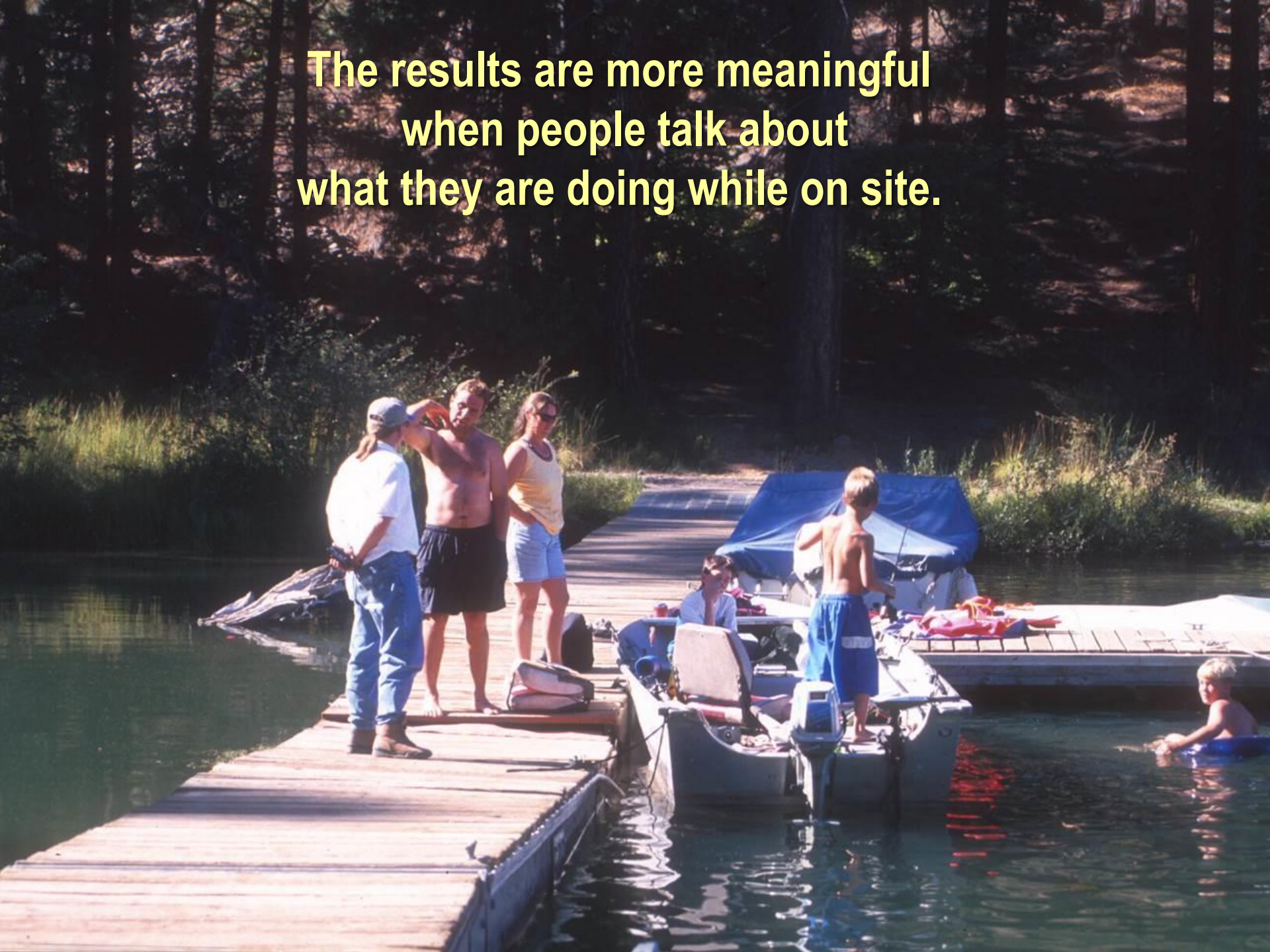


The Paperwork Reduction Act, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) applies to surveys that are administered to nine or more people using the same questions.

Sensing overcomes this restriction by the use of a conversation guide. Three actions ensure that OMB restrictions are avoided.



**The results are more meaningful
when people talk about
what they are doing while on site.**



Bracketing & Interpreting Data

Transcribe

Transcribe the interviews into a text document. Keep the interview prompts with the responses for ease of bracketing.

Read

Read the text closely paying attention to the various themes that emerge from it. Discuss the readings with at least one other person.

Assign

Assign meaning units (complete thoughts) and content brackets (themes) within the text. Mark and number all meaning units.

Classify

Classify the meaning units into their appropriate content brackets and further into groups of common themes within the brackets.

Enumerate

Enumerate the data by creating a final list of all content brackets and themes. Use this list to guide the interpretation of the data.


Campground Plans Appealed

2003, by Dale Rodenbaugh, Durango Herald



“Little Molas Lake recreation area should remain essentially underdeveloped, a group opposed to recreational user fees said Tuesday. The Western Slope No-Fee Coalition is appealing a Forest Service plan to spent \$700,000 to convert the campground into a fancier, fee-based site.”

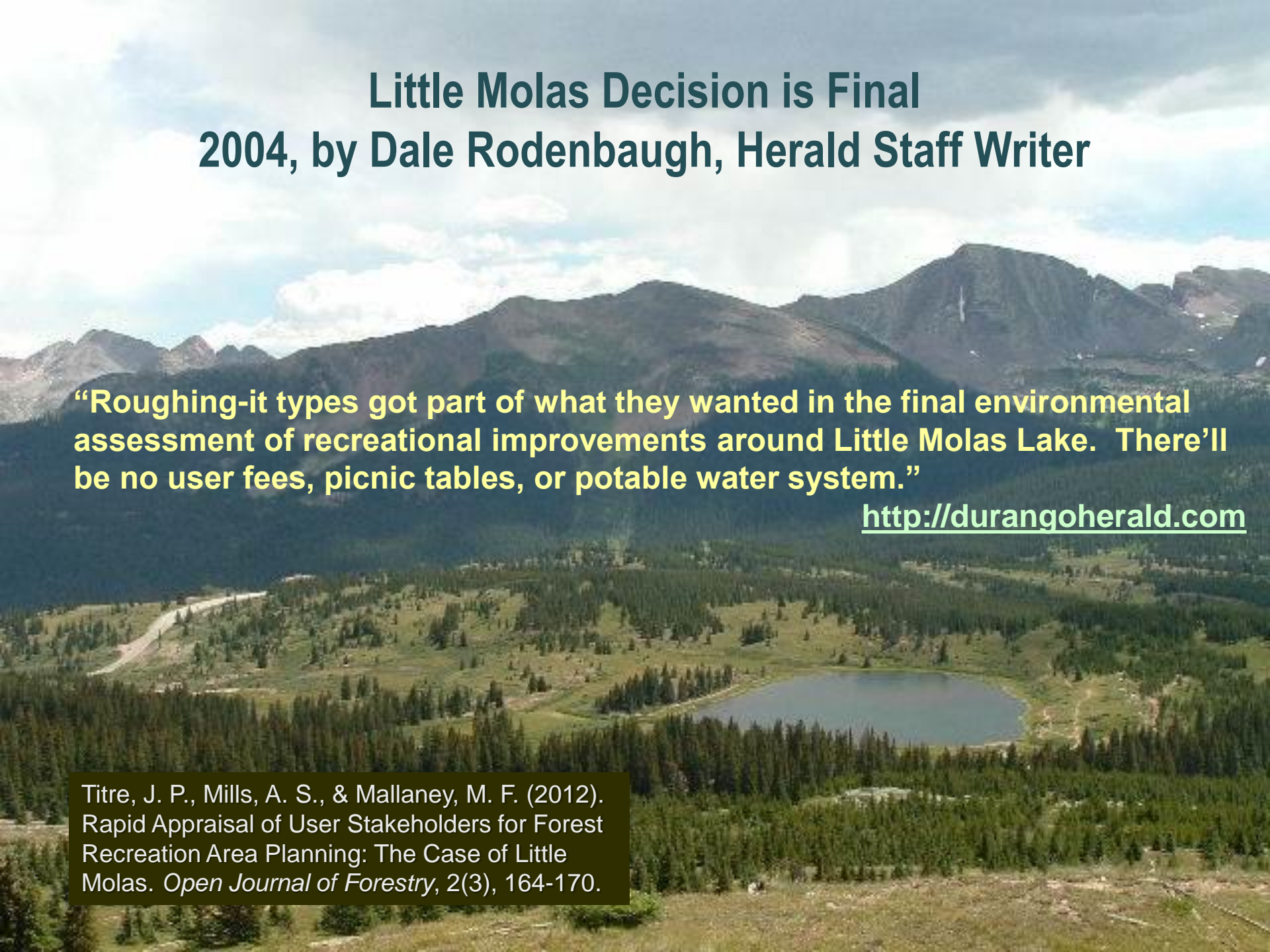
The slide that changed everything, August 2003



One respondent paused and pointed down to a plow disc that he welded into a cooking pan and said, “That there, that’s what it is all about.”

Instead of having a person check a box on whether they wanted fire grates or picnic tables, I asked them, “What does this place mean to you, does it have a special meaning?”

**Little Molas never received modern facilities.
The community of Silverton was happy.**



Little Molas Decision is Final 2004, by Dale Rodenbaugh, Herald Staff Writer

“Roughing-it types got part of what they wanted in the final environmental assessment of recreational improvements around Little Molas Lake. There’ll be no user fees, picnic tables, or potable water system.”

<http://durangoherald.com>

Titre, J. P., Mills, A. S., & Mallaney, M. F. (2012). Rapid Appraisal of User Stakeholders for Forest Recreation Area Planning: The Case of Little Molas. *Open Journal of Forestry*, 2(3), 164-170.

Improving Partnerships & Community Collaboration

These four methods allow community leaders, decision-makers, and citizens to engage with each other and “jump start” the learning process

By unlocking deep embedded knowledge and ideas that are below the surface, new insights can lead to better directions and a better future



Questions?

It is through story that we embrace the great breath of memory, that we can distinguish what is true.”

Barry Lopez, About this Life