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An Analysis of the Consensus-Based Participation Model in the
Georgia Ports Authority's Stakeholder Evaluation Group
(Under the Direction of JOHN MURPHY)

Over the past few decades, the environment has become a topic of considerable debate. Chief among the concerns in this new research arena is the role of citizens in environmental policy decisions. Indirect forms of public participation have failed to produce the cooperation and collaboration intended. Instead, these public hearings and comment periods have increased division and frustration. In response, researchers have begun suggesting more direct forms of participation and have identified a consensus-based stakeholder model as the solution. This approach relies on the assumptions of equality, free and open deliberation, the common good, and rational consensus which have become popular among democratic theorists in recent years. Despite strong critiques on a theoretical level and indications that the model may be impractical for the American political context, researchers continue to promote its use. The Georgia Port Authority's [GPA] decision to create the consensus-based Stakeholder Evaluation Group [SEC] in January of 1999 in order to deal with opposition to its proposed deepening project reflects this recent trend. In this study, I explore the impact of the consensus-based stakeholder model on group practice through an analysis of the characterizations, myths, and ideographs, which comprised the vocabulary of the SEG. Specifically, I argue that the consensus-based model produced a rhetorical foundation for group deliberation that was inconsistent with practice. I trace the SEG's struggle to produce a vocabulary that reflected actual practice and worked better over two and one-half years. I conclude that in the end, stakeholders' need for efficiency resulted in their abandonment of the consensus-based foundation for a vocabulary of traditional decision-making approaches. I also discuss the implications of this finding for the future of public participation research.

INDEX WORDS: Public vocabulary, Environmental rhetoric, Georgia Ports Authority, public participation, stakeholder involvement, deliberative democracy

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONSENSUS-BASED PARTICIPATION MODEL IN THE GEORGIA PORTS AUTHORITY'S STAKEHOLDER EVALUATION GROUP

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DEDICATION

To all my friends and family who each contributed in their own way. And to my father, Dad, this is for you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the environment has become a topic of considerable debate (Dahlberg, Soroos, Feraru, Harf & Trout, 1985; Kraft, 1999; Shabecoff, 1993). The rise of new science oriented disciplines such as ecology, environmental health science and risk studies attest to this new interest (Golding, 1992). Research in the humanities and social sciences also has shifted as scholars started exploring the interaction of environmental issues with humanity (Renn, 1992; Waddell, 1998). Chief among the concerns in this new research arena is the role of citizens in environmental policy decisions (Bacow & Wheeler, 1984; Krimsky, 1992; Trumbo, 2000).

Participation in environmental decision making has been a part of the national agenda since Nixon outlined a role for the public in the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA]. This law mandated that agencies complete an elaborate process of study and review whenever their proposed action had the potential to affect the environment. Citizens were given the opportunity to comment at various stages of the process through public hearings and comment periods. Over the decades, increased environmental consciousness has produced a proliferation of federal and state laws that have similar provisions (Rabe, 1991). Yet, the 30-day comment periods and public hearings have done little to facilitate the type of collaboration originally intended. Generally, community members often either fail to participate because they feel they do not possess the specialized knowledge necessary or they become frustrated because these processes appeared little more than public relations efforts to convince them to accept decisions already made (Fiorino, 1990; Katz & Miller, 1996; Vaughan & Seiffert, 1992).

In response, researchers have begun suggesting more direct forms of participation and have identified a consensus-based stakeholder approach as the solution to this problem (John &

Mlay, 1999; Juanillo & Scherer, 1995; Renn, 1992). Although "there is no single description in the literature of these new approaches to resolving environmental disputes" (Crowfoot & Wondellek, 1990, p. 17), they all follow a model where by rational, authoritative consensus decisions are reached through the free and open deliberation of representative and equal stakeholders. This model reflects the deliberative approach to political disagreement advocated by democratic theorists in recent years. Although a number of case studies point to the difficulty and even the impossibility of securing this ideal in practice (Murdock & Sexton, 1999; Spyke, 1998; Waddell, 1996), researchers repeatedly refuse to critique its use. Instead, they attribute the failure of such efforts to incorrect implementation rather than to flaws in the model (Katz & Miller, 1996).

The Georgia Port Authority's [GPA] decision to create the consensus-based Stakeholder Evaluation Group [SEC] in January of 1999 in order to deal with opposition to its proposed deepening project reflects this recent trend in environmental participation (see Appendix A for a listing of all acronyms). The GPA sought to address stakeholder concerns through this cooperative effort by including representatives from government, business and the public directly and equally in a deliberative process of identifying environmental impacts of the proposed project and formulating a plan to alleviate them. However, practice did not reflect this ideal. After months of frustrated and circular deliberation, the SEG abandoned the consensus-model for more efficient decision making practices.

In this study, I explore the impact of the consensus-based stakeholder model on group practice through a rhetorical analysis of the deliberation of the Stakeholder Evaluation Group. Although a few rhetorical critiques of environmental participation processes exist (Katz &Miller, 1996, Rowan, 1994; Waddell, 1996), these efforts use rhetorical analysis to critique traditional models and to promote the consensus-based model. This study provides the next step to this research by analyzing the consensus model.

Specifically, I argue that assumptions of equality, free and open deliberation toward the common good, and rational, authoritative consensus produced a vocabulary that was inconsistent with actual group practice. Participants' desire to craft characterizations, myths and key terms that reflected group practice better and were more suitable for their task produced long debates and frustration, which constrained them from progressing in their mission. Driven by the need to "get things done," the SEG ultimately abandoned consensus-based meanings for a vocabulary of efficiency where experts and agency members guided group practices.

I begin the study in this chapter with an overview of the theory and scholarship that led to the development of the consensus-based model as the preferred approach to environmental participation. Since this model is grounded in a deliberative approach to disagreement, I first briefly outline this perspective. In the next section, I trace how participation researchers adopted the ideals of this approach as their solution to the problem of environmental participation. I then explain the methodological approach I take in this study. Finally, I provide an overview of the chapters that follow.

Theoretical Foundation of the Consensus Model: Deliberative Democracy

The GPA's use of a consensus-based model to deal with opposition over the harbor deepening reflected the larger movement in political thought toward a deliberative democratic approach to political disagreement. In the following section, I discuss this school of thought.

Democratic theorists contend that the issue of deep disagreement has long been one of the challenges of the American political experiment (Bohman, 1997; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Hardin, 1999). In *Democracy and Disagreement*, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson attempted to address this challenge once and for all with the theory of deliberative democracy. Gutmann and Thompson argued that the solution was simple. In cases of moral disagreement between citizens and their representatives, opponents "should continue to reason together to reach morally acceptable decisions" (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 1). Arguing that American society was suffering "from a deliberative deficit not only in our democratic politics but also in

our democratic theory" (Shapiro, 1999, p. 32), Gutmann and Thompson developed a theory of deliberative democracy to guide this approach to disagreement.

Deliberative democratic theory begins with the assumption that "legitimate decisions require equality" (Bohmann, 1997, p. 321). Participants have to be equal in two senses. First they had to have "equality of resources needed to ensure that an individual's assent to arguments by others is uncoerced" (Knight & Johnson, 1997, p. 282). Marginalized groups can obtain this type of equality by identifying "representatives from within their own ranks who could speak for them" (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 133). Second, "their *reasons* must be given equal consideration" (Bohman, 1997, p. 321). As a result of such equality, "the deliberative playing field is nearly level" (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 133). Although "differences in opinions, tastes, preferences . . . as well as in some resources such as knowledge" can exist, participants can not possess "differences which make for disproportionate political advantage and persistent political disadvantages, such as differences in social circumstances and in basic public skills and abilities" (Bohman, 1997, p. 326). In this way, deliberative arrangements work to "dampen, and optimally to eliminate entirely any arbitrary inequalities between participants to any interaction" (Knight & Johnson, 1997, p. 288). In turn, deliberation is superior to negotiation or bargaining as a tool for disagreement because it can "diminish the discriminatory effects of race, class and gender inequalities" (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 133).

Equal participants produce a deliberative process that is "free"(Cohen, 1997, p. 74) and "open to all" (Michelman, 1997, p. 160). Arguments are treated neutrally, unbiased "for or against any particular alternative" (Knight & Johnson, 1997, p. 292). The rational force of the better argument guides deliberation, ensuring the equality of participants since "the use of material advantages in the political process" (Knight & Johnson, 1997, p. 295) is unnecessary. As deliberators offer their perspective, propose ideas and make compromises, they forge a "collective will, a joint intention" (Richardson, 1997, p. 360). This common good is "not identical

with the wills of any person" (Richardson, 1997, p. 358), but rather a notion crafted through debate and compromise.

Through this process of "free and reasoned assessment of alternatives by equals" (Cohen, 1997, p. 74), deliberators arrive at "a rationally motivated consensus" (Cohen, 1997, p. 80). Since decisions are guided by rationality, "relations of power and subordination are neutralized" (Cohen, 1997, p. 78). Such decisions have more permanence and authority than majority rule because "the decision of a majority at any particular time is provisional, since it may always be revisited by subsequent majorities" (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 28).

The apparent ease and straightforwardness of this theory has made it very popular among democratic theorists (Macedo, 1999). According to Hardin, the shift to deliberative democracy "has been perhaps the single most popular move of democratic theorists in our time" (1999, p. 103). Yet, critics have long found the theory's core assumptions of equality, free and open deliberation to the common good, and rational consensus problematic.

Craig Calhoun (1992) concluded that the main problem with deliberative theories was that they ignored "the power relations, the networks of communication, the topography of issues and the structure of influence in the public sphere" (p. 35). According to Hardin, this notion of equality made deliberation possible "only in the parlor room discourses or in the small salons of academic conferences, not in the normal world of rough and tumble politics" (1999, p. 112). Nancy Fraser argued that in addition to being unrealistic, the deliberative notion of equality actually masked "subtle forms of control" (1992, p. 119) and worked "to the advantage of dominant groups in society and to the disadvantage of subordinates" (p. 120) because elite control of vocabulary and meaning excluded the less powerful from discussion.

Other critics questioned why "political debate ought to be focused on the common good" (Cohen, 1997, p. 72). According to Shapiro, rather than uniting individuals, deliberation brought "differences to the surface, widening political divisions" (1999, p. 32). G. Thomas Goodnight and David B. Hingstman (1997) argued that this was especially true in a society that was

"noninstitutionalized, fragmented" (p.352). Thomas McCarthy (1989) agreed that since the public was "socially, culturally, and psychologically diverse" (p. 128), the notion of the common good was unworkable.

Because the common good was an impractical notion, critics argued that promoting it might actually facilitate exclusive deliberative practices. Koivisto and Valiverronen (1996) claimed that the assumption of the common good produced a situation where issues of public justice and economy were considered the only suitable topics for political discussion. Because issues of social and familial relations were excluded, both women and the discussion of topics considered private such as domestic violence and sexual harassment were excluded from public political discourse.

The fragmentation of society likewise produced a situation where there was "no common measure by which to assess the relative weights of reasons articulated in different evaluative languages" (McCarthy, 1992, p. 65). With no common standard to judge alternatives, the notion of consensus became problematic. Patricia Roberts (1996) argued that the promotion of consensus caused the "the oppression of steadfast dissenters" (p. 62). Mouffe (1999) similarly suggested the notion "that political questions can be decided rationally" (p. 753) could lead to the domination by the perspective with the most power.

In short, critics believed that "the search for a completely abstract definition of the public sphere could be part of the problem"(Hohendahl, 1992, p. 102). In turn, McCarthy suggested that we should "reconsider whether there might be a reasonable, nonviolent alternative to discursive agreement, hermeneutic consensus, and negotiated compromise" and develop "structures and processes of democratic public life . . . [that] reflect an awareness that unresolveable yet reasonable disagreements are also possible in principle" (1989, p. 152). Knight and Johnson (1997) recommended promoting the option of voting as "a necessary component of the democratic process" (p. 309) while Mouffe offered a theory that was more elaborate. She proposed an approach that emphasized the "inherently conflictual aspects of pluralism, linked to

the dimension of undecidability and the ineradicability of antagonism" (Mouffe, 1999, p. 756) as a better alternative.

Despite these criticisms, proponents of deliberative democracy continued to defend it as a practical solution to democratic disagreement. Gutmann and Thompson (1996) insisted that because deliberative democracy was derived from actual cases, it was far from the abstract theory critics indicated. However, they also agreed with critics that in practice deliberative ideals were not yet achieved. They argued for the creation of institutions "arranged so as to provide opportunities and incentives for officials to engage in moral reasoning" (1996, p. 358). Adolph Gunderson (1995) offered the environmental arena as one context where the creations of such deliberative institutions could solve disagreement. Gunderson claimed that "environmental deliberation encourages citizens . . . to connect their own lives, beliefs, and activities with the collective pursuit of environmental ends" (1995, p. 10). In this sense, deliberation was the first step to producing the "environmental rationality" (1995, p. 23) needed to solve environmental issues. Gunderson's suggestion pointed to a similar trend that was occurring in environmental public participation research.

Research Foundation: Public Participation Research

At about the same time as ideas of deliberative democracy were circulating in the political arena, research in environmental participation was promoting "collaboration among contending interest groups instead of adversarial relationships . . . [and] consensus decision-making rather than judgments by authorities" (Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990, p. 1). Since the SEG reflected this consensus based approach, I trace its development in environmental participation research in the following section.

Participation of the public in all levels of governmental decision making began in 1946 with the Administrative Procedures Act. It became an issue in the context of environmental policy following the implementation of a plethora of federal environmental laws in the late 1960s (Willeke, 1976). Among these, the National Environmental Policy Act was the most significant.

This law was the first attempt to forge a piece of comprehensive environmental legislation. It established a Council on Environmental Quality in the Office of the President and required government agencies to write an Environmental Impact Statement [EIS] whenever their actions had the potential to harm the environment. It also required public hearings and public comment periods as part of the EIS process (Shabecoff, 1993). In this way, NEPA identified participation as an essential component of environmental decision-making.

Due to the symbolic importance of NEPA in the environmental policy arena, policy makers used it as a blueprint for the creation of environmental initiatives in the following decade. Most of this legislation included similar outlets for public input. For example, laws such as the 1970 Rivers and Harbor Act, the 1972 Amendments to the Water Pollution Control Act, the 1972 Endangered Species Act [ESA], and the 1980 Comprehensive Response Compensation and Liability Act [CERCLA] all required public participation in the form of public hearings and public comment periods as an element of the decision-making process. Despite the good intentions of lawmakers, implementation of these mechanisms proved difficult for a number of reasons. First, agency representatives were less than enthusiastic about including the public in their decision-making efforts (Pierce & Doerkson, 1976). Agencies had grown accustomed to taking a managerial approach to problem solving where supposedly neutral, scientific criteria were used for making decisions in the public interest. Public input was unnecessary because scientific expertise acted as both a "structural barrier to and substitute for democratic participation" (Williams & Matheny, 1995, p. 10). Second, unskilled facilitators often did not know how to handle the tempers that flared at meetings. This situation "intensified preexisting polarization" (Hendee, et al., 1976, p. 130). Finally, meetings were difficult to conduct, costly and time-consuming (Hendee et al., 1976).

Participation efforts continued to produce such results steadily until nineteen-eighty when the conservative Reagan administration slowed the enactment of new environmental legislation. This move allowed agencies to concentrate on implementing and enforcing the abundance of laws

enacted in the prior decade. With more participation efforts occurring, the disagreement and frustration they produced became more pronounced. As often is the case, this problematic situation attracted scholarly interest. Multidisciplinary research centers devoted to tackling the problem of environmental participation emerged (Golding, 1992). In particular, scholars in the social sciences became "intimately involved with the growth and professionalization" (Golding, 1992, p.48) of environmental participation. This research focused on uncovering the root of the problem and on identifying better solutions.

One group of researchers identified the problem in participation as fundamental differences in perception and approach between decision-makers and community members. Orwin Renn (1992) provided a summary of this category of research. According to Renn, drawing on their own disciplinary perspectives, these studies would determine that decision-makers' views of environmental issues differed fundamentally from those of the public. Officials operated from a scientific and objective definitional framework whereas community members operated from a subjective community-based definitional framework. These differences led to distrust, conflict and exclusion of the public from the decision-making process. The research would then suggest an approach for bringing the two perspectives together grounded in its particular discipline.

According to Renn (1992), psychologists were the first researchers attracted to the study of differences between decision-makers and the public. Generally, psychological approaches attempted to map individual citizens perceptions and to highlight the ways in which these differed from the technical assessments made by decision-makers. For example, psychologist Paul Slovic (1987) created the psychometric paradigm "to produce quantitative representations or 'cognitive maps'" (p. 281) of public risk perceptions and to compare them to the technically derived "risk assessment" (p. 280) of decision-makers. Psychologists Ola Svenson and Baruch Fischoff (1985) identified decision theory as a method for explaining the differences between the perceptions of the public and decision-makers. In a case over radon in the home, the researchers determined that

authorities defined the central problem as “what constitutes an acceptable level [of risk] for all homes” (p. 4), whereas residents defined the central problem as “deciding what to do when faced with a particular exposure” (p. 4). Svenson and Fischoff suggested making differing problem definitions explicit so that each side would be forced to reevaluate until they reached a point of congruence.

Sociological research differed from psychological approaches because it addressed the issue from the level of society rather than the level of the individual. For sociologists, contrasts between citizens and officials were the result of differences in socially constructed belief and value systems. For example, sociologists Cvetkovich and Earle (1992) described decision-makers’ perspective as “objective” where issues were measured, weighed and defined “on the basis of the probability and the severity of negative outcome” (p. 5) and community members perspective as “constructive,” defined in terms of what was valued through “rules of thumb.” These differences caused decision-makers to view the public as “capricious, unpredictable, and irrational” (p. 5). Sociologists Plough and Krimsky (1987) likewise characterized decision makers’ perspectives as a technical rationality where trust rested in scientific methods, explanations and evidence. They characterized the public’s contrasting perspective as a cultural rationality where trust existed in political culture and democratic process. Elaine Vaughan and Marianne Seifert (1992) also described the “different belief and value systems” (p. 120) of decision-makers and the public. According to Vaughan and Seifert, decision-makers framed environmental issues as quantitative questions of societal gains. In contrast, community members framed these issues as questions of fairness to be measured in terms of losses on an individual level. The researchers argued that incompatibilities in frameworks made conveying information between groups useless because “information compatible with one framework [was] judged to be of little use from another perspective” (p. 124). They suggested instead that a negotiated perceptual framework should be created to make groups “see and understand the legitimacy of alternative ways of defining policy issues” (p. 129). Thomas Grieder and Lorraine Garkovich

(1994) agreed that since "the environment has multiple meanings," (p. 14) the framework for decision making should "include all" who have a connection with the "physical environment in which the change is occurring or is proposed to occur" (p. 14). Cvetkovitch and Earle (1992) and Plough and Krimsky (1987) advocated similar approaches to bringing these perspectives together to avoid exclusion and frustration.

Anthropology and natural resource ecologists also contributed to this area of research. However this perspective assumed that cultural patterns rather than societal factors structured "the mind-set of individuals and social organizations to adopt certain values and reject others" (Renn, 1992, p. 73). James Kennedy (1988) demonstrated this approach in his study of the U.S. Forestry Service infrastructure. He argued that foresters were "socialized in their professional education and occupations to see the world in terms of instrumental content, focusing on practical, objective, 'scientific' dimensions rather than expressive dimensions" (p. 245). In contrast, citizens were socialized to view the world in terms of its symbolic content. Kennedy argued that such inconsistency made natural resource managers "perplexed by citizens who value wilderness they will probably never 'instrumentally' visit . . . or rare or endangered wildlife they will never see" (p. 246). Andrea Brandenburg and Matthew Carroll (1995) likewise argued that resource managers were educated to view the land in terms of economic resources, whereas community members viewed the land in terms of "the social and cultural contexts, the meanings, values, traditions of the people . . . and the nature of a given space" (p. 384). The researchers suggested "discovering common values and meanings among ostensibly opposing stakeholder groups" (p. 396) as a way to overcome this division. Anthropologists Michiel Schwartz and Michael Thompson (1990) agreed that "differing definitions of the good, the socially desirable" (p.11) among different subculture groups demanded the incorporation of multiple perspectives equally in decision-making for it to be comprehensive.

Communication researchers specifically identified communication as a tool to bring the perspectives of the public and decision-makers together. For example, Rowan (1994) suggested a

rhetorical approach to bringing the technical view of officials and the democratic view of the public together through strategies meant to establish trust, authority, and dynamism. James G. Cantrill (1998) similarly argued that communication was the key to bring decision-makers' and the public's definitions together.

Although research in this area could be critiqued on grounds of objectivism and essentialism, it contained a number of insights pertinent to this project. First, all agreed that the public and decision-makers defined the common good in environmental issues differently. Second, all indicated that these differences led to exclusion of the public, control of the decision by officials and frustration on the part of both groups. Finally, all promoted approaches where some type of common good could be crafted by considering the views of the public equally with those of decision-makers in some type of collaborative effort.

The second area of research focused on the investigation and critique of communication practices. One type of scholarship in this area considered the structure of public participation mechanisms. For example, Robert L. Heath and Kathy Nathan (1990) argued that "few communication problems loom as ominously" (p. 15) as communication about environmental issues. They cited the one-way informational type model demonstrated in public hearings and comment periods with decision-makers and "experts as sources, messages as information about risk, channels as media reporters and editors, and receivers- an amorphous public" (p. 16) as the source of the problem. Heath and Nathan maintained that this model was based on decision-makers' false assumptions that "if the public understood our side of the story as we do, then confidence . . . would increase and the problem would go away" (p. 17). Juanillo and Scherer (1995) suggested that in addition to being inappropriate, the classical form of communication as practiced in public hearings and comment periods was often little more than a "token- an instrument to gain credibility and trust and not really to engage people in a communication process, but to build support for the plans of regulatory agencies officials" (p. 290). Such methods failed to address "disagreement over the appropriate role of government, the struggle between

individual autonomy and community goals, and the threat to the power of the citizens" (p. 283). They suggested weighing and debating conflicting values through a dialectical model of communication. This model involved multiple stakeholders with multiple perspectives. The interactive exchange between all parties made the theoretical distinction between source and receiver irrelevant. A free flow of information occurred between stakeholders, as all members could equally share information, become informed and weigh options. Holistic judgments were reached through consensus.

Covello, McCallum and Pavlova (1989) similarly promoted participation as "two-way activity based on mutual respect, trust, and the open exchange of information" (p. 5). According to the researchers, this type of communication was guided by two principles. First, that "citizens in a democracy have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives, their property, and the things they value" (p. 5). Second that the goal of communication "should be to produce an informed public that is involved, solution oriented and collaborative" (p. 5). They claimed that this type of communication was a "means for improved cooperation, collaboration, and coordination" (p. 4). Finally, Laura Belsten (1996) identified community collaboration as a more empowering approach to objective communication efforts. In this "open process" (p. 37), equal and representative stakeholders were "free to participate to the extent they" (p. 37) felt necessary. According to Belsten, this approach might "increase stakeholders' satisfaction in the decision making process . . . improve the stakeholders' perception of trust and credibility in the governmental or business ventures leading that process . . . [and] lead to more enduring decisions" (p. 39).

Other scholars critiqued the nature of discourse in public participation efforts and indicated that scientific and technical appeals excluded the public from participation. For example, Katz (1992) claimed that argument in public participation was "technological, replacing the democratic decision-making process with *techniques* of persuasion and audience adaptation calculated to serve their own ends only" (p. 271). Patterson and Lee (2000) identified the main

strategy of this discourse as the use of the god term "balance" and the devil term "partisan." Patterson and Lee maintained that this tactic “distorts public domain . . . by procedurally diminishing the public, by cloaking the subjectivity of decision making, and by reducing the reasonable rhetor to the role of umpire” (p. 236). Katz & Miller (1996) also asserted that decision-makers’ language in public hearings often demonstrated themes of control, the need to educate an ignorant public, one-way communication from decision-makers to the public and contempt. According to the researchers, such appeals produced an angered and frustrated citizenry. They cited the reaction of one member who described participation efforts as “a farce, a damn farce” (p. 111). Kaminstein (1996) likewise found that officials’ uses of facts and scientific language and control of discussion facilitated public “frustration and hopelessness” (p. 463).

The solution promoted by much of this research was a model based on deliberative democratic assumptions of equality, representation, free and open deliberation and rational consensus. For example, Bill Karis (2000) argued that “the inclusion of dialogue and debate” (p. 229) was an essential part of deciding environmental issues. In order to secure such dialogue, he identified a model “in which all parties in the dialogues have ethical *communicative action* as their goal and outcome” (p. 229). In this sense, they shared a definition of the common good. However, he also admitted that this model might never be realized in practice. Killingsworth & Palmer (1992) promoted an approach to public participation based on the assumptions that through argumentative speech, participants could “overcome their merely subjective views and, owning to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction” (p. 166) reach a consensual agreement. Craig Waddell (1996) identified the social constructivist model as a method for achieving “an interactive exchange of information during which all participants . . . communicate” (p. 142). However, he determined through a case study that the model was difficult to achieve in practice due to the public’s lack of technical knowledge and official’s prejudice against emotions. Finally, Arlene Plevin suggested an approach to participation where

"consensus building [was] a long-term goal . . . [and] dialogue between differing parties [was] desired as a rhetorical strategy" (2000, p. 263).

Although quite distinct, these two participation research trajectories similarly promoted more collaborative, egalitarian approaches to public participation as the best way to dissipate disagreement and make better decisions. To varying degrees, all demonstrated the deliberative democratic assumptions of equality, open and free deliberation to the common good and rational consensus. At the same time, some intimated that realization of these ideal forms of participation might be difficult to achieve in practice.

The deliberative democratic approach and environmental participation research seemed to merge in practice as government began to employ consensus-based participation in environmental decision making. The Clinton administration initiated this shift from limited traditional public involvement to more direct consensus-based approaches with its "new environmental agenda." This agenda was based on the ideas reflected in both deliberative democracy and participation research that "better decisions result from a collaborative process with people working together" (Clinton & Gore, 1995, p. 1). Consensus-based participation was a necessary part of this agenda (John & Mlay, 1999). In turn, the administration began enacting a number of consensus-based programs at the federal level such as the Environmental Protection Agency's [EPA] Project XL, Community Advisory Panels and Good Neighbor Dialogues. The Department of Energy [DOE] also began to engage in similar mechanisms (Spyke, 1999). These efforts initiated a shift "in environmental policy implementation from adversarial to consensual processes and from judicial to administrative procedures" (Klause, 1995, p. 88) in private industry and all levels of government as well.

As consensus-based mechanisms started to be implemented, these efforts began to demonstrate some of the problems articulated by critics of deliberative democracy. Murdock and Sexton (1999) identified issues of power inequalities, trust issues, frustration, industry co-optation and exclusion through an exploration of the EPA's consensus-based participation efforts. Spyke

(1999) also found that the vague and conflicting goals of participants, inconsistencies between agency goals of efficiency, expertise and control, and time constraints that resulted in lowest common denominator solutions rather than consensus decisions made these efforts difficult to enact. As with proponents of deliberative democracy, researchers and practitioners of environmental public participation continued to promote the use of the consensus-based model despite suggestions that its problematic assumptions might make it unworkable. In turn, the GPA adopted this new participation approach for its 1999 harbor-deepening project.

Methodology

Since this project seeks to critique the ways in which the consensus-based model impacts public argument in environmental participation, a methodology is needed that allows me to explore both the underlying assumptions of the Savannah stakeholder process (ground) as well their impact on subsequent discourse (figure). Condit and Lucaites' (1991) public vocabulary concept is a suitable tool for this study since it enables the critic to consider "the efforts of individual rhetors in specific groups and organizations (figure) within the rhetorically constituted matrix of ideological commitments (ground)" (p. 16). In this section, I define public vocabulary and discuss its suitability as a methodological approach for this project.

McGee introduced the notion of a public vocabulary in 1980. According to McGee, a "vocabulary of complex, high-order abstractions that refer[red] to and invok[ed] a sense of 'the people" (1980/1995, p. 452) defined a particular collectivity. This vocabulary consisted of simply "a group of *words*" (p. 447) entitled ideographs. Ideographs were "ordinary-language term[s] found in political discourse, . . . higher-order abstraction[s] representing collective commitment . . . to a normative goal" (p. 452), such as liberty or equality.

Building on McGee's original work, Condit and Lucaites (1993), expanded this notion of a public vocabulary, suggesting its use as "a general model of the rhetorical process of public argumentation" (p. 16). Condit and Lucaites identified the public vocabulary as "the shared rhetorical culture" (p. xiv) that rhetors employed as they attempted to direct the community in its

struggle to “negotiate its common needs and interests” (p. xii). Although this vocabulary included “the full complement of commonly used allusions, aphorisms, characterizations, ideographs, metaphors, myths, narratives, and topoi or common argumentative forms” (p. xii), these scholars agreed with McGee that ideographs were “the central, organizing elements for any rhetorical culture” (p. xiii). Condit and Lucaites noted that, in addition to “represent[ing] in condensed form the normative, collective commitments of the members of the public . . . [ideographs] typically appear[red] in public argumentation as the necessary motivations or justifications for action performed in the name of the public” (p. xiii). In this sense, they acted as “’the moral of the story in public political narratives, especially mythoi”(Condit, 1987b, p. 3).

Public political narratives were “story forms which . . . provide ‘an account of a thing being done, or supposed to have been done, which [were] adapted to persuade” (Condit, 1987b, p. 4). When they gained “persuasiveness and force among an active plurality of persons in a national discourse group” (p. 4) they were transformed into public political myths. Myths, in turn, derived their meaning from characterizations. According to Condit, characterizations were “universalized descriptions of particular agents, acts, scenes, purposes or agencies which, when they [became] culturally accepted as accurate descriptions of a class [could] be labeled character-types” (p. 4). Examples of character-types in American culture were “’Boy Scouts,’ ‘politicians,’ and ‘the South” (p. 4).

Through public argument, ideographs, myths, characterizations and other elements of a public vocabulary interacted to develop a “precise set of ” relationships that provided “a rhetorical foundation of public value” (Condit, 1987b, p. 3) for a particular community. Such foundations acted as “substantive constraints on precipitous social change. At the same time, the particularized character of their formation presum[ed] that the public vocabulary must receive at least partial revision when new conditions [arose]” (Condit & Lucaites, 1993, p. 3). So, “although the collectivity always retain[ed] power to modify the code, it [could not] exert unlimited control” (Condit, 1987a, p. 87). In essence, the elements of a rhetorical culture maintained somewhat of a

“discursive constant” (Condit & Lucaites, 1993, p. xiv), providing lenses through which a critic could “gain a reliable, if indirect, indication of the patterns of interests and forces supporting and constituting the public discourse” (Condit, 1987b, p. 2). In this sense, the notion of a public vocabulary could provide a suitable monocle to explore the ways in which the assumptions of a consensus model of participation impacted stakeholder argument within the Savannah Stakeholder discourse. Maines and Bridger (1992) argued that the discursive, narrative nature of communities made the public vocabulary concept the best tool for social scientists seeking to discover patterns of consensus and conflict within particular groups. Bridger (1996) also suggested that this approach was particularly suitable for examining “the language used in the public decision-making process that results in new land use decisions" (p. 354).

According to Condit and Lucaites, this type of exploration “into how social and political problems [were] constituted and negotiated through public discourse” (1993, p. xiv) entailed “charting the diachronic and synchronic structures” of the elements constituting a particular collectivity’s public vocabulary. The diachronic structure of ideographs, myths, and characterizations “represent[ed] the full range and history of its usage for a particular rhetorical culture” (p. xiii), whereas the synchronic structure “represent[ed] . . . usage as defined by its relationship in public discourse to other ideographs relevant to the historically specific situation” (p. xiii).

This project follows a similar trajectory of study. First, I draw on discussions of the consensus-based approach by participation researchers and practitioners to describe the rhetorical foundation crafted by this model. I then examine how this foundation affects SEG participants’ discourse (synchronic) over the 19 months (diachronic) it took stakeholders to complete the first half of their mission by identifying and implementing environmental impact studies. I analyze meeting tapes, summaries, transcripts and personal notes to trace changes in the vocabulary throughout this time frame. In each of the four chapters, I provide a general description of the group’s vocabulary across a particular segment of time. I also perform a detailed analysis of a

specific meeting that I believe contains representative examples of the stakeholders' discourse at that point. These meetings are February 1999, July 1999, December 1999 and July 2000. I chose this approach because I believe that concentrating on specific meetings allows me to overcome the critique that a public vocabulary methodology leads critics to concentrate on the "public consciousness" and "easily lose the feel for the concrete details of social life that reveal rhetors fighting for change" (Murphy, 1992, p. 74). Focusing on the rhetorical maneuverings in specific meetings enables me to capture points of conflict where individual rhetors grapple with their consensus-based rhetorical foundation.

Overview of Chapters

Since this project is a critique of the suitability of the consensus model for environmental public participation activities though a case study of the Savannah Stakeholder Evaluation Group, it must be grounded in the specific context of the group. For this reason, I begin with an overview of the specific conditions that surrounded the creation of the SEG in Chapter Two. In this chapter I discuss the importance of the port for the history of Savannah, outline the specific controversy that arose over the 1999 project and introduce the Stakeholder Evaluation Group. I then move to an exploration of the group's discourse in Chapter Three. I begin with an outline of the rhetorical foundation provided for the group by consensus-based models. This foundation outlined a characterization of stakeholder as active, equal and representative, a myth of group process as free and open deliberation to the common good, and an ideographic meaning of consensus as authoritative, rational decisions. I then explore the discourse of the SEG in the second group meeting held on February 2, 1999 and consider ways in which the consensus-based vocabulary affected stakeholder interaction. Specifically, I argue that attempts to articulate a consensus-based vocabulary by representatives of the GPA and the facilitator proved inconsistent with actual practice. Stakeholders' efforts to craft terms that better reflected actual practice facilitated rearticulations of consensus meanings. These exchanges produced long debates and frustration, which kept the group from progressing on their mission. In Chapter Four, I trace SEG

stakeholders' continued attempts to craft a more workable vocabulary from the period of March 1999 to July 1999. During this period, although inconsistencies between the consensus vocabulary and actual practice continued to produce lengthy debates, members began to employ a variety of rhetorical strategies to craft meanings that recognized difference in stakeholder status, a narrative where experts and the GPA controlled deliberation and defined the common good and consensus as majority vote. Not only did these meanings better reflect actual practice, they also enabled the group to advance in its mission. By the end of this period, the SEG started to resemble the hierarchy and elite controlled practices of a traditional environmental decision-making group. In Chapter Five I then discuss how congressional appropriation and approval of the project by the Corps of Engineers brought increased pressure for progress during the period from August 1999 to December 1999. In turn, members pushed for traditional notions of stakeholder, group process and consensus that seemed more suitable in order to progress. These discursive challenges facilitated the collapse of the consensus process in November. However, by December when the SEG began to articulate these traditional meanings, their stakeholder vocabulary continued to constrain them and proved unsuitable. In the final chapter of analysis, Chapter Six, I discuss how increased external attacks caused the stakeholders to adopt a vocabulary of efficiency in order to implement studies and achieve the first half of their mission from January 1999 to July 1999. Members yielded control to agency and technical elite by limiting the characterization of stakeholder to this group and following a narrative where they defined and led studies. Members also accepted the titles of agencies and experts as authority for decision making instead of consensus. In essence, the SEG had abandoned the consensus model for one that was more efficient. In Chapter Seven, I discuss the effects of this discursive move on the public participation effort, summarize and discuss implications of this case on public participation research.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORY: SAVANNAH = PORT

In 1733, General James Oglethorpe approached prosperous English businessmen with his idealistic vision of a charity-based settlement in the southern New World. In this appeal, Oglethorpe adopted the language of Sir Robert Montgomery who named the land soon to be known as Savannah the "New Eden." Aware that commerce and trade were primary motivations for English settlement, Oglethorpe framed this Eden as an abundant store of "exotic products desired in England- particularly silk" (Sieg, 1985, p. 15). Oglethorpe's emphasis on Savannah's water based commercial potential constructed a characterization where the economic contributions of the port were central to the city (Bell, 1977).

Savannah's ensuing history reinforced this connection between the economic prosperity of the port and the identity of the city. For example, in 1937, the authors of the Federal Writer's Project [FWP] remarked that "Savannah . . . had grown into a metropolis through its shipping" (1937, p. 32). In 1977, historian Malcolm Bell recognized that "it is the river that is Savannah's greatest reason for being"(p. 15). Sieg wrote in 1985, "for nearly 252 years Savannah has been Georgia's principal portal to the world beyond the seas. The Royal Colonies riches . . . were funneled to England through Savannah" (p. 169). In 1994, the Georgia Ports Authority characterized Savannah as "a leader in the international trade arena" (GPA, 1994, p. 1). Finally, in 1998 an anonymous writer for the Savannah Morning News noted that "from the time that Gen. James Edward Oglethorpe landed here more than 250 years ago, Savannah's economy has been linked with water" (Editorial: Politics . . . 1998, p. 1). In essence, the economic prosperity and development of the port is central to Savannah's identity.

For this reason, discussion of the 1999 deepening controversy must begin with an overview of this connection. The position of the port influences which issues surface and become pertinent. These issues then provide the context in which the Stakeholder Evaluation Group convenes. In this chapter, I discuss the elements comprising the SEG's discursive context. First, I overview the history of Savannah in order to demonstrate how the port and its economic capability becomes central to the identity of Savannah. Against this backdrop, I then consider the specific events and issues, which comprise the 1999 harbor-deepening project. Finally, I introduce the Stakeholder Evaluation Group. In combination, these three areas offer a discussion of the situation surrounding the Stakeholders' discourse.

Savannah and the Port

The port became central as early as its inception in 1733 when Savannah's "forbears had the vision to establish the Port of Savannah as the state's economic . . . cornerstone" (GPA, 1994, p. 1). Although General Oglethorpe began Georgia with the lofty goal of building a well-rounded community of agriculture, export and military prowess, colonists were immediately preoccupied with the potential of trade (Granger, 1968). Two significant factors quickly constrained these ambitions. First, the hydrography of the Savannah River created navigational problems. Islands divided the river at various points both above and below the city. Inland below the city, the river "was split into three channels . . . Front River, Middle River and Back River" (Granger, 1968, p. 1). As the rivers moved past the city they merged. After one mile, the single channel split again into the Front and the Back Rivers, which continued to the sea. Savannah existed twenty miles inland from the ocean on the Front river, "naturally result[ing] in the almost exclusive use of Front River for traffic" (p. 1). Division of the river "tended to reduce the flow and depth of each channel compared to what would have been provided by confining the flow to a single channel" (p. 1). Inadequate water levels made navigation problematic. The build up of soil and sediment, termed shoaling, exacerbated this situation by decreasing channel depth. In essence, the Savannah River was more of a "shallow river" than a "natural harbor" (Southern Environmental Law Center

[SELC], 2000, p. 1). Second, ships from England were often diverted to Charlestown or Port Royal in the north because Savannah, a much younger development, had not yet established a staple commodity for trade.

Despite these constraints, in 1749 James Habersham and Francis Harris created Savannah's first export business by sending a ship loaded with deerskins, lumber, cattle, hogs and poultry valued at ten thousand dollars to England. Other members of Savannah's emerging breed of colonials "begged that they be allowed to abandon the exclusive production of silk and wine and be permitted a freer hand with other commodities" (FWP, 1937, p. 30). Flexibility combined with the breakdown of Oglethorpe's multi-task community moved commerce to the center of colonial life. By 1753, "exports jumped to seventy-five thousand" dollars (Sieg, 1985, p. 34). By 1760, "forty-two vessels traded in Savannah . . . with rice exports of 3,400 pounds" (Sieg, 1985, p. 34). By 1763, exports reached 200,000 pounds as 153 ships entered the harbor. According to Granger, because of the early importance of trade, the history of Savannah became "a chronological detail of public works in the harbor and lower river . . . to improve navigation" (1968, p. 8).

Exports of rice, indigo, and naval stores and imports of slaves, rum and sugar continued to increase until the American Revolution making Savannah "one of the most cosmopolitan populations in the colonies" (Debolt, 1976, p. 14). By the time the Stamp Act passed in 1765, Savannah "was reporting a new high in exports of three-hundred and fifty thousand dollars" (Sieg, 1985, p. 42). Because of the economic prosperity brought through English trade, Georgia was "the most loyal of the thirteen colonies" (Debolt, 1976, p. 21) and refused to participate in the rebellious activities of the northern colonies. Instead, "leading shippers of Savannah conducted business as usual" (Sieg, 1985, p. 42) and quickly acquired business lost by rebel ports ensuring colonial wartime enemies.

With the Revolutionary War, the city abandoned its heritage as a "loyal and law abiding seaport" (Sieg, 1985, p. 45). Surrounded "with British armies massing to the south, unpredictable

Creeks to the west and Charlestownians to the north threatening to 'cut some throats'" (Sieg, 1985, p. 45) citizens defensively sunk ships around the naturally low depth area of Fig Island. Although this move provided a suitable defense, "these obstructions greatly increased future problems of navigation by providing a nucleus for more rapid shoaling" (Granger, 1968, p. 8), plaguing all future river engineers. This defense could not withstand the force of the British Army who successfully took the city on December 29, 1778. As troops left Savannah in 1782, the town was starving and empty because it was cut off from its major revenue source during the war.

In the following years a number of events threatened the emerging link between the city and the port. First, with the occupation of Savannah during the Revolutionary War, much of the population shifted to the interior of the state and then remained in the countryside to begin a new agricultural life. Cotton became the crop of choice and world demand for it was great. Eli Whitney produced the famed Cotton Gin while on a plantation near Savannah in 1793. In one year, this invention increased the production of cotton from "five to eight million pounds" (Sieg, 1985, p. 53). In five years, production increased to thirty-five million pounds. Rather than turn inward to focus on agricultural development, Savannah business owners quickly created an infrastructure to support the trade of cotton (Harden, 1913/1969). Faster ships were designed such as the *S.S. Savannah*, the first steam-powered vessel to cross the Atlantic (GPA, 1994). An area of the city devoted to the storage and exchange of cotton called Factor's Walk emerged. In addition, roads and canals were built to funnel cotton to the port for shipment. "Steamboat lines" were developed to carry goods between Savannah and Charleston, Augusta, other Northern and European ports (Harden, 1913/1969). Such lines brought Savannah into "its golden age which lasted until the fatal eighteen-sixties" (FWP, 1937, p. 31). In essence, rather than allowing its identity to be reformulated as a primarily agricultural town, increases in crop growth became the impetus for further trade development. In turn, Savannah became "a regional trade center and port for an agricultural society" (Fisher, 1976, p. 2). Exports of $14 million transformed it into "King

Cotton Port of the World" and the "sixteenth-largest city in the young nation" (GPA, 1994, p. 2) by 1819.

Second, in 1820, the port introduced an element that threatened its central position in the identity of the city. In September, yellow fever arrived on a ship from the West Indies. According to Sieg, "in a few days the fever had spread through the city with worse effect than fire" (1985, p. 57). Seven hundred died in the first month and, through death and desertion ultimately reduced the city of 7,000 by 6,000. Despite the fact that the channels of trade brought a massive plague to the city, commerce continued. According to Debolt (1976), the city record of the following year "bravely read, 'exports $6,032,862; imports $865,146" (p. 27). In fact trade almost recovered completely by 1825 (Harden, 1913/1969). Because of the central importance of trade, citizens opted not to protect themselves through limiting or altering commerce. As a result, yellow fever returned to Savannah in 1854 and again in 1876 killing over 1,000 each time.

Third, in light of past displays of military strategy, some began to articulate Savannah's potential as a strategic military port. Citizens demonstrated strategic use of the port during the Revolutionary War as they sunk timber cribs in a narrow portion of the river in order to create defensive barrier against intrusion. The creation of two forts- Fort Jackson on Hutchinson Island and another fortification on Tybee Island during a potential war with Britain in the mid nineteenth century also demonstrated the port's military potential. A third fort, Pulaski, was constructed a few years later. In the War Between the States, the harbor again proved its suitability for military strategy as Confederate generals blocked the channel with ships and timber cribs to prevent Union ships from approaching the city. However, as Fort Pulaski quickly crumbled to the ground and the river blockade folded under forceful northern troops, the port failed to demonstrate potential as a strategic military base. More concerned with increasing commerce and wealth, the city's leaders focused on development rather than on security against a military attack.

As early as 1837, it was routine to dredge the river channel to maintain adequate depths. In 1852, the Corps of Engineers, a group with "special duties by the President in the field of

navigation and road building" (Granger, 1968, p. 16), approached Congress with a proposal to improve the Savannah Harbor. The commerce clause of the constitution gave the Corps responsibility for developing navigable waters (GPA, 1998a, p. 14). However, local and state groups held responsibility for the construction of facilities to load or unload cargo. Corps representatives presented "a detailed study of means of transportation into the port for foreign and coastwide trans-shipment together with the supporting export and import figures for 1849-1852" (Granger, 1968, p. 26) to demonstrate that Savannah was an essential trade center with many advantages over better established ports such as Charleston (Harden, 1913/ 1969). This appeal resulted in closing the Fig Island channel to increase depth in the Front River, dredging of the obstruction area to eleven feet, and removing both a grassy area near Tybee Island called the Knoll and other various remnants of Revolutionary War blockades. By 1855, Savannah harbor had a channel from the sea to the city "that allowed vessels drawing 17 ½ feet to reach the city on favorable winds and tides" (Granger, 1968, p. 34). In light of these improvements, one ship captain "pronounced 'the outlet of the Savannah River better than that of any harbor south of Norfolk'" (Harden, 1913/ 1969, p. 424). These attempts were fairly futile however since blockades during the Civil War reduced channel depth from 17 ½ to 13 ½ feet.

Improvement efforts continued after the Civil War. With "Three-fourths of the wealth of the state" (Debolt, 1976, p. 83) gone, Savannah struggled to re-establish its prosperous port. It began with a city-sponsored effort to clear and deepen the channel in 1864. However, years of sunken ships and other items in the river increased shoaling and altered its course. Recognizing the limitations of city sponsored improvements, Congress granted Savannah $50,000 in 1872. With this move, "the U.S. Engineer Department again formally assumed charge of the river work" (Granger, 1968, p. 39). By discarding the old barriers, constructing dams, deepening the river from fourteen to twenty-two feet and shifting the channel of entry from the North to the South River, Savannah hoped to "become a truly international city, connected to the world by land, sea and telephone" (Sieg, 1985, p. 81). In fact, by the final quarter of the nineteenth century

Savannah had re-established itself as the leading cotton export port in the country. In 1898, "more than 1,192,038 bales of cotton were shipped" (Debolt, 1976, p. 83) from Savannah. Economic achievement produced an increasing demand for greater channel depths. In response to local pressure, Congress passed the Rivers and Harbor Act in 1886, which provided for another survey of the Savannah River with the possibility of deepening to 28 feet. By 1913, the port was ranked fourth in export values among all ports in the United States and second among the ports of the Atlantic Coast (Harden, 1913/1969). Sixty-two percent of the world supply of cotton moved across Savannah and it also "ranked as the number one naval stores port of the world" (Fisher, 1979, p. 7). Savannah's harbor was so prosperous that "not even Boston or Philadelphia could boast Savannah's 200 million dollar shipping income" (Sieg, 1985, p. 83). Internationally, it had a reputation as an important neutral trading market equipped with modern facilities (Debolt, 1976).

Trade continued at record high levels throughout the First World War. Port "business was good as great ships of war steamed in and out of the little harbor" (Sieg, 1985, p. 93). The fact that port activity caused "Savannah's commercial wheel [to] whirl . . . at a new and dizzier speed" (FWP, 1937, p. 33), demonstrated the close link between the port and Savannah's economic prosperity. To allow for greater efficiency, the "river channel was deepened, and several new wharves were under construction by the end of 1917" (Debolt, 1976, p. 104).

Following World War I, Savannah lost its primary commodity as the boll weevil destroyed much of Georgia's cotton crop and the world market plummeted. As a result, shipping numbers fell drastically. In 1929, "Custom House receipts showed that shipping was down by fifty percent" (Debolt, 1976, p. 105). Because Savannah was dependent on trade for economic prosperity, the city "watched its once burgeoning riverfront slowly deteriorate, its little palaces gradually decay, and its most important citizens move away to fashionable, newer dwellings" (Sieg, 1985, p. 97). As primarily "a port city," Savannah could not rely on revenues from industrialization during the ensuing depression, as did many cities to the North. Savannah's port

ranking quickly sunk to “a point of almost insignificance” (Fisher, 1979, p. 9). During this time, “it is as though the South was in an economic quagmire—knowing it had to take a giant step, but not truly able—wanting to and not wanting to” (p. 9). On the eve of WWII, “there was perhaps no more than slight diversification of commodity flow . . . and foreign trade almost disappeared” (p. 9).

As violence in Europe erupted, Savannah’s port began to display the rapid industrialization that only a war could bring. Due to the centrality of the port in city life, only manufacturing which reflected the port function of Savannah developed (Fisher, 1976). Factories sprung up along the harbor with “vast billows of smoke clouding the gray tops of ancient oaks [and] . . . odors of oil, turpentine and fertilizer permeat[ing] the atmosphere” (FWP, 1937, p. 28). Rather than appearing as unsightly scars on a pristine landscape these elements were celebrated as signs of the “wealth of the city” (p. 28). Prosperity remained following WWII. Savannah “found itself a vital part of the Marshall Plan to relieve hunger in Europe as horses, cattle, seed, and farm machinery traveled from its port to devastated areas” (Debolt, 1976, p. 181). According to Sieg (1985), unparalleled growth in international trade “turned Savannah from a sleepy, traditional, back-ward looking town on a muddy river into a full-fledged, twentieth-century American city” (p. 107). The state of Georgia acted to sustain post-war prosperity by joining with the U.S. Engineers to establish the Georgia Ports Authority in 1945 “hardly a mile upstream from the old city hall” (Sieg, 1985, p. 119). The purpose of the Authority- the “development and expansion of shipping and commerce through the harbors and seaports of the state” (Cox, 2000, p. 1), clearly reflected the economic importance of the port. The Authority was a “financially self-sufficient” entity, paying “all variable expenses of operation and repay[ing] principal and interest loans with revenue generated from fees assessed for the use of facilities for services rendered” (GPA, 1998a, p. 18). A few years later, the GPA and the Corps again deepened the harbor to 38 feet in an effort to “accommodate the bigger ships exporting pulp, paper, paperboard and other products produced by the sprawling paper mills that had sprung up along the coast” (Seabrook, 1998, p. 1B).

In 1948, the Authority bought a “407 acre tract [with] 5.41 miles of warehouses and . . . wooden docks” (GPA, 1994, p. 5) from the Army and in 1952, dedicated a six million dollar Savannah State Port. This dock would host the world’s first merchant ship powered by an atomic reactor ten years later (Debolt, 1976). By 1955, the Authority outgrew the Garden City facility with “four general cargo berths, two 35-ton gantry cranes, three transit sheds and one tanker berth” (GPA, 1994, p. 5). In turn, the GPA “acquired property three miles downstream, on the western end of Savannah's city limits" (GPA, 1994, p. 5), in order to build more facilities. The GPA tore down the dilapidated Ocean Steamship Terminals that existed on 87 acres of waterfront property, built three new berths, added a transit shed and made one of the slips larger.

The Authority continued to grow and develop gradually until the city experienced a downward trend in population, employment and personal income in the early nineteen sixties. Since the port was central to the city, officials saw its development as a way to make the economy prosperous again. They expressed hope that the Savannah harbor would become the “great port gateway to the Southeast” (Smith, 1965, p. 5B). In pursuit of this end, the city sold the Whitehall plantation of Eli Whitney fame bordering the Garden City Terminal to the GPA in 1959. The GPA quickly covered the historically valuable site with new storage facilities (GPA, 1994). The city also supported the GPA’s efforts to capture new “super vessel” containerized traffic (Ports will compete, 1968, p. 5B). Containers were boxes measuring 20 feet by 20 feet, which were stacked on ships and then placed conveniently on the backs of trucks or railcars for land transport. According to a United Nations report, this concept revolutionized shipping logistics (GPA, 1994). Although about 50 percent of Savannah’s trade consisted of petroleum shipped in bulk form, the GPA began aggressively pursuing container traffic in 1967 with an advertisement “promoting its ability to handle containers up to 30 tons in weight” (GPA, 1994, p. 7).

While Savannah and the port pushed for further expansion and development, environmental problems brewing for years came to a head in the early nineteen seventies. At this

time, port water from the Savannah River began to show signs of contamination. Traveling downstream 160 miles from Augusta, a city that "chronically refused to treat their wastes" (Fallows, 1971, p. 8), the water was heavily tainted with mercury and other elements. Flowing through Savannah, human and industrial wastes were added to the mix. As a result, "the once clear waters were . . . reddened with wasted land while generations of residents regularly added their own waste with aqueous disaster through the ducts of an antiquated sewer system that emptied directly into the river near city hall" (Sieg, 1985, p. 113). In the summer heat, "the water in front of city hall often boiled, as pockets of hydrogen sulfide and methane gas rose from the river bed" (Fancher, 1976, p. 104). For years commercial fishermen in this area, formerly known for its excellent fishing, could not sell their catches (Fallows, 1971). In addition, the once abundant oyster beds had been closed for over twenty years. In fact, this water was so contaminated that it often "seared the skin of small children" (Fallows, 1971, p. 8) playing by its side.

The constant stench that arose from the polluted waters appeared natural to Savannah natives, however. Savannahians "downplayed their *Savannah perfume* with a shrug and a smile" (Russell & Hines, 1992, p. 175). Blinded by port prosperity, they merely commented, "*Don't worry. It's just the smell of money*" (p. 175). At the same time, "ship captains joked that they anchored in port to poison off their barnacles" (p. 175). The smell of money allowed the local community to remain unmotivated until a report released by Ralph Nadar and his investigative team revealed "the raw wound of the river in the lovely facade of Savannah" (Fancher, 1976, p. 103) in 1971. The group first chastised city officials for releasing 16 million gallons of human waste from the city's 135,000 inhabitants daily into the river. Although throughout the "early 1960's, the county grand jury, city study groups and even the U.S. Public Health Service reported that the city had to do something about its raw sewage" (Fallows, 1971, p. 28), Savannah officials did not have a comprehensive plan until 1965. However political and technical problems caused the project to be delayed until 1972. Nadar also criticized the city for allowing 100 million

gallons of industrial pollution daily into the river primarily at the hands of Union Camp paper company as well as the American Cyanamid factory (Fancher, 1976). According to the research group, the major problem with Savannah's pollution was that it was oxygen consuming. This meant that although much of the wastes were "not toxic themselves, [they] use up the dissolved oxygen in the water as they decompose" (Fallows, 1971, p. 9) killing fish and other marine life. Local environmental groups such as the Georgia Conservancy and the Sierra Club used this report to gain strict regulations on local industry and the protection of natural marshes (Fancher, 1976).

Both the city and industry were forced to respond. Savannah water works installed a six-million-dollar sewage-treatment facility and Union Camp completed a 39-million-dollar network of air pollution controls and constructed a 200-acre aeration lagoon to treat 33 million gallons of waste-water per day. According to Fancher by the mid nineteen-seventies, "Savannah's waters show[ed] the result" (1976, p. 107) of such efforts.

Although city agencies and industry felt the blow of Nadar's criticism, the GPA and the port went unnamed in his report. Port facilities continued to expand and secure new business throughout the controversy. In 1972, the Georgia Ports Authority opened a new nine million dollar bulk handling facility and a five million dollar container facility "with the largest and fastest container crane in the United States" (Debolt, 1976, p. 185). In May of this year, new service by Seatrains Lines container ship, Visurgis, forged the path for other container ship lines to make Savannah a regular port of call (GPA, 1994). In 1975, the GPA joined forced with the Corps of Engineers for the construction of the Back River Tide Gate. The gate, which was opened with the incoming tide and closed with the outgoing tide worked to "prevent the buildup of silt and reduce the need for dredging" (Seabrook, 1998, p. 1B) by saving water and then forcing it into the main channel. This "605-foot-long" feat of engineering was considered a revolutionary method to ease the age long problem of a shallow shipping channel (p. 1B). Such developments enabled the GPA to capitalize on the industrialization sweeping through the south (Jackson, 1981a, p. 6) making it the "largest deep water facility in the South Atlantic, with a volume of

shipping handled of more than ten million tons annually" (Debolt, 1976, p. 185) by 1976. As the "biggest single point of the Savannah economy" (1976 promises to be, 1976, p. 5) the vitality of the port countered a national recession to fuel the economic health of the city (Fisher, 1979). In this sense the port maintained its "dominant role in the economic life of the city" (Jackson, 1981a, p. 6) shadowing the impacts of retail trade and manufacturing the second and third points of Savannah's five part economy (1976 promises to be, 1976, p. 5).

Since port improvements facilitated economic prosperity, such efforts were interpreted as the nostalgic extensions of history. The historian Malcolm Bell captured this sentiment with the following narrative. In 1977, he wrote that "Savannahians and . . . visitors can view a city that holds firmly to its past. The great river, although deepened and directed by the Corps of Engineers, still swings close by the city in a sweeping curve . . . Today massive cargo vessels have replaced the handsome sailing ships that once filled the harbor. Their superstructures rise high above the five-storied buildings along the bay just as did the masts of sailing ships in the days gone by" (p. 15). In this sense, port development efforts fit with the narrative of Savannah's history. In turn, the potential environmental impacts of port activities were often considered secondary (Kreuzwieser, 1995). For example, when an oil tanker docked at the GPA facilities leaked 1,000 gallons of oil in to the harbor in 1978, head of clean-up operations Coast Guard commander Jerry Carlton lamented the loss of income the accident caused. Carlton responded, "I don't like having to interfere with port operations . . . after all, money has to be made" (Smith, 1978a, p. 1B). Although "some oil" traveled as far as the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge and "soiled marsh grass" concern was delegitimized since it "did not amount to major damage" (Smith, 1978b, p. 1B). In addition, when an EPA ship entered the harbor to test the effects of dumping dredged material in the ocean in November of 1979, The Savannah Morning News mentioned it only once in a back page story (EPA Vessel Due here on Sat, 1979, p. 12D). However the best example of the disregard of port impacts on the environment was the issue of saltwater infiltration into the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge.

The Savannah National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1927 in order "to preserve, restore and enhance in their natural ecosystems (when practicable) all species of animals and plants that are endangered or threatened" (United States Fish and Wildlife Service [FWS], 2001, p. 2). As "one of the most important wildlife preserves on the east coast" it contained "26,349 acres of freshwater marshes, bottom land hardwoods, tidal rivers and fields of wild rice . . . [and] a tremendous array of wildlife- bald eagles, alligators, 21 species of warblers and other migrating birds, and a variety of ducks including the rarely seen cinnamon teal and Eurasian widgeon" (SELC, 2000, p. 1). Positioned approximately eighteen miles inland on the Back River, repeated harbor engineering efforts by the Corps and the Ports Authority flushed saltwater into its freshwater marshes. As early as 1980, FWS voiced concern that the Back River Tide Gate was backing up tidal water into the refuge converting "some 3,000 acres from freshwater to saltwater habitat" (Lowry, 1980b, p. 1B) and killing thousands of freshwater species. An annual port growth rate of 21 percent despite "the downward turn in the national economy and the runaway inflation rate" (Lowry, 1980a, p. 4SS) allowed the GPA to ignore the issue. Responsibility for the project construction required the Corps to respond however. Initially the Corps' representatives simply blamed the Fish and Wildlife Service. One official stated, "once we turn over the project to Fish and Wildlife, as we have with the refuge, there is not much we can do to help them out . . . We don't know whether it was poorly constructed or a lack of maintenance on their part" (Lowry, 1980b, p. 1B). The Corps continued to deny responsibility even when a study concluded that water control gates designed to flush saltwater from the compound were not working properly in 1981, arguing that Fish and Wildlife specifications had directed the construction (Lowry, 1981, p. 1D). Although very concerned, internal problems such as lack of support on the federal level and "lack of adequate manpower and resources" (Morris, 1983, p. 1E) on the local level, kept the Fish and Wildlife Service from engaging in a full scale battle with the Corps at this time.

Setting aside this controversy, the Savannah port sailed through the early 1980's as "the leading international commerce port on the South Atlantic" (Lowry, 1980a, p. 4SS). In 1981, the

port was “the biggest employment game in town” as the “area’s number one contributor to the ‘green’ in the local economy” (Jackson, 1981b, p. 10A). Such prosperity gained the full support of local politicians. In 1980, Governor George Busbee broke his self-imposed moratorium on state bonds to include a “$24.9 million authorization for bonding to construct an additional container facility and a new administration building for the Georgia Ports Authority in Garden City” in the 1981Georgia budget (Riley seeks quick port, 1980, p. 1A). Arguing for the “need to continue to expand our port facilities [because] they make money for us” (Neal, 1981, p. 1A), he also appealed to the Georgia Assembly for support of the GPA’s five year development plan. This plan involved consolidating break-bulk cargo (items such as wood) and bulk (items such as grain, sugar and oil) shipments at Ocean Terminal by adding two new covered berths and a warehouse. At Garden City, the new administration building and container storage facilities would be complemented by a new berth and two container cranes, transforming it into the main dock for containerized cargo. Such support displayed the central importance of the port in the identity of Savannah.

Consolidation efforts proved fruitful as the port kept Savannah’s economy healthy through the early 1980s (Green, 1982). A new contract with U.S. Lines, “one of the world’s busiest shipping companies” (Kreuzwieser, 1985a, p. 8SS) propelled Savannah to the number one position in the South Atlantic in 1985. In this year, “a record 2.25 million tons of containerized cargo [and] . . . 1.8 million tons” of noncontainerized cargo moved through the port (Sieg, 1985, p. 169). In light of such figures, the improper importation of potential fatal azinphos methyl and the illegal shipment of DDT and the subsequent storage of both materials at the GPA warehouses were simply overlooked by environmental agency officials and environmental groups (Kreuzwieser, 1985b, p. 1A). Savannah’s top status was short-lived however. In 1986, the port’s “largest steamship line, U.S. Lines, went out of business, almost overnight robbing the South Atlantic’s star port of more than a third of its cargo” (Wooton, 1996, p. 1E). This carrier left the Port Authority with a massive $2 million dollars debt. Its demise produced a ripple effect

prompting “other steamship lines to shift their service to Charleston, S.C., Savannah’s nemesis to the north” (Wooton, 1996, p. 1E). Watching the port and therefore the city slide down an economic spiral, the GPA officials spent the remainder of the eighties struggling to pull themselves out of debt and swore to never be in a similar position again.

With the GPA’s economic power base reduced, environmental issues began emerging once again. In 1987, Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division [EPD] came forward and identified Chatham County as “Georgia’s top releaser of toxins”(Krueger, 1998c, p. 1). Efforts to clean up Savannah’s county focused on identifying specific toxin release levels. Since shipment byproducts such as the gypsum dust that flew from transport trucks were not considered toxins, activities at the port remained unhampered as paper producer Union Camp struggled to reduce methanol levels (Krueger, 1998c, p. 1). Although the port was not the prime object of this attack, it was the main entity for questioning by the Fish and Wildlife Service in October of 1989. At this time, the FWS revealed a study concluding that the Back River tide gate did without question facilitate massive amounts of saltwater to filter into the Savannah Wildlife Refuge. At the same time, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources [DNR] revealed the finding that the tide gate reduced the traditional spawning grounds of the striped bass population by 50 percent (Conflict history, 1998, p. 1). These studies gave the Fish and Wildlife Service the proof they needed to confront the GPA and the Corps. Unsupported by a secure economic foundation, the agencies could no longer deny the FWS's requests. The Corps decided to conduct a series of studies regarding the impact of the tide gate on water quality and to discontinue the maintenance dredging that potentially exacerbated the problem. They also recommended postponing discussion on a deepening project under debate early in 1990. Although finally the direct target of environmental concern, the GPA’s required compensation paled in comparison to that demanded from the city and industry for environmental damage a decade earlier.

Environmental concerns seemed to fade again as the port “continued to climb out of the deep hole” financially in the beginning of the nineteen-nineties (Georgia ports report, 1990, p.

1B). By now, the Garden City terminal was considered “one of the largest facilities of its kind on the east coast of the United States” with six berths solely dedicated to container transport and nine container cranes “served by on-dock rail capability and quick intermodal access to all inland points via rail and two major U.S. interstate superhighways” (Port of Savannah,1991, p. 1). Intermodal access was the process of moving containerized cargo directly from ship to train or truck to destination. The Ocean City terminal also offered ten general cargo berths and four breakbulk cranes with 45 to 160 ton capacities (Georgia ports eye, 1992, 10). Such facilities attracted container shipments. Container volumes grew 9% in both 1990 (Georgia ports report, 1990, p. 1E) and 1991 (Georgia Ports Authority applies, 1991, p. 1). With the expansion of trade in Latin America, the Caribbean, South Africa, Northern Europe and the Far East (Latin American traffic, 1992) container volume increased 12% (Ports round up, 1992) in 1992.

Increased traffic caused economic prosperity. At this time, the port employed almost one-fifth of Savannah’s residents and produced “approximately $189 million of state and local tax revenue, $200 million in federal customs revenue” (Georgia Ports Authority applies, 1991, p. 1). Such a large impact dwarfed the $84 million dollar contribution made by all local manufacturers (United States Department of Commerce Economics and Statistical Administration, 1990). The return of economic profit in the face of a local and national recession enabled the Authority to promote a number of improvements for “faster, safer navigation” (Dunlap, 1990, p. 1B). City officials languishing over Savannah’s faltering economic growth, threw their support behind port development (Applebome, 1989, p. A16). In 1992, the GPA presented a three-phase port development plan entitled Focus 2000 to the Georgia Legislature. The Authority argued that such improvements were vital in order for Savannah to maintain rising profit levels (Dunlap, 1992). Phase one consisted of replacing the Eugene Talmadge Memorial Bridge as well as upgrading the capabilities of six of the nine container cranes at Garden City (Dunlap, 1992) and adding two container berths at Garden City and one at Ocean Terminal (Glass, 1992). GPA argued that the bridge created a shipping obstacle with a clearance height of only 136 feet at mean low water.

Over the years, a number of ships hit its sides and many shipping lines actually avoided Savannah because of it (Dunlap, 1991). GPA's argument proved effective and the bridge was replaced in March of 1991 with a "$70 million dollar" cable-stayed suspension bridge complete with an unrestricted clearance of 185 feet (Savannah's Talmadge, 1991, p. 1). Reinforcing the connection between the port and the city, Ports Authority representatives praised the new bridge as a symbol of "Savannah and Georgia's expanding role in international trade" (Savannah's Talmadge, 1991, p. 1) since it could accommodate 98 percent of the world's ships. Since the port was bringing in record numbers, "while Georgians squabbled endlessly over what to name the span . . . they quibbled little about the need for the bridge" (Wooten, 1996, p. 1E). Also completed in 1991was phase two which involved widening the river 100 feet from Fig Island Turning basin to the Ports Authority's Garden City Terminal (Dunlap, 1991). The Corps recommended the project in 1976 and Congress appropriated it in 1986. Political disagreement over the national need for harbor improvement projects had delayed its realization.

The Authority's goal in retrospectively consolidating past completed projects under a future plan was ultimately their need to push through phase three, the deepening project suggested by the Corps in 1989 but suspended in 1990 due to environmental concerns. Beginning in 1991, the Authority employed a variety of efforts aimed at "speeding up the Savannah channel deepening project" (Georgia Ports Authority applies, 1991, p. 2). First, the board allotted $65,000 for a study to determine impacts of deepening 42 feet rather than the 40 feet being investigated at the same time in a Corps study (Dunlap, 1990). With the results of this research, the GPA convinced the Corps to alter the recommended depth of their own study to 42 feet (Conflict history, 1998, p. 2). While waiting for Federal Authorization in September 1991 the Authority petitioned the Corps for a 404 environmental permit to allow the project to move ahead with the aid of state funding (Georgia Ports Authority applies, 1991). With this approval granted, the Authority was able to secure state funding for their "prime project" (Dunlap, 1990, p. 1B). Governor Zell Miller issued $350 million dollars in state bonds for the Focus 2000 project in April of 1992 despite strapped

state funds (Dunlap, 1992). Congress ultimately authorized the project in November 1992, ensuring the state would be reimbursed for up to 75% of project costs (Georgia has high hopes, 1992).

The economic centrality of the port was demonstrated once again by the fact that the GPA was able to enact the project despite environmental concerns. The Fish and Wildlife Service maintained its concern over the impact of the tide gate on the Refuge and the striped bass population. When the Corps released its Environmental Impact Statement on deepening in 1992, FWS joined with the Coastal Heritage Society in arguing that further deepening would exacerbate this problem (Conflict history, 1998). Rather than suspend deepening again, the Corps simply decided "to permanently idle the tide gates and fill in the new cut canal" (Conflict history, 1998, p. 2). They also stocked striped bass in the river in the hopes of establishing a new population. As a result of these efforts, the agencies dropped the issue.

As deepening got underway in 1993, the GPA and the Corps of Engineers further appeased local environmental concern by offering dredged material as replenishment for Tybee beach. Tybee Island was a barrier island located near Savannah's port entrance. The home of Savannah's only beach, Tybee was a source of great livelihood for many of Savannah's citizens (Coffey, 1994, p. 202). Tybee consisted of a "wide expanse of accumulated sediment and sand" (Kreuzwieser, 1995, p. 31). This composition made the shape of beaches change "constantly from hour to hour, season to season, and year to year, depending on sediment drift and the size and speed of waves" (p. 31). Normally, islands of this type were "self-balancing . . . proceed[ing] through seasonal cycles of growth and destruction changing only gradually over long periods of time" (p. 31). However, over the years, navigational changes in the harbor "starv[ed] Tybee of its organic sand renourishment" (p. 35). To protect the dredged river channel from the accumulation of sand and sediment, jetties had been built, diverting and trapping sand that would usually replenish the beach. To mitigate against such unnatural erosion the GPA and the Corps used the sand resulting from deepening to replenish the north end of the beach. However, it "turned out to

be not as much as they thought it would be, and it was no good . . . It was too fine and it [would not] stay on the beach" (p. 35), leaving residents dissatisfied with the effort.

As the project continued, the release of findings from a Price Waterhouse on Corps' procedures foreshadowed further problems. The study concluded that flaws in the cost/benefit process used by the Corps to assess harbor-deepening projects led to faulty projections and conclusions (Dunlap, 1993a, p. 8B). This finding intimated that the chosen depth for the Savannah channel may not have been the best choice given conditions and projections.

The GPA disregarded the study and pursued development as they experienced "the fifth consecutive year" (Georgia cargoes hit, 1993, p. 10) of revenue increases in 1993 (Dunlap, 1993d). Prosperity also enabled the GPA to influence the types of industries that developed throughout this decade. Industries that provided international tradable commodities such as paper flourished while high tech companies faltered (DeWitte, 1998). This economic power perpetuated the GPA's "lock . . . on the statehouse" (Wooton, 1996, p. 1E). In May, the legislature left the $38 million dollars allotted by Zell Miller for GPA's Focus 2000 project untouched in a budget from which they slashed $1.9 billion (Dunlap, 1993c, p. 1B). This lock was further demonstrated in 1994 as state lawmakers amended the tax code to resist an impending port sales and use tax threatened by the revenue department. Concerned the tax would "have diverted cargo to Charleston, S.C., and Jacksonville, Fla" (Mitchell, 1994, p. 2B), Zell Miller signed the amendment in March. An ardent supporter of port projects, Miller continually commented that "we [Georgia] depend on exports, we depend on trade" (quoted in Salzer, 1998, p. 1).

Harbor deepening was completed in April of 1994. In this year, the port produced "a net economic impact of $7 billion, creating 63,000 jobs and generating $200 million in state and local taxes" (Mitchell, 1994, p. B2). In comparison, International Paper, formerly Union Camp, one of Savannah's largest manufacturing companies was responsible for only $500,000 in local economic impact with shipments through the port contributing much to this total (DeWitte, 1998). Such figures gave the port an unmatched impact on the local economy (Editorial: Project

should proceed, 1998). However, in the next few years, new trends in the shipping industry emerged. As a result, officials urged continued development (Eighth year of growth, 1995, p. 6). Ultimately, these trends which surfaced in the mid-nineties, would develop to form the Port's economic justification for further deepening. First, although Savannah continued to grow, the US economy was stable and international trade in general was expanding at unprecedented rates. In effect, all South Atlantic ports demonstrated similar growth, creating "brutal competition" (Wooten, 1996, p. 1E) between ports. In response, ports such as Jacksonville, Charleston and Savannah worked to "accommodate what the carriers" (Wastler, 1995, p. 1A) did in order to gain the competitive edge. Savannah's main rival, Charleston was working toward such accommodation with a major development project. This project involved the addition of "1373 ft of berthing space, 65 acres of container yard, 440 refrigerated container slots and two UK built post-panamax container cranes" (Glass & McLaughlin, 1993, p. 8). Ships were named post-panamax when they were too big to fit through the canal.

Second, what shipping companies wanted was changing. With the increase of international trade, carriers were using larger container ships with capacities of over "4,000 20-foot containers" (Wastler, 1995, p. 1A). In 1995 alone, "more than 60 container ships [were] scheduled to come into service" (p. 1A). Since many of these ships needed 46 feet to navigate safely, the GPA began to express "wonder about the adequacy of their facilities" (p. 1A). Specifically, the GPA officials considered the "need for a channel capacity greater than that provided by the existing 42-foot channel"(GPA,1999, p. 1). Finally, larger ships enabled carriers to consolidate many of their shipping runs. The same amount of cargo could travel to one port on one ship rather than three ports on three ships. However, once the ship arrived in port, it then required sophisticated systems of rail and road transport to send goods to their destination. Such systems were not nearly as important in the past because more ships meant each could be targeted to a port close to the cargoes' final destination. In 1996, experts predicted that only three such shipping centers or "intermodal" facilities would emerge among the South Atlantic ports.

Determined to be one of the three, the GPA made a series of moves to demonstrate that their "maritime community [was] committed to superior customer service" (Ports report, 1996, p. 8). First, the GPA expanded trade with South Africa, Mexico and South America and added many new shipping lines. To address the move toward intermodal transport, the GPA initiated a study to determine the feasibility "of building an intermodal container transfer yard across the street from the port authority administration building . . . at its Garden City Terminal" (Dunlap, 1993b, p. 15C) in April of 1994. As a result of this study, the GPA planned to open "the only one of its kind on the U.S. East Coast" in the spring of 2001 (GPA, 1999, p. 1). To meet the demand for container capabilities, the authority added two more container cranes at the Garden Terminal for a total of eleven, nine of which were of post-Panamax capacity with future plans to acquire two more. The new cranes had smaller bases than those in the past, "allowing more cranes to work a single vessel which speeds up the loading and the unloading of vessels" (GPA, 1994, p. 14). In 1996, the Garden City Terminal introduced a "new container processing system designed to avoid the inefficiencies and delays that . . . dogged a number of rival east coast terminals" (Ports report, 1996, p. 8), by installing a generic container interchange system to more efficiently process traffic in and out of the port. Officials also began to consider possibly expanding rail operations to seven days a week and extending the hours of operation for road haulers. Finally, the GPA began constructing another $57 million berth at Garden City adding 1,200 ft of water frontage and 147 acres of container handling and storage space in 1996 (Wooten, 1996).

Despite these changes, harbor officials were concerned about the future. They cited a study by Ocean Steamships Consultants in London concluding that world trade was going to double between the years 1990 and 2005 and that 95 percent of this trade would be ocean borne. Officials reasoned that the port "would lose millions of dollars in business unless it was accessible for larger vessels" (Georgia in brief, 1996, p. 2E). A Reconnaissance Study performed by the Savannah district of the Corps to determine if "certain vessels calling the Port of Savannah were incurring significant transportation costs related to insufficient channel depth"

(GPA, 2000, p. 1) in July 1996 confirmed the GPA's assessment. This report concluded that "over 40 percent of the containership calls in 1995 were greater than the existing channel design draft" and that "virtually all, 99.6 percent, of these trips were made with vessels light-loaded due to channel constraints" (GPA, 2000, p. 1). The GPA officials feared that shipping companies would turn to other ports since the cost of visiting Savannah outweighed the benefit. The study also predicted that the annual benefit of deepening the channel by two feet was $12,927,000. Arguing that failing to deepen would surely cost Savannah as much, the GPA pressured the Corps for further study. In turn, the Corps of Engineers recommended further study of the need for navigational improvements in the Savannah Harbor.

Projected earnings fell below expectations, with a mere 1.5 percent increase in total container, breakbulk and bulk tonnage despite the addition of 18 shipping firms offering new services, new destinations and increased ship call frequencies (Glass, 1996, p. 3). In turn, port officials began "aggressively pursuing a harbor deepening project" (Economic doors, 1998, p. 33). In August 1996, the GPA asked the Corps to consider dredging three more feet from the bottom of the Savannah River.

The Deepening Project of 1999

Eager to consider further deepening, the GPA took the opportunity to perform a project feasibility study granted by section 203 of the Water Resources Development Act [WRDA] of 1986 in March 1997 (GPA,1998a, p. 9). This section enabled community members to petition the Corps regarding a perceived water-resource related need and to then undertake the Feasibility Study work. Under this provision, the Corp of Engineers acted as an advisor, giving technical support, providing review of draft documents and working with the project sponsor to secure Federal authorization through the biennial Water Resources Development Act. Costs of the Feasibility Report (cost/benefit analysis and engineering feasibility) and Environmental Impact Study were to be split evenly between the project sponsor and the Corps of Engineers.

The GPA released its five million-dollar Tier I Draft Feasibility Study [FS] and Draft Tier I EIS in May of 1998. The purpose of the Tier I study was to answer the question "is there a feasible engineering solution to the depth problem in Savannah Harbor and is the benefit – cost ratio for this solution positive?" (GPA, 2000, p. 2). Specifically, the two "half-foot thick" (Krueger, 1998a, p. 2) Tier I documents determined the project's "economic feasibility and environmental acceptability as well as [its] engineering soundness" (GPA, 1998a, p. 14). The GPA figured economic feasibility through a National Economic Development [NED] analysis required as part of the study. This cost/benefit analysis determined which possible project alternative among no action, 44, 46, 48, and 50 feet would be the best use of Federal dollars. The GPA's Draft Feasibility Study identified 48 feet as the NED preferred alternative for the Savannah Harbor. Under Federal requirements however, given a compelling reason, a community could promote a different locally preferred plan. Despite the absence of a compelling reason, the GPA promoted a locally preferred plan of 50 feet in the inner harbor and 52 feet in the harbor entrance in the draft document (GPA, 1998a, p. 11). The GPA estimated the cost of the project to be about $228 million with an average annual cost of $17 million. The Authority also estimated $52 million annually in benefits resulting "in a benefit/ cost ration of 2.94 and approximately $35 million in net benefits (GPA, 1998a, p. 12).

The GPA deemed the project environmentally feasible by considering impacts against applicable Federal Laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act and other State and local environmental regulations such as Clean Water requirements. Through this analysis, the GPA "concluded that implementation of the Recommended Plan or any of the harbor expansion alternatives would have impacts to cultural resources and natural resources in the harbor and adjacent areas" (GPA, 1998a, p. 11). In order to ease cultural and environmental impacts of the project, the GPA included a general mitigation plan in the Tier I EIS. A more thorough investigation of impacts and a more complete mitigation plan were to follow in the Tier II EIS (GPA, 2000, p. 2).

Despite the GPA's emphasis on potential economic benefits, the document's release produced responses from nearly every impacted group (Krueger, 1998b). Federal resource agencies, environmental organizations, historical groups and industry engaged in lengthy and heated debates (Krueger, 1998a). In response to this unexpected controversy, the Corps of Engineers extended the traditional 30-day public comment period by two weeks (Editorial: Corps make proper, 1998). They received over one hundred comments. Many reflected the desire for community based decision-making following a more thorough study of costs and benefits (Editorial: Project should proceed, 1998). Next, the documents went under review by the FWS, the National Marine Fisheries Service [NMFS] and state wildlife resource agencies (GPA, 1998a). One agency recommended forming a stakeholder evaluation group in order to deal with what it saw as a variety of unresolved issues. These issues such as economic necessity and environmental impacts are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In light of the comments received from both public and agency review, the Georgia Ports Authority decided to moderate its "plan to deepen the harbor, opting for slightly less depth, agreeing to give state and federal environmental officials power over the project if certain concerns are not satisfied" (Editorial: Project should proceed, 1998, p. 1). The more temperate plan included reducing the dredging depth to 48 feet and forming a stakeholder group to act as the GPA's advisor for the environmental studies of the Tier II phase. The GPA framed this effort as a genuine attempt to understand community concerns and to address them (Editorial: High stakes deepening, 1998, p. 2). Although the Final FS/EIS was yet to be released and far from gaining the Corps approval required for appropriation, the GPA pushed for authorization at the Federal level in the Water Resources Development Act of 1998. By September, the Senate already approved its version of the Act, which included Federal Authorization of the project. However, the House remained stifled on a debate regarding a California flood control project also in the bill (Editorial: Raise anchor on ports bill, 1998, p. 1).

The GPA released the revised final Tier I FS/EIS in October of 1998. In the report, the Authority concluded that deepening was absolutely necessary to "address the known problems and deficiencies within Savannah Harbor and allow the harbor to efficiently and safely accommodate existing and projected vessel traffic" (GPA, 1998a, p. 105). With the project moving along, tension over issues of concern heightened.

The Many Issues of Deepening

Given the historical importance that port economics played in the identity of Savannah, it is fitting that the first issue to emerge surrounding the 1999 deepening was the question of economic necessity. The GPA asserted that trends in the shipping industry demanded deepening for growth to continue at record rates.

The GPA's argument began with the notion that shipping lines were increasingly using larger container ships rather than bulk or breakbulk transport. According to the GPA, Savannah's container volumes "increased over 200 percent" (GPA, 1998a, p. 48) in the previous thirteen years. The GPA also stated that container cargo in 1998 accounted for "84 percent of the port's total economic impact to the State and broader region" (GPA, 1998a, p. 34) in terms of job, wages, sales, revenue and state and local taxes. In this sense, containerized cargo generated "roughly five times the economic impacts provided by a ton of break-bulk cargo, such as paper products, and ten times the impacts provided by a ton of bulk products, such as grain" (GPA, 1998a, p. 35).

The GPA reasoned that since container ships were larger than conventional ships, they were often constrained in the Savannah harbor. For example, "in 1996, more than 52 percent of container ships serving the Port of Savannah were operationally constrained due to inadequate channel depth" (Krueger, 1998a, p. 5). Problems included maneuverability and time lost waiting for the appropriate tidal stage (GPA, 1998a, p. 38). According to the GPA, ships were continuing to get bigger. In 1998, fifteen of the super ships "135 feet wide and 1,043 feet long—longer than the Eiffel Tower is tall. . . [with] a draft of 47.5 feet but requir[ing] . . . drafts up to 52 feet"

(Seabrook, 1998, p. 1B) were in service. Ports officials cited predictions indicating ships of this size would become standard fare, increasing 400 percent to "almost 1,600 Post-Panamax vessels in the world fleet" (GPA, 1998a, p. 58) in twenty-five years. Given this situation, officials stated that "increased channel depths [were] necessary to accommodate the increasing drafts of these vessels" (GPA, 1998a, p. 9).

Larger ships also meant the increasing consolidation of trade routes. According to the GPA, industry analysts predicted consolidation of shipping routes would lead to the emergence of three mega hub ports on the Eastern Seaboard with all other ports becoming secondary feeder ports. With the Northeastern ports in New York and Virginia securing the first two positions, Savannah was "locked in a battle with Charleston, S.C. to be named the third" (Schmitt & Guidera, 1998, p. 1). Port officials argued that "dredging work" (Krueger, 1998a, p. 4) at the rival Charleston harbor put them in the lead. A 45 foot deep harbor could have enabled Charleston to secure the third spot by providing companies with hassle free transport while at the same time, guaranteeing them "significantly lower maritime transportation costs" (GPA, 1998a, p. 67). The GPA's executives reasoned that if this were to happen, Savannah would experience a drastic 50 percent decrease in revenue. Worse yet, as they watched their long-time rival experience unimagined profitability, Savannah would be relegated "to 'feeder' port status—a port where smaller ships call" (Editorial: Project should proceed, 1998, p. 1).

The Authority argued that due to these two trends, the harbor must be deepened in order for the port to have continued economic growth. Growth rates in the early nineteen-nineties had been tremendous. By 1997, the port handled a record total of 8,424,000 tons of containerized cargo, general cargo, and bulk cargo (GPA, 1998a, p. 17). The port "directly or indirectly support[ed] 80,100 jobs, [was] responsible for $1.8 billion in wages, generate[d] $23 billion in revenue and account[ed] for $585 million in state and local taxes annually" (Editorial: Project should proceed, 1998, p. 1). In turn, Savannah was "a major port on the East Coast of the United States . . . in the top tier of U.S. ports serving foreign trade" (GPA, 1998a, p. 53). The GPA

reasoned that “continued expansion of port related activity would stimulate growth” (p. 39) not only in port revenue but also in the entire Savannah area.

Although this argument was ultimately effective in winning the support of both Congressman Jack Kingston and local county businesses (Editorial: Politics and water, 1998), it faced strong opposition. On the other side of the issue, the Southern Environmental Law Center led opponents such as Coastal Environmental Organization [CEO] and the Nature Conservancy in arguing that the GPA was wrong: harbor deepening was not necessary for the port to maintain economic viability. Just as proponents grounded their argument of economic necessity in the FS/ EIS, opponents also based their rebuttal in the study.

Opponents’ argument began with the notion that the Ports Authority rushed the Feasibility Study / Environmental Impact Statement phase in order for the project to be eligible for Congressional appropriation under the WRDA of 1998. They cited the GPA’s statement that “a major study objective was to complete the final Feasibility Report in time to be eligible for authorization in the Water Resources Development Act of 1998” (GPA, 1998a, p. 41). According to opponents, this objective led to an “unusual ‘fast-track’ process, rushing to submit the proposal for congressional authorization before the benefits or environmental impacts could be sufficiently addressed” (Seabrook, 1998, p. 1b). Rushed procedures produced “environmental and economic feasibility studies thicker than an Atlanta residential phonebook and riddled with ‘serious flaws’” (p. 1b) in the project’s economic justification. SELC also argued that the SEG was merely an effort to disguise the inadequacy of the analyses.

One flaw identified by opponents was the basis of the GPA’s economic justification. According to fiscally concerned Taxpayers for Common Sense [TCS], the GPA mischaracterized the industry’s need for deep draft harbors. In actuality, the demand was fairly “limited” (TCS, 1999, p. 1). The SELC on behalf of The South Carolina Coastal Conservation League, the Coastal Environmental Organization of Georgia, the Coastal Georgia Center for Sustainable Development and the Georgia Wildlife Federation argued that the GPA’s prediction of industry growth rates

was also faulty. According to this group, the GPA ignored downward trends in both the shipping industry and the Asian economy, which would affect future growth rates. In turn, the GPA's growth projections "directly conflict[ed] with reality" (SELC, 1998b, p. 2).

Another flaw opponents identified was the GPA failure to consider the interplay between the Savannah project and other deepening projects. The SELC argued that according to Corps guidelines, economic assessment must consider 'the diversion from or to adjacent competitive harbors' . . . and any commonality that might exist" (SELC, 1998a, p. 2). But, the Savannah study did not compare "the likely effects on those harbors with the proposed Savannah Port deepening and without it, nor the effects on Savannah and its future development at those harbors" (SELC, 1998a, p. 4). Limiting the assessment to the Savannah region allowed the GPA to provide economic justification for the project and ignore "the fact that several subsidized harbors in the South Atlantic region [were] better positioned to service post-Panamax vessels calling on the region" (SELC, 1998a, p. 3). According to the SELC, each additional project reduced benefits, making consideration of the interaction between ports important (SELC, 1998a, p. 4). In this sense, the "interplay between all the ports and rail and road facilities of the South Atlantic region" (SELC, 1998a, p. 5) was a crucial element in determining the economic feasibility of the project.

Opponents concluded that reconsideration of the GPA's deepening economic assessment in light of these suggestions would reveal "that costs far outweigh benefits, even before necessary environmental mitigation costs are factored in" (TCS, 1999, p. 1). In this sense, deepening was not only not necessary economically, it was economically unnecessary.

With the increased articulation of environmental concern in prior decades by Federal and state wildlife agencies and environmental groups over navigational improvement efforts, it makes sense that this concern was the second issue to surface. Shortly after release of the Draft FS/EIS both the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Environmental Protection Agency were worried over impacts. They argued together with environmental groups such as the Nature Conservancy and the CEO, that the rushed nature of the study process produced an incomplete account of

potential impacts and an untested mitigation plan (SELC, 1998a). Generally they believed that "the environmental damage would outweigh the economic benefits" (Seabrook, 1998, p. 1b).

Specifically, environmental advocates expressed concern that drastic measures, such as the impulsive closure of the Middle River, would exacerbate past impacts such as "increased salinity and decreased dissolved oxygen in the river, causing catastrophic collapse of the striped bass fishery and the habitat available for the endangered shortnosed sturgeon, while also causing the loss of over half the tidal freshwater marsh which forms the centerpiece of the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge" (SELC, 1998a, p. 1). In turn, environmental discussion revolved around these specific issues- the Savannah Wildlife Refuge, shortnosed sturgeon, and striped bass.

Saltwater infiltration in the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge was the largest environmental concern. The Refuge lost approximately 2,800 acres over the years to navigational improvements (SELC, 2000). In turn, when GPA released its Environmental Impact Statement for the 1999 deepening project, recognition that the project would "damage more than 1,000 acres of freshwater wetlands on the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge" (Krueger, 1998a, p. 1), made the FWS react with fear and anger. Federal Wildlife biologist John Robinette asserted that deepening would produce "a disaster that cannot be reversed. It's kind of scary" (p.1).

In response to objections, the GPA confidently expressed the ability to control environmental damage (Krueger, 1998a, p. 2). Deputy Executive Director David Schaller stated that the EIS outlined "several ways saltwater intrusion can be minimized through engineering- everything from filling existing navigation cuts that straighten the river above the harbor to making other cuts to flush saltwater out of the system" (p. 2). The mitigation plan Schaller spoke of included purchase of 3,000 acres of freshwater wetlands while turning the 1,000 acres lost to saltwater intrusion into saltwater wetlands.

In response to this plan, the FWS representatives argued that the GPA would be unable to locate 3,000 acres in freshwater wetlands since "there is very little . . . available for purchase"

(Seabrook, 1998, p. 1B). This scarcity, in combination with the marshes' function as a stopping point for migrating birds made preservation imperative according to officials. In essence, opponents argued the damage could not be fixed, it "would be irreparable" (p. 1B).

Environmental advocates were also concerned that increases in salinity and reduction in dissolved oxygen, which complemented deepening activities, would further impact two struggling fish populations inhabiting the Savannah River. As discussed earlier, fish populations needed dissolved oxygen to live. The increased salinity that complemented deepening reduced dissolved oxygen. Years of polluted waters and harbor improvements had reduced the shortnosed sturgeon and striped bass populations drastically. The Back River Tide Gate was the proverbial nail in the coffin for these populations. It "reduced by 50 percent the traditional spawning grounds of the stripped bass population" (Conflict history, 1998, p. 1), resulting in a decline in striped bass egg production "by 95 percent" (Seabrook, 1998, p. 1B). The sturgeon also could not withstand the influx of salt water. Very sensitive fish, their numbers dropped so low, they were placed on the Endangered Species List. Following the removal of the tide gate and restocking efforts, both populations had begun to recover.

Despite their admittance that "the actual levels of salinity and dissolved oxygen, . . . are difficult to predict because of the complex and varying river flows and tidal influences" (GPA, 1998a, p. 40), the GPA confidently proclaimed that the agency would set aside " $70 million . . . [for] safeguarding water-quality issues . . . such as levels of dissolved oxygen in the river, which are crucial for marine life" (Sechler, 1998, p. 2). Specifically the GPA's mitigation plan suggested dredging "the Port Wentworth turning basin by 8 feet to improve habitat for shortnosed sturgeon and conducting a study of shortnose sturgeon behavior" (GPA, 1998a, p. 11). The GPA also suggested initiating a "striped bass avoidance plan which include[d] closing selected channels connecting the Savannah River and Middle River and opening a cut from Middle River to Back River" (GPA, 1998a, p. 11).

Environmental advocates were dissatisfied with the proposed plans. The SELC argued that the GPA created the sturgeon mitigation plan without performing any studies on sturgeon behavior (1998b). The South Carolina DNR argued that closing the Middle River in an effort to save the bass population seemed reminiscent of the tide gate fiasco and was "inadvisable" (SELC, 1998b, p. 7).

Inhabitants of Tybee Island also expressed concerns of an environmental nature. Although the beach was "in relatively good shape" (Kreuzweiser, 1995, p. 30) it was still "shrinking." Maintaining the position that the beach "is a resource that has to be maintained and preserved, not just for the people who live here but for those who visit" (p. 32), residents were worried that further deepening would intensify erosion. However, the EIS included no mitigation efforts for Tybee. Instead, the GPA merely stated that "there'll be plenty of time to address concerns about the project . . . because the Ports Authority is in the early stages of seeking approval for it. The port will be required to conduct full impact studies before any work begins" (Sechler, 1998, p. 1). Once again residents were dissatisfied.

The GPA treated concerns over the freshwater supply similarly. Freshwater was the issue of both city officials and local businesses. It would seem both groups would have been supportive of deepening given Savannah's historical dependence on the economic prosperity of the port. However business and city officials were both worried about the impact on their use of freshwater.

The availability of freshwater was a historically sensitive issue due to Savannah's polluted past. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that water was scarce in Georgia at this time. Naturally, Georgia had a limited number of freshwater sources and was experiencing a statewide drought and ongoing battles with Alabama and Florida over river water rights. Fresh water was so precious that one private company actually proposed creating a store of readily available water by taking "water from three area rivers, treat[ing] it, then sell[ing] it to potential customers" (Editorial: Politics and water, 1998, p. 1). Given this situation, groups who depended

on the adequate supply of fresh water did not take news regarding increased salinity levels in the river lightly.

City water works officials were troubled that salinity caused by deepening would limit their ability to provide the citizens of the city with fresh water. Officials' primary concern was with the impact deepening would have on the Upper Floridian Aquifer. Unrestricted use in the 1950s decreased the water level and pressure of the aquifer. Continued pumping of already depressed areas drew salt water into the Aquifer (Fancher, 1976). Despite the fact that each ensuing deepening project "raised questions about . . . possible effects" (GPA, 1998a, p. 32) projects continued over the years. By the nineteen-nineties, fear of salt water intrusion loomed so large in the minds of the community that the President of the Chamber of Commerce concluded that this was "the most serious issue that's ever faced this county" (Cochran, 1998, p. 1). It was so pressing that in 1997 the EPD actually drove real estate to a stand still by freezing new permits for large wells until 2005 in order to stave off intrusion. City officials were specifically concerned that dredging the harbor to 50 feet might rupture the confining layer of rock that protected the Aquifer and allow salt water to slowly infiltrate (GPA, 1998a, p. 32). The principle area of concern was the "harbor entrance channel just North of Tybee Island, where the Aquifer [was] at its highest elevation" (GPA, 1998a, p. 71) and where the harbor would be dredged two feet deeper than the rest of the channel. Since this was the primary source of drinking water for "the city of Savannah, neighboring areas in South Carolina including Hilton Head Island, and virtually the entire coastal area of Georgia" (GPA, 1998a, p. 32), salt water contamination of the aquifer would have had serious consequences.

The GPA responded to this concern in the Feasibility Study report. The GPA argued that their research "indicates that dredging to the maximum proposed project depth will have no noticeable impact on the quality and quantity of groundwater within the Floridian Aquifer" (GPA, 1998a, p. 72). This response did little to satisfy city officials who were also worried about salinity levels in the river. The river was Savannah's second source for drinking water. Scattered along

the River and its tributaries, uptake stations withdrew water to be sent to central treatment facilities before going to customers. Water works officials argued that deepening could require moving a number of these uptake stations (Krueger, 1998a). Director of city water and sewer Harry Jue reasoned that deepening would send salinity as far as "8 miles upstream of the harbor limits" (Krueger, 1998a, p. 3). Increases in salinity could cause chlorine levels to skyrocket from average levels of 12 parts per billion to exceed the 250 parts per billion limit set by the Clean Water Act. At such levels the water would be unusable and the city would be forced to close uptake valves in the contaminated area (p. 3).

Although the GPA included the possible $25,000,000 cost of relocating city water intake stations in the FS/EIS, they argued that "unless the subsequent investigations determine there is a clear relationship of likely impacts resulting from a harbor deepening project, there would be no basis to implement corrective measures" (GPA, 1998a, p. 81). Realizing that this statement created controversy, the GPA hoped to appease city officials by stating that "these issues will be addressed during the design phase of the project" (Editorial: Corps make proper call, 1998, p. 1). However, Nadar's critique had made this group wise. They responded with what could have been interpreted as an "anti-growth"(Krueger, 1998a, p. 3) stance by arguing that water was more important to the community than port development,.

Local businesses were also troubled that the project would greatly impact their ability to acquire and use fresh water. Many companies nestled along the Savannah River drew in water to use in industrial processes and after treating to required levels, would discharge wastewater into the river. Local business owners argued that saltwater intrusion would affect this practice in a variety of ways. First, for machinery use, businesses often needed water purer than drinking water. Many companies had to treat city water. Increased salinity would make the water more polluted, driving up treatment costs. Norbet Jones, Chief Engineer for Stone Container argued that he would "put in $3 million in capital improvements and an additional $1 million a year in maintenance expenses to treat for increased chlorides from the next harbor deepening" (Krueger,

1998a, p. 3). Second, when businesses discharged wastewater back into the river, they had to treat it to levels identified by the Clean Water Act. Savannah industry's historically high levels of discharge had resulted in fairly strict regulation. Increased salinity not only would have made more treatment necessary, it might have also made the discharge permit process, made difficult by industry's past performance, harder (Krueger, 1998b, p. 1). Finally, historically these industries had been targets of much criticism from environmental groups while they watched the GPA slide by with a slap on the wrist for environmental violations. Local businesses may have decided it was only fair for the GPA to face the repercussions of their continued environmental maneuvering.

Expecting full support from local business, the GPA failed to address these concerns in the Draft FS/EIS (Krueger, 1998b, p. 2). However, the expressed dissatisfaction of local businesses caught the attention of the state legislature (Editorial: Raise anchor on ports bill, 1998, p. 2). Pushing for appropriation, the GPA conceded that further study into these issues would be completed when funding was secured (Krueger, 1998b, p. 1).

Much less controversial, historic preservation was the final issue to surface following the release of the Draft FS/EIS. In the past, historic concerns were considered secondary to port improvement and development even though Savannahians appeared to have "an obsession with historic preservation" (Coffey, 1994, p. 5). However, the nature of this project made historic preservation a central concern. First, this project was going to stir the C.S.S. Constitution, "the wreck of the Confederate ironclad constructed in Savannah in 1862 and scuttled to prevent capture in 1864"(GPA, 1998a, p. 33). Located on the north side of the navigation channel across from Fort Jackson, it was "an occasional hazard to navigation" (GPA plans to spend, 1998, p. 1). However, over the years the GPA tried not to stir the ship and even kept maintenance dredging around the area to a minimum. The proposed deepening of eight feet would cause the ship to shift and make excavation necessary. The Historic Savannah Foundation welcomed the move to excavate the wrecked ship and commended GPA for their efforts.

This group was not nearly as agreeable in the case of Fort Jackson however. The Fort Jackson site, which consisted of "a brick fort, moat, and surrounding buried archeological deposits . . . located about 3 miles east of the city of Savannah" (GPA, 1998a, p. 32) was plagued by erosion problems as a result of past navigational improvements. The Corps of Engineers pumped dredged material around the fort and constructed a steel sheet pile wall to stabilize the structure and postpone erosion (GPA, 1998a, p. 32). Erosion was not limited to the fort site however. Owners of many of the 51 privately owned piers and wharves in the harbor argued that they were "still experiencing erosion to their properties from a previous deepening in 1994, which took the channel from 36 to 42 feet" (Sechler, 1998, p.2). For example, shipping terminal owner Fred Peebles stated, "'My property is falling into the river today' because of the 1994 deepening" (Sechler, 1998, p. 2).

Although the GPA ignored local businesses concerns in this area, they admitted that "any channel deepening would affect the stability of the structure at Old Fort Jackson . . . and require protection of the site" (GPA, 1998a, p. 12). However, much to the dismay of the Historic Savannah Foundation, the GPA delayed identifying specifics of the excavation plan reasoning that "most of the engineering studies . . . will be conducted as part of the proposed Savannah Harbor Expansion Project during the Continuing Engineering and Design (CED) phase" (GPA, 1998a, p. 33).

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1998 passed without congressional authorization due to debate in the House of Representatives over a flood plane in Sacramento. Although the WRDA was usually a biennial piece of legislation, Representative Jack Kingston expressed a commitment to revisit it in 1999. Kingston "intended to press for passage of a new water resources authorization bill as soon as legislatively possible when Congress convenes" (Schmitt & Guidera, 1998, p. 2). Port officials seemed fairly unconcerned that they lacked official permission. Jamie McCurry, manager of legislative affairs argued that "it's not going to affect what we have to do" (Pace, 1998, p. 1).

Continuing to move ahead, the GPA updated the public and announced participation activities at a meeting on December 22, 1998. Included in this presentation was a discussion of the Stakeholder Evaluation Group.

The GPA framed the SEG as an effort "to ensure effective two-way communications" (GPA, 1998b, p. 1). Membership was to be "open" to "government, public and private" (GPA, 2000, p. 4) organizations. However in both the FS/EIS and the December meeting, the GPA specifically outlined groups they hoped would participate. These organizations were the GPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Transportation, GA Department of Natural Resources, SC Department of Natural Resources, SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, City of Savannah, and Savannah Manufacturer's Council (see Appendix B for a complete listing of the names and affiliations of regular participants). Although the GPA also indicated "other interested parties" would be an integral part of the process, their identification of a limited number of participants and subsequent labeling of these groups as "appropriate organizations" (GPA, 1998b, p. 4), suggests that some members of the SEG would carry more political weight than others.

The group had a three-fold purpose. First, it was to "provide for a collaborative forum in which the appropriate organizations could pursue the scientific aspects of Tier II EIS development" (GPA, 2000, p. 4). Second, it was to "provide for the public establishment of the concerns surrounding the project" (p. 4). Finally, it was to provide "a forum for the involvement of governmental, public, and private citizens in the Tier II EIS development" (p. 4).

Group members were to represent their own organizational interest in developing "an environmentally acceptable mitigation plan for deepening the Savannah harbor federal navigation project" (GPA, 1998b, p. 25). In pursuit of this mission, the SEG was to be guided by the following structure: 1) develop the scope of scientific analyses and studies in 4- 6 months, 2) execute analyses and studies, 3) evaluate study reports and determine impacts, 4) evaluate

alternative project designs to avoid or minimize impacts, 5) develop compensation for resulting impacts, and 6) deliver mitigation plan for focus issues to project team. Although the GPA indicated to reporters that the SEG could find deepening unfeasible and in this sense act as an authoritative group (Miller, 1998) limiting the mission to the development of a mitigation plan and outlining a structure of this process suggested that the issue had already been decided. With deepening inevitable, the SEG was reduced to an advisory role, foreshadowing potential disagreement.

The GPA also argued that all possible impacts connected to the deepening project were acceptable as potential areas of study. However, in the December presentation, they clearly outlined five "focus issues" they believed were essential to consider. These were: analyses of the dissolved oxygen levels and chloride and salinity distribution in the river and analyses of stripped bass and short-nosed sturgeon habitat. By emphasizing these issues, the GPA disregarded other important issues such as the erosion of Tybee beach and infiltration of the aquifer.

The decisions of the SEG were to be made by consensus. Generally, the GPA supplied no definition for consensus, assuming that all shared a common meaning for the term (GPA, 1998b). In the FS/EIS, they suggested a more precise definition. First, the Authority stated that individuals could retain dissenting opinions only in the absence of consensus (GPA, 1998a, p. 130). In this sense, consensus meant only complete agreement of all parties. In the context of conflict that surrounded the deepening project, gaining one hundred percent agreement would seem problematic. The GPA attempted to ensure such agreement, however, by stating that if the SEG took "too lengthy of a time" in designing a mitigation plan, "the group [would] furnish a report to the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Commerce, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Director of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and the Commissioner of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental

Control, describing the unresolved issues" (GPA,1998a, p. 130). This pressure for efficiency could force consensus. With this framework, the SEG convened its first meeting.

CHAPTER 3

THE BEGINNING OF THE SEG

Public participation exists in a variety of forms in American governance. In the environmental policy arena, participation efforts are as varied as "lobbying, public advocacy and protest, public hearings, solicitation of public comments, political party involvement, voting. . . information-gathering activities, interest group involvement, service on advisory and review boards, campaigns for political office, and simple contact with elected officials" (Spyke, 1999, p. 3). According to Crowfoot and Wondolleck, these various processes are delineated and defined by "the structure of the process itself" constituted by "who is involved, how they are involved, and how issues are framed and then acted upon in making and then implementing decisions" (1990, p. 22). The vocabulary constituting who, what, when, where and how is significant because "participants in a process develop expectations based on the words used to describe the process" (EPA, 1998a, p. 3). By creating specific expectations, the vocabulary constituting a particular process both constrains and provides opportunities for participants. This premise is the starting point from which I begin my exploration of the discourse of the Savannah Harbor Deepening Project's Stakeholder Evaluation Group in this chapter.

According to Spyke (1999), although participation efforts are diffuse and fragmented, they demonstrate definitional similarities in the constitutive elements of who is involved, how they are involved and the way decisions are made. In order to present a clearer picture of the consensus-based stakeholder model, I begin my discussion by delineating the specific definitions of these elements provided by proponents of the model. I also highlight problematic issues that arise when practitioners attempt to enact this vocabulary. The purpose of this discussion is not to construct a dominant ideology. I agree with Condit and Lucaites (1993) that "there is no dominant

ideology that inexorably governs social and political action. Instead, there is the rhetorical process of public argumentation in which various organized and articulate interest groups negotiate the problems of resource distribution in the collective life of the community, and there is a shared rhetorical culture out of which they all draw as they strive to express their particular interests" (p. xiv). I intend to clarify the collective rhetorical culture that the Georgia Ports Authority drew upon in forming the SEG in order to consider the constraints and opportunities this vocabulary placed on the group. Given this goal, in the next section I explore the discourse of the SEG in the second group meeting held on February 2, 1999. I consider ways in which the available vocabulary affects group interaction. In the final section, I summarize and discuss the vocabulary that emerges in local news reports to define the SEG.

The Vocabulary of the Consensus-Based Stakeholder Participation Efforts

As discussed earlier, securing public involvement is one of the most pressing problems in the environmental arena. In the past decade, ineffective hearings and comment periods have been increasingly replaced by efforts based on "collaboration among contending interest groups instead of adversarial relationships [and] consensus decision-making rather than judgments by authorities" (Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990, p. 1). In 1995, Clinton secured this type of participation as the preferred mechanism at the Federal level in his Reinventing Government initiative. Reasoning that "better decisions result from a collaborative process with people working together" (Clinton & Gore, 1995, p. 1), Clinton supported the EPA's efforts such as Project XL and the Good Neighbor Dialogue as well as similar attempts initiated by the DOE. Because it promised improved participation through "inclusiveness and flexibility" (Spyke, 1999, p. 2) the consensus-based stakeholder model also began to appear in the environmental efforts of industry and state and local government (Sexton, Marcus, Easter, & Burkhardt, 1999). It is no surprise then that a federal agency suggested that the Georgia Ports Authority adopt this model for its Stakeholder Evaluation Group.

According to Condit and Lucaites (1993), "the vocabulary of a particular community is actively crafted by rhetors drawing on a shared rhetorical culture of commonly used allusions, aphorisms, characterizations, ideographs, metaphors, myths, narratives, and topoi or common argumentative forms that demarcate the symbolic boundaries within which public advocates find themselves constrained to operate" (p. xii). In enacting the consensus-based SEG, the GPA was constrained by the rhetorical base constituted by previous discussions of such efforts. In the following section, I attempt to delineate the terms of this vocabulary through an analysis of such descriptions in the discourse of practitioners and researchers. My data set for this analysis consists of a series of texts authored by prominent participation researchers. The texts, *Environmental disputes: Community involvement in conflict resolution* edited by Crowfoot and Wondolleck, *The environmental promise of democratic deliberation* written by Adolf G. Gunderson, *Better environmental decisions* edited by Sexton, Marcus and Easter, all contain in-depth theoretical discussions of collaborative consensus based efforts. The texts, *Public involvement in maritime facility development* by the Committee on the Impact of Maritime Services on Local Populations [CIMSLP] and *Water politics and public involvement* by Pierce and Doerkson, discuss this approach in the context of water policy development. In addition to texts authored by researchers, I also draw on practitioners' discussions of consensus-based efforts. Since Clinton and Gore made the first public recognition of Federal agency's turn to consensus-based models, I include their description of the consensus-based model in their *Reinventing Government* document. Because the EPA was the first Federal agency to make this model a regular component of environmental decision-making, I also explore this agency's discourse for discussions of consensus-based efforts. Specifically, I draw on descriptions in annual "Reinvention" reports from 1996, 1997 and 1998 as well as current discussion of stakeholder involvement. I also include a number of reports written by EPA practitioners. These include: *Sector-based issue paper #4: Stakeholder involvement in the sector-based approach*, *Aiming for excellence: EPA's commitment to innovation* by Farrell, *A real public role* by J.C. Fox

and *Public participation in environmental decisionmaking at the new millennium: Structuring new spheres of public influence* by Nancy Spyke. Drawing on discussions by both researchers and practitioners provides me with a thorough picture of this involvement mechanism.

The Characterization of Stakeholder

According to the EPA, although "the term [stakeholder] is widely used in environmental decision making, there is no consistent definition" (Using stakeholder processes, 1998b, p. 1). At the same time, the EPA argues that "it is critical to define who is a stakeholder. (Using stakeholder processes, 1998b, p. 3). This paradox produces abstract and fragmented descriptions of the environmental stakeholder in the literature. For example, general discussions list "environmental and public interest groups, businesses and industry, the academic community, other government agencies and private citizens" (EPA, 1997a, p. 1) as environmental stakeholders. The EPA specifically identifies "state and local governments, tribes, community leaders and private citizens" (EPA, 1997b, p. 3) as potential stakeholders. However, a number of qualities also arise in these discussions, which coalesce to form a particular character-type. Stakeholders are described as active, representative and equal. According to Condit, such "universalized descriptions" (1987b, p. 4) or characterizations carry much rhetorical weight when the community accepts them. This is especially true in environmental public participation efforts where identification of "who is involved" affects the working of the process by shaping the expectations of stakeholders (Crowfoot & Wondelleck, 1990). In the following section, I attempt to outline the character-type of stakeholder as crafted by researchers and practitioners which ultimately affects the discussions of the Savannah SEG.

First, the stakeholder is an active member of the community. The EPA argues that such individuals are "willing and able to play a much more active role in environmental issues" (EPA, 1997a, p. 2) than average citizens. They work to "provide meaningful input" (EPA, 1997b, p. 5) and want to "contribute constructively" (Fox, 1998, p. 5) to the environmental problem at hand.

Stakeholders make the "commitment of time and political capital" (Fox, 1998, p. 6) and in this sense are active and willing to get involved.

Second, researchers argue that in the past, environmental decision making was controlled by three groups "congressional committees, agencies, and interest groups" (Pierce & Doerkson, 1976, p. 6). As a result "certain publics have been systematically excluded from the decision-making process" (Pierce & Doerkson, 1976, p. 6). In an attempt to correct this problem, stakeholders in consensus-based involvement processes must bring "a wider range of affected interests together to negotiate as a group" (Edgar, 1990, p. 230). In this sense, stakeholders "represent . . . a broad spectrum of interests" (Hendee et al., 1976, p. 134). They "should be representative of the community in age, gender, socioeconomics, ethnicity, and stakeholder interest" (Murdock & Sexton, 1999, p. 385) and come from "all segments of the community" (Mazmanian & Nienaber, 1976, p. 238).

In essence, stakeholders are representative of all "constituent" groups of a particular environmental project (CIMSLP, 1979, p. 53). Such representation ensures that "all voices be heard" (Spyke, 1999, p. 18). With interests of all affected interests expressed, "public values can be assimilated into the decision making process" (Spyke, 1999, p. 19). Since decisions are no longer based on the views of a select few but the interests of all in the community, "the chance of disgruntled stakeholders who could later negatively impact a decision" (Using stakeholder processes, 1998b, p. 6) is reduced. The result is an "open [and] inclusive" (Fox, 1998, p. 5) environmental decision making effort.

Finally, the stakeholder is characterized as equal. Stakeholders act as members of a "team" (Clinton & Gore, 1995, p. 38). They form "partnerships" (EPA, 1996, p. 9) and in turn "become a partner in the decision making process" (Spyke, 1999, p. 17). In this sense, "participants . . . are partners, not dictators, in the overall process" (Spyke, 1999, p. 19). Each participant is equally "given adequate opportunity and positive encouragement to participate and have their views considered" (CIMSLP, 1979, p. 52). They act in a "neutral" (John & Mlay,

1999, p. 367) forum where “all parties bring something to the table (Murdock & Sexton, 1999, p. 390). Education works to ensure such equality. According to Wengart “intelligent citizen contributions” can be secured through “citizen education on goals, objectives, problems, alternative solutions, costs and benefits and their distribution” (1976, p. 32). In this sense, participants will “learn a new language to enable them to provide clear and meaningful information to the agency about public concerns” (Spyke, 1999, p. 20). According to the EPA, “use of a common language with terms that are understood by all will enhance communication” (EPA, 1998a, p. 3). In turn, all participants are placed “on equal footing” (Spyke, 1999, p. 19). The result is a “real give and take among the members” (Fox, 1998, p. 6). In short, the character-type that emerges in discussions of participant practitioners and researchers is the stakeholder as an active, representative and equal individual. However when this abstract notion is translated into practice, three issues which foreshadow potential problems arise.

Representation or deciding who speaks for whom is the first issue to emerge. Contemporary society is diverse. Individuals hold different attitudes, values and beliefs. Such differentiation is especially true in the case of environmentalism where a number of very distinct ideologies guide the movement. According to Edgar, such division makes it impossible to find “a principal actor that can voice the entire community’s concerns” (1990, p. 250).

Second, practitioners find it difficult to determine what interests are "legitimate" and should be represented. They struggle with which interests “are the ‘right’ ones to include” (Fox, 1998, p. 9). However they seem to agree that “the right” interests are those which constitute “a major stake in the issue” (Edgar, 1990, p. 230). All generally agree that groups responsible for a particular project or with veto power have legitimate interests (Using stakeholder processes, 1998b). However, the Federal Advisory Committee Act reduces the ability of Federal agencies to participate as a stakeholder in another agency’s participation process. Although the purpose of this law is to reduce the dominance of a single interest through agency coalition building, it also “frequently inhibit[s] nontraditional processes that would bring all interests groups together to

address collaboratively a common concern" (Crowfoot & Wondelleck, 1990, p. 23). Afraid of overstepping the boundaries of the law, principal agencies may opt out of stakeholder efforts. Economic concerns are also considered to be legitimate interests. For example, Wengart (1976) argues that in water policy decisions, the representation of those whose production or marketing efforts may be affected is more important than those whose homes are simply located near the proposed project.

The notion of who counts more is the final issue to emerge as practitioners attempt to implement this abstract characterization. Researchers Finnegan and Sexton (1999) assert that inequalities in economics, communicative ability, and decision power result in differentiation among stakeholders. First, given that environmental issues tend to be of a highly technical nature, differences in technical knowledge exist among stakeholders. Since "from a practical standpoint everybody cannot always have a seat at the table" (Murdock & Sexton, 1999, p. 4), those with technical knowledge are often included to the exclusion of those without. For example in 1998, "Administrator Carol Browner asked knowledgeable stakeholders to advise EPA on results-oriented ways to expand its innovations agenda over the next 12 to 18 months" (Farrell, 1999, p. 3). Only those considered knowledgeable were allowed to provide input. Participants are also often categorized according to their level of interest or proximity to the issue. For example, in many of its participation processes, the EPA ranks stakeholders according to the categories "of 1) those who want to be involved with the process; 2) affected parties; 3) anyone with an interest in the project or activity" (Murdock & Sexton, 1999, p. 4). Based on this categorization, "a committed but limited group of stakeholders . . . [gain] shared decision making authority, while an alternative group of stakeholders receives an opportunity for input" (Murdock & Sexton, 1999, p. 4).

In summary, discussions of consensus based stakeholder participation models craft a characterization of the stakeholder as active, representative and equal. However, when this

idealized notion is put into practice, issues of representation, legitimacy, and equality arise signaling potential problems for consensus-based model enactment.

The Myth of the Common Good

According to Condit (1987b) characterizations such as the stakeholder form the basis of public political narratives. The level at which a particular characterization resonates with the audience is significant because "if the audience believes one set of characterizations . . . they are predisposed to accept the stories and eventually the ideographs of the related argument" (p. 13). Researchers and practitioners craft a narrative for the stakeholder of transcending disagreements and uniting in the common good.

"Community dialogue" (Farrell, 1999, p. 4) is the most accurate description of the narrative crafted for the stakeholder. In this story, equal and representative stakeholders enter into a "collaborative framework" (EPA, 1997b, p. 3). In this forum, the individual takes on the role of the citizen stakeholder and engages in dialogue with previous adversaries (Gunderson, 1995). Such deliberation enables citizens to "understand each other better" (Fox, 1998, p. 5). Through discussion participants "may find there is more common ground than expected" (John, & Mlay, 1999, p. 368). They work to "bridge differences, find common ground, and identify new solutions" (Clinton & Gore, 1995, p. 3). As a result, stakeholders begin "to think of our collective pursuit of environmental ends in a more *collective, long term, holistic* and *self-reflexive* way" (Gunderson, 1995, p. 23). According to Fox, this thinking is fundamental to the success of a consensus-based effort (1998). It allows the group to easily identify "the critical implementation issues, develop policy alternatives, and identify options and make recommendations to the agency" (EPA, 1997a, p. 3). These products "reflect . . . general public opinion" (Hendee et al., 1976, p. 134) and allow the "infusion of common values into the decisionmaking process" (Spyke, 1999, p. 4). Proponents argue that in this way "consensus building is primarily substantive in nature, since it changes the scope and nature of the concerns that enter into decision-making, as well as the weight those concerns are given" (Spyke, 1999, p. 20).

In essence, the narrative that "when all stakeholders collaborate in designing their collective future, it increases chances of former differences being resolved and a new consensus emerging around issues everyone can agree on" (Using stakeholder processes, 1998b, p. 8) is the story crafted by proponents of a consensus-based stakeholder model. Continued retelling has given this story "pervasiveness and force" (Condit, 1987b, p. 4), elevating it to mythic status. In practice fundamental differences of opinion make this notion of a clear and rational process of deliberative unification difficult to achieve. According to Crowfoot and Wondolleck, "environmental conflicts are rooted in different values of natural resources and environmental quality" (1990, p. 6). Immersed in cost-benefit environmental approaches and engineering solutions, it is difficult for agencies to envision nontechnical solutions to environmental problems. For example, "it took almost one hundred years for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to accept the idea that "nonengineering solutions might be preferred to engineering solutions" (Wengart, 1976, p. 40). In turn, agency members often prefer "carefully defined, technical" solutions (Murdock & Sexton, 1999, p. 396). However, unschooled in these approaches and with different stakes in the outcome, members of the public often hold differing views (Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990). Such diversity is especially true in debates over water development where "the many quantitative and qualitative demands for water cause conflict to be the rule, rather than the exception" (Pierce & Doerkson, 1976, p. 3).

Diverse perspectives also result in different expectations for participation. According to Nancy Spyke (1999), "how one regards public participation and citizen involvement depends to a great extent on one's point of view or perspective, and this is determined to a large extent by the role one fills in society" (p. 34). Because members of government agencies consider technical approaches best for environmental issues, they will often consider "public participation . . . as a way of gaining legitimacy and public support" (Wengert, 1976, p. 34) for a decision already made by the agency and a technical elite. Citizens, on the other hand believe that participation is important because it allows for a consideration of their concerns in decision making. These

participants may be "convinced that their involvement guarantees the achievement of their goal" (Spyke, 1999, p. 14). When they realize that agencies often do not consider their input, "frustration is likely to set in as citizens, who are accustomed to living in harmony, begin to experience conflict. In turn, these members may "seek to frustrate plans and proposals regarded as unsound" (Wengert, 1976, p. 34). Participation then becomes "an exercise in confrontation governed by inflexible agency rules that afford only limited avenues for agency input" (Spyke, 1999, p. 14).

In summary, advocates of a stakeholder model perpetuate the myth that members unite in the common good through free and open deliberation. However, practice reveals fundamental differences in environmental perspective and participation approach between decision-makers and the public, which makes achievement of this narrative difficult.

The Ideograph of Consensus

For researchers perpetuating the myth of the common good, common ground "provides a basis for compromise of views and a workable consensus" (CIMSLP, 1979, p. 53-54). An abstract term intimating inclusive and fair agreement, consensus is "often defined as an outcome that, as a package, everyone can live with" (Fox, 1998, p. 3). In the discourse of participation researchers and practitioners, a consensus "decision requiring give and take is the goal of participation" (Spyke, 1999, p. 21). Because consensus is the ultimate goal of stakeholder efforts, it acts as "the moral of the story" in the stakeholder myth of collective good. It takes on ideographic meaning and serves as a "powerful, normative warrant" (Condit, 1987b, p. 3) influencing stakeholder behavior.

In the discourse of consensus-based participation proponents, consensus is defined as an inclusive and representative agreement. In a discussion of an EPA Project XL effort, Fox describes how "at the conclusion of the negotiation process, consensus was reached as all interested groups agreed to implement the outcome, and all were signatories to the final project agreement" (1998, p. 6). Spyke likewise argues that in consensus-based participation, a "final

solution is accepted only when consensus is reached, meaning that 'all involved agree that everyone's concerns have been heard, a good faith negotiation has taken place" (1999, p. 12). In short, consensus represents an inclusive agreement.

Consensus decisions are also thought to be the most rational. Consensus decisions represent "a means to develop more flexible cost-effective and environmentally-protective solutions tailored to industries' and stakeholders' needs" (EPA, 1997a, p. 2). Because they logically correspond to the intricacies of the particular context, consensus decisions are rational decisions. Clinton and Gore similarly argue that consensus decisions offer the promise of "new and innovative ways to achieve greater levels of environmental protection at a lower cost" (1995, p. 3) by offering "community-based flexibility to tailor solutions to local conditions and to set sound health and environmental protection goals, while developing cost effective solutions" (p. 37). Terms such as flexibility, sound, and effective intimate the rationality of such decisions. As the most rational, consensus decisions are also considered to be superior. Consensus decisions are "the most effective, workable solutions possible" (EPA, 1997a, p. 1). They produce "better results" (EPA, 1996, p. 8). According to Farrell (1999), consensus decisions "promise superior environmental performance and economic results" (p. 1). Because consensus decisions are better, when participation is "structured to make an impact, not just to educate . . . consensus, not voting, should be the decision-making process" (Using stakeholder processes, 1998a, p. 3).

Although consensus offers the potential for inclusive and rational decisions, practical constraints limit the achievement of this ideal. First, because they require the mutual agreement of diverse interests, consensus efforts are often painfully slow, causing lead agencies substantial financial losses (Pierce & Doerkson, 1976). As a result agencies often pressure stakeholder toward "cooperation and compromise" (Edgar, 1990, p. 230). Pressure generally yields one of three results. Sometimes less powerful groups and individuals will concede to "influential special interests and environmental organizations . . . [which may be] opposed to public opinion on environmental matters" (Spyke, 1999, p. 15). At other times institutional pressure forces

participants to agree to “lowest-common-denominator solutions” (Spyke, 1999, p. 6). Finally, agencies may remove the decision making power from the group through the imposition of institutional hammers or subcommittees. The creation of subgroups with decision-making authority alters “the Committee’s power dynamics, putting some public members in a more influential position than others” (Edgar, 1990, p. 232). While subcommittees quicken decisions by shifting them to a citizen elite, hammers move decision-making authority to an executive elite. Process “hammers include statutory or court-imposed deadlines that can transfer the issue away from stakeholders if they fail to achieve agreement within a specific time period . . .[or] an impending decision by a government agency, corporation, or multi-lateral organization” (Using stakeholder processes, 1998b, p. 13).

Also, often agencies consider consensus decisions as recommendations rather than authoritative decisions (EPA, 1998b). Realizing that the results of their deliberation will have no impact on the final decision, “the group’s progress may decline” (Fox, 1998, p. 9). At other times, decision making may shift from consensus “negotiations to a majority voting system" (Murdock & Sexton, 1999, p. 391).

Proponents of the consensus-based approach rhetorically craft a foundation for these efforts where stakeholders, characterized as free and equal, and are led by the ideal of fair, rational consensus agreement to participate in the myth of unification for the common good. However, practical constraints create problems for the realization of this ideal. In this sense, consensus based processes reflect the “myth of mediation- the illusion that it is a simple and easy process, that all participants around the table are equal, that the process is inherently fair, that compromise is always reasonable and so on” (Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990, p. 4).

Characterization, Myth and Ideograph in the SEG’s Early Discourse

According to Condit (1987a), “once universal terms, narratives, and characterizations are created and supported, they carry a force separate from the wishes of the collectivity. Great labor is required to restrain or reshape such commitments. Additionally, a code does not simply and

univocally reflect the wishes of its creators, even at the instant of its creation- the rhetorical process and moral codes adhere to their own logic" (p. 87). Once articulated by researchers and practitioners, the vocabulary of the consensus-based stakeholder model takes on its own rhetorical force. When the Georgia Ports Authority adopts this framework, it serves as a forceful rhetorical foundation for group discourse. However, because this language is inadequate to capture the reality of group interaction, each point of articulation is met with attempts to "question or disarticulate" (Deluca, 1999, p. 41) its terms. Such questioning produces rearticulations of the consensus vocabulary. In this way, the consensus vocabulary places "substantive constraints on precipitous social change" (Condit & Lucaites, 1993, p. 3).

In this section, I begin my exploration into the SEG's discourse by considering the second group meeting held on February 2nd 1999. Fifty three members attended with fifteen individuals representing business, nine representing federal and state agencies, eight representing environmental groups, nine representing state and local government, and one representing local news. The three "private" citizens who attended the January meeting did not attend. In the February meeting, discussion revolved principally around the issues of the position of the SEG in the GPA deepening process, the definition of a stakeholder, and the purpose of the group. Each section was rife with various attempts to articulate a consensus vocabulary followed by attempts to disarticulate its terms. Because these debates were confused and complex, I begin my exploration of each section with an overview of the discussion. Following this description, I draw on Condit and Lucaites's notions of characterization, myth and ideograph to explore the interaction of various efforts to fix, disarticulate and rearticulate the consensus vocabulary.

The Position of the SEG in the Deepening Process

The first topic debated by the group was the position of the SEG within the GPA deepening process. Discussion on this topic involved the issues of the SEG's agenda and the meaning of the SEG's consensus for the GPA's decision making. In each of these discussions, group members struggled over the terms of their vocabulary. Continued assertions that the group

defined their own common good and that their consensus was authoritative proved inconsistent with the GPA's practices of controlling the stakeholders' agenda and considering consensus decisions as suggestions. In response, stakeholders pointed out inconsistencies and struggled to craft terms more reflective of group practices. Such dearticulations were met repeatedly with attempts by the facilitator and the GPA representatives to fix the consensus vocabulary.

The first issue to arise was the SEG agenda. This issue arose during a discussion of the January meeting minutes. During the January meeting, the GPA had attempted to set the agenda for the SEG activities. A representative from the Georgia Ports Authority first listed all of the issues that drew public comments in the Tier I EIS. He then argued that these issues had been "adequately addressed" and listed the endangered shortnosed sturgeon, striped bass, salinity, dissolved oxygen and chloride distribution as the five principal topics suitable for SEG discussion. Stakeholders argued that the fact that many groups had felt Tier I comments were not "adequately addressed" was the very reason for the SEG's existence. In an effort to set their own agenda, members suggested that debate should begin with all issues found in the Tier I EIS comments. Continued assertions by the GPA that these issues had been "adequately addressed" caused stakeholders to demand that the GPA produce a document identifying each public comment and the way in which it was addressed. The GPA offhandedly agreed to be forthcoming with such a document. In the February meeting, this issue arose again as the group reviewed the section of January minutes devoted to this discussion. Unprepared to present the promised comment listing and response document, the GPA argued that the production of such a document was unnecessary because the issues represented by the comments would be addressed as the SEG defined their agenda. The SEG members noted how this attempt to limit the issues of the SEG debate was inconsistent with the notion that stakeholders would set their own agenda. The debate ended with the GPA "off the hook" however and the stakeholders left unsure of how their agenda would be defined.

Facilitator Rees opened the meeting by defining the nature of the SEG process. In this description, Rees drew on the common good narrative forwarded by advocates of the stakeholder model. Rees began this telling by characterizing all stakeholders as equal with "everybody" having the "chance to speak up and be heard" (SEG, 1999a, side 1). According to Condit (1987b), such characterizations provide the foundation for "story forms" or accounts "of a thing being done" (p.4). The narrative that Rees built from this characterization was one where "everyone has a chance to say what their concerns are" (side 1), making deliberation free and open. With "everything on the table" (side 1), the group could debate to determine the common good.

SEG members' ensuing review of the January meeting minutes revealed inconsistencies between this myth and group practice. Drawing on the story form provided by Rees, one unidentified member asked the GPA whether or not they were going to provide the requested listing of public comments and the GPA's responses from the Tier I EIS. Since performing the myth of the common good began with putting all issues on this table, this list was essential. Based on this information, the SEG members could determine which "issues should be included in this effort by the SEG" (side 1) in turn, coming together to determine the common good.

The GPA representatives' responses revealed the actual narrative of group practice. First, the GPA's consultant Ed Modzelewski denied the need for a production of this document. He asserted that the public comments contained in the Tier I EIS were "historical issues" that would require "going back and looking at the comments on the Tier I EIS" (side 1). By framing certain topics as historical issues, this GPA representative worked to set the agenda for the SEG. Rather than members beginning with a listing of all issues and determining the common good through a rational debate on these issues, particular issues deemed "historical" by the GPA would not be addressed. The GPA project director Larry Keegan then outright refused to produce the document asserting that "it would take an awful lot of time for us to go through and cover what is in appendix H of the final EIS. We are not prepared to do that today" (side 1). By refusing to prepare this document, the GPA effectively limited the issues to be addressed by the SEG.

Control by one group contradicted with the myth of the common good where the good was determined through free and open debate.

Since the GPA's actions were inconsistent with the myth of the common good, facilitator Rees quickly worked to mend this disparity. Rees reasoned that "all of those issues will get adequately addressed" (side 1) since group practice was guided by the myth of the common good where all issues would be "put on the table" (side 1). He also argued that since "the objective of this group is to make sure that all the issues are adequately addressed . . . production of a large document or a lengthy briefing at this time by GPA may be premature" (side 1). In this sense, Rees attempted to ensure participants that the GPA's refusal to produce the document was not an attempt to control their agenda. Since deliberation was free and open, all issues would be addressed eventually. Rees' rearticulation of the common good myth grew immediate support from another member of the SEG who agreed that "the function of this group is to identify all possible issues and then figure what to do about them. Rather than have GPA explain why they did this or that" (side 1). Here, the myth of the common good legitimized the GPA's attempted to limit the group's agenda and control deliberation. Because stakeholders would identify all issues through free and equal deliberation, the GPA did not need to produce a document describing how Tier I issues were adequately addressed. In essence, the GPA could limit the SEG's agenda because as the group participated in the myth of the common good, all issues would be addressed.

This attempt to smooth over inconsistency by asserting the myth of the common good did not gain the assent of all group members. A number of stakeholders responded by forging a new narrative of group practices. Sam Drake of the Fish and Wildlife Service was one such member. According to Drake's "recollection" of "some of the 101 meetings" the outline of group activities was "a little different" (side 1). Drake recounted this narrative where the GPA defined topics addressed by the SEG because they were "gonna seek congressional authorization" and wanted to "not complicate the process" (side 1). By offering an alternative narrative of group

deliberation where the GPA defined the topics of debate, Drake disarticulated the myth of the common good.

Stakeholder Tom Meronek from the GA DNR continued the telling of this tale. He recounted the story of the last meeting when the entire SEG "created a list of key issues that we felt we should address early on" (side 1). Recognizing the GPA's control of the agenda, he noted that these issues were not listed "in the minutes at all" (side 1).

Following stakeholder attempts to describe a realistic narrative of group process where the GPA controlled the SEG agenda and in turn determined the common good, Rees again worked to fix the myth of the common good. He argued that because all issues were represented, "this group is going to deal with [these issues] in one way or another" (side 1). Reasoning that the SEG would set its own agenda and determine the common good through a debate of these items, Rees let the GPA "off the hook" (side 1) for producing the document. Paradoxically, the myth of the common good legitimized the GPA's control of the SEG agenda.

The issue of the SEG agenda emerged again as GPA project director Charles Griffen presented an overview of the Tier II aspect of the project. In this presentation, Griffen outlined three components to this phase of the project. He first outlined the detailed design phase, which contained an economic analysis, some environmental analysis such as sedimentation effects, and engineering studies such as ship simulation. Griffen argued that this phase of the project was distinct from the environmental evaluation phase, which was the domain of the SEG. The environmental evaluation phase involved determining environmental impacts and creating a mitigation plan. Finally, he briefly described phase three which involved the creation of a plan dealing with cultural resources such as Fort Jackson and the USS Constitution, a Civil War ship sunk at the bottom of the harbor. The culmination of this three-part effort was a final environmental impact statement and report. By categorizing certain topics as suitable for particular phases, Griffen attempted to limit the agenda for SEG deliberations. However, members began to argue that many of their concerns fell within other phases of the project. They

struggled with the inconsistency between repeated articulations by the GPA that they would set their own agenda and the demonstrated practice of the GPA's limitation of this agenda. These inconsistencies again produced a lengthy debate over who decided what issues the group would address.

As Griffen discussed the three phases of detailed design, environmental evaluation and cultural resources, he clearly distinguished between them, limiting the SEG's agenda and revealing inconsistencies between group practice and the myth of the common good. Griffen limited the SEG's agenda by arguing that the engineering, economic and environmental studies considered part of the detailed design phase were not "deemed . . . to be facilitated or necessary to be facilitated" (side 2). Griffen asserted that although some of these items were specific concerns of the SEG members such as the Tybee beach evaluation and the economic analysis, they were part of this "unfacilitated process however . . . [with] a very strong public input component" (side 2). By categorizing these studies as part of the unfacilitated detailed design phase, Griffen removed them from the SEG agenda. Griffen next outlined "the fundamental elements that are in the domain of the facilitation [or SEG] process" (side 2). He identified the agenda of the SEG as containing only the "four or five elements" such as "dissolved oxygen and salinity and chlorides" (side 2). By putting these issues on the SEG "map," this GPA representative confined the SEG discussion only to these elements. Since the myth of the common good depended on beginning with all issues, Griffen's attempt to confine SEG deliberations to four or five suitable topics revealed an inconsistency between this myth and group practices. However, Griffen rationalized this inconsistency by arguing that the categorization of topics was necessary to produce "the most desirable design balancing the environmental issues balancing . . . the market, economics that go with it and balancing constructability, three parts – environmental, market economics and constructability" (side 2).

Recognizing that Griffen was attempting to limit the SEG agenda, activist Ben Brewton worked to make this inconsistency explicit with the question, "you're explaining parts of the

project that are beyond the scope of the stakeholder's group?" (side 2). In the face of this recognition that the GPA controlled the SEG agenda, the GPA representatives quickly rearticulated the myth of the common good. First Griffen stated,

> I'm explaining the parts of the project in its total environment. I'm going to come back. I'm gonna go through this and then I'm gonna come back and show where the SEG, the things that this group has up to this time decided is a part of what they want to do (side 2).

Griffen attempted to reestablish the myth of the common good by asserting that the distinctions he presented between the detailed design phase and the SEG led environmental phase were distinctions that the SEG had determined. Next, Facilitator Rees reasserted "what was said in the formation of the group" as he jumped "in as facilitator . . . and said . . . any issue that the SEG wants to bring to the table is a legitimate issue for the SEG" (side 2). By rearticulating an essential component of the common good myth- that deliberation began with recognition of all issues Rees worked to reestablish this myth.

Brewton responded to this rearticulation with another attempt to craft a more realistic narrative of group interaction. He stated, "ok well we'll listen it just appeared to me that many of these things [considered not appropriate for the SEG] are the very essence of what the stakeholders are" (side 2). In this comment, Brewton made the fact that GPA was controlling and limiting the SEG agenda by deeming some issues as outside of their scope explicit. Such control contrasted with the myth of the common good where all issues were aired and the good was determined through free and open deliberation. Griffen instantly disregarded this dearticulation with the statement, "ok, I appreciate your comment. We are in that portion of the area that you saw during the public information meeting, detailed design . . . " (side 2). Griffen intimated that this description was inaccurate by closing down the discussion and moving on.

The second issue to emerge dealing with the position of the SEG in the GPA deepening process was the meaning of the SEG consensus for the deepening project. The struggle over the

SEG agenda, which arose during Griffen's presentation, caused one member to question the meaning of a stakeholder consensus decision. Since consensus functioned as an ideograph, it provided the motivation for group activities. In the myth of the common good, consensus meant rational, authoritative decisions. Questioning of the suitability of this myth for describing the SEG interaction led to questions regarding the meaning of consensus. In this interchange, Mitch King from the Fish and Wildlife Service sought to determine whether the SEG consensus represented an authoritative decision. He first asked the GPA officials whether they would be bound by an SEG consensus if the group recommendation differed from the recommended NED plan alternative. As discussed earlier, a National Economic Development analysis was a cost/benefit analysis performed to determine which deepening scenario was the best use of federal dollars. According to Federal guidelines, the deepening alternative resulting from this analysis should be the option chosen for the project. Yet, a community could choose a different alternative in the case of a compelling reason, such as if the cost of mitigating against extreme environmental damage made the selection of a lower benefit to cost ratio necessary. By asking whether the GPA would follow the SEG's recommendation even if it produced lower benefits, this stakeholder questioned whether the SEG consensus had authoritative meaning or not. The GPA representatives attempted to avoid the topic by arguing that it was not part of the briefing. They also assured the SEG members in abstract language that their consensus decisions were legitimate and binding. This failure to fully address the meaning of consensus made members frustrated. Led by environmental activist Ben Brewton, members began to push the GPA to provide an accurate definition for consensus.

Mr. King began to question the meaning of SEG consensus by directly addressing the GPA representative Larry Keegan. King asked "You indicated that you're gonna do a NED is that going to cover all the costs of an identified mitigation of proposed alternatives?" (side 2). King followed an assurance from Keegan that "it has to" with a direct question to determine the authority of the SEG consensus. He questioned,

> you felt like Georgia Ports Authority wanted to accept the recommendation of this group which may be different than the NED recommendation has that been agreed upon. That whatever this group identifies as the recommendation the Georgia Ports Authority's gonna go with that? (side 2).

As a product of the myth of the common good, consensus decisions represented rational and authoritative conclusions. By questioning whether the SEG consensus would hold authority over the GPA's action, King was attempting to determine if the SEG's practice was consistent with this ideographic meaning.

According to Condit and Lucaites ideographs act as the "necessary motivations or justifications for actions" (1993, p. xiii). Because the meaning of consensus provided the motivations for group activity, its establishment as rational and authoritative was essential to the performance of the myth of the common good. For this reason, the facilitator and the GPA representatives attempted to fix the meaning of the SEG consensus as rational and authoritative in their responses. First, Rees worked to halt discussion by suggesting that King's question was "a new item and I don' t know what the real answer is" (side 2). Griffen, however, quickly worked to block such questioning and rearticulated the consensus vocabulary. Characterizing stakeholders as free and equal, he began, "we want to be sure that, the purpose of this briefing is, . . . to let everybody know that there's a place at the table for you" (side 2). This attempt to misdirect King by articulating the consensus-based characterization of stakeholder did little to appease him. Again, King questioned the meaning of an SEG consensus decision. He asked "has Georgia Ports Authority made a commitment and basically said whatever this group agrees upon as far as a depth and an alternative will live with that even though it may not be the most economically viable alternative but it might have some other considerations such as environmental considerations, has Georgia Ports Authority made that kind of commitment?" (side 2). King questioned whether the SEG consensus decisions would have authority over the GPA's

actions. In short, he attempted to determine whether practice was consistent with the articulated ideographic meaning of consensus as legitimate, rational and authoritative.

Griffen again attempted to table discussion by making this question appear irrelevant. However, environmental advocate Ben Brewton became frustrated with his evasive answers and continued attempts to defer debate. In an effort to force Keegan to define consensus, Brewton asserted,

> I think it's a good question, it goes to the very core of what some of us in this group are concerned about, and it's a question that should be able to be answered with a yes and a no (side 2).

Here Brewton recognized that the definition of consensus was essential to group activities. A definition of consensus as rational and authoritative would yield a plot of the common good; whereas a different definition of consensus would produce a different narrative. For this reason he pushed Griffen to define the term.

Ports Authority Deputy Director David Schaller responded to this pressure by rearticulating the consensus based vocabulary. In abstract language, Schaller defined SEG consensus decisions as authoritative by asserting,

> The work of the SEG is important to the Georgia Ports Authority. I can confirm that. Uh, we are committed to the process and committed with the SEG and the results of the SEG in terms of the final recommendation will be taken under consideration to the very fullest extent when the time comes (side 2).

Terms such as "committed" and "taken under consideration to the fullest extent possible" intimated that consensus had authoritative meaning. However, this evasive response also suggested that in practice the GPA could disregard the SEG consensus. Recognizing this inconsistency, Brewton responded,

> David thank you for the very statesman like and very carefully word-smithed answer you gave there. We appreciate that, but I think that the problem that we have here is that we

> keep getting mixed signals. Mr. Keegan just said something a few minutes ago that Mr. King followed up on that's very clear he said GPA would follow the recommendations of this group. What you are saying now is that GPA is going to consider the recommendations of the group, and there's a big difference there. The thing is we keep getting conflicting statements (side 2).

Brewton's response reflected recognition of inconsistency in the meaning of consensus. At one point the GPA defined this term as authoritative and in the next minute the term was considered to be merely a recommendation. In the face of this inconsistency, Brewton continued to push for a meaning of consensus that accurately reflected its practice. He stated,

> I think the people here, the stakeholders are here in good faith we want to participate, we want to work with you, but we don't want to have the rules changing as we go and we really want to hear from the GPA not a carefully word-smithed answer but an honest from the gut, from the heart answer to those questions (side 2).

Brewton's call for a consistent definition of consensus revealed a desire for a vocabulary more reflective of the process.

This argument propelled Schaller into providing a realistic definition of this term. According to Schaller, the SEG consensus could not have complete authority over GPA actions because

> the question of what the final depth chosen by the Georgia Ports Authority is, is a matter of policy that will be considered by the Georgia Ports Authority board of directors . . . [and] will include in a very significant way the recommendation of the SEG" (side 2).

Schaller admitted that SEG consensus meant merely a recommendation rather than an authoritative decision.

Grateful for a definition of consensus that accurately reflected group practice, Brewton responded with the statement,

> well, I think that clarifies in a good enough way that you are going to consider this group but not necessarily be bound by it. And that's fine. I just don't think you should be saying one thing in one occasion and not in another (side 2).

Likewise King "appreciate[d]" the effort to "make it clear" (side 2). In this interchange, the emergence of a meaning of consensus, which accurately reflected group practice rather than the continued assertion of the consensus-based vocabulary satisfied participants.

In summary, as the SEG members discussed their position within the GPA deepening process, the group struggled over the meaning of the terms in its vocabulary. In the debate over how the group agenda was defined, continued assertions of the myth of the common good proved inadequate to describe the GPA controlled group interaction. In the interchange over the definition of the SEG consensus, the ideographic meaning of rational and authoritative consensus did not accurately reflect the GPA's consideration of consensus as merely a recommendation. As these inconsistencies emerged, the GPA representatives continually attempted to fix the consensus-based vocabulary. At the same time however, stakeholders struggled to disarticulate these terms and craft a vocabulary more reflective of group practices. Although at the end of this discussion, an alternative definition of consensus emerged, its fixation was temporary. As discussion moved to the definition of stakeholder articulations of a consensus-based vocabulary reestablished its terms.

The Definition of Stakeholder

The second major issue addressed by the SEG was the definition of stakeholder. This issue first emerged as the Modeling Technical Review Group [MTRG] updated the SEG on the status of its activities. Prior to the first SEG meeting, the GPA had established this technical advisory committee for the group and at that meeting had urged the SEG to officially recognize the committee. The GPA reasoned that the immediate creation of this committee, which was responsible for the design and implementation of scientific studies to be used to create a model for the prediction of chlorides, dissolved oxygen, and their interaction at various depths, was

crucial since these studies demanded springtime conditions. Committee membership was a mixture of engineering experts mostly from the GPA's consultant firm, Applied Technology and Management [ATM]. Discussion of the MTRG's activities revealed that this subgroup was distinct from other stakeholders and conducted closed deliberations, which exerted control over the SEG activities. Throughout the presentation, this group was continually classified as a microcosm of the SEG with equal and representative members and fair and open proceedings. This inconsistency caused other members to ask for a more accurate description of both this subgroup and their activities and the SEG as a whole. These requests were met only with attempts to reassert the MTRG's sameness and the openness of their proceedings.

Throughout this discussion, members of the MTRG, the facilitator and the GPA representatives drew on the stakeholder vocabulary to characterize all members as equal and representative with access to all participation efforts. Discussion revealed that the MTRG participants enjoyed a specialized status and directed the SEG deliberation. As this inconsistency emerged, various members began to push for a characterization of stakeholder and a group narrative that more accurately reflected practice. However, such dearticulations merely led to rearticulations of the consensus-based vocabulary.

In his presentation of the MTRG's activities, ATM president Ed Modzelewski crafted a characterization of stakeholder as equal and representative. Modzelewski argued that at the first MTRG meeting, participants were "representative [of] different agencies, the Corps . . . John Sawyer from the city . . . Atlanta, [and] EPA" (side 2). In this sense, the participants of the MTRG reflected the various concerns surrounding the deepening project. During the meeting, there was "a lot of interaction" making participation "pretty good" (side 2). As "all of the group" (side 2) participated equally, the MTRG engaged in the myth of the common good to reach consensus on a study design based on input from "almost everyone in the group" (side 2). Modezelewski concluded this consensus-based narrative with the statement, "generally the communication has been very good . . . so any details you want to bring up" (side 2).

Sensing that this articulation did not accurately reflect the workings of the MTRG, Savannah Manufacturer's Council representative Bob Scanlon began to question the committee's activities. First Scanlon asked "where" (side 2) the group met. As he became aware that the group met in Atlanta, Scanlon suggested that this location may cause the group to be unrepresentative since South Carolina and Georgia state agency offices were located near Savannah and "there's been no state participation at all for either Georgia or South Carolina" (side 2). Scanlon's suggestion that this group may not be representative of the SEG's interests and that all stakeholders may not have access to their activities, initiated a lengthy discussion replete with reassertions that the activities of the MTRG ensured the equality and representation of all stakeholders. The ATM's representatives continually affirmed that although the meetings were held in Atlanta, the MTRG was committed to "outreach" (side 2) in the form of information exchange through "web page" postings, hard "copies" and "written comments" and email and telephone interactions (side 2). Such activities ensured that all of the SEG's interests were represented and considered in the MTRG discussions. Since all members had access by participating "electronically if they couldn't make it to the meeting" (side 2) all stakeholders acted equally. The result was the "significant involvement" (side 2) of all parties in designing the studies (common good).

Yet, throughout this discussion, it became clear that the members of the MTRG enjoyed a special status among stakeholders. First, discussion revealed that some members of the group were considered more important than others were. In order to justify the Atlanta meeting location, Ed Modzelewski argued that

> the major thrust of the first three tasks are water quality issues and the keeper of those standards are really housed in Atlanta – its EPA and EPD. We wanted to accommodate that group in Atlanta primarily because they have busy schedules and they're really the two important agencies that really have to get involved (side 2).

Throughout the ensuing discussion, the preferred status of these agencies surfaced. The EPA, EPD and FWS were continually characterized as “primary agencies” (side 2) with “significant interests” (side 2). In contrast to other stakeholders, their participation was described as “at least very important and perhaps even critical” (side 2). This characterization of the EPA, EPD and FWS as more important than other members of the MTRG, revealed that in practice stakeholders were not all equal.

Second, discussion indicated a distinction between the MTRG committee as a whole and other stakeholders. In defense of the MTRG’s decision to hold their meeting in Atlanta, the GPA Project Manager Charles Griffen classified the MTRG as a “scientific group” of “scientific folks” who “as with any engineer . . . don’t necessarily need meetings” and could “adapt their activities as a scientific group to interact together in the best way that that group can deal with” (side 2). Griffen’s description of the MTRG as a specialized group was inconsistent with the predominant characterization of stakeholders as equal. As he continued, he also suggested that the MTRG controlled group decision making. According to Griffen, following their exclusive meetings, the MTRG would then “bring back to the SEG the results of their deliberations and ask for - ask for SEG consensus about what they brought back” (side 2). In this narrative, as the technical elite determined the common good, other members of the SEG were reduced to the role of saying, “hey, . . . what they’ve got is the right thing” (side 2). This process was inconsistent with the myth of the common good.

As inconsistencies between stakeholder characterization and narrative and actual practice appeared, members began to demand a vocabulary more reflective of group interaction. Requesting to make the distinction between stakeholders explicit, Sierra Club President Judy Jennings asked the GPA to

> name the agency that you are talking about I mean you made references to certain agencies . . . certain agencies are supportive of fast track, would you just put names on who those are? . . . if you want to be more clear I’d appreciate it (side 2).

By asking for the specific names of stakeholders with special status to be identified, Jennings suggested a recharacterization of stakeholder that better reflected group practice. Such a vocabulary would be "more clear."

Jennings' suggestion caused environmental activist Ben Brewton to initiate a more direct consideration of the stakeholder interaction narrative. In this next section of the meeting, Brewton recounted his personal experience of being excluded from the MTRG activities to point out inconsistencies between the guiding myth of the common good and actual group practice. Specifically, he outlined how he was denied access to the information circulated in the Atlanta meeting. The GPA representatives responded to Brewton's accusations of inappropriate practice evasively and attempted to rearticulate the consensus vocabulary by positioning the committees' activities as consistent with the myth of an open and consensus-based decision process. These responses angered Brewton who demanded that the GPA officials address his questions directly in the effort to craft an outline of group activities that reflected their actual practice.

Brewton began to interrogate the narrative of group activities by explaining that he sent a representative to the MTRG meeting because he could not attend personally. Attempting to participate in the free and open deliberation characteristic of the myth of the common good, he then contacted the GPA representatives, asking to "be copied on meetings correspondence, attendance lists and so forth of the modeling technical review group" (side 3). The response he received, "that neither we nor the representative we asked to go were officially considered members of that group and as such we would not be copied on anything" (side 3), indicated that participation in the MTRG deliberations was not open. Seeking a narrative which more clearly described group interaction, Brewton questioned "can someone address if that information will be made available generally to those of us who request it or not?" (side 3). When this request was met with the GPA's representative Charles Griffen shuffling through his papers for his email response, Brewton continued to push for an answer "in plain English rather than reading the message" (side 3).

In his prepared response, Griffen worked to rearticulate the myth of the common good. Initially, Griffen conceded that the MTRG followed a narrative where "technical and scientific modeling professionals [were] charged to come to agreement on a set of final task statements on a monitoring plan which will be presented to the SEG for approval" (side 3). These professionals, according to Griffen, would select their own meeting location in order to "facilitate the members of the particular group and their mission" (side 3). However, the MTRG would then update other members such as Brewton "at subsequent SEG meetings [with] regular status reports on this and other SEG commission tasks" (side 3). At this point, the SEG members could participate and comment on the "activities of . . . the scientific working group" (side 3). In this narrative, the MTRG merely acted as an arm of the SEG working to bring the group quality information, which they could then deliberate about to make decisions. Because the MTRG functioned in this way, its existence facilitated open deliberation among the SEG. Griffen then took this story a step further, asserting that since the creation of the group was a result of the SEG consensus, its practices were consistent with the guiding group goal of consensus based decision making.

Pointing out the contradictory and evasive nature of this response, Brewton asked for the telling of a more accurate narrative by stating "I don't understand if he answered yes or no we'll be made available copies of minutes, attendance sheets and findings or if we did . . . I just don't get the answer" (side 3). However, his attempt to force a dearticulation of the common good myth only initiated its rearticulation by the GPA Deputy Director David Schaller. Schaller asserted "there isn't any data we choose to hide from anyone" (side 3) and that any data was available "to everyone who wants the data" (side 3). Since information was available to all, deliberation was free and open. He argued that the GPA's failure to distribute information resulted simply from the fact that "to manage all of our data and distribute it to you and Patsy and to everyone would cost bundles of money" (side 3). Schaller then drew on the guiding ideograph of consensus to argue that information dispersal was not the GPA's responsibility but rather "up to the consensus of the working group" (side 3). By defining information dispersal as an activity based on group

consensus rather than GPA accountability, Schaller framed the GPA's refusal to make minutes available to all stakeholders as consistent with consensus-based decision making. In an attempt to fix this rearticulation, Griffen suggested "we table this discussion" (side 3).

Brewton, however, remained unsatisfied with the inaccurate descriptions of group process offered by Griffen and Schaller. Angry, he began,

> let me redefine the question . . . we're talking about a report that apparently was distributed to some people and not, and we're supposed to be familiar with it and react to it or get some information about it here (side 3).

In this statement, Brewton outlined inconsistency between a practice of exclusion and the myth of the common good, which required access and participation of all group members. Questioning, "can we get a yes or no we still haven't heard an answer" (side 3), Brewton called for a dearticulation of the common good myth and the crafting of a reality based articulation of the deliberation process.

Following this interchange, Brewton pushed the group to discuss directly the definition of stakeholder through recounting his experience of exclusion from the MTRG activities. Brewton began his interrogation of the stakeholder characterization with a description of how he

> specifically sent an email in advance of that [MTRG] meeting asking that . . . a consultant that we had contracted with be included, uh when he attended the meeting he was told that neither of us were considered to be on the list or part of the committee (side 3).

By highlighting that neither he nor his representative was allowed membership in the MTRG, Brewton suggested that in practice there was a distinction between stakeholders. He then questioned the consistency of this practice with the group vocabulary by asking, "I'd like to know why we seemingly have an open invitation for participants, yet when we asked that we were told that no we weren't participants or members of the committee?" (side 3). In this question, Brewton highlighted the inconsistency between the articulated characterization of stakeholders as equal

and the practice of differentiating some as members of a specialized committee while excluding others.

Brewton's recognition of this inconsistency initiated a series of attempts to dearticulate the consensus-based characterization of stakeholder. First, the GPA representative Charles Griffen began to recognize explicitly inequalities between stakeholders as he asserted, that there was a "difference between the deliberations of the SEG and the deliberations of the technical task people" (side 3). However, he quickly caught his slippage from the standards stakeholder description and responded that this was "not the forum in which I care to deal with it" (side 3). Next, Tybee Island representative Bill Farmer crafted a characterization of stakeholder, which more accurately captured diversity and difference between participants. According to Farmer, rather than all stakeholders being uniform,

> some are very interested in the water quality work that's being done by the technical review group, some are not, some are interested in other items and will not plug into that and will not care too much about that information. Others will care a lot about it and want to review it and take a long time to review it and understand it because the SEG has to approve what the technical review group does or the final product of the technical review group, and some people would not feel comfortable giving their consensus unless they are able to review that in its entirety. Some will, some won't care (side 3).

Farmer's characterization identified differences among stakeholder interest, representation and power at various points in the deliberation process. This characterization was much more reflective of actual group experience.

In response to these alternative portrayals of the stakeholder, Facilitator Rees quickly made an attempt to reassert the notion that all stakeholders were equal. He began by rearticulating the myth of the common good. In a seemingly "off topic" statement he described the SEG forum as "open . . . public involvement government" (side 3) where "you can't close the door to anybody" (side 3). Since all were allowed to participate in deliberation, a stakeholder in this myth

was “anybody. . . [who] wants to join” (side 3). In essence, all who want could represent their interest in this forum equally. Rees then attempted to fix this characterization by arguing that members’ attempts to craft a notion of stakeholder that more accurately reflected SEG interaction was really an effort to differentiate and limit representation. He stated,

> If you folks want to close the door on somebody and you can reach consensus on that then you can do that . . . I’m just telling you my reaction of having done a lot of public involvement that I’m not sure if I could close the door on anyone or on any issue (side 3).

Rees reasserted qualities of equality and representation as he critiqued members’ effort to craft a more accurate account of the stakeholder.

A number of stakeholders’ questioned Rees’ characterization of stakeholder as inaccurate. Chris Schubert asked Rees, “anybody that’s showed up . . . that’s the group?” (side 3). Such amazement suggested that Shubert might not have found Rees’ characterization to be believable. Next, an unidentified member highlighted practical inconsistencies with the characterization of stakeholders as representative. He questioned whether “a couple of scientists from Skidway with expertise in modeling” were participating in the activities of the MTRG. The “uhs” that followed revealed that they were not and indicated that they had not been allowed to participate equally in this forum and represent their interests. Finally, a member from the Fish and Wildlife Service entered the discussion. This representative first voiced concern over inconsistencies between descriptions of the group and actual group practices. He stated that Federal agencies were worried that the GPA was using the SEG consensus to manipulate Federal agencies (who were members of the SEG) into committing to the deepening project. In this sense, the GPA was controlling the process. Recognizing this inconsistency between the articulated group narrative and actual practice, agency members “found it difficult to comment” and “chose not to comment” (side 3). In turn, inconsistencies between vocabulary and practice reduced the participation of many key groups. Next, this representative provided a characterization of stakeholder that “was a lot different” (side 3). He argued that many Federal agencies were in

precarious positions because they were members of the SEG but also were required by their agencies to review the entire project when all phases of study were completed. As members of these agencies, they had to follow certain laws that mandated not only the degree to which they could participate but also the types of studies they could conduct. They also had different "information needs [that] . . . need[ed] to be met in order to be in sync" (side 3). By interrogating inconsistencies between group vocabulary and reality and then providing a characterization of stakeholder that accurately captured differences in representation and interest, this individual worked to dearticulate the consensus-based articulation provided by Rees.

Such dearticulations drew an immediate response from the facilitator. Rather than attempting to reassert a consensus-based notion of stakeholder Rees instead attempted to move discussion to another topic. Recognizing that Federal law limited the participation of Federal agencies, Rees asserted that "we probably need to develop a process so that we make sure that we do meet the state and federal agency coordination meetings act through this stakeholders process" (side 3). With this comment, he moved the group to a discussion of their purpose.

In summary, as group discussion progressed from consideration of the activities and status of the specialized MTRG to a more direct focus on the meaning of membership, the individuals of the SEG struggled to define "stakeholder." Throughout this discussion, the closed nature of group interaction and the different status and interests between stakeholders became apparent and revealed inconsistencies between actual group practice and a consensus-based vocabulary. These exposed inconsistencies prompted members to craft alternative characterizations and narratives that more accurately reflected the group and their interaction. During this section of the meeting however, such dearticulations only facilitated rearticulations of consensus-based terms.

The Purpose of the SEG

The final discussion topic of the February meeting was the purpose of the SEG. The group addressed this topic as they worked to develop a set of operating procedures from an

outline of suggested rules for operation that had been provided for them by the GPA in the January meeting. Although they had hoped to develop the entire set of guidelines during that meeting, they only agreed on the content of the introduction. In this meeting, the SEG readdressed the operating guidelines in the effort to define more clearly their purpose through discussions of their scope and method for group decision making. In these debates, articulations of a consensus-based vocabulary proved inconsistent with actual group practice. Recognizing this inconsistency, stakeholders crafted alternative terms. However, these dearticulations produced only rearticulations of consensus-based meanings.

Bill Farmer from Tybee Island and Brittney Robinson from Savannah Manufacturer's Council initiated the discussion of the SEG's scope. These speakers crafted a narrative where stakeholders dealt with a broad scope of issues and determined which should be addressed through fair and rational debate. Members then attempted to perform this plot and broaden their scope. Toward this end they suggested the removal of the word estuary from their mission statement. This statement limited the scope of SEG issues to "the Savannah River Estuary." Removal of the term ensured that issues such as Tybee Beach and Ft. Jackson, which fell outside of this geographic area, would be addressed. However, the GPA refused to allow such alteration. The GPA's effort to limit the SEG's scope to the estuary proved inconsistent with the narrative articulated by Farmer and Robinson. Stakeholders began to question this inconsistency and provided accounts more reflective of group interaction where the GPA controlled the scope of the SEG activities. In response, the GPA conceded and allowed the SEG to broaden their scope by removing the word estuary.

Farmer began this debate by drawing on consensus-based vocabulary to articulate a broad scope for the SEG. First, he characterized stakeholders as "individuals" who didn't "have to speak for [her/his] organization" but who could "help develop a final document" (side 4). The official agency or organizational approval would "come later" (side 4). By articulating the notion that stakeholders bracketed differences in interest and status as they entered the group, Farmer

clearly asserted a consensus-based characterization of stakeholder. With the statement, all "members [could] propose tasks for the group to consider" (side 4), Robinson likewise emphasized the equal quality of all stakeholders.

Farmer then outlined a narrative based on the common good myth. He argued that the SEG would have a broad scope considering "all the issues" identified on a "tentative list" (side 4) created with the input of all stakeholders. Rather than making issue investigation only the charge of a technical elite, "committees" composed of various SEG members "would look at all those issues" (side 4) and the SEG then would determine "whether the committee reports had yes or no merit" (side 4). Through this open deliberative process, the SEG could unite to "determine whether [they] agree with that and make a recommendation to the Ports Authority" (side 4) as to whether a particular issue should be addressed. In this sense, participants would determine which issues were addressed through open and rational deliberation. Robinson completed Farmer's narrative by offering a definition for the SEG's guiding ideograph. Although this term emerged in earlier discussion, no explicit definition had been offered in this meeting prior to Robinson's suggestion. She argued that decisions should be made by "consensus not by majority vote" (side 4). In contrast to the dominance and division found in majority voting, consensus decisions were inclusive and fair agreements. Disagreement would be dealt with by submitting "minority views . . . as well the consensus along with the report" (side 4). In essence, disagreement would not be incorporated into the decision but rather exist along side it as a footnote.

Following this suggested outline of the scope of group activities, members attempted to enact the myth outlined by Farmer and Robinson as they suggested the removal of the phrase estuary from the mission statement. Believing that the SEG should be broad in scope by considering "all issues, all potential impacts from the project" (side 4), Farmer suggested "taking out" the word estuary. In this sense, he tried to enact his narrative where the SEG started with a broad list of issues and through free and equal deliberation would determine which the group

should consider. Surprisingly, Rees supported this suggestion and asked the SEG to "recall that sentence and say something like Savannah River Channel Deepening Project" (side 4).

However, the GPA immediately worked to limit this attempt by the SEG members to enact the myth of the common good. The GPA deputy director stated, "I would suggest that we would like to study it some more" (side 4). The GPA project director Charles Griffen likewise asserted that "we'd like to evaluate the proposal and get back to the SEG" (side 4). The GPA attempted to determine the scope of the SEG by not allowing the SEG to change the term. The GPA's control was clearly at odds with the common good narrative that Farmer articulated. Stakeholders began to question this inconsistency. In response, the GPA representatives quickly worked to reassert the myth. Schaller stated that

> it is possible with the SEG if they choose to propose a broadening of the scope of the work that needs to be undertaken can certainly do that and take a vote and recommend that component to the Georgia Ports Authority as a project component (side 4).

In this statement, Schaller attempted to reenact the notion that the stakeholders could broaden their scope and determine issues through rational deliberation. At the same time, underlying this rearticulation was the suggestion that it would be the GPA who made the final choice. Griffen contributed to this tale with the statement, the "SEG should go ahead and deliberate that discussion and uh, at this point we'll abstain on our position on that" (side 4). Griffen's assertion that the SEG should continue to deliberate and discuss suggested a narrative where stakeholders determined their own "common good" through free and open deliberation. However, like Schaller's earlier comment, Griffen's assertion that the GPA would withhold their comment intimated that the GPA was ultimately controlling the process.

The GPA's demonstrated inconsistency between articulations of the myth of the common good and actual practice again produced questioning from a number of members. First Brewton questioned in an amazed tone, "you have to go back and evaluate removing a word?" (side 5). Chris Schubert, offered a more realistic narrative of the SEG scope. He stated,

> what's coming out of this is, that if we pick out this here or this gets picked out then the ports will huddle and they will say something, we'll take this under advisement, which is fine, and then they'll consider it for three or four days and an edict will come down and say that item is to be dismissed because we simply won't consider it (side 5).

In this dearticulation of the common good myth, Schubert presented a realistic narrative where the GPA limited and controlled the scope of the SEG activities. Brewton likewise depicted an alternative narrative. He argued,

> there are concerns that people have about this project, environmental concerns, economic concerns and other concerns that may not necessarily fall within the scope of a particular law and my thought, my understanding was that this group was here to identify what those concerns are and whether you all want to deal with them or fight them or whatever you want to do later you all can certainly decide to do (side 5).

In Brewton's narrative, the SEG would be broad in scope, dealing with a wide range of issues. However, the GPA ultimately controlled what issues were dealt with. This dearticulation of the common good myth recognized the GPA's power and control over SEG activities.

Stakeholders then attempted to fix this alternative narrative through performance. First Schubert enacted it by initiating discussion of an issue the GPA had previously argued was out of the range of consideration. He stated,

> I had said something about a beach erosion committee and they said wow this is beyond the scope and we are already saying in here that this is not our problem, this is the Corp's problem. [This] is clearly contrary to what all studies have shown (side 5).

Schubert identified this issue as an interest of stakeholders that the GPA had dismissed and denied the SEG the ability to address. In this sense, he performed the alternative group narrative crafted by Brewton. As deliberation continued, stakeholders continued to question inconsistency and joined in this alternative narrative. In response, the GPA representatives worked to rearticulate the common good myth by removing the word estuary from the introduction. By

allowing removal of this word, the GPA could again assert that the group had a broad scope and could define their own issues through open, rational deliberation. In essence, through this concession, GPA reestablished the myth of the common good as the guiding narrative of stakeholder efforts.

Within this debate over the operating guidelines introduction, the decision to remove the word estuary from the opening statement was determined by SEG consensus. Although consensus had been described as the ultimate goal of deliberation throughout the meeting, Robinson's effort to articulate its meaning marked the only instance where a formal definition was explicitly recognized. For this reason, after the SEG reached consensus on removing the word estuary from the operating guidelines, a number of members questioned what their decision truly meant. As the group moved to the issue of consensus, facilitator Rees offered an abstract definition that had been compiled from books on consensus-building, stakeholders' recommendations and personal experience. However, the terms of this definition produced two very distinct interpretations of its meaning. A consensus-based articulation of assumed agreement emerged first. However, because this definition proved incapable of capturing the disagreement and difference characteristic of the SEG interaction, a second definition, which more accurately reflected the group worked to dearticulate this interpretation

Stuart Stevens initiated stakeholders' questioning regarding the meaning of consensus. Stevens asked, "do we have control of this language or are we just making a recommendation to GPA to change it" (GPA, 1999b, side 5). Likewise Chris Schubert questioned, "what we're doing now with the language; are we advising GPA or did we get an answer? I'm not sure" (side 5). Since no clear definition other than Robinson's had as of yet been offered to the SEG, they questioned whether consensus meant authoritative decisions or merely recommendations.

Moving to the discussion of consensus, Facilitator Rees forwarded a patchwork definition. His definition of this ideograph was characteristically abstract. He stated, "decisions will be by consensus and the markup that I got from the Manufacturer's Council that says also not

by majority vote" (side 5). Next, he detailed this definition more fully asserting that, "consensus is the mutual feeling that all concerns have been addressed, consensus does not necessarily mean unanimity or 100 percent agreement on everything by everybody, consensus is not conformity" (side 5). This part of the definition was "taken actually from a textbook on consensus building and group dynamics called *The rules for reaching consensus : the modern approach to decision-making* by Steven Saint and Jamie Farlong" (side 5). Finally, Rees noted that that the SEG accepted this definition in the January meeting "with the proviso that it is understood that in the event of a dispute over whether consensus has been reached on a particular issue the group would reconsider the definition at that time" (side 5). Although he forwarded an ideographic definition that was extremely abstract, as a rhetor, Rees was "constrained" to use this term "in ways that are more or less consistent with the rhetorical culture" (Condit & Lucaites, 1993, p. xiv). Because Rees spoke in an arena where a vocabulary of equality, representation, open deliberation and agreement was predominant, he drew on these assumptions in his ensuing interpretation of this definition. Rees then provided the following description of this process. First, he would

> kind of poll the group if everybody's comfortable, you know if there's a general feeling that it's ok then everybody says ok and if there's not a general feeling that it's ok somebody says no it's not ok, we haven't reached consensus and then we revisit them on issue by issue basis (side 5).

At the heart of the description was the characterization of stakeholder as equal. Equal participants joined together easily in agreement to determine their common good. If disagreement did arise, the group would merely return to the issue and continue to work "to proceed and get past the issue" (side 5). The final consensus decision that resulted would be all-inclusive since it "captured all" (side 5) concerns. As the end result of a process of equal and representative stakeholders coming together to deliberate freely and openly to reach agreement on a common good, consensus meant the culmination and the realization of the stakeholder ideal. Disagreement

was inconsistent with this narrative of agreement and satisfaction. In turn, if disagreement did remain, it would be recognized merely as an aside "to make it part of the official record"(side 5).

Recognizing that Rees's description of consensus as equality, agreement and satisfaction did not appear consistent with the disagreement and division experienced by the SEG members, stakeholders began to question the suitability of his interpretation. First, environmental advocate Chris Schubert argued that in Rees' description, "the minority view is contrary to consensus" (side 5). In essence, Schubert recognized that in Rees' description, disagreement was not considered in the final decision. Since disagreement and difference were fundamental parts of the SEG, such a notion of consensus did not reflect group activities. According to Condit and Lucaites (1993), since the meanings of ideographs are not fixed, "creative rhetors [can] craft their meaning in use" (xiii). Ben Brewton then took advantage of the abstract definition offered by Rees to craft an alternative interpretation of this definition of consensus, which reflected the disagreement and diversity of the SEG. According to Brewton, the definition of consensus gave

> anybody in the room the right to say when [Rees] said we've reached a consensus anybody in this room has the right to say, no I don't think we have and the group has agreed that we can go back and re-examine what the definition of consensus was or cross that bridge when we came to it (side 5).

In contrast to Rees' interpretation, stakeholders would not continually readdress a particular issue when consensus could not be reached. Instead members of the disagreed minority would "say well this definition of consensus is not working and we've got to stop and figure out what precisely what consensus is" (side 5). Andrew O' Conner captured this sentiment: "if conflict or dispute arises we're gonna take at that point we're gonna decide on a case by case basis what this consensus means" (side 5). Since stakeholders continually readdressed the very definition of consensus, they were empowered to change the very meaning of decision rather than simply forced to readdress the issue until agreement was reached. Consensus could be redefined,

sometimes reflecting agreement and sometimes disagreement. This fluid definition better reflected the complex and often conflicting context of the SEG deliberations.

The initial meaning of consensus as rational agreement provided by Rees prevailed despite the emergence of these alternative interpretations. Noting the inability of this definition to capture the disagreement and diversity of interests in stakeholder deliberations, stakeholders again questioned its suitability. For example, Federal agencies feared that with consensus meaning agreement and satisfaction, they might be forced into accepting a decision they disagreed with and then expected to promote that decision to their organization. These representatives maintained that they had an "independent responsibility to make their recommendations to the President and the organizational structure of the government [and couldn't] make commitment - an unequivocal commitment to the SEG" (side 5). Rather they must "preserve their authority, their ability to judge independent of their participation" (side 5). In essence, these stakeholders were calling for a definition of consensus derived from a diverse characterization of stakeholders and a narrative of independence and disagreement.

In summary, during this final section of the meeting the SEG members dealt with the issue of their purpose through discussions of their scope and mechanism of decision making. As they debated their scope, articulations of free and equal stakeholders determining the common good through rational consensus conflicted with a realistic narrative of the GPA's control. When members addressed the meaning of consensus, assertions of rational agreement proved inconsistent with the division and difference of SEG debate. Although stakeholders worked to craft a vocabulary more reflective of group interaction, their attempts were stifled by rearticulations of a consensus-based vocabulary

Conclusion

During the February 1999 Stakeholder Evaluation Group meeting, the members of the SEG struggled over the terms of their vocabulary as they discussed issues of their agenda, the definition of stakeholder and their purpose. This struggle produced two very distinct narratives of

stakeholder activity. The first was the model narrative crafted from the consensus based stakeholder model where stakeholders were characterized as representative and equal, deliberation was narrated as a free and open process where stakeholder united to determine the common good, and the motivating force of consensus was defined as rational agreement. The facilitator, GPA representatives and other members articulated this narrative as the foundation for discussion. The second was a realist narrative, crafted by a variety of stakeholders to reflect actual practice. In this narrative, stakeholders were different in terms of status and interest, deliberation and decision making was controlled and consensus meant disagreement as well as agreement. Each time this dearticulation destabilized the model based vocabulary and exposed the reality of group interaction, the facilitator or the GPA representatives would intervene and attempt to fix the foundational terms. In this sense the model based vocabulary of equality, open deliberation and rational agreement was often used to cover up and smooth over recognition of inequality, control and disagreement. Its rearticulation also produced frustration and anger among stakeholders who recognized its inaccuracy.

By the end of this meeting the GPA temporarily fixed the model-based vocabulary. The prevalence of this vocabulary to describe group process was evidenced in local news reports. News accounts portrayed stakeholders as representative of "all interested parties" (Kreuger, 1999a, p. 2) with "50 representatives" from "state and federal agencies, local industries, environmental organizations and others" (Krueger, 1999a, p. 2). Members were also equal with all participants offering "comments and concerns" that were "being taken seriously" (Editorial: Fresh start, 1999, p. 1). Reports also narrated the myth of the common good with deliberation as an "inclusive . . . process of identifying and analyzing potential project impacts" (Krueger, 1999a, p. 2). Finally consensus was described as producing decisions that were both "good" (Editorial: Fresh start, 1999, p.2) where "all environmental impacts were considered" (Krueger, 1999a, p. 3) and authoritative since the group had to "sign-off on the Savannah River channel deepening project's final environmental impact statement" (Krueger, 1999b, p. 1).

These same reports also recognized the prevalence of stakeholder frustration. Many reports depicted that stakeholders were “questioning their role” (Krueger, 1999a, p.3) and felt “stalemated” (Krueger, 1999b, p. 1) and “frustrated” (Krueger, 1999a, p. 2). The FWS withdrew from the group two days after the meeting (Krueger, 1999a). Other agencies such as the Georgia Environmental Protection Division and the National Marine Fisheries Service “hinted” that they too “may withdraw from the SEG process” (Krueger, 1999a, p. 2) These reports of discontent, most likely fueled by terminological inconsistency, suggested that this struggle was far from over.

CHAPTER 4

STUCK IN ITS OWN MUD

An atmosphere of pessimism plagued the remaining SEG members and made it apparent that they had a long and arduous road to the completion of their task following the February meeting. In an effort to put a "fresh face" on the SEG and encourage the estranged FWS to rejoin, the GPA hired a "neutral" facilitator for the March meeting. Believing that stakeholders were dissatisfied because they felt that "the process was tainted, since one of the GPA's contract employees was facilitating the sessions" (Editorial: Fresh start, 1999, p. 1), the GPA was confident that this move would ease conflict. Optimistically they projected a new beginning for the SEG spearheaded by the return of the FWS since "with a neutral party leading the discussion, the agency would not have to worry about compromising its responsibility" (Editorial: Fresh start, 1999, p. 2). However reality proved different. The FWS did not rejoin the SEG and according to columnist Gail Krueger, the group was "stuck in its own mud . . . slow to move beyond its own in-fighting" (Krueger, 1999e, p. 1) for the first half of the following year. As the SEG worked to identify possible impacts and complete assessment studies during this time, struggles over vocabulary affected their ability to deal with the issues. Although inconsistencies between actual practice and the consensus based vocabulary continued to produce lengthy debates, members increasingly employed language strategies to offer new meanings for stakeholder, group myth and consensus. Initially, these changes in SEG vocabulary met with rearticulations of consensus based meanings. However, as the group recognized that these meanings better reflected actual group practice and helped to move the group along on their mission, they began to reveal greater acceptance of them. Since new meanings were based in traditional environmental decision practices, by the end of the July meeting, the SEG started to demonstrate such characteristics.

In this chapter, I trace the struggle of SEG members to craft a more workable vocabulary from March 1999 to July 1999. I begin this discussion with an overview of the issues and terminological struggles leading up to the July meeting. Next, I engage in a detailed analysis of this meeting. This concentrated analysis allows me to explore points of terminological struggle more completely. By analyzing shifts in the characterizations, narratives and ideographs of the SEG during this time, I can chart discursive change within the group.

The SEG's Slow Progress

March 1999 – June 1999

To assess the Savannah Harbor Deepening Project from afar in the period from March 1999 to June 1999, one would surely conclude that the project was progressing at a rapid pace. At the end of March, the Georgia General Assembly approved $10.8 million dollars for the Savannah Harbor Deepening, marking environmentalists' "lone disappointment" from lawmakers (Williams, 1999, p. 1). In fact, the funding for this project alone was greater than for all the projects in other Georgia cities combined (Walck & Salzer, 1999, p. 2). In April, the United States Senate passed the WRDA of 1999. This legislation authorized $230 million for the Savannah project with the Federal government responsible for $145 million and GPA responsible for the other $85 million. House approval quickly followed. Although the House and Senate versions of the bill contained differences that had to be "ironed out," both included "language conditioning authorization of the project on completion of a study analyzing the impact on the environment of dredging the river channel to various depths between 42 and 48 feet" (Pace, 1999, p. 2). The Bill also gave the Corps of Engineers, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Interior and the EPA "kill switch authority" (Dewig, 1999, p. 2) if they thought the project was inadequate in any way. While awaiting final authorization, in May, ocean shipping rates were deregulated. This move secured the industry shift to the hub and spoke system projected by GPA and fueled GPA's fast track mentality. However, since approval was contingent on the

completion of an environmental analysis by the SEG, the future of the harbor-deepening project depended on the productivity of this group.

Procedural and Technical Issues

The SEG grappled over a series of procedural and technical issues from March to June. First, the mission of the SEG remained a topic of contention. In the April meeting, members identified "the scope and content of scientific investigations and analysis to be performed pursuant to the development of the Tier II EIS [and] the impacts of the project and the resulting appropriate mitigation actions" (SEG, 1999c, p. 3) as the two "deliverables" they would present to the GPA. Other mission related aspects of the operating guidelines were often tabled for more "time sensitive" issues. For example, in the April meeting, facilitator Dysart curtailed discussion of the operating guidelines, reasoning that although they were "important because we are moving down the road . . . they don't have a deadline like other things do" (SEG, 1999c, p. 3). In fact discussions of operating procedures were tabled so often that by May, the SEG had yet to approve a clear mission statement that said "this is what we are really trying to do" (SEG, 1999d, p. 4).

The SEG also remained mired in debate over agenda issues. Agenda setting was a significant topic of discussion. Stakeholders continued to debate whether Tier I EIS comments had been adequately addressed and if not whether the comments should or should not act as their primary agenda source. In response to stakeholders' continued requests for the GPA to explain how they addresses each Tier I EIS comment, Morgan Rees, who became the GPA's SEG representative following his replacement as facilitator, presented an indexing of all public comments on the Tier 1 EIS in April. In this report, he "identified the individual comments by the person or group that commented . . . [and] went through and listed where all these things were adequately addressed" (SEG, 1999c, p. 5) in the EIS. At this meeting, members decided that they would use this report to determine if comments were adequately addressed. If a comment was not, the group would pursue scientific investigation. The GPA's deputy director, David Schaller objected to this approach, reasoning that if the SEG decided an issue was addressed inadequately

they should identify in what way the GPA's response was not adequate (SEG, 1999c, p. 6). A lengthy debate ended without conclusion and in ensuing meetings this report dropped from discussion as the new facilitator developed a new list of stakeholder concerns. Although this inventory was more limited than the Tier I comments, Dysart defended it as a "living list" of issues that could be changed as needed. While debate on the Tier I EIS comments ceased, the GPA's control over particular issues continued to be a topic of concern.

In addition to disagreement over the method for identifying the agenda of issues, members also struggled to determine the scope of their studies. In both the April and May meetings, concern arose over whether studies should be designed to measure only the impacts of the current deepening project (incremental effects) or of this project combined with all past deepenings (cumulative effects). In cases where the GPA was required by law to study the issue, such as the water salinity and chloride content studied by the MTRG, they supported investigation of cumulative impacts. However in the case of Tybee Beach erosion, an issue that the GPA did not feel needed investigation because it was not required, they suggested a study of incremental impacts. After many debates, the SEG decided that all scientific work groups would consider both incremental and cumulative effects.

Scientific work demonstrated a similarly slow pace. In the following months, the SEG's first standing committee, the MTRG, continued to pursue their studies separate from the larger body of the SEG membership. Although this technical committee was initially envisioned to perform all of the SEG's scientific work, the SEG had decided in the February meeting that this committee would pursue development of the water quality model and other committees would be formed to investigate other issues. In the April SEG meeting, the MTRG presented a series of recommendations for "immediate" approval by the SEG. Bo Ellis, an employee of the GPA's engineering consulting group, ATM, and MTRG committee chair, first asked the SEG to support studies to determine the current status of salinity, dissolved oxygen and short nosed sturgeon. These were three of the primary issues recommended by the GPA at the SEG's inception.

Second, the MTRG suggested that the SEG should request all parties who normally performed maintenance dredging in the harbor to stop for the period of data collection. This recommendation drew heated response from the River Pilots who argued that the scheduled clearance of sand build up, which occurred every thirty to ninety days from March 15 to June 15, was necessary for navigational safety. Third, the MTRG recommended that they continue production of task statements for the model development as soon as possible. This was the next research step where the data collected from suggested studies would be used to create a computer model to predict water quality changes resulting from deepening. Finally, the MTRG suggested that the SEG request the GPA to ask the Corps of Engineers to regulate dam releases in the river. Normally, the Corps of Engineers would periodically release water from upstream dams in order to ensure navigationally and environmentally safe flow levels.

During this presentation, it became evident that the MTRG had not "hammered" out the details of how to control maintenance dredging and dam releases. Since these factors would greatly impact the quality of the data collected, the committee's inability to secure such details produced a long debate in the April meeting. Although the MTRG began implementing scientific studies immediately, the SEG did not officially approve the full set of the MTRG recommendations until May. At the May meeting, the MTRG reported that they had asked the Maritime Council to reduce dredging and to contact the GPA representative Larry Keegan when they had to dredge. They also reported that their attempt to ask Corps to produce a high flow event from the dam was denied due to drought conditions.

The Beach Erosion Committee [BEC] was also formed over these months, making it the second of the SEG's standing committees. In the February meeting, the GPA argued that this committee was unnecessary because it fell outside of the five principle issues for the SEG study. The GPA contended that because the Corps' past projects impacted Tybee Beach, this issue was their responsibility. In the March meeting, however, environmentalist Chris Shubert and Tybee City administrator Bill Farmer arrived

> armed with letters from Skidaway Institute of Oceanography and Watson Technical Consulting that stated the Tybee shore should be included in any environmental mitigation plan [since] . . . the disruption in the sand sharing cycle has a negative impact on Tybee's economic well-being as its tourists-drawing beach . . . [and] threatened loggerhead sea turtles . . . that nest on island beaches (Krueger, 1999b, p. 2).

Despite the GPA's lack of approval, the SEG formed this new committee at the March meeting. The BEC instantly went to work requesting proposals from experts to investigate the impact of deepening on beach erosion. In the May meeting, committee Chair Bill Farmer forwarded two proposals to the SEG for consideration. These studies were "similar in that they both address analyzing historical as well as incremental impacts of the project" (SEG, 1999d, p. 7). However, one used a "coastal engineering approach" and the other took "satellite data and uses numerical modeling techniques" (SEG, 1999d, p. 7). The GPA refused to pay for the studies, again reasoning that this issue was the responsibility of the Corps. However shortly after the meeting, reports in the local news indicated concern from federal and state officials that erosion on Georgia coastal islands was "cutting into available nesting habitat for the sea turtles" (Krueger, 1999d, p. 1). Significantly, these entities were "pinning the blame on two factors: a series of storm-enforced high tides that have naturally eroded the beaches over the winter and a disruption of the natural sand sharing system due to channel deepening" (Krueger, 1999d, p. 2). As expected, the GPA threw their support behind the SEG approval of a Tybee Beach erosion study "to consider the historic and future impact of continued channel dredging on the beach of Tybee Island" (SEG, 1999e, p. 2) in the June meeting.

The SEG formed other committees during this period. The Striped Bass Committee emerged from four recommendations made by a group of fisheries experts in the April meeting. These individuals requested monitoring stations in the main channel, data collection upstream and in the Back River, and coordination of Corps maintenance dredging with the study schedule. Since striped bass was one of the five principle issues the GPA identified as suitable for the SEG's

consideration, Brewton's suggestion that "a committee be formed" (SEG, 1999c, p. 15) was easily approved. Likewise this committee's recommendation to add more sampling stations at the May meeting produced little disagreement. During this meeting, a study on shortnosed sturgeon was also approved since it too was considered a principle issue for the SEG's investigation. In contrast, the inception of the Economics Work Group [EWG] met with more resistance. The purpose of this committee was to review the economic analysis of the Tier I EIS, which had been criticized as insufficient. However, because it was considered a nonessential issue, this group gained little support from the GPA who denied the EWG access to their economic consultants, arguing that they were not currently under contract.

As the group inched along in the technical realm, a series of events occurred that destabilized the fragile trust among members. First, in April the Savannah Morning News reported that the GPA had tried to discredit the FWS while seeking funding for the WRDA of 1998. Reporter Gail Krueger exposed how the GPA's executives expressed the desire "to paint a picture of GPA being the good guy, willing to work with interested parties and do everything we can to squelch the cries of our 'oppressed' environment" (Krueger, 1999c, p. 1). Comments by the GPA's top officials found in internal correspondence indicated the GPA attempted to paint the FWS, DNR and EPA as "being neglectful of the economic needs of the state and this community despite being offered every opportunity to work together in developing a plan of action which would thoroughly analyze and mitigate all impacts of harbor deepening" (Krueger, 1999c, p. 1). Kreuger's report also conveyed stakeholders' disapproval at learning the GPA wanted to "kick F&WS's ass" (Krueger, 1999c, p. 2). Sierra Club representative Judy Jennings formally responded that "the ports doesn't deserve an inch after this" (Krueger, 1999c, p. 5). Fish and Wildlife officials stated that they were "deeply concerned about the documents" and that "there appears to be a level of deception" (Krueger, 1999c, p. 2). In fact, Krueger concluded that the release of these comments would "seriously hamper . . . bringing consensus to a stakeholder group" (Krueger, 1999c, p. 2).

Drawing on the historical meaning of the port as the driving element of Savannah's economy, the GPA promoted a record 11.3% increase in container traffic to mend their torn credibility in the weeks following this report (Asian rebound easing, 1999). However, in June the GPA's ethos became an issue again. At this meeting, stakeholders accused the GPA of censoring the SEG web site by removing members' assessments of the group's benefits and barriers posted by the facilitator in May. This situation led to much name-calling and accusations during the June meeting. Ultimately, the issue was resolved with the decision to retain tapes of meetings and to resurrect the Communications Committee to deal with information flow, the "question of needed content and detail of the meeting summary and the question of who approves what, when, and how?" (SEG, 1999e, p. 12).

Following the meeting, accusations that the GPA was "censoring the proceedings and withholding public information" (Krueger, 1999e, p. 2) appeared in the paper. However, the issue died quickly in the popular press. Only two weeks later, the city newspaper carried a glowing report detailing the benefits of river dredging on the bird population. This report indicated that the Corps was using dredge material to create two man made islands "out of silt and sand to appeal to least terns, gull-billed terns, and other threatened birds" (Krueger, 1999f, p. 2). According to reports, the Corps chose this option to mitigate against the destruction of wetlands resulting from the disposal of maintenance dredge material as opposed to a traditional approach of simply buying and donating additional wetlands. The report concluded that this effort was "critical to the survival of some shore birds" (Krueger, 1999f, p. 2).

In summary, from March 1999 to June 1999, pressured by impending congressional authorization, the SEG grappled with issues of distrust and toiled to identify their mission and procedures, create committees and instigate scientific studies. Within this context, stakeholders also continued to struggle with a consensus-based vocabulary.

Terminological Struggles

During this time, the members of the SEG continued to push for a vocabulary which better reflected group practice. They employed a variety of language strategies to expand the range of meanings for the consensus-based characterization, myth, and ideograph. Over the months, these dearticulations were increasingly employed and developed. Yet at this time, efforts to change the consensus-based vocabulary continued to facilitate its rearticulation.

First, beginning in March, members began to employ metaphor to expand the characterization of stakeholder. The GPA deputy director David Schaller began this meeting by recognizing that the GPA wore two "hats" in the SEG process. Kenneth Burke defined metaphor as a "device for seeing something in terms of something else" (Gusfield, 1969/1989, p. 248). In this sense, Schaller suggested that the GPA's roles or identities in the SEG process were like a person's hats, multiple, varied and changeable. He then explained that the first hat the GPA wore was the proposed Savannah Harbor improvement project proponent. According to Schaller, this role was "entirely logical and proper due to GPA's mission." (SEG, 1999b, p. 1). Schaller explained that he fulfilled this role at the SEG meetings, speaking for the GPA on policy matters beyond the scope of the SEG mission and addressing issues relevant to the GPA's role as project proponent. Schaller's description intimated that in this role, the GPA had more power than other stakeholders. He then identified the second hat as "active stakeholder" in the SEG process. In this role, the GPA was equal with other stakeholders. Morgan Rees acted in this capacity as the GPA's SEG representative. Interestingly, the GPA had additional representatives since Larry Keegan, Bo Ellis and Ed Modezelewski sat on the SEG as technical and scientific resources. These additional members seemed to weigh the balance in the GPA's favor since other groups generally had only one or two representatives.

According to Osborn and Ehninger (1962), when new metaphors are introduced into a rhetorical culture, "a state of higher tension exists, and when this tension is suddenly relieved by insight into the intended meaning, the metaphor like a taught bow string, drives the arrow of its

meaning deep" (p. 232). Possibly because this fresh metaphor had such persuasive force in this culture, members began adopting it to alter the consensus-based characterization of stakeholder. Later in the March meeting, facilitator Dysart indicated that all stakeholders had multiple identities since all wore "at least two hats" (SEG, 1999b, p. 10). According to Burke, by applying metaphors in this way, "we establish a character's reality" (Gusfield, 1969/1989, p. 248). In this sense, by using the metaphor of multiple hats to refer to all members, Dysart altered the reality of stakeholder from one of stability and equality, to one of multiple identities and difference. In later meetings, members then began to employ this recognition of stakeholder difference. In the May meeting for example, an unidentified stakeholder commented how he often became confused about "which hat" (SEG, 1999d, p. 13) (agency representative or SEG member) he wore during meetings. In the April meeting, stakeholders had adopted a principle, which affirmed that when acting in the role of government agency representative, these members could not commit fully to the SEG. Instead they oversaw the process and provided information to the SEG regarding requirements and to their agencies on the SEG activities. In this position of oversight, these members had more power than when acting simply as members of the SEG. In this sense, this individual's use of the hat metaphor affirmed the different identities and power inequalities of members.

The change this metaphor produced in the characterization of stakeholder facilitated the rearticulation of the consensus-based vocabulary. In the May meeting, Dysart argued that even though stakeholders wore many hats, "we, including GPA, meet on the SEG platform at these meetings to do SEG business" (SEG, 1999d, p. 10). Here, Dysart expanded the metaphor to rearticulate the consensus-based meaning of stakeholder. He added the term platform and drew on its cultural meaning of evenness to articulate the notion that although stakeholders were different and had multiple identities, when they met together as the SEG, inequalities in status and difference were bracketed.

Second, as stakeholders continued to grapple with inconsistencies between the myth of the common good and deliberative and decision making practices, an alternative narrative where technical experts and the GPA controlled group process emerged and developed. As it emerged, this alternative narrative continued to encounter rearticulations of the myth of the common good. Brewton seemed to instigate the development of this more reflective narrative as he questioned the membership, "how do we systematically determine what has to be addressed, what needs to be addressed, and whether it is within the purview of SEG?" (SEG, 1999b, p. 8) in March. In the April meeting, he complained that the group appeared to be "doing things out of sequence" (SEG, 1999c, p. 14), and urged the need to have a consistent narrative for group process by "talking in the same terminology . . . or with the same terms" (SEG, 1999c, p. 8).

Following Brewton's questioning, a variety of stakeholders articulated narratives of an expert controlled process. For example, in the April meeting, Judy Jennings suggested that since "some of these discussions are so technical . . . you [the MTRG] really need to get everybody on the same page before you bring it to the group" (SEG, 1999c, p. 15). In this sense she urged the technicians who composed this group to define and determine the issues for the SEG. In fact, during the April meeting, she even encouraged the MTRG to "continue to determine its own issues" (SEG, 1999c, p. 16). In later meetings other members contributed to the development of this narrative. For example, in the June meeting, Stuart Stevens said that the "content [of the technical committees] is likely above the head of the SEG members" and that in turn the committees should "deal with the technical details beyond the interest and understanding of more generalist/policy oriented SEG members and report results of their deliberations, recommendations and trade-offs to SEG" (SEG, 1999e, p. 15).

Other members offered detailed narratives of the GPA's control. For example, Schaller outlined how the GPA ultimately controlled the SEG agenda. He stated,

> I guess what I want to conclude by saying is that if the SEG believes there is some good justification for studying an issue we will address that issue with you if there is not

> already funding captured, available, appropriated to that . . . [but] I can't give you a . . . that we'll do it, no matter what it is, if you say it, we'll do it (SEG, 1999d, p. 10).

In this narrative, the GPA controlled what issues the SEG addressed through funding certain studies and not others. In this story, the GPA controlled the SEG's agenda.

These narratives of expert and agency control better reflected group process. However, they also reflected the hierarchical practices of traditional environmental decision making where experts and government agencies defined the issues and drew conclusions. Since these notions contrasted with the SEG's foundational vocabulary, the GPA representatives often responded with rearticulations of the myth of the common good. Initially, they reacted with attempted rearticulations of the notion that stakeholders defined their own agenda, an essential component of the myth. For example, David Schaller outlined a process where "the diverse group of SEG stakeholders . . . systematically and comprehensively" identified "the scopes of work for sound, credible, and cost-effective scientific studies to evaluate the likelihood of [project related] impacts and practical measures to mitigate such impacts" (SEG, 1999b, p. 1). Facilitator Dysart also emphasized this notion. For example, in the April meeting, he stated that "any issue that is brought up as important should be dealt with" (SEG, 1999c, p. 3). However, as control by technicians and the GPA became more evident, Dysart and the GPA's representatives turned to highlighting the openness of deliberation within meetings rather than the open nature of the decision making process. For example in the April meeting, Rees expressed his desire to have another member of the operating guidelines committee present the report "just so it wouldn't seem like GPA is trying to dominate this" (SEG, 1999c, p. 3). Facilitator Dysart also attempted to ensure the openness of the SEG deliberations in May by implementing a tent system to guarantee that he recognized "all who want to speak" (SEG, 1999d, p. 2). In this system, individuals who wished to speak would simply hold up a tent with their name on it for all to see. By emphasizing the open nature of the SEG deliberation during meeting, the GPA representatives and facilitator

Dysart attempt to rearticulate the common good by deflecting attention from the increasingly recognized dominance of the decision making process to the open deliberative process.

Finally, during this period stakeholders expanded the meaning of consensus decision making. However, as the title "temporary interim approval" emerged to designate a temporary consensus wrought with disagreement, Dysart worked to make this meaning consistent with the group's consensus-based vocabulary through rearticulation.

By March, members were increasingly questioning the inconsistency between the ideographic meaning of consensus and actual group decision making. For example, although the ideographic meaning of consensus indicated authoritative decision making, Brewton asked if the SEG's decisions had this authority by questioning the GPA whether the work of the SEG would be incorporated into the Tier II EIS. However, as late as April, no official calendar had been created to outline how the SEG fit into the deepening process. In light of this apparent inconsistency, environmentalist Neff McIntosh questioned whether the GPA had a commitment to carry out the recommendations of the SEG. Pointing out that the GPA only committed to performing the work required by law, he stated,

> I think, the nuances and qualifications that we are hearing, yes we will unequivocally do so and so and so and so and so to the extent that it is required by federal law. These qualifications I think none of us quite know what they mean and I think what I'm looking for is a commitment that if it is a legitimate environmental impact of the harbor work, identified by the SEG that we have a commitment that GPA is going to see that its fully addressed somehow (SEG, 1999d, p. 10).

Here McIntosh questioned whether SEG decision making truly reflected the ideographic authority of consensus. Brewton again demonstrated similar questioning in the same meeting. He stated, " I think there's a big question of who interprets. Is the SEG the final arbiter of interpreting that or is GPA or who is. That's probably a question that needs to be answered real soon" (SEG, 1999d, p. 11).

Stakeholders' push for a more realistic notion of consensus resulted in the emergence of one clear alternative meaning during this time. According to Condit and Lucaites (1993), "an ideographic phrase . . . can take on a wide range of meanings within the practice of a rhetorical culture, depending upon the particular context in which it is employed and the specific phenomenon it is used to praise or blame" (p. xiii). This meaning reflected the temporary nature of decision making and the actual disagreement of group members. In the April meeting, the MTRG asked the SEG to approve its recommended tasks. However, discussion revealed that the members of the MTRG disagreed about how to ensure that dredging and dam releases would be controlled during data collection. Brewton refused to agree, stating that "somehow we need to address how we are going to resolve these differences of opinions" (SEG, 1999c, p. 12). He argued that "I'm not comfortable sitting here approving the task statements subject to this and this and this that have yet to be worked out" (SEG, 1999c, p. 16). In turn, he suggested "temporary interim approval of MTRG recommendations" (SEG, 1999c, p. 16). This temporary approval allowed the MTRG to "move along with it" (SEG, 1999c, p. 16); however it also captured the notion that some members did not think all was "appropriate" (SEG, 1999d, p. 16). The body agreed to "interim approval" where they accepted the recommendations from the MTRG and tasked the GPA to pull together "folks to bring back a plan on implementation and management" (SEG, 1999d, p. 16). In this way Brewton expanded the meaning of the SEG consensus-based decision making to include disagreement.

In response to Brewton's attempt, the new facilitator rearticulated the meaning of consensus as achievable agreement. Dysart immediately called for a determination of consensus. He questioned the group, "are you ready to indicate whether you concur with the approval of the three modeling tasks. I hear concur. I see smiley faces and people want to move on. We are winding up here real fast" (SEG, 1999d, p. 15). By suggesting that all concurred and that such agreement was easily achieved, Dysart attempted to redefine this decision as consistent with the ideographic meaning of consensus.

In summary, from March 1999 to June 1999, the SEG membership continued to struggle with a consensus based vocabulary. Through metaphor and narrative stakeholders attempted to dearticulate the consensus-based vocabulary and provide workable definitions of their terms. These new meanings- the recharacterization of stakeholders as different and unequal, the narrative of a process controlled by technicians and the GPA and a meaning of consensus as temporary and inclusive of disagreement appeared workable in this context. Yet, they also reflected the hierarchical notions of traditional decision making. In the end, each of these dearticulations met with articulations of consensus-based meanings by the facilitator and the GPA representatives. Fixed in an ongoing debate over meaning, news reports indicated that as the SEG approached the July meeting, it was "slow to move beyond its own in-fighting" (Krueger, 1999e, p. 1). With members "concerned about the level of mistrust among the group" (Krueger, 1999e, p. 1) the SEG convened on July 13th 1999.

July 13, 1999 Meeting

In the July meeting, thirty-four SEG stakeholders continued their struggle with a consensus-based vocabulary. Following what had become established as standard operating procedure, facilitator Dysart began the July meeting by articulating the myth of the common good. He argued that unless the group "collectively" followed their "mission as it is stated in the operating guidelines . . . there are things on behalf of the environment – making good responsible tradeoffs- that aren't going to be done, or can't be done well" (SEG, 1999f, p. 1). By making the concepts of the environment and trade-offs equal, he urged members to unite to define a common good in the interest of all. He also reinforced the "critical" elements of "trust and mutual respect and understanding" (p. 1), central assumptions of the common good myth. In the ensuing five-hour meeting, although similar articulations of consensus based meanings for stakeholder, group myth and consensus continued, group members increasingly employed language strategies to expand its range of meaning. Stakeholders indicated more support for the traditional notions that emerged than they had in the past. For this reason by the end of the meeting, the SEG started

demonstrating the assumptions of hierarchy and expert control that characterized traditional environmental decision-making. In this section, I trace this discursive movement in the context of three principle issues debated by the SEG. These issues were the GPA judgement of the SEG recommendations, the role of technical committees, and the procedures for committee recommendations. I begin my discussion of each of these issues with an overview of the topic. Following this description, I draw on Condit and Lucaites' notion of public vocabulary to explore points where stakeholders articulate and dearticulate the consensus-based vocabulary.

The Criteria for the SEG Recommendations

The first issue addressed by the SEG was the judgment criteria for recommendations to the GPA. Rees opened the discussion with a presentation outlining required project definitions and laws. He reasoned that discussion of these elements was essential because they had immense bearing on whether the GPA accepted an SEG recommendation. Rees provided definitions for cumulative impacts, direct effects, indirect effects and mitigation that the NEPA required the GPA to use. Next, he described a number of complex environmental statutes, which controlled the deepening project. These included NEPA and The Water Resources Planning Act of 1965. These two Federal laws controlled the GPA's study process and enabled the Secretary of the Army to reject the project proposal. Section 404 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 also required a Corps permit for any Corps project performed by a sponsor. He then discussed the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act, which ultimately gave the EPA veto power if the agency did not feel that the project met the provisions of these laws. Finally, the Refuge Management Act required the Savannah Wildlife Refuge Manager to determine whether the project was consistent with the purposes for which the refuge was established. If the manager judged it as inconsistent the project would need approval by the Secretary of the Interior. Rees then described laws that could apply if "something happens that we didn't predict" (p. 4). These included section 216 of the Flow Control Act and section 1135 of the Water Resources

Development Act of 1986, which allowed the Corps to reassess a project if reality proved different than prediction.

Following this lengthy listing of the numerous laws to which the project was subject, Rees presented a decision tree used by the GPA to judge the SEG's recommendations. He divided the SEG recommended studies into two extreme categories, studies that were required by law, such as the shortnosed sturgeon study and studies that that the GPA considered irrelevant. He stated that any recommended studies on required issues would be accepted whereas studies on unrelated issues would not. In between these two categories was a "gray area," which required the GPA's judgment to determine if the recommended study related to the project. An example of this type of issue was historical erosion of the beach at Tybee Island. Following Rees' presentation, stakeholders asked questions for clarification. Although diverse questions fragmented discussion, most were aimed at clarifying the impact of laws on the SEG process and the GPA's vision for this process.

Throughout this discussion, Rees generally articulated a consensus-based vocabulary. However, his presentation also revealed inconsistencies between these meanings and practice. Possibly recognizing this inconsistency, stakeholders employed a variety of strategies to uncover characterizations of stakeholders, narratives of group process and meanings for consensus more reflective of practice. Although members indicated a greater acceptance of these dearticulations than in the past, rearticulations of the consensus vocabulary continued. In the following section, I explore this discursive movement during Rees' presentation.

As Rees introduced his discussion on the criteria the GPA used to judge the SEG's recommendations, he drew on the consensus vocabulary to articulate a decision process, which was consistent with the myth of the common good. Rees ambiguously described the process:

> whatever concepts we apply to make a judgment about how we deal with the SEG recommendations the bottom line is that it's pressable, . . . I don't want to draw a line that says here is one side and here's the other because there are significant gray areas and part

> of the purpose that I think of this group is to help us to work through those gray areas and figure out what's the right thing to do in everybody's interest (p. 4).

In this description, stakeholders were characterized as equal participants working through questionable areas and reaching a common good that was "in everybody's interests." Rees further asserted that the SEG's consensus decisions had authority. He stated,

> the bottom line is that GPA no matter what the SEG is concerned about if it has to do with the quality of the Savannah River Estuary we will work with the SEG to find a way to fix the problem (p. 4).

In essence, the GPA would listen to the SEG's decisions.

However Rees' presentation also revealed inconsistencies between practice and the myth. By simply presenting this information on the GPA's judgment criteria, Rees suggested that he had a different status than other members. As Rees described the GPA decision process more fully however, he exposed additional inconsistencies. He continued to detail the process:

> there is a recommendation from the SEG and it would go to GPA and we say well this is part of the project . . . if it's one of those mandatory things, part of the direct effects, part of the indirect effects no question, easy choice, if it's a mandatory task we'll adopt it . . . but on the other side, if it's clearly external and we've used a few silly examples . . .we would work with the SEG to find a solution to the problem (p. 4).

Here, Rees used the strategy of dissociation to differentiate between mandatory issues and nonmandatory issues. According to Perelmen "dissociation is the classical solution for incompatibilities that call for an alteration of conventional ways of thinking" (1970/1990, p. 1093). Here Rees employed this strategy to make the GPA's inconsistent approaches to issues appear consistent. In this strategy, a speaker divides a terms in two and gives one meaning value while the other "is denied value and is considered a mere appearance" (p. 1093). By dividing the term "issues" into those that are mandatory and those that are silly, Rees attempted to frame only mandatory issues as legitimate. Since only mandatory issues were important, the GPA would only

address them. Although he claimed that the GPA would "work with" the SEG to find a solution for other issues, by defining these issues as silly and less important, he suggested that there was no need for the agency to address them. While this strategy attempted to provide a "coherent reality" (Perelman, 1970/1990, p. 1093) of the GPA's activities, it also provided a narrative where the GPA controlled the SEG agenda. He continued, emphasizing this distinction between "two kinds of problems. One that is project related and we'll do that under the project and another kind that is not project related" (SEG, 1999f, p. 4). By narrating a process where the GPA chose which recommendations were part of the project or not and decided which ones to fund or not, Rees revealed that the GPA rather than the SEG defined the common good of the group. This practice was clearly inconsistent with a myth of group practice where all participated equally in decision making.

Following this expose, Rees employed historical narrative to rearticulate the myth of the common good. According to Charland (1987), such narratives "render the world of events understandable with respect to a transcendental collective interest" (p. 139). In this sense, Rees crafted a historical narrative in the attempt to commit stakeholders to the myth of the common good. He crafted a group history where "quite a few accomplishments . . . have been made in a cooperative way and really do reflect the decision philosophy that we have been talking about" (SEG, 1999f, p. 4). In essence, he attempted to assert that practice was consistent with the cooperative myth of the common good. He then went on to recount specifics instances of where "you folks all came together" (p. 4), suggesting equality between members. These instances included ironing out the details of the operating guidelines where "people said to me, we are never going to get through this and we did" (p. 4). Rees also described how "the SEG has recommended to the GPA and recommended to itself an established list of committees" (p. 4) and that there were "a number of tasks that have been worked through and agreed to, by the SEG" (p. 4). In these descriptions, Rees illustrated a process where equal stakeholders joined together to

produce the common good. He also emphasized the authority of the SEG's consensus decisions by describing how

> at the previous SEG meeting, the beach erosion committee made a recommendation for certain studies and the SEG adopted those recommendations and passed them along to GPA and in the past week we've seen . . . that GPA agrees to look at those beach erosion studies recommended by the SEG (p. 4).

This SEG decision had authority. Rees' historical account certainly worked to rearticulate the common good. At the same time, it also pushed the SEG members "to act so as to maintain the narrative's consistency" (Charland, 1987, p. 140).

However, in order for such a narrative to succeed, "members must be successfully inter-pollated" (Charland, 1987, p. 141) or accept the position they are offered in the historical narrative. Possibly recognizing inconsistencies between this history and actual practice, stakeholders were unmoved to act in such a fashion. Instead, they began to question Rees. For example, Tybee representative Bill Farmer questioned Rees whether "the required mitigation from this project [would] include bad conditions from the prior [deepening] project" (SEG, 1999f, p. 4). Rees' answer revealed that the GPA would probably deny the SEG the ability to address the issue of bad conditions. He answered, "basically – we'll go through the decision process: my sense is that that would be not part of the deepening project but the solution to the problem is something that this group could deal with" (p. 4). The GPA's denial of a suggested recommendation indicated their control of this process. Such control was inconsistent with a group myth where all participated equally in defining the common good. Rees emphasized this reality as he moved to another topic. He stated,

> as you know the Fish and Wildlife Service has opted out of this forum but we have still been working with them and in fact just in the past week or so finally worked up a proposal to do a marsh succession study that will be incorporated in the Tier II EIS and as soon as we can we'll get that on the web site get input from everybody whose interested

> in that but we are moving ahead with the Fish and Wildlife Service on the marsh succession impact in the refuge (p. 5).

The juxtaposition of the denial of Bill Farmer's request with a progress report of a joint study between the FWS and the GPA revealed the control the GPA had over the issues of the SEG agenda. Because the GPA viewed marsh succession as a legitimate issue, it was moving ahead with the FWS on its study. But because it did not consider bad conditions from past projects as a legitimate interest it would not support the group in their exploration of this issue. In addition to revealing a decision process controlled by the GPA, Rees statements also indicated an increasingly emerging division between the stakeholders' various statuses. As the decision-making member, the GPA occupied an elevated status, while the FWS, as a powerful government agency and representative of a legitimate interest, occupied the next level. Finally, other stakeholders with interests the GPA considered less legitimate occupied the lower levels.

In response to these suggestions of inconsistency, Stuart Stevens provided a narrative of group practice that more accurately reflected reality. He described the GPA decision process:

> GPA will get the recommendation from the SEG, and go through this decision tree and pop it out at the bottom in one of those two boxes that if it's correct, then I'm hoping that GPA can come back to the SEG and make sure we understand which one of those boxes we fall in and so forth (p. 5).

In this process, the SEG's consensus decisions acted simply as recommendations to the GPA which then decided what issues were relevant to the study or not. This narrative more accurately reflected the SEG's actual practice. Finally, Rees conceded and accepted this dearticulation of the common good myth. He stated,

> some of them [the issues] will be directly and clearly within the scope of the project; GPA will pay for them fund it, do it, whatever. Those that fall outside, we'll find a way of working with the SEG to solve them, but that will be with the SEG (p. 5).

Here Rees admitted that the GPA would only support the SEG decisions that fell clearly within the scope of the project. In dealing with gray issues, the SEG would be on its own. In this way, the GPA would ultimately determine what issues the SEG addressed.

Other stakeholders contributed to Rees' dearticulation as the discussion shifted. One member then questioned the status of the EPA's participation. Rees responded by trying to "characterize" the EPA as supportive of the process although, "they probably won't attend all the meetings but will attend when there are issues of importance" (p. 5). Here Rees characterized this stakeholder as having a difference in status that other members. Brewton developed this notion, arguing that "they reclarified their role as being an observer and consultant as opposed to direct participant" (p. 5). As a government agency, the EPA occupied a position of oversight, attending only when "important" issues were on the agenda. This characterization indicated that the EPA maintained a top position in the increasingly emerging hierarchy of the group. The group expressed no objection over this dearticulation, suggesting that stakeholders accepted this characterization of a hierarchy among members. Press Brownell then entered the conversation and employed the metaphor of the hand to offer a narrative of a GPA controlled project process. He recounted a project process where "the hand of the Port's Authority of managing this system through the Port development project is an ongoing activity, continuing activity and it's such a strong hand in the system" (p. 5). This metaphor indicated that like Smith's invisible hand, which controlled the system of capitalism, the GPA not only controlled the deepening project but also the entire river system. Such fresh metaphors can powerfully impact interpretation (Osborn & Ehninger, 1962). In this sense, the hand metaphor worked to alter the narrative of group process from the myth of the common good to a story of the GPA's control.

Interestingly, these dearticulations of the consensus based myth and stakeholder characterization went unchallenged. In fact, Dysart ended this convoluted discussion by recognizing difference in stakeholder power. In an attempt to move the discussion forward, he mentioned "a footnote about committee chairs" (SEG, 1999f, p. 5). He admitted prior confusion

over which "hat" Bo Ellis was wearing when he reported on the activities of the MTRG – whether "he was speaking as a committee chair, as a GPA contractor or what kind of hat he was wearing" (p. 5). Dysart then clarified that "the presumption is that when presentations are made, you are presenting things on behalf of the SEG committee and so forth" (p. 5). As a committee chair, Ellis had a greater status than other members. Although Dysart attempted to make this metaphor consistent with a characterization of stakeholder as equal in prior months, his use of it here indicated that this metaphor had become dead. According to Osborn and Ehninger (1962), metaphors become dead when "as a result of their continued use, their metaphoric nature dissipates and they stand as simple designative signs of the subjects to which they are applied" (p. 230). In this sense, the notion of multiple hats had become synonymous with the characterization of stakeholder, indicating that the characterization of stakeholder had been expanded to include recognition of different power levels among members.

In summary, in this section of the meeting, stakeholders continued to struggle with their vocabulary. Although articulations of consensus based terminology continued, stakeholders employed a variety of strategies to dearticulate these terms. As stakeholders began to accept a characterization of stakeholder as unequal and a narrative where GPA controlled the agenda, their vocabulary increasingly began to reflect the hierarchical, expert controlled practices of traditional environmental decision making.

The Role of Technical Committees

The next major issue under discussion at this meeting was the role of technical committees in the SEG. This issue arose during the presentations of the Striped Bass and Fisheries Committees. During the Striped Bass Committee presentation, this topic emerged as stakeholders debated coordination of the SEG study with the ongoing Corps 1135 study. At this time, the Corps of Engineers was engaged in an ongoing effort to document the effects of the Tide Gate on the striped bass population. The SEG Striped Bass Committee wanted to coordinate their study with the Corps. However, issues of timing and funding created problems for this

effort. Since the Corps study would be completed before the SEG study, the GPA feared that if the Corps implemented mitigation efforts before the SEG study was complete their study might become obsolete. Also, both groups struggled over how to negotiate who paid for what. As these aspects emerged during the July meeting, stakeholders recommended that the Striped Bass Committee pursue its coordination with the Corps. Members of the committee argued that the study was already approved and that the SEG did not need to make recommendations to ensure moving forward on the study process. Carrying out the tasks was the responsibility of the Committee, the GPA and the Corps.

Within this context, members continued to struggle with a consensus based stakeholder vocabulary. Throughout this discussion, members used a variety of strategies to dearticulate the consensus-based vocabulary by providing meanings for stakeholder, group narrative and consensus that more accurately reflected group process. Although rearticulations of a consensus-based terminology emerged to challenge alternative meanings, generally the group became more accepting of this traditional vocabulary. In the next section, I explore these terminological shifts.

Member Carl Hall instigated discussion of the striped bass issue with an overview of the coordination problems with the Corps of Engineers 1135 study. In this description, he illustrated a reality, which differed greatly from the one articulated in a consensus-based vocabulary. He began,

> I'm not sure that everybody understands, there are some complications underscoring the Striped Bass task which basically involves a lot of model runs. . . our biggest concern is uhm, what is still the problem of reproduction in the Back River which was not the case before the tide gate and how the deepening project may potentially impact the Back River or further impact any potential restoration (SEG, 1999f, p. 6).

In this description, Hall characterized the fishery experts as having a type of knowledge that other members might not understand. In this sense, he placed these SEG members at a higher level in the developing hierarchy than nontechnical members. He then went on to describe how

> the problem is that the 1135 project is really the project, this is a joint partnership between DNR and the Corps of Engineers that really determines what physical problems in the Back River carried over from the Tide Gate era may still be occurring and what those are and how to rectify that . . . but the Corps has a funding dilemma, 1135 really is supposed to end this December, they've got it extended for another year, we asked them to, but what we will ask them to do is the Corps can't afford to run all those models. We want to use GPA's model to do some preliminary runs that's gonna chart the course to help us to determine what some of the problems are from past actions. We are trying to work these two studies together that's what makes the explanation so difficult, you have to understand (p. 6).

In describing the Striped Bass Committee's efforts to coordinate their research needs with the Corps' ongoing study, Hall revealed that in practice, technical experts worked closely together to define the common good for the SEG. He also recognized inequalities between stakeholders by claiming that less technically experienced members would find it difficult to understand. In this sense, he reinforced his prior placement of technicians above other members in the SEG hierarchy.

ATM representative Larry Keegan then used a historical narrative to "add to" (p. 7) this story. The history that he recounted differed greatly from the history told by Rees earlier in the meeting. Keegan began:

> we sat down with the group of people working on the 1135 study . . . we're trying to figure out how we fit these together. At that point in time, I was concerned about the possibility about making choices, reaching conclusions using a version of a model that would be revised in what we were doing in this forum and we could result in having some very different outcomes . . .the scope of work included having the Port Authority pay to set up some additional grids for model runs. The Corps was going to pay GPA to run the model runs. They were going to ask the Port to set up the grids. At that point in

> time I hadn't seen it and so I said wait a minute, I gotta look and see what we gotta do here (p. 7).

As he recounted the coordination efforts, Keegan contributed to the development of a description where technical representatives and agencies negotiated and coordinated the SEG study process. This practice did not reflect the group myth where all participated in determining the common good. Keegan continued, describing how he then "talked to the Corps of Engineer study manager" to determine "how can we fit it together? " (p. 7).

In response to this revealed inconsistency between vocabulary and practice, some members attempted to rearticulate a consensus-based vocabulary. First, Brewton sought to enact the common good myth by attempting to participate in the negotiation process. He began, "It seems to me, the more information, the better and I'd like to encourage y'all . . . do we need any kind of action from the SEG to endorse it or recommend it" (p. 7). By attempting to participate in the coordination effort through an SEG recommendation, Brewton rearticulated a myth where all stakeholders equally participated in determining the common good. McIntosh continued this attempt. He questioned, "don't the members of the committee require some specificity to the recommendation that's been made?" (p. 7). Finally, Dysart pushed for the reassertion of this myth with his question,

> Ya'll need a more specific recommendation from Ben, he's asking the group to move forward with it but does he need to be more specific about what we are going forward with. So there's no question amongst your selves about what we are agreeing to (p. 7).

Each of these stakeholders attempted to instill the notion that all members participated in group decision making and that stakeholders were equal in status.

Committee members then spoke to dearticulate this myth. Hall retorted, "the committee has already approved the Striped Bass Committee task themselves, three or four months ago, the confusion is, this incorporation . . . the problem is we are trying to incorporate some work" (p. 7). In this narrative technical experts had already defined the issue and made decisions. Now they

would negotiate with the lead agencies of the Corps and the GPA to further determine the issue. The less important members of the SEG were not included in this process. While depicting a narrative of elite control, this description also revealed the developing hierarchy among members. With the GPA in the first position, lead agencies in the second, and members with technical knowledge in the third, all others existed below. This hierarchy mimicked those found in traditional approaches to decision making. Surprisingly, Rees supported this dearticulation of consensus meaning and suggested that "this is resolvable in committee . . . I don't see it as any more complicated than that" (p. 7). In the end, the SEG recommended getting "the knowledgeable and involved parties . . . together [to] bring back a recommendation" (p. 7). In essence, members supported a hierarchical characterization of stakeholders and a narrative of group process where technical elites and agency representatives determined what studies got done and how they got done. This dearticulation appeared more workable in the technically complex process of harbor deepening. At the same time, it also mirrored traditional environmental decision making practices.

The role of the technical committees also emerged as an issue in group discussion over a proposal for the creation of a fisheries committee. Press Brownell suggested that this committee be created as an umbrella for the Striped Bass and Shortnosed Sturgeon Committees to bring together fisheries experts to discuss broader fisheries issues. In this discussion, members debated the membership and purpose of this new committee. As members debated these items, suggestions of the elite nature of its membership and activities revealed an inconsistency between practice and the consensus-based vocabulary causing repeated attempts at dearticulation. Brownell instigated this debate, describing how he discussed,

> with the other fishery management agencies . . . the core of this idea of more or less establishing a Fisheries & Aquatic Resources Committee as part of the SEG . . . There seems to be a good bit of consensus at least among those with whom I talked that we

> should probably establish a Fisheries & Aquatic Resources Committee just to deal with a number of issues under that category (p. 7).

Here, Brownell drew on the ideographic meaning of consensus to argue that there was broad support for the decision by a group of technical experts to create a new committee. Brownell then outlined "the potential role of the committee" as to

> facilitate some discussion of the broader fisheries issues and helping inform other members of the SEG who may not be experts in fisheries matters. . . Another role would be essential help the Georgia Ports Authority and the Corps of Engineers address the projects effects and to develop a mitigation of management plan (p. 8).

He also cautioned that the committee should not "relieve Georgia Ports Authority or the Corps of Engineers their own responsibility for preparing a fully accurate EIS and compliance with all the applicable laws. I think it's more of a communication function, more of an assistance function" (p. 8). Brownell's description was clearly inconsistent with a consensus-based vocabulary. In his narrative, a group of specialized fishery experts provided the link between the SEG and the GPA on fishery matters. Agencies "such as Georgia DNR, SC DNR, FWS, National Fishery Service SC Fishery Management Council, the GA and SC Coastal Zone Management Program just as a starting point" (p. 8) would negotiate with the GPA as the leader of the group. In this sense, these agencies would be positioned under the GPA and above other members in the SEG hierarchy. In this characterization, stakeholders were not equal.

Possibly recognizing that Brownell's descriptions were inconsistent with the foundational vocabulary, Rees' response to the GPA's committee leadership worked to rearticulate its terms. Rees responded:

> uhm, we don't have any problem with the recommendation, with forming that committee, uhm, we'd like to talk about the chairmanship and responsibility for the functioning of the committee, . . . we have actually talked internally about the advisability within the SEG for let's say level of involvement of GPA and would things be seen as GPA

> initiatives versus SEG initiatives . . . and we'd like some consideration of some other leadership for the committee, we would certainly endorse the committee and serve on it (p. 8).

Rees denied the GPA's interest in leadership based on the notion of equal participation. The GPA did not want to dominate the process. Therefore, they did not want to lead this committee. This suggestion worked to rearticulate the characterization that stakeholders were equal and shared in the process of group problem solving.

Members' responses to Rees's rearticulation emphasized the difference in status of the committee. Brownell responded, "maybe I can speak for the state and federal agencies on this, we certainly aren't set up to be able to fulfill that type of role" (p. 8). By denying committee leadership, Brownell suggested that committee leaders would have a particular responsibility which agencies when acting in the role of SEG member could not take on. This indication of difference in status between stakeholders dearticulated a characterization of stakeholders as equal. It also marked another level in the hierarchy of members. Leaders of technical committees would occupy slightly higher positions than other technical experts. They would be below government agency members when agency representatives were acting in that role. However, they would be above agency representatives when they acted members of the SEG. Rees contributed to this dearticulation by arguing that rather than having the "SEG" determine leadership, "the committee [should] convene and then have the committee deal with the issue of administration and logistics or committee purposes, as the first order of business"(p. 8). In this narrative, the committee would determine its leadership to the exclusion of other SEG members. Dysart then "fixed" this dearticulation by asking for the SEG's acceptance. He stated,

> I think what we have on the table is a recommendation for the establishment of a committee and a recommendation that the interested parties convene between now and next time and one of the things they can consider is how leadership can be provided and

> if there are recommendations they can bring them back to us in August. Is there a recommendation? (p. 8).

Here Dysart asked members if they accepted a characterization of members as unequal and a narrative of group process where technical elites would lead decision making.

In summary, as the SEG debated the role of technical committees in the context of presentations by the Striped Bass and Fisheries Committees, stakeholders struggled against characterizations of stakeholders as equal and the myth of open deliberation for the common good. As reality revealed inconsistencies between this vocabulary and group practice, members used a variety of strategies to craft a vocabulary, which accurately reflected their actions. The discussions concluded with the acceptance of a characterization of stakeholders as unequal and a narrative where the technical elite would join together to define fisheries issue for the SEG. Although members accepted these dearticulations they also reflected traditional hierarchical environmental decision making.

Committee Recommendations

The final issue of debate in the July meeting was the process of committee recommendations. This issue arose from a discussion of the study on beach erosion. In a previous meeting, the Beach Erosion Committee presented two proposals prepared by independent contractors to the SEG. In the June meeting, the BEC submitted a unitary proposal that contained a reworking of these two proposals by the GPA's contractor, ATM, for the SEG's approval. The SEG accepted the proposal and following the meeting, the BEC presented the proposals to the GPA. The GPA passed this study onto the Corps and the Corps judged it to be inadequate. At this meeting a fourth proposal was in the works. However, many of the SEG's members were unaware of the specific steps of this process. During this section of the meeting, stakeholders questioned the GPA about this process in an effort to uncover the exact steps an SEG recommended study followed. These questions uncovered the GPA's hesitation on the beach erosion issue. Discussion also revealed that the two initial contractors had been misled into

believing that they were going to perform the study. They accused the SEG of unethical conduct and the ATM of plagiarism, claiming the ATM had used their studies to produce the third proposal. After a lengthy and heated debate, the issue was resolved with members agreeing to meet with the independent contractors. However, the actual trajectory of the committee recommendation process remained unsettled.

Throughout this debate, members of the SEG again struggled with a consensus based stakeholder vocabulary. Descriptions of the actual committee recommendation practice revealed that this process was far from the unproblematic unification of equal stakeholders as the consensus based vocabulary asserted. As these inconsistencies emerged, stakeholders explicitly called for a description of group process, which reflected actual practice. Although partial dearticulations emerged, the group was constrained in the development of an appropriate vocabulary by consensus-based meanings. In turn, discussion ended in stalemate.

Bill Farmer initiated debate on the committee recommendation process by using a historical narrative to describe the Beach Erosion Committees' recent activities. He stated,

> as you remember, at the last SEG meeting, a study proposal was provided to the GPA for accomplishment. Shortly after the meeting last month the Corps of Engineers put out a document that had thirteen technical comments on the proposed study. And in those thirteen technical comments there was an introductory paragraph that said that these comments should be addressed for the Corps to consider the statement of work to be technically adequate. Uh, that raised a little alarm in committee as to whether the proposed study needed to be revised, so that was the major portion of our meeting and we discovered that uh, the impression we had was that the proposed study would get a cost and a schedule and some contract language attached to it . . . but as it turns out that there's another document that needs to be developed that's a task statement and that task statement then has the contract language and the schedule and the cost attached to it . So we discovered that the Ports Authority will take the proposed study to be approved and

> incorporate the Corps of Engineering comments into a task statement and that task statement is the thing that will be contracted to be accomplished (p. 9).

In this update, Farmer narrated a process where the GPA and Corps determined the specifics of the recommended study. According to Charland (1987), in order for such historical narratives to succeed, the audience must experience a "series of identifications and . . . be captured in its structure and production of meaning" (1987, p. 143). Before stakeholders could accept this narrative then, they had to determine if it was consistent with group practice. Toward this end, Farmer questioned, "Is it true that this is the sequence that we develop a study and it goes to the Ports Authority and they develop a task statement . . . and that becomes part of the contracting document is that routine for all the studies?" (SEG, 1999f, p. 9).

The GPA's representative Larry Keegan attempted to reassert the myth of the common good in his answer. Although he recognized that "yes, maybe" this was the process, the proposed study would still "stay with the intent and the content of what was recommended to be done" (p. 9). By adding that the proposal would stay consistent with the SEG recommendation, Keegan attempted to frame this process as consistent with the myth of the common good. Questioning whether the process actually was consistent with this myth, Farmer then asked, "so, uh, if it's incomplete then you all make it complete until it comes back to the SEG for concurrence again is that correct? Or do you just go ahead and do it, is that correct?" (p. 9). If the GPA went "ahead" and performed the study, this process would clearly be inconsistent with a myth where all stakeholders had input into decision making. Schaller responded to Farmer's inquiry into the committee recommendation process evasively, stating, "We're not there yet, I guess is the answer to that question Bill"(p. 9). However, Rees quickly interjected and attempted to reassert the notion that all members would participate in decision making. He began, "if there's any thought to changing the recommendation, we would certainly come back to the SEG and work that out" (p. 9). Since the proposal would come back to the SEG, members would have an equal say in the decision.

However, the GPA's responses did not satisfy Farmer who pointed out that this "thing called a task statement . . . as the next step prior to implementation" (p. 9) was not needed for the recommendations of the MTRG and Striped Bass studies. Here, he intimated that the GPA was treating the Beach Erosion Committee's study differently than others. This suggestion hinted at a GPA controlled process. It also suggested the existence of a member hierarchy. Led by the government agencies and technicians and consisting of required interests, the MTRG and Striped Bass committee members had higher statuses than other members. He continued in his pursuit of a realistic description of the process with the question,

> I'm trying to verify the process of once SEG develops a recommendation then what happens after that. And I think, I don't know if the Beach Erosion Committee recommendation is the first thing to go through this process therefore we're developing it or whether there's two processes or what (p. 9).

Rees attempted to forestall questioning with the response, "can we have a minute"(p. 10). However, Farmer continued to push. He questioned "I think that the issue is what's the process after the SEG recommends to the Ports that a certain study gets done. I think it's just a matter of us understanding what that process is" (p. 10). As discussion strayed from this topic Farmer again persisted and asked: "there is an issue on the table as to what the process is after the committee puts the recommendation to the uh, Ports Authority" (p. 10). Schaller quickly interjected in the conversation and attempted to rearticulate the myth of the common good. He stated,

> I think that, from a layman's perspective, that is correct. I mean the experts pieced it together and developed task statements as to what gonna happen and what needs to and the SEG endorsed it and boom we go to the contract. This one is not that way. As I understand it, this one is not clear in terms of the task statement and the deliverables and the objectives and so forth. It needs some additional work. I think it genuinely has the endorsement of the SEG, right? Yeah, so we gotta get to the specific task statement work correct? (p. 10).

Schaller distinguished between other studies, which were well researched and fully developed and the unclear and underdeveloped beach erosion study to argue that generally, group process followed the myth of the common good where all members were involved in decision making. By claiming that the BEC's study did not follow this path because it was not adequately developed, Schaller placed the blame for this practice on the SEG members. The reason why this study did not follow the myth of the common good was the fault of the BEC. Farmer then questioned "and that sort of comes back to the SEG" (p. 11) to determine if all of the SEG members would in actuality participate in the study process.

Finally, Schaller admitted that the process did not actually follow the myth of the common good through the use of analogy. According to Perelman, analogies work "to establish the structure of reality" (1970/1990, p. 1092). This strategy is especially useful is simplifying complex or overly technical concepts. In this instance, Schaller used to analogy of ditch diggers to simplify the complex study process. He stated,

> I'm sure in a perfect world, that would be the correct answer, I guess I don't know how, I don't know the details or particulars. If you said dig a hole six feet deep, you know and then we had to contract that to be done, I think we could accomplish that but if it's dig a hole six feet deep with two tunnels, I think we'll have to figure out how to do that but we might start diggin' the hole before we get to the task statement about the tunnels (SEG, 1999f, p. 11).

Through this analogy, Schaller constructed a reality where the GPA ultimately controlled the decision process. As the ditch diggers, they determined how studies were carried out. At the same time, he suggested that the degree of input the SEG would have depended on their ability to clarify and develop the studies. In this sense, although he provided a narrative of reality where the GPA controlled the decision process, he designated the competence of the SEG as the variable that determined the level of that control.

Once again, Rees interjected by rearticulating the myth of the common good. He argued, "all I can say is that the Beach Erosion Committee, this group, dealt with that issue, made the recommendation, SEG approved it, and maybe you don't agree with it but that's what happened" (p. 11). In this description of group process, all participated in decision making. Possibly recognizing this inconsistency, Farmer continued to seek a description of group process more reflective of practice. He asked, "The only issue I have is what's the process after the SEG gives it to the GPA?"(p. 11). Schaller attempted to table discussion by admitting that he didn't have an answer. However, Farmer indicated that he would not end his pursuit. Instead he would "put it on the agenda for next time" (p. 11).

At this point, the discussion shifted from the study process to which contractor was actually going to perform this study. Brewton introduced a letter submitted by member Chris Shubert from the two contractors who submitted the initial study proposals. These letters provided a clear dearticulation of the myth of the common good. The first letter by contractor Watson described the SEG study as an "exercise of political compromise" (p. 11). According to Watson, it was a "possibly technically legal [but] unprofessional and unethical process" (p. 11) because the BEC solicited proposals and then gave them to a third party. He further argued that this type of process would "not result in good science and therefore . . . in good public policy" (p. 11). Watson's statements described a process of powerful political manipulation. Olsen's letter developed this narrative further. He expressed concern that

> GPA has managed to 1) develop a narrowly focused scope of work which is solely conductive to their interests 2) formulate an implied general consensus that the ATM scope of analysis is comprehensive, appropriate and exceptional to all parties, 3) continue to steer clear of the historical impacts of the navigation project in general 4) position them such so that when the study results are finalized all SEG members will have been manipulated into being a 'party' to the effort (p. 11).

In this description, the GPA and the ATM worked hand in hand to control the SEG members and the study process. Together these narratives formed a clear dearticulation of the consensus vocabulary. Stakeholders were not equal, deliberation was not open and consensus had no authority.

In response to this less than attractive narrative of group practice, Brewton expressed concern over "the credibility, the ethics, the process" (p. 12). Initially, Schaller attempted to refute these accusations through rearticulating the common good. He argued that the SEG made its own decisions and that "the GPA doesn't control the actions of the SEG uhm, or the beach erosion committee or the fisheries committee or any other committee" (p. 12). However as discussion continued stakeholders indicated less of a concern with lobbing accusations at the GPA than outlining a process that was credible to protect themselves from accusations of unethical behavior. For example, Brewton stated, "I think we all are part of this process whether we like it or not- the GPA, the SEG, the Beach Erosion Committee. My concern is that we all maintain our credibility" (p. 13). He later suggested, "the complaint is that this committee process didn't work here . . . and I think we need to learn how to make it work better, I offer that as a proposal" (p. 14). In this statement, the usual rascal Ben Brewton united with the GPA to defend the credibility of the SEG against outside attacks. According to Janis (1982), such displays of loyalty and cohesion in the face of external attacks are dominant symptoms of groupthink. Often initiated by external sources of stress, decision groups experiencing groupthink begin to overestimate the morality and invulnerability of the group, engage in collective rationalizations and stereotyping of the out-group, and exhibit internal pressures to conformity. The responses of the other SEG stakeholders displayed these symptoms. Bo Ellis rationalized this occurrence as resulting from "misunderstanding" (SEG, 1999f, p. 13) rather than intentional deceit. He then indicated the inherent morality of the group by suggesting that the SEG could fix this problem simply by making it "a lot clearer in our committees when we're requesting scopes of work, how that process would work" (SEG, 1999f, p. 13). Stuart Stevens' suggestion of having committees

send out a formal Request for Proposal when they were seeking contractors to perform study work demonstrated a similar illusion of morality. Finally Dysart suggested a united effort "to figure out the nature of the situation and bring something back to this body next time" (SEG, 1999f, p. 14). The result of notions of rationality, invulnerability and cohesion is an increasing division between group members and outsiders. This was particularly problematic for stakeholders who claimed representation. They could not be representative if they lost touch with their constituents. At the same time, groupthink often produces "errors in decision making, and such errors increase the likelihood of a poor outcome" (Janis, 1982, p. 11). In this sense, groupthink worked against the SEG realistically achieving the common good of all stakeholders.

Conclusion

From March 1999 to July 1999 the SEG stakeholders debated a variety of issues. Pressured by impending authorization, they struggled with a consensus-based vocabulary that did not reflect group practice. Members employed the strategies of metaphor, dissociation, analogy and narrative to craft a workable vocabulary by dearticulating a characterization of stakeholder as equal, a myth of group process as free and open and an ideographic meaning of consensus as authoritative agreement. Initially, these dearticulations facilitated rearticulation. However, as members recognized that hierarchically characterized stakeholders and a group decision making narrative with control by the GPA, agencies, and technicians, enabled them to "inch ahead" (Krueger, 1999g, p. 1) on their mission, they began to accept new meanings. In this sense, the SEG increasingly started to exhibit old patterns of traditional environmental groups such as limiting the agenda, letting those with more power exert power and defending themselves against outsiders in order to get work done. However, as evidenced in the final section of the July meeting, these traditional notions signaled trouble ahead. This may be one reason why the city of Savannah chose to "take the future of its river into its own hands instead of letting federal environmental officials determine what's best" (Wiltrout, 1999, p. 1) by instigating a $ 67,100 study on water quality in late July.

CHAPTER 5

A NEW SENSE OF URGENCY

As the SEG worked through the summer months, a series of events occurred that facilitated interest and urgency among members. First, in early August, both the Senate and the House approved conference committee reports and made the WRDA of 1999 a law (Krueger, 1999h). Although project construction was contingent on the SEG study and approval by the administrator of the EPA, the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce, this move made the project appear inevitable. The law also had a provision, which gave the FWS and the DNR authority to stop the project for environmental reasons. Unsatisfied with the fact that authorization occurred before the completion of an Environmental Impact Statement as well as the current direction of the stakeholder group, the Fish and Wildlife Service decided to rejoin the SEG in late August. The agency reasoned that with the urgency created by authorization, the SEG would "deal a little more with science and less process" (Krueger, 1999i, p. 1). Other stakeholders of the SEG believed that authorization made their work particularly urgent (Krueger, 1999h, p. 3).

Although the group did not meet in September due to an impending hurricane, this sense of urgency and renewed interest led to increased membership when the group resumed their monthly meetings in October. In this meeting, sixty-three individuals met representing backgrounds as diverse as Congressman Jack Kingston and Senator Paul Coverdale, the Savannah Chamber of Commerce and the League of Women Voters. Shortly after this meeting, the Secretary of the Army issued a favorable report on the project. This report was "one condition" of the authorization process and stated "that for the project to move forward it must

meet all environmental laws, adequately address potential environmental impacts and receive specific formal approval from the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Commerce and Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency" (Ports Authority gets favorable, 1999, p. 2). Stakeholder reactions were mixed. Judy Jennings responded publicly that she was "OK with it" while Brewton accused the Army Chief of granting approval even when the "project was not in accord with Corps policy, procedures and regulation" (Ports Authority gets favorable, 1999, p. 2). At the same time, many felt the need to "focus on scientific study" (Ports Authority gets favorable, 1999, p. 2).

Within this context, the SEG members continued their monthly meetings in the second half of 1999. Pressured by authorization and the Secretary's letter, the SEG increasingly pushed for acceptance of traditional hierarchical notions of stakeholder, group process and decision making in the hope of achieving progress. Paradoxically however, the more the SEG worked to enact this vocabulary, the more they were constrained in their expression of these notions due to the unsuitability of the consensus-based vocabulary. In the following two sections, I trace both the issues discussed and the terminological movement of the SEG from August 1999 to December 1999.

Issues August to November

During this time, the SEG membership dealt with a variety of procedural and technical issues. While some pre-established committees marched ahead, others struggled just to have their issues considered valid.

The procedural issue of group communication, which was ignited by the May censorship issue and the July beach erosion controversy, came to the fore once again in August. While attempting to approve months of prior meeting minutes, the group began to debate the minute form. Dysart questioned whether the group preferred verbatim or bulleted minutes. This question created a debate between members who believed verbatim transcripts were too difficult

administratively and others that wanted a more detailed outline of meeting events. The Communication Committee then decided to tackle this along with other internal communication issues. In the October meeting they presented a lengthy list of recommendations. These included continuing to send emails for web postings, hiring a court reporter to take meeting minutes, making a declarative sentence at each point of consensus, standardizing the agenda format, labeling unapproved minutes posted on the web site clearly, creating individual committee communication plans, and opening the web site for posting by any member. During this meeting, the SEG debated the issue of verbatim transcripts at such length that this was the only recommendation approved. Some members argued against verbatim transcripts because "it implies distrust that we as a group can't work together, that we as a group can't trust one another" (SEG, 1999h, p. 72) while others argued that

> we have to be accountable for our work . . .this whole discussion reverts back to a lost trust and if we can't have our words written down, for what we say, so we are accountable, that is the loss of trust (p. 72).

Then in November, the SEG spent over an hour debating the standardized agenda format. Some members protested the idea of putting old business before committee reports for fear the SEG would never get to the committee reports. Although this issue remained unresolved, the SEG did approve having a declarative statement of consensus as well as asking each committee to develop a communication plan to submit to the SEG in November.

A number of existing committees moved rapidly ahead on their scientific work during this period. The Striped Bass Committee continued to collect data and coordinate their efforts with the Corps of Engineers. The MTRG, moving into the modeling design phase, finally educated the group on its efforts in August. Bo Ellis, committee chairman, outlined how the data would be used to develop a model to predict deepening's impact on current conditions of salinity, dissolved oxygen and overall water quality. He argued that model development was significant to

the project for two reasons. First, it enabled the group to predict the outcome of conditions not yet experienced. Next, since it was extremely expensive to go out and measure every point in the harbor or in the system, the model allowed the MTRG to fill in the blanks. However, the utility of the model depended on the quality of the data collected. The MTRG then reported on this quality during the October meeting. Ellis indicated that throughout the summer, 55 monitoring stations had been in place collecting water samples in the heat with the water level at its lowest yearly point. In these low flow conditions, concentrations of salinity, chlorides and dissolved oxygen were at their highest level. Ellis argued that capturing such critical conditions ensured a high quality model. He also argued that the MTRG achieved "excellent" (SEG, 1999h, p. 21) coordination with Corps dam releases and maintenance dredgers. These were issues, which produced heated debates in earlier meetings. In essence, Ellis concluded that the MTRG "got as good of data as we could ever hoped for" (SEG, 1999h, p. 21).

As the MTRG moved toward model development, the Beach Erosion Committee continued to pursue study development. In an effort to reestablish the study's credibility, the GPA began developing a fourth study in August that took

> the proposed study that was approved by the SEG and merg[ed] it with the remarks provided by the Corps, remarks provided by Eric Olsen, consultant to the city of Tybee Island, and also to incorporate into the task statement the recommendation from the committee that the study have peer participation and peer review, which means other experts will participate in some way to accomplish the study (SEG, 1999g, p. 30).

During this meeting, Rees also reported that his research into the questionable way previous studies had been developed revealed "no indication of any credibility problems, any ethical problems or any scientific problems with respect to what the committee is doing, and particularly . . . with respect to GPA's involvement" (SEG, 1999g, p. 31). However, the GPA continued to move slowly on this issue. In September, a report in the Carolina Morning News, on the status of

loggerhead nesting on area beaches gave the GPA the space to further delay addressing this issue (Kreuzwieser, 1999, Sept. 6, p. 1). This report indicated that turtles reproduction was thriving despite stifling summer heat. By November, the Beach Erosion Committee study was underway but with a scope limited to the incremental impacts of the present deepening project.

There were also a variety of debates surrounding fisheries issues during these months. While collection of shortnosed sturgeon data continued, a letter submitted to the Secretary of the Army by the GPA as part of the process to gain his approval in August brought this issue to the forefront of debate. This letter stated that studies indicated there were no shortnosed sturgeon in the Savannah River channel. During the August meeting, stakeholders questioned this assertion by the GPA. Morgan Rees defended this statement as not untrue but merely imprecise. He conceded that there probably were some fish in the river but that studies performed prior to the last deepening indicated there were no sturgeon in the navigation channel. Stakeholders asked that a corrected letter be sent to Secretary Westphal since preliminary findings from the current study indicated the presence of sturgeon in the river. They also expressed concern that this statement "suggested that GPA believed some of the most fundamental issues of the SEG agenda to be negligible or non-existent" (SEG, 1999g, p. 48) and might reduce the credibility of current studies. Rees argued in response that this statement in no way impacted the GPA's commitment to stakeholders' concerns. Specifically, he retorted,

> the point is we continue to hear the theme of credibility being questioned . . . in the holistic view of what's going on here, GPA has already agreed to adopt the studies recommended by the SEG, studies that are underway that were developed by people other than GPA and we are doing them (SEG, 1999g, p. 23).

In October, Rees presented a seven-page record of stakeholder debate on this issue which he planned to submit to the Secretary. However stakeholders continued to be dissatisfied. Instead

they suggested that a one-paragraph update indicating current findings be sent. Rees conceded yet, the letter arrived too late as the Secretary issued a report of approval just a few weeks later.

Also in the October meeting, the newly created Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Committee streamlined its mission to "summarize recommendations about the science viewpoint for consideration by the SEG and the Georgia Ports Authority" (SEG, 1999h, p. 14). The committee also presented a number of questions they had been debating. These included whether to study American shad, to consider dissolved oxygen in their study, whether they should consider the entire basin or just the channel and whether they should examine cumulative impacts in addition to incremental impacts.

In contrast to the progression experienced by established committees, a number of new committees struggled to be recognized during this time. For example, in August, the Economics Work Group suggested having the SEG sponsor a speaker to address the community on the economic issues of port deepening. Initially, the GPA denied this request because they did not want their name to be attached to a speaker they did not know. After the EWG promised to provide a disclaimer, they agreed. In the October meeting, the SEG suggested that committees be formed to deal with the issues of dredged material disposal, the impact of deepening on tidal flow, the introduction of nonnative species, and mitigation measures. The GPA attempted to block debate on these issues, using the metaphor of a school to argue that dredging was in "another classroom" (SEG, 1999h, p. 45). Through this metaphor, Schaller recognized the importance of this issue yet suggested that it was a topic of study for other students since the introduction of nonnative species was a problem regardless of the harbor depth. Yet, the members of the SEG continued to urge that these issues be addressed.

The pressure of authorization seemed to quicken the SEG's pace. This pressure may have also increased their drive to craft a more workable vocabulary. Fueled by the expanded vocabulary they had created in prior months, stakeholders intensified their attacks on consensus-

based meanings. These challenges often produced long debates with members spending more "than an hour " (Krueger, 1999j, p. 3) on minor issues such as the standard form of the agenda or the approval of meeting minutes. In the following section, I trace this drive toward a workable vocabulary.

Terminological Push

The characterization of stakeholder occupied fewer debates during this period. Characterizations of members as equal and representative were voiced to a lesser degree. When they did emerge, these articulations were immediately challenged with more realistic characterizations. For example, in the October meeting, facilitator Dysart began proceedings by characterizing all stakeholders as equal. He began,

> anybody on the back row or side row who wants to come up and sit at the table, they are welcome. If during the course of the meeting and you wish to speak, everybody in here except me, is considered a member of SEG and has the privilege of the floor (SEG, 1999h, p. 9).

However, when he later took the privilege of the floor by asking a series of technical questions, Brewton challenged his characterization with the response, "it's sort of interesting, I didn't know if you had switched your role to a member of the group" (SEG, 1999h, p. 131). With this statement, Brewton indicated that in practice, members occupied varied roles, which were constantly changing. Rather than rearticulate his characterization of stakeholder, Dysart simply stated that he was not a member. In the August meeting during a discussion of membership for the Aquatic and Fisheries Committee, Press Brownell articulated that the committee was not "exclusive of anyone" (SEG, 1999g, p. 19). However, in the next line, Brownell dearticulated this notion of stakeholder equality by recognizing that for practical reasons, "We do want to keep it as small as we can however" (SEG, 1999g, p. 19). Although Brownell articulated a characterization

of stakeholders as equal, he also indicated that practical constraints required the exclusion of some members, making all not equal.

The media also began to recognize the practical inequalities and differences among stakeholders. For examples, in August, Gail Krueger acknowledged that "agency members were retaining their regulatory autonomy and expected to make decisions independent of the environmental group" (Krueger, 1999i, p. 2). Here Krueger recognized that when acting as agency representatives, these members had a different status than other members. Since they maintained their autonomy, they occupied a position of authority that other members did not have. Krueger's expression of the hierarchal characterization of stakeholder indicated a general acceptance.

In contrast to stakeholder characterization, the issue of group myth was often at the center of discussion. Articulations of the common good myth continued but were expressed less often. For example, in the October meeting, Rees expressed concern that verbatim transcripts might constrain "the openness of the debate and . . . potential creativity" (SEG, 1999h, p. 70). Schaller likewise articulated this myth in November when in defense of the GPA's refusal to provide email notification of web postings, he stated,

> I hope that . . . [the] members of the SEG will agree that we have been responsive to every question, we've tried to fill every need. We are committed to doing that and continuing to do that, provided we can do so without just being overwhelmed and overcome, if you will, by expenses (SEG, 1999i, p. 124).

Here, Schaller asserted that the GPA worked to ensure open deliberation and allow all stakeholders input into decision making.

Possibly recognizing that a workable narrative of group process was essential for any progress to be achieved, members forcefully challenged the myth of the common good. For example, in the August meeting during a discussion regarding the GPA's letter to Secretary

Westphal, Rees argued that the accuracy of the letter should not be at issue because "in the holistic view of what's going on here, GPA has already agreed to adopt the studies recommended by the SEG, studies that are underway that were developed by people other than GPA and we are doing them" (SEG, 1999g, p. 23). Unsatisfied by this simple articulation of the common good myth, Brewton questioned this description of "the process" because "GPA, who is paying for the study, has already announced a statement of fact that there might be something that one would expect at the end of the study" (SEG, 1999g, p. 24). Here, Brewton suggested that the process was far from free and open since the GPA was controlling it by drawing conclusions before studies were complete. McIntosh followed Brewton's questioning with a direct indication of the inconsistency between the common good myth and group practice. With a metaphor drawn from the Wizard of Oz, he described a process where "there is a curtain and GPA was responding to the Corps saying there are no shortnosed sturgeon" (p. 26). By comparing the GPA to the all powerful Wizard of Oz, McIntosh suggested that the GPA was appearing confident and all powerful externally "While on the other side they are working with us, behind the scenes so to speak, looking for the shortnosed sturgeon" (p. 26). Behind the curtain, the GPA acted secretly with the SEG to determine the situation of the shortnosed sturgeon. Through this metaphor, McIntosh crafted a narrative of reality that was clearly inconsistent with the myth of the common good. Brewton continued the challenge for consistency stating,

> it concerns me that we are simultaneously all here agreeing to study something and find out the answers. Yet, on the other side of the curtain as Neff described, letters are being sent that speak these things as if they were concluded facts (p. 29).

Here, Brewton restated McIntosh's challenge against the myth of the common good. This pattern of persistence and challenging was also repeated in a discussion of the BEC study where Farmer again pushed for a clear description of the committee process.

In addition to challenging articulations of the common good myth, stakeholders also increasingly crafted narratives more reflective of group practice. First, Dysart began to refer the SEG's mission as identified by Congress rather than the one formed through the SEG's deliberations (SEG, 1999h). In this narrative, Congress controlled group deliberation. In addition, often group members embraced a group narrative where technical committees defined the issues under debate. In October Jennings stated, " I think that as we listen to the scientific committees, we are going to have to trust they made a valid recommendation" (SEG, 1999h, p. 176). Finally, narratives surfaced that captured the GPA's control of the process. For example in October, Rees defended the GPA's refusal to start considering mitigation strategies. He asserted that

> internally within the GPA team we have looked at the question of when we can start to deal with the potential mitigation issues, including the DO and the oxygenation and all that. We had decided among ourselves that it made more sense to get the studies to where the DO problems are and to what extent of the DO problems might be. And then we can start spending time and money to analyze what the impacts are and how best to mitigate against them (SEG, 1999h, p. 45).

Rees reasoned that because the GPA decided not to address these issues yet, the SEG would not.

The ideograph of consensus demonstrated a similar trend. Although articulations of its consensus based meaning as rational, authoritative agreement continued although at a decreased level, stakeholders were more assertive in their challenges to this meaning. In addition, alternative meanings were voiced. During these months, Morgan Rees continued to emphasize its consensus based meaning. For example, when discussing the Communication Committee's proposal to assess other committee's communication plans, Rees argued that putting one committee in charge of another might not facilitate "the right atmosphere for consensus" (SEG, 1999i, p. 144). This definition of agreement produced through free and open deliberation among equal stakeholders clearly reflected the consensus-based meaning. Dysart also continued to articulate that consensus

decisions had authority. In response to Brewton's complaint that the Communications Committee report was the last item on the August agenda, Dysart suggested that "next time you come in very aggressively saying I want to talk about this and this and that is what we are going to talk about. That will be first. Is there consensus on that. I see a consensus" (SEG, 1999g, p. 10). In this sense, consensus had authority. Finally, Dysart continued to articulate that consensus was achievable. During the October meeting, he commended the SEG on their consensus to form a fishery committee. He then stated, "I think the system is almost working here" (SEG, 1999h, p. 19), suggesting that consensus could be easily achieved.

At the same time, stakeholders were more persistent in their questioning of this ideographic meaning. First, stakeholders more often directly questioned the authority of consensus decisions. For example, in the August meeting during a discussion of the GPA letter to Secretary Westphal denying the existence of sturgeon in the harbor, Brewton asked Rees,

> it seems like what adds a lot of volatility and contentiousness to this whole process is the fact that we are not sitting, you know, while we are sitting down and talking about it, letters are going off and decisions are being made. By the time we finish talking about them, even if you find yourself in agreement with me, it is highly possible that Sec. Westphal will have already made a decision by that point (SEG, 1999g, p. 52).

In October, Terri Leffek likewise questioned the authority of SEG decisions with the statement, "Does the SEG have . . . authority"(SEG, 1999h, p. 33).

Next, stakeholders also questioned more the meaning of consensus as agreement. For example, when Brewton indicated in the Communications Committee report that the group had agreed by unanimous consensus to verbatim transcripts in the October meeting, Jennings questioned,

> I don't really understand the word unanimous in terms of the consensus process. At almost any given point of time dissenting opinions were probably voiced, they definitely

> were on some occasions because I voiced them. So I think unanimous is not appropriate in this context (SEG, 1999h, p. 27).

Here Jennings indicated that the current definition of consensus did not capture disagreement. She later stressed, "I think it is important to be aware that certain recommendations did receive dissenting opinions" (SEG, 1999h, p. 65).

In an effort to craft a meaning for consensus that worked better and captured the disagreement of the group, Dysart started employing voting to determine consensus. He often questioned, "how many of you agree . . . raise your hand" (SEG, 1999h, p. 44), or "Is there a consensus for this? All in favor, raise your hands" (SEG, 1999i, p. 117). Then he would proceed to count, "1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21" (SEG, 1999i, p. 117) and make a "declarative statement" that since "the majority of the group has spoken" (SEG, 1999h, p. 33) "broad consensus" (SEG, 1999i, p. 191) had been achieved. By making the will of the majority act as consensus, Dysart crafted a definition of this term that worked in the divisive context of stakeholder interaction. Yet, voting and consensus were different decision processes. Voting revealed a collapse in the consensus process. Unable to act equally, to make decisions freely and fairly and to achieve mutual agreement, the group was forced to revert to the voting procedures of traditional environmental decision making groups.

In summary, from August to November, Congressional authorization urged members to move ahead. Feeling this pressure, the members of the SEG became more persistent in their drive to craft a workable vocabulary. Members expressed greater acceptance of a vocabulary that recognized a hierarchy of stakeholders, a process controlled by agency and technical elite and decision making by voting because this vocabulary seemed capable of moving the group along. As the SEG increasingly displayed hierarchy, control, defensiveness, and majority rule, they began to resemble a traditional environmental decision-making group more closely than a consensus-based group. Their acceptance of voting intimated their abandonment of the

consensus-based meanings. Within this context, the SEG entered the final meeting of its first year on December 7th, 1999.

December 7, 1999

In December, forty-four stakeholders met to discuss the SEG business. As usual facilitator Ben Dysart instigated proceedings by focusing "the group on its mission, on its purpose, on its business" (SEG, 1999j, p. 9). However, at this meeting his speech differed slightly from those of the past. First, he asked stakeholders if they were "familiar with the Congressional list, purpose, mission . . . You're familiar with it? Have read that, understand it, that's fine" (p. 10). Here Congress defined the list of issues, purpose and mission of the group. This narrative is a clear dearticulation of the common good myth where stakeholders defined their own issues, purpose and mission. Next, Dysart moved to the topic of the agenda. In response to suggestions by Brewton and Schaller that the guest speakers present before any other business, Dysart declared, "a consensus has been reached within the body, and this is a declarative statement that we have our first consensus of the day" (p. 14). However as Dysart began to address other items on the agenda, stakeholders emphasized the agreement that the speakers would present next. Dysart responded,

> so to make sure the record is complete, we either have another consensus or we are reconfirming the previous consensus that the agenda as laid out is generally acceptable and that we will operate by exception. If anybody needs to change anything around we will (p. 18).

Dysart's treatment of consensus as a somewhat flimsy, unstable and changeable decision contrasted with the consensus based meaning of the term as an authoritative agreement. Finally, Dysart failed to follow this decision and began to discuss the November transcripts. He concluded that verbatim transcripts had worked well because he "saw very few places where people weren't identified except some things that sort of came from the audience, if you will, as opposed to the

normally active participants" (p. 20). Dysart characterized the active participants who occupied the main table as more important than the mass of members who sat on the fringes. This distinction identified yet one more level of the hierarchy of stakeholders. The "audience" of stakeholders existed below the "normally active participants."

Dysart's characterization of stakeholders, narrative of group process and treatment of consensus signaled a shift in the vocabulary of the group. Having seemingly abandoned consensus-based meanings for more workable ones in prior months, by the December meeting the SEG was acting much like a traditional environmental decision making group. They were allowing contracted experts determine technical issues and the more powerful members exert their power. They also were narrowing the agenda, demanding decisions through voting, and defending themselves against outsiders. Yet, in this meeting, as members attempted to forge ahead by articulating a traditionally based vocabulary, their consensus foundation constrained them. In the following section, I explore these discursive struggles as members discussed the issue identification process, the nature of group deliberation and the meaning of consensus. I begin the exploration with a brief overview of each issue. Then, I draw on Condit and Lucaites' concept of public vocabulary to consider stakeholders' struggles to craft a vocabulary more reflective of group practice.

Issue Identification

The SEG discussed the topic of issue identification in their debate over the relevance of the environmental impacts of ballast water to the deepening project. Ballast water is the water held in the hull of a ship for balance and stability during transport. During a normal shipping route, water is both taken on and ejected at various times depending on the weight of the ship's load. When imports are unloaded, "ballast water is usually pumped on board, and it's frequently discharged in another port as the vessel is reloaded" (p. 29). The result of this process is "that aquatic organisms that are picked up in one part of the world are frequently released in another,

and this provides the opportunity for nonindigenous species to be introduced when the ballast water is discharged" (p. 30).

At this time, scientists had identified "the increased scale and variety of opportunity for transport that have accompanied the modern expansion on international commerce" (p. 29) as the "most significant pathway that humans provide for the spread of aquatic nuisance species" (p. 27). Discharge was regulated through the 1996 Noninvasive Species Act. This act mandated that the Coast Guard implemented a temporary three-year voluntary release program where ships would exchange their ballast water 200 miles offshore for salt water. Although the exchange could never be one hundred percent complete, salt water organisms could not live in the fresh water atmosphere of a port, resulting in the reduced occurrence of non-native species transport. After this information gathering phase, the Coast Guard would assess its success and possibly make discharge mandatory if vessels were not complying with voluntary exchanges.

At a previous meeting, South Carolina DNR representative Patricia Wendt identified the introduction of nonnative species through ballast water as a "potential environmental impact" (p. 24) of harbor deepening. At this meeting, she invited researcher David Knott to present his findings on this issue. Knott indicated that a container ship usually discharged 80,000 gallons, tankers discharged 400,000 gallons, and bulk ships discharged 2.4 million gallons of ballast water in port. He argued that although the GPA had a law against discharges at their docks, a variety of other docks occupied the riverbank. Increased traffic brought about through harbor deepening would surely increase the occurrence of these discharges. He ended his presentation with a series of questions surrounding this issue. These questions included: 1) How much ballast water is actually discharged into a particular receiving environment? 2) Where does the water come from? 3) What ballast water management strategies are in place? 4) How might the mix of vessels arriving in port change due to harbor deepening? 5) And how might the average discharge volumes change due to harbor deepening?

Believing that this was not an issue for SEG focus, the GPA employed Coast Guard Commander James McDonald to refute Knott. As the individual charged with the responsibility for overseeing the only legislated effort to deal with nonnative species introduction, McDonald was certainly an expert on the topic. His presentation challenged many of Knott's claims. Essentially, McDonald argued that the introduction of nonnative species through ballast water was an ongoing problem that would not be exacerbated by deepening. Specifically, he stated,

> the problem exists right now. The problem is going to exist well into the future, and it's a problem that certainly has to be tackled, but is it a problem that is going to change as a result of—change dramatically as a result of larger container ships possibly coming into Savannah? Maybe but probably not (p. 87).

He reasoned that since port traffic would increase anyway, either fewer larger ships would bring in more ballast water or a greater number of smaller ships would bring in more ballast water. In other words, "it's a wash" (p. 88). He also indicated that the Noninvasive Species Act made this an issue for Coast Guard concerns only. Interestingly, this argument directly contradicted the GPA's economic justification for deepening, that a deeper harbor would bring increased traffic.

Following these presentations, stakeholders discussed this issue of questionable relevance to the SEG. In this discussion, they again grappled over the process stakeholders' used to identify issues. No longer relying primarily on the myth of the common good to describe group process, stakeholders offered a number of practical narratives of control by the GPA and technicians. Yet, their foundational consensus-based vocabulary constrained their acceptance of these narratives. In the following section, I discuss this discursive contest.

After the presentations, Patricia Wendt attempted to conclude discussion with the suggestion that SEG "provide a list of questions [outlined in Knott's presentation] to the Ports Authority to see what kind of information is already available, and perhaps we can take this issue up again when we get a response to those questions" (p. 97). Here, Wendt outlined a narrative

where the GPA researched and defined the issue for the SEG. Her quick suggestion that the issue be discussed and debated first by the GPA revealed a new acceptance that the GPA could control the issue identification process. At the same time, this description reflected a traditional approach to environmental decision-making where agencies defined the issues for stakeholders. It also contrasted sharply with the myth of the common good where the stakeholders would first identify an issue, research it and then through free and open debate, determine if it should be addressed. McDonald took this suggestion on step further. As a GPA representative and an expert on the topic, he argued that such research was unnecessary because,

> is increasing volume going to be the result of more ships visiting Savannah with smaller ballast tanks dumping those tanks into the Savannah River, or is it going to be more likely the result of larger container vessels coming to Savannah with larger ballast tanks dumping those tanks into the Savannah River, but you have the trade-off of fewer vessel transits or fewer vessel visits (p. 100).

By claiming that ballast water was not an issue for SEG consideration, McDonald enacted a narrative where an agency employed expert identified and determined which issues the SEG would address.

Possibly experiencing echoes of the myth of the common good, a number of stakeholders were not quite ready to support control of the issue either by the GPA or their expert. Newly returned FWS representative Mitch King offered an alternative narrative where the internal SEG experts would research and define the issue. He asserted that

> what the SEG is supposed to be doing is identifying issues like this one to be analyzed fully through the NEPA process, and I think this issue has been identified with qualifications that the Commander has laid on and the stuff that's come from South Carolina. I think what this group ought to be thinking about doing is saying is this an issue that we want to be covered in the NEPA process, and if it is, it needs to be covered

> in detail. So I'd suggest we push this to a committee, if we've got a committee, to address it or just say that it needs to be addressed in the EIS thoroughly and let it be addressed by whoever is doing it (p. 110).

In this narrative, the SEG's technical members would investigate and determine the issue for the rest of the group rather than having the issue determined through the free and open deliberation of all members in the meetings. This narrative reflected the way that the SEG had been dealing with most technical issues in prior months. This practice, where experts and agency members toward the top of the hierarchy defined the SEG's issues appeared to work better than the consensus-based narrative. At the same time, it seemed more consistent with the myth than a narrative of the GPA's control. Dysart reinforced this interpretation with the statement,

> I think your observation is correct. The role of this body is to identify issues and to have working committees identify the scientific studies that are needed as is stated in the mission statement. It is not necessarily to do all the work that needs to be done in the plenary session (p. 110).

Dysart supported a narrative of group process where technical experts determined issues for the SEG by suggesting that a committee of experts should determine the issue rather than having it defined through free and open debate in the plenary session,.

Wendt, however, believed that the lack of information on this topic made the GPA's control the most practical option. Based on this reasoning, she repeated her suggestion "that the questions that David had laid out in his presentation be provided to GPA for them to provide some response back to this body" (p. 110). The process Wendt described differed from the narrative told by other stakeholders. Rather than have technical experts determine issues, Wendt suggested that the SEG should deal with the issue by allowing the GPA to investigate it and define it for them. Surprisingly, Brewton accepted Wendt's narrative and expressed "with respect to the issues that have been raised, the desire to move on" (p. 113). Rees then attempted to

expand this story further. Rather than indicating that the GPA would investigate and define the issue for the SEG, Rees suggested that the GPA would take sole responsibility for the issue and deal with it in another forum. He stated,

> As far as I'm concerned, and I'm pretty confident I can make a commitment on the part of GPA, that this issue will be clearly and fully addressed in the EIS. Now, the question is when do we tackle it and when do we know what the rules are going to be and so forth? I would suggest at this point, since a lot of that is unknown, I wouldn't like to make a specific commitment to come back to the SEG at a date uncertain at this point . . . So without a specific time commitment, I would make a commitment to give this a full analysis to deal with the kinds of issues. We'll deal with that (p. 115).

Here Rees described a group narrative where the GPA did not only define issues for the SEG but actually determined which were suitable for the SEG to address. Since the GPA would deal with the issue in another forum, it was not necessary for the SEG to concern itself. His assertion of the GPA's control also revealed that he had a different status than other SEG members. As the hand of the controlling GPA, he was certainly not equal with other members.

Possibly recognizing that the narrative offered by Rees flew in the face of the rarely practiced but underlying myth of the common good, stakeholders then attempted to frame the narrative where the GPA researched and defined the issue in the language of the consensus-based vocabulary. First Stewart Stevens suggested,

> I'd like to see the answers to those at the next meeting, and then if we're all satisfied with that and it can be addressed in the EIS, great. If we want more than that, then maybe we would suggest that at the next meeting, but I think we need the answers to those questions really before we can . . . move forward (p. 116).

By asserting that the SEG would judge and determine the issue, even though the GPA would initially research and define it, Stevens attempted to frame a narrative of the GPA's control in the

language of consensus. According to Stevens, framing the process in this way would allow the SEG to "move forward." However, the difficulty in framing a narrative of the GPA's control as consistent with the myth of the common good was captured in Ben Brewton's need to restate Steven's suggestion. He reiterated

> that we ask the GPA to give us a preliminary report on those questions at the next meeting, that we note that GPA has committed to include a study of this in the EIS, and after the preliminary report, the SEG can determine what input it needs to have in the studies that will appear in the EIS (p. 117).

Although he accepted that the GPA would research and define the issue for the SEG, he asserted that the SEG would ultimately determine the issue. Because both Stevens and Brewton were constrained by consensus-based vocabulary, they were unable to accept narratives of the GPA's complete control of the issue. In turn, they worked to frame the fact that the GPA would research and define the issue as consistent with the myth of the common good by demanding the SEG's input. However, the fact that Brewton had to repeat Steven's statement and his addition of a variety of qualifiers to make the action appear consistent with the myth revealed how inappropriate the stakeholder language was to the completion of their task.

Possibly unsatisfied with the effort, Brewton attempted again to frame this decision with the consensus-based vocabulary. To conclude discussion, Brewton asked for a "consensus on that declarative statement" (p. 117). However, because the ideographic meaning of consensus seemed incompatible with a narrative sanctioning the GPA's issue definition, Dysart questioned the need for this assertion. He asked Stevens "Isn't that basically what you said" (p. 117). In essence, Dysart intimated that consensus based terms were inappropriate to describe a decision sanctioning this narrative of group process.

In summary, in this section of the December meeting, stakeholders again debated to determine the process for issue definition. With the myth of the common good no longer the

primary descriptor of group process, stakeholders provided a number of narratives to deal with the issue of ballast water. Constrained by a consensus-based vocabulary, members could not accept a narrative of complete control by the GPA and in turn, added a variety of qualifiers to make the narrative where the GPA defined and researched the issue consistent with the consensus-based vocabulary. Despite these efforts, the narrative that resulted reflected traditional environmental decision-making practices where authorities determined and defined issues and stakeholders judged them. Dysart's disregard of Brewton's call for consensus revealed the inappropriateness of the consensus-based vocabulary for capturing this narrative. Consensus was not suitable for this decision.

Nature of the SEG's Deliberation

The next issue discussed by the SEG was the nature of the SEG's deliberation. This issue arose as the SEG discussed the Communication Committee's recommendation that the SEG web site should be available for posting by all members. Specifically the recommendation "was that there be a section with a disclaimer that it was individual information, and the individual members could post information that could be viewed and copied or printed by other members as they wished" (p. 131). At the November meeting, stakeholders expressed concern that irresponsible individuals might post untrue information and that because of its position on the SEG site, the group would automatically be associated with it. In turn, some members suggested a list serve. In the December meeting, Brewton returned to the issue of the web site and presented the advantages and disadvantages of both the web site and list serve. Brewton listed the advantages of a web site as: all members could post information they deemed relevant, anyone could visit the site to view information or download or print it if desired, and names would be posted with the information they submitted so that members would take full responsibility for the quality of information provided. The drawback that he outlined was that an irresponsible member might post something that was inappropriate. He then argued that the sole advantage of a list

serve was that information could be screened. The drawbacks however were that an individual or group would be responsible for deciding what could or couldn't be posted, individuals would have to register to receive information and all members would receive large files through email which they would have to download. Following this presentation, members engaged in a long debate over whether they preferred a web site or list serve for their internal communication.

As stakeholders discussed this point, they also struggled to determine the nature of their deliberation. In his presentation, Brewton drew on the stakeholder vocabulary to articulate that the web site ensured the equality of all stakeholders in free and open deliberation. Stakeholders were unmoved by this argument and presented a series of dearticulations where the active SEG members had a specialized status and controlled other stakeholders' access to information. Members revealed that they had come to define themselves as a distinct group apart from their constituents through their acceptance and expression of this vocabulary. Their consensus-based vocabulary proved inappropriate for framing this element of traditional environmental decision making. In the following section, I trace this discursive maneuvering.

In his presentation, Brewton drew on the consensus based vocabulary to position the web site as consistent with the myth of equal stakeholders engaging in free and open deliberation. First he argued that the web site was consistent with a characterization of stakeholders as equal since "all members could post information they deemed relevant" (p. 132). In addition, the web site ensured equal access not only for active stakeholders but for any interested party because "anyone whether they were a member of the SEG, a member of the public or the media, or other agency people could visit and view it" (p. 134). He also suggested that the web site was consistent with the myth of the common good because, "all information would be available to everyone" (p. 134).

As stakeholders debated this issue however, it became apparent that the group vocabulary was no longer limited to these terms. First, Teri Leffek interrupted Brewton's presentation with the assertion that an advantage of the list serve would be that information could be limited only to

"similar people [who] have similar interests" (p. 134). In this statement, Leffek characterized stakeholders as being distinguished by different interests. This characterization seemed to draw upon the SEG hierarchy that had emerged. Some interests were obviously more important than others, placing those stakeholders closer to the top. At the same time, her desire to limit information to only those with a particular interest suggested a narrative where group deliberation was not free and open but controlled. Both this characterization and narrative were reflective of traditional approaches to environmental decision making where specialized experts deliberated among themselves to make decisions.

Rees then offered a more detailed dearticulation of the consensus based vocabulary just as Brewton called for the SEG to "to choose to adopt it or reject it or modify [this recommendation] it as the group sees fit" (p. 142). First, Rees indicated a difference in status between stakeholders. He stated, "there are a lot of people who are perhaps interested in the proceedings of the SEG who don't participate in these meetings" (p. 144). Here Rees was referring to the "audience" of stakeholders who held less power and existed on the last rung of the SEG hierarchy. He then asserted that because these stakeholders were less knowledgeable about the activities of the SEG, he was concerned that

> a free and open Website might provide some – I don't want to say misinformation, but be confusing to people in terms of trying to figure out what the SEG has done or what personal views are of people who put information on it (p. 144).

In this instance, Rees drew upon his prior distinction of the SEG members' status to provide justification for limiting free and open deliberative practices. This secret and closed deliberation directly opposed the free and open deliberation of the myth of the common good. At the same time, Rees's suggestion that the group enact this type of deliberation through "the E-mail ListServe" (p. 144) indicated that the group had increasingly come to perceive itself as an entity

of experts. This practice worked to cut representatives off from their constituents. In essence, stakeholders could not be characterized as representative.

Judy Jennings then interjected into the conversation. Her comment captured the struggle stakeholders were experiencing with accepting a vocabulary that reflected group practices but that was inconsistent with their foundational vocabulary. She stated, “I desperately want a method to communicate with all of you” (p. 152). Here Jennings expressed a deep desire to develop a narrative of group deliberation that worked. Believing there was a “fatal flaw” (p. 152) to accepting the myth of free and open deliberation as exemplified by the web site, but constrained by this vocabulary, Judy Jennings had no alternative to offer.

Sam Booher then interjected and attempted to offer

> a solution I think would make everybody happy. That is, there is a way on the Web site when you go there that the manager of the Web site sees who is coming to their web site and they can screen a list of people and if you’re not one of those people, then you just go back and say you don’t have access to this portion of the web site. So there is a way that you can have the web site – you can only have this group be able to get access to a portion of it. So that can meet what this group wants because it would restrict this group to be the people that can get to those certain pages on the Web site (p. 155).

In this description, Booher clearly distinguished between active stakeholders and other stakeholders. He characterized active stakeholders as having a different status than other stakeholders, which would allow them access to the website. He also outlined a narrative where deliberation would be limited to this active membership. Both this characterization and narrative directly opposed consensus-based meanings of stakeholders as equal and deliberation as free and open. Mitch King’s support of this description revealed that the SEG had come to perceive of itself as a distinct and closed group. He stated, “Sam mentioned an alternative that would screen people who visit, and is that something that could make it livable and if so, why not?” (p. 156).

The fact that secret and controlled deliberation was the most "livable" narrative for SEG deliberation indicated that in actuality, the group wanted to conduct a secret forum free from public scrutiny. Using a private forum to decide the charged and complex questions of the environmental arena is a traditional approach.

Constrained in the acceptance of such a narrative by the consensus-based vocabulary, Schaller immediately asserted its characterization and narrative. He stated,

> we don't know quite frankly what the membership of the SEG is. And for that reason, you know, you can't confine it just to those of us who say, yeah, I want to be a part of that because there may be any number of people who want to be part of that (p. 157).

In this rearticulation, Schaller reminded members that according to their consensus-based vocabulary, all stakeholders were equal and all had free access to deliberation. He reasoned that because a limited web site was inconsistent with this vocabulary, it was inappropriate. Again stakeholders were unmoved by this appeal. They continued to push for a controlled web site which produced another appeal to the consensus-based vocabulary by Schaller. He responded,

> we do not have a plan to modify the first consensus drawn with respect to what goes on the Web page that the Georgia Ports Authority is sponsoring . . . any information that needs to be dispersed, there are any number of ways to get it dispersed to any number of people (p. 160).

Here Schaller drew on the authority of consensus to support his refusal to adapt the web site. At the same time, he intimated that the real reason for the GPA's refusal to alter the web site was because the GPA was sponsoring it and possibly did not want to be connected with such information. In this sense, the purpose of his appeal to consensus-based meaning was really only to avoid admitting the GPA's refusal.

Frustrated with the inability of stakeholders to define and describe their deliberation process, Brewton pushed them to make some type of conclusion with the statement, "I think you know we do have to make a decision on these things and resolve them or either consciously decide we are

never going to resolve them and we're not going to care" (p. 180). Still struggling due to their inability to craft a narrative of exclusive deliberations, stakeholders asserted that "we've spent far too much time on this issue" (p. 184) and questioned "is there an easy way to solve this" (p. 184). Mitch King from the FWS then attempted to move the group forward by clarifying the issue for the group. He stated, "so what we need here is a forum for exchanging ideas and negotiations- or not negotiations, but ideas, thoughts, positions and discussions among the people at this table. Some sort of electronic exchange" (p. 181).

In response to King's clarification, John Robinette then entered the discussion and began to craft an alternative narrative for group deliberation. He stated,

> I think the question is here how can we effectively communicate with each other? Can we set up on maybe the – on the GPA web site, committee members with their email addresses in a group where, . . . you just click on that group and it sends it to everybody on that committee. So if I wanted to get in touch with the Beach Erosion Committee, and I had got some information that they needed to see, I could send that to them and we could communicate back and forth . . . You could download that to your E-mail system, and if you wanted to send them something, you can communicate back and forth and it wouldn't have to be out for the public to view or anybody else. It would just be within the SEG. What we're talking about here is communicating among and within the SEG without putting it out to the – for public scrutiny. I mean, we're going to have to discuss some very controversial issues and go over some detailed scientific studies (p. 189).

In this description, Robinette differentiated between the active SEG members and the interested public. Following this characterization of stakeholders as unequal in status, he outlined a narrative where deliberation was limited to this distinct group of SEG members. In this narrative, the SEG conducted a secret decision-making forum, away from the watchful eye of the public. Such closedmindedness and self-censorship were characteristic symptoms of groupthink. As a

cohesive in-group, stakeholders were no longer representative. In addition the errors in decision-making that groupthink caused made it almost impossible for them to adequately determine the common good.

Because the stakeholders were constrained by the consensus-based vocabulary, they were unable to accept this narrative. In the end, the SEG was forced to follow Rees' suggestion that the Communication Committee "retrench . . . and see what we can come up with" (p. 191).

In summary, as stakeholders debated their internal communication, they struggle to craft a workable and acceptable narrative of group deliberation. Stakeholders offered a variety of alternatives, which revealed characterizations of stakeholders as being unrepresentative with differences in status and a narrative of secret and controlled deliberation. Although these suggestions seemed acceptable to most members, they reflected traditional hierarchical environmental decision making practices where cohesive experts investigated and decided issues for the public. Constrained by a consensus-based vocabulary, stakeholders were unable to agree upon a description of internal communication based on such exclusion and control. This situation emphasized the inappropriateness of a consensus-based vocabulary for capturing the practices of a group charged with the complex and difficult task of deciding environmental issues. With no agreement reached, members were forced to "move on with the next item of business" (p. 191).

Meaning of Consensus

The final issue of debate in the December meeting was the meaning of consensus. This issue, which seemed to be a topic of continuous deliberation, also arose during discussion of the web site. In previous meetings, the ideographic meaning of consensus as mutual agreement gave way as Dysart started to implement majority voting in the attempt to move the group forward. In this meeting, group members' acceptance of voting made them resemble a traditional environmental decision-making group. Constrained by their consensus vocabulary, stakeholders began to question the consistency of this practice with the meaning of consensus. As stakeholder

struggled to frame their practices consistently with a stakeholder vocabulary, they ultimately conceded to a majority voting process and decided to address the issue more fully in the next meeting.

FWS representative Sam Drake initiated discussion on this topic as he attempted to bring the web site debate to conclusion. He made a "motion" (p. 143) for members to vote on the recommendation. Sam Booher then seconded his recommendation. By calling for a vote, stakeholders attempted to enact a form of consensus where decisions were based on rule by the majority. Rees then highlighted the inconsistency of this decision practice with the ideographic meaning for consensus. He stated,

> while we have started doing that sort of thing in the last couple of meetings, I would just like to point out that that is contrary to the operating guidelines that have been adopted to reach these decisions as a matter of consensus and not through a motion and second and vote process (p. 146).

Brewton agreed that he was "right about that, although we have been doing it. Someone started it" (p. 146). Here Brewton recognized the inconsistency between the consensus-based definition accepted by the group and the actual decision making the SEG practiced. He then questioned members, "how can we determine when we have a consensus" (p. 146). His question suggested the inappropriateness of consensus-based vocabulary for capturing the SEG's practices. In the ensuing discussion, a number of stakeholders attempted to provide an answer for Brewton's question.

First, Dysart simply disregarded Brewton's question and enacted voting based decision-making. He stated, "okay, I would ask—raise your hands if you support this Recommendation No. 10" (p. 146). Unable to accept the complete disregard of the ideographic meaning for consensus, Judy Jennings demanded, "It's this body's job to form consensus on it or not" (p. 147) rather than to determine the issue through voting. Jennings' assertion of the need for the SEG to

reach consensus indicated that the consensus-based vocabulary constrained her acceptance of decision making by majority rule.

In response to this rearticulation, Dysart attempted to frame voting as consistent with consensus-based decisions. He continued, “Okay. My request [was for] show of hands” (p. 148) while he also maintained that

> having motions, seconds, calling the questions and so forth is not consistent with a consensus seeking body. However, there is—typically you ask for an expression of support for something. You can either have all smiley faces indicating it, raising hands or whatnot (p. 148).

Here, Dysart suggested that “raising hands” was not voting but rather an indication of support and therefore was consistent with consensus decision making. Attempting to enact this form of consensus decision-making, he continued, “please raise your hands. Okay one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty . . . twenty-five” (p. 148). As Dysart counted hands to determine whether over fifty percent of the group supported the recommendation, he enacted majority voting rather than consensus agreement revealing that the consensus-based vocabulary was unsuitable for describing group practice.

Possibly realizing that Dysart’s effort to determine a consensus decision was in actuality a majority rule decision, Shubert suggested a way to make the raising of hands consistent with consensus-based decisions. He stated,

> why you don’t say who opposes it? The consensus is to convince those who are really in opposition to bring them along by modification. So if no one is really in opposition, then you are going home with the whole ball and bat (p. 149).

By framing the raising of hands as an indication of opposition, Shubert attempted to make the practice consistent with the ideographic meaning of consensus. Once opposition was expressed,

proponents could work to bring opponents into agreement. The result would be the mutual agreement of consensus. Ben Brewton then suggested another question. Brewton indicated that "a more appropriate question would be how many people can't live with that?" (p. 149). According to Brewton, this question helped to make the raising of hands more consistent with the ideographic meaning of consensus. Dysart's unsuccessful effort to enact this determination of consensus revealed the unsuitability of the consensus vocabulary for this group. Dysart then questioned, "how many people support or can live with this?" (p. 149). Angrily, Brewton yelled "No.No" at this attempt. Dysart then posed the question again, "How many people can't live with it?" (p. 150). He then attempted to interpret this vote. He stated, "so we have—we have half of the body supports, six people can't live with it" (p. 150). Dysart then asked another question. He asked, "How many of the other people, basically the other half, who didn't say you supported it can live with it? And please don't vote twice" (p. 150). Dysart then determined that since those in support of the recommendation equaled "less than 50 percent, I think that that would be difficult to call a broad consensus or a narrow consensus" (p. 162). In the end, Dysart concluded that consensus was not achieved because there was no solid majority. In essence, although he attempted to enact a form of raising hands that was consistent with consensus, he reverted to using the hands to determine the will of the majority. His inability to lead a consensus decision revealed the unsuitability of this vocabulary for SEG practices. At the same time, the ease with which decision making by majority rule was practiced suggested the SEG's compatibility with a traditional environmental decision group.

Just when it seemed the membership was satisfied with voting, the EPA representative Gerald Miller then indicated a problem with majority rule decision making. He argued that because,

> there are some people by virtue of either their position or whatever are not going to be disposed to vote, have no opinion or whatever . . . there is a concern I think on their part that if they vote one way or another that brings along the agency they represent (p. 168).

Miller reasoned that because stakeholders maintained differences in status, voting was not the best method for determining decisions within the SEG. Exasperated, FWS representative Mitch King interjected. He stated,

> I'm beginning to thank myself for being absent, and my opinion here is that this is ludicrous. The bouncing around of discussions here is not – it's not what this group should be doing. We have a situation that needs to be resolved. I don't know what the solution is, but I know that the bantering I've seen over the last ten minutes has not been very productive (p. 171).

Here, King captured the circular and ridiculous nature of the stakeholders' efforts to make practice appear consistent with consensus-based meanings. His statement also captured the frustration members felt as they grappled over these issues.

With members at the point of giving up, Coastal Sierra Club representative Andrew Rae interjected in the nick of time. He suggested that the group

> take the two most disparate groups in the room . . . get them together and let them work together, not argue, but they have to either find agreement and compromise and then move forward and then make a recommendation to the entire group then you can move on (p. 176).

Although this definition of consensus seemed much more suitable for the extreme positions and divisive arguments of the SEG, it also was far from the notion of mutual agreement as expressed in the ideographic meaning of consensus. In this sense, Rae's suggestion and members' acceptance of this type of decision making emphasized the unsuitability of the consensus-based vocabulary for the SEG's task. Instead the negotiation of environmental dispute resolution efforts proved to be a more suitable type of decision making.

In the end, stakeholders accepted Rae's suggestion for negotiated decision making as a temporary fix. Constrained by the ideographic meaning of consensus, they could not accept

negotiation as consensus. In turn, Dysart concluded that this topic "needs additional work" (p. 193). Brewton likewise suggested

> that the operating guidelines committee, just in view of what happened today and how much time we spent on trying to achieve consensus and then debating what consensus was, and sometimes we voted and it counts, and other times we've voted and it's even a larger margin and it doesn't count, that the operating guidelines reconvene and discuss the issue of consensus and voting and so forth so that we don't have a debate about that (p. 234).

In summary, in this section of the meeting, stakeholders struggled over the definition of consensus. In prior meetings, the SEG had adopted the voting practices of traditional environmental decision making groups. As the group began to enact this type of decision making, they were constrained in their acceptance of this traditional practice by their consensus-based vocabulary. The group's struggle to make the practice of raising hands consistent with the ideographic meaning of consensus revealed the unsuitability of the consensus-based vocabulary for the SEG's task. Unable to forge a meaning for consensus that was consistent with the ideographic meaning of consensus and worked in practice, the group temporarily accepted negotiation and committed to resolving this issue at the next meeting.

Conclusion

From August 1999 to December 1999, the Georgia Ports Authority's Stakeholder Evaluation Group met to complete their tasks of identifying potential deepening impacts and implementing studies to determine the extent of those impacts. Congressional authorization in August and ensuing Corps approval placed pressure on the group to quicken its pace. These events facilitated the SEG's recommendations for a number of studies and committees. At the same time, the SEG remained plagued by communication and procedural issues such as the

processes of committee recommendations and issue identification, the meaning of consensus and the best means for internal communication.

As the SEG deliberated to tackle these issues, they continued to struggle with their foundational consensus based vocabulary. From August to November, stakeholders intensified their challenges to the characterization of stakeholders as equal and representative, the myth of group process as free and open deliberation toward the common good and the ideographic meaning of consensus as rational agreement. Increasingly they expressed acceptance of characterizations for stakeholder as different in status and unrepresentative, group narratives where the elite controlled decision making and deliberation was secret and exclusive and decision making practices where majority ruled, in the hopes of progressing in their mission. Their support of these practices made the SEG more closely resembled the hierarchy, exclusion and symptoms of groupthink that characterized traditional environmental decision making groups and ultimately caused the collapse of the consensus process. However, in December when they began to articulate these practices clearly, their stakeholder vocabulary constrained them and proved unsuitable. This situation led to episodes of “contentious bantering” Krueger, 1999k, p. 1) which mostly ended without conclusion.

CHAPTER 6

BACK TO TRADITION

The members of the SEG began their second deliberative year unaware that their group and their project would receive increased public attention over the next six months. In January, the fact that both candidates in the Senatorial special election focused heavily on harbor deepening signaled its shift into the public arena (Mantius, 2000). Then in February, both local and national newspapers buzzed with reports of conflict within the SEG. The controversy resulted from the GPA's failure to respond to a SEG January recommendation that they fund two striped bass studies. Pilot studies sponsored by the SEG in the previous year indicated that the fish might reproduce in the Front River rather than in the Back River as previously believed. Because the studies were time sensitive and also had "a lot of implications for deepening" (Krueger, 2000b, p. 2), the SEG allowed the experts of the Striped Bass Committee to work directly with the GPA without the interference of the larger group. However, in the February meeting, the committee revealed that the GPA refused to fund the studies arguing that the research was part of the Corps of Engineers' ongoing Back River restoration work. The Corps, on the other hand, asserted that they had authority only to study the Back River, not the Front River (Krueger, 2000b, p. 2). Both national and local newspapers covered this controversy in the days following the meeting. Reports focused on the FWS's assertion that "the project can't go forward without further study" (Squabble over $122,000, 2000, p. 1). The news also suggested that this agency might stop the project by pulling "the kill switch . . . if information about how the important food and game fish reproduce in the channel is missing from the final environmental studies of the project" (Krueger, 2000b, p. 1). The GPA conceded to the authority of this agency and agreed to fund the studies on February 18th (Ports Authority agrees, 2000, p. 1).

This event stirred public interest. A few days later, on February 24th, the groups Taxpayers for Common Sense and the National Wildlife Federation [NWF] issued a scathing critique of Corps directed navigation projects (TCS, 2000a). Their report suggested that "hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent on projects that create navigable waterways for traffic that never comes, flood control that encourages people to develop high risk areas, and ports that destroy wide expanses of the nation's estuaries and coastlines" costing both "the taxpayer and the environment" (Shade & DeGennaro, 2000, p. A11). TCS and NWF categorized the Savannah project as "No. 8 on a list of the 10 worst U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects" (Environmental, taxpayer groups, p. 1). They argued that it demonstrated "pork-barrel spending and bad environmental policy" (p. 1). The NWF followed up the report with a law suit accusing the Army Corps of Engineers of violating "the National Environmental Policy Act, the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the Magnuson-Steven Fishery Conservation and Management Act" (Savannah River: Group sues, 2000, p. 1) by issuing approval on the Savannah project before the proper environmental studies were complete. The South Carolina Coastal Conservation League, the South Carolina Wildlife Federation and the Coastal Georgia Center for Sustainable Development partnered with the NWF to file the suit on March 14th under the council of the SELC. The groups claimed the Corps "had bulldozed the Savannah Harbor project through on the promise it would study the environmental impacts later" (Seabrook, 2000, p. 3B). They hoped to force the "Corps of Engineers to reverse its approval until it fully reviews the environmental and economic issues" (Krueger, 2000c, p. 1).

These attacks and the complementary front-page coverage they facilitated sparked the interests of the local citizenry. Letters to the Editor from private citizens critiquing the project increased in frequency (Public interest must prevail, 2000, p. 2). Citizens also started to attend SEG meetings. Feeling the pressure, the GPA scheduled a public meeting for July. However, this second and last public meeting of the project was primarily the GPA's show. Booths were set up

with information detailing the approval process rather than possible impacts and public comments taken in an isolated chamber “that gave the impression of a confessional” (Krueger, 2000h, p. 2).

Somewhat paradoxically, rather than slowing the SEG down, these attacks seemed to motivate the group to move forward in their mission. A number of stakeholders adamantly defended the SEG’s work in newspaper editorials. In January, Judy Jennings and Terri Leffek asserted the “responsibility” (Leffek & Jennings, 2000, p. 1) and “steadfast concern” (p. 3) of the SEG members and the “thorough, rigorous and unbiased” (p. 1) nature of their work in the *Savannah Morning News*. In May, member Chris Schuberth maintained the legitimacy of the SEG discussion and the credibility of its scientific efforts in another editorial (Schuberth, 2000, p. 1). Stakeholders expressed an intense desire to move forward during the meetings. For example, the February meeting began with members urging each other to “get on with" (SEG, 2000b, p. 6) it, to “not go overboard on time” (p. 7), to “get into the science” (p. 9) and to “plow through the agenda” (p. 11). Toward this end, stakeholders readily accepted a vocabulary that enabled them to identify and implement scientific studies in order to fulfill the first half of their mission. In an effort to be more efficient, members yielded control to agency and technical elite by limiting the characterization of stakeholder to this group and following a narrative where they defined and led studies. The SEG members also accepted titles as motivation and authority in decision making. Although this vocabulary enabled the SEG to progress on their mission, it also caused them to fall deeper into the problematic patterns of traditional groups.

In this final chapter of analysis, I explore stakeholders’ vocalization of a vocabulary that allowed them to fulfill the first part of their mission. As in previous chapters, I begin with an overview of the issues and vocabulary of the SEG from January 2000 to June 2000. Next, I engage in a more detailed analysis of the final monthly meeting in July of 2000.

Issues January 2000 to July 2000

From January to June, the SEG membership maintained a rapid pace. Under the leadership of the various technical committees, the group resolved pressing issues and recommended and approved new studies. In January, stakeholders finally resolved the web site controversy by accepting the recommendation from the Communications Committee that two areas be made available for members to post information. The first area included "information related to any topic that has been placed on the agenda for an upcoming or past SEG meeting" (SEG, 2000a, pp. 77) and the second included "important project-related reports, correspondence, and other information arising between meetings" (p. 78). Only members who had attended at least one meeting could post information and both areas would include disclaimers regarding the unofficial nature of the information. No space was created for general correspondence. Initially, the GPA did not want to accept this recommendation because representatives claimed the practice would complicate deliberation by confusing people "about where and how this body communicates" (p. 86). However, the membership pushed the recommendation through. The committee also made a number of suggestions to increase meeting efficiency. The first was the creation of a steering committee comprised of committee chairs to meet after each meeting and set the next month's agenda. This recommendation was readily accepted despite the fact that it legitimized elite control of the agenda. The committee also recommended that chairs develop plans for their record keeping practices. In March, all chairs unanimously reported that they would recount their activities through meeting summaries. Although Brewton was unsatisfied with this answer and argued for a system where primary documents would be accessible to all, the lack of member's support left him alone in this attempted defense of open deliberative practices.

The Operating Guidelines committee continued to address the definition of consensus. In February, the committee proposed a "change in the language on reaching consensus" (SEG,

2000b, p. 63). The recommendation that "consensus is the mutual feeling that all concerns have been addressed and that all parties can live with the proposed course of action" (SEG, 2000b, p. 64) was accepted by the SEG membership. The committee also revamped its mission to include keeping "the operating guidelines current to reflect the decision of SEG operational matters" (SEG, 2000b, p. 71). This change reflected a recognition that group guidelines should come from workable procedures rather than preset rules.

While these issues were being resolved, a number of committees forged ahead on technical work. Preexisting committees moved the group closer to fulfilling the first half of the SEG mission. The MTRG continued to pursue model development. In February, the committee reported that a draft report on all the data collected the previous year for use in model development would be completed within a few weeks. The report was not released until May. This delay peaked stakeholders' interests since they had heard some of the modelers express concern regarding the accuracy of portions of the data. Members of the MTRG assured the stakeholders that they would deal with these problems and promised the group a presentation on the data during a future meeting. The committee itself continued to develop the model. During the March meeting, the MTRG reported on their discussion of the model grid resolution. The grid was the heart of the model. Each of its 11 layers of horizontal and vertical blocks represented an area of water in the channel- the finer the model resolution, the smaller the area. The MTRG committee chair Bo Ellis reported that the committee was considering coarsening the grid to "keep run times . . . to run a reasonable amount of time" (SEG, 2000c, p. 128). Stakeholders expressed concern that a coarse grid might result in an inaccurate model. Ellis again assured stakeholders that the MTRG would handle the issue. In May, Ellis reported that the committee had decided not to coarsen the grid due to the advice of the GPA's consultant that a coarse grid would sacrifice model quality. In essence, the MTRG continued to develop the model on its own with little attention to stakeholder concerns.

A number of other preexisting committees began to adopt similar practices and for the sake of efficiency, sidestepped the SEG and worked directly with the GPA to develop and implement scientific studies. For example, the Striped Bass committee worked one-on-one with the GPA to implement the controversial spawning study discussed earlier. With this study implemented, the committee concluded in May that all research needed to assess the impact of deepening on striped bass were in place. The Fisheries Committee likewise worked closely with the GPA to negotiate two complementary studies designed to determine what fish were in various parts of the river estuary at various times during the year. When tied to the MTRG's model, these studies would help determine how the deepening would change the habitat for area fish. The committee had to assure the GPA that the studies "fit into the Corps project evaluation framework . . . [and] could assist in the evaluation of potential project impacts" (SEG, 2000d, p. 127) before the GPA granted them funding. However, by May, committee chair Bill Bailey concluded, "we do believe that these studies are the only field studies needed to address fishery concerns" (SEG, 2000e, p. 65).

Lacking the formal committee framework, the Fish and Wildlife Service took it upon itself to propose a series of studies dealing with the Wildlife Refuge in January. This research included studies on salinity monitoring in the marsh, production of seed for migratory birds, the tree community of the tidal swamp, the marsh sedimentation, the vegetation change in the marsh, and the behavior of migratory birds and juvenile fish in the refuge. According to Fish and Wildlife Service representatives, the purpose of the $575,000 project would be to "quantify the ecological value of the freshwater marshes and to put long-term monitoring projects in place" (Krueger, 2000a, p. 2). Working one on one with the GPA, the FWS secured funding for two studies by May with promises from the GPA that approval and funding of the others would soon follow.

Possibly since beach erosion was not an issue of regulatory necessity, the BEC was not as successful as these other committees. Yet, the BEC was still able to secure approval for one study directly from the GPA. In January, the BEC reported that the GPA had agreed to fund research to determine the best "coarse/fine sand ratios suitable for the beneficial use of dredge material in three alternate locations; one, on the shoreline; number two, adjacent to existing sand dunes; and three, near shore areas" (SEG, 2000a, p. 125). This report of approval was the first the SEG had heard of the study. The BEC also introduced a second study that consisted of a comprehensive cost/ benefit analysis of merging Corps run beach restoration projects with the harbor-deepening project. Since this research dealt with both the Corps' and the GPA's interests, the BEC was less successful with procuring the GPA's sole support. In January, the BEC decided "to defer [the study] as not being in the scope of the harbor deepening project" (SEG, 2000a, p. 122). Yet in March the committee returned with two studies that attempted to divide the research according to interests. The first was a study comparing the costs and benefits of using project sand to renourish the beach. This research clearly fell under the scope of the proposed project making it the GPA's responsibility. The next was a comparison of the costs and benefits of using of harbor maintenance dredge material for beach renourishment. This study was concerned with the operation and maintenance of the channel, making it the Corp's responsibility. The BEC reported that they would develop the specifics of the research during April but returned in May with the recommendation that "the GPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers . . . take both studies, and modify them into some joint study effort that would accommodate both scopes of work" (SEG, 2000e, p. 77). Having given up, they conceded to let the agency experts develop the study.

With many established committees reaching the end of their recommendation phase, a number of newer committees that relied on their findings began to mobilize. In March, the Dredging and Disposal Committee began reporting findings of their background research. Based on a discussion of the current disposal plan with the Georgia Department of Transportation, they

concluded that harbor deepening would not drastically impact the level of maintenance dredging material. This eased the minds of many stakeholders who had expressed concern that increased amounts of dredged material might fill designated disposal sites above capacity. Committee chair Beason indicated in May that the committee had been collecting stakeholder concerns to address once the studies determining the impact of the deepening were complete. Similarly, the EWG also awaited findings before the committee could begin its economic analysis. The EWC reported in May that they were beginning to prioritize so that when the resource studies were complete issues could be addressed in a systematic order.

Generally, stakeholders expressed satisfaction over the progress of established scientific committees. Yet during this time, a number of issues remained unresolved. The first was ballast water. In December, members had agreed to allow the GPA to define the issue by responding to a series of questions. Rees continually postponed the presentation until April. In his short report, he claimed that there was a lack of information on this issue, that state laws currently in place were ineffective, and that efforts were underway by the EPA and the international community to deal with it. He also referenced the report of a recent deepening in Oakland California, which echoed the claims of Coast Guard Commander Mcdonald. This report determined that there would be "less discharges of ballast water and fewer problems as a result of channel deepening" (SEG, 2000d, p. 119) because with the larger, more stable vessels there would be fewer ships to carry the same amount of cargo and less ballast discharges. Reasoning that the issue was continually changing, Rees suggested continuing his research and providing a report in May. However, by June Rees had yet to readdress the issue.

Stakeholders' failure to follow-up on this topic seemed strange, given the amount of controversy it produced in prior meetings. However the issues of tidal amplitude and saltwater intrusion into the aquifer quickly overshadowed the ballast water debate. Tidal amplitude arose as a topic of concern in the January meeting. Stakeholders were anxious about the increases in tidal

water level that deepening might facilitate for two reasons. First, higher tides meant that "saltwater will creep farther up the river" (Krueger, 2000a, p. 1). Second, higher tides could interact with a coastal storm to facilitate flooding and drastically increase storm damage. When this issue arose during the January meeting, the MTRG assured stakeholders that the model under development would account for tidal increases so that any impacts could be predicted. They also claimed that the Tier I EIS had determined that "there was really insignificant increase in the water levels as a result of tidal amplitude" (SEG, 2000a, p. 39). Stakeholders demanded that the MTRG present the specifics of how the model incorporated tidal amplitude at the next meeting. In February, the MTRG returned without a presentation and claimed they were still working on it. Unsatisfied with the MTRG's response, stakeholders invited expert Chuck Watson to present his research in April. Watson was the father of a storm model used by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Organization of American States, the World Bank, the States of Florida, Hawaii, North Carolina, and virtually all of the Caribbean Countries. In his presentation, Watson claimed that deepening the navigation channel by six feet would add "$4 million in flood damages to the county if it is hit by a Category 3 storm" (Krueger, 2000d, p. 1). He also argued that "mitigating these kinds of things is pretty tough" (SEG, 2000d, p. 71) and that such efforts might "end up causing more problems" (SEG, 2000d, p. 71). During this meeting, the stakeholders decided to let each of the technical committees determine how tidal amplitude would affect their particular issue. In May, some committees such as Fisheries and Striped Bass indicated that tidal amplitude would not affect their resources while the MTRG reported that they were working with the GPA on how to address it in the model.

The issue of saltwater intrusion into the aquifer arose as a topic of discussion in March. Since 24 of Georgia's coastal counties had been "living under an interim ground water management plan imposed by the state EPD" (Krueger, 2000f, p. 1) since 1997, protecting the coast's freshwater was a particularly salient topic. Part of the Floridan Aquifer resided deep

beneath the navigation channel. Thick Miocene rock and a surficial aquifer system protected it. Yet the rock was cut in areas by ancient riverbeds, which were filled with silt. Stakeholders became concerned that "cutting into those old channels could let saltwater" (Deepening the channel, 2000, p. B1) into the aquifer. When the issue arose during the March meeting, the GPA representative Larry Keegan assured stakeholders that the GPA had been "very concerned" about the aquifer during the Tier I evaluation process. He further claimed that research performed at that time indicated that "deepening up to 48 feet will not endangered the aquifer" (SEG, 2000c, p. 28). In May however, this issue returned with renewed vigor as "coastal counties [dealt] with water supply issues" (Krueger, 2000e, p. 2). In an effort to dispel the issue, the GPA invited the Corps representative responsible for the original Tier I study to reassure stakeholders. He explained the research and reasoned that small amounts of saltwater would inevitably leak into the aquifer. However because it contained "tremendously more than what's coming down, it has a flushing effect" (SEG, 2000e, p. 168). In turn, "the actual effect on the Floridan Aquifer is minimal" (SEG, 2000e, p. 168).

In June, the SEG decided to readdress the issue and invited researcher Fred Rich to speak on the topic. Rich had recently identified vertical fissures in the Miocene rock, which covered the aquifer in nearby Statesboro. According to Rich, since

> what's true for the rock around Statesboro is probably true for the rock under the river, which is the same strata or layer . . . saltwater would move into the aquifer more quickly along the fissures that are hidden under the river (Krueger, 2000e, p. 2).

Following this presentation, "the group voted to establish a special subcommittee to track the topic and possibly call for studies to be done on the subject before the deepening can move forward" (Krueger, 2000f, p. 1) while the GPA and the Corps continued to question the need for further study. For example, during the meeting Dan Parrot of the Corps argued, "if there's been

no smoking gun of salinity leaking into the aquifer, what's the impact of the harbor expansion project? " (SEG, 2000f, p. 51).

In summary, despite these few unresolved issues, the SEG moved rapidly toward fulfilling the first part of their mission from January to June 2000. By June most of the needed studies were underway. A change in SEG vocabulary enabled the stakeholders' scientific progress to quicken.

Vocabulary January 2000 to June 2000

Stakeholders employed a more workable vocabulary in order to move forward. With efficiency as their number one priority, this became a shared good between all stakeholders. Toward this end, members employed a narrative of group process where agency and technical elite developed studies and made decisions. The characterization of stakeholder was limited to this inner circle of decision-makers and their words symbolized decision-making authority. In turn, authority titles replaced broad consensus as the SEG's central ideograph. This vocabulary helped the SEG progress yet it also facilitated many of the problems associated with more traditional types of decision making.

In January, members' approval of a concrete definition of stakeholder as an individual who "physically attended and signed in to at least one SEG meeting previously" (SEG, 2000a, p. 80) initiated a limiting of the stakeholder characterization. In this definition, generally interested but absent parties not only existed at the bottom of the SEG hierarchy, they were now excluded from the hierarchy altogether. In the following months, this characterization was limited further as more powerful members drew on their authority in order to get studies approved and implemented. Stakeholder came to represent only the inner circle of agency and technical elite and their titles functioned to establish authority for making decisions.

First, agency members at the highest level of the SEG hierarchy began to use their titles in order to push through specific scientific studies. The debate over the Striped Bass Committee

research was the first example of this occurrence. While waiting for the GPA to approve the research in February, Striped Bass Committee chairman Tom Meronek commented,

> to be honest, I can sit here right now and speak, as the committee chairman for the Striped Bass Committee, or I can sit here right now and speak as a representative of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and a person who works on Striped Bass and has been working on it the past five years, so however you look at me, I'm saying that I think we should talk about this issue right now, and talk about approving this scope of work . . . it's information that if we don't have it, it's going to compromise our position at the end of this whole project (SEG, 2000a, p. 25).

Here, Meronek emphasized his title as a Georgia Department of Natural Resource representative in order to assert the need for the striped bass study. His title acted as the authority for making a decision in support of the studies and replaced consensus as the guide for SEG decision making. At the same time, by asserting that this issue was important because it was an agency's interest, Meronek limited the characterization of stakeholder to these agencies. In essence, only the top layer of the SEG hierarchy was now considered stakeholders. Fish and Wildlife Service representative Andrew King demonstrated a similar characterization of stakeholder as discussion of the research continued. He stated,

> this is one of those things that I'm looking at from a Fish and Wildlife Service standpoint and saying, if we can't fund this project and get this moving and other things associated with the very things that are identified here, I don't know where we're going and why we're sitting around this room (SEG, 2000a, p. 35).

Here, King emphasized his position as a Fish and Wildlife Service representative in order to give persuasive force to his argument that the study was needed. Since this term worked as motivation for this decision, it functioned ideographically. King's suggestion that the FWS's interest was

central to the composition of the group limited the characterization of stakeholder to only agency members in contrast to past hierarchically arranged characterizations.

A number of stakeholders used a similar strategy later in the February meeting during a discussion of the proposed Fisheries studies. When presenting the studies, committee chair Bill Bailey assured the SEG that "the agencies who were represented on the committee stated that they believe that this work was needed—would be needed to evaluate the impacts on these resources" (SEG, 2000b, p. 122). Brownell then identified which agencies supported the research. He stated,

> I'll speak for the National Marine Fisheries Service, we now have a responsibility, which is actually shared by any federal agency . . . we as federal agencies are obligated to ensure to the public we have done the best we can to ensure that any federally sanctioned or authorized activity would not have an adverse effect on federally managed species (SEG, 2000b, p. 129).

By emphasizing the interests of federal agencies Brownell limited the characterization of stakeholder to these agencies. He also articulated his agency's title and emphasized its position as one of these federal agencies that supported the study in order to reinforce his argument that they must be completed. The title, the National Marine Fisheries Service, acted ideographically as motivation for SEG action. The words of experts as authority for decisions contrasted with prior usage of consensus as the basis for decision-making. When the studies were not yet funded by March, Brownell drew on his agency again to argue that "they are important studies, at least, from our agency's viewpoint" (SEG, 2000c, p. 121). Andrew King agreed that "this is an important one from the Fish and Wildlife Service's standpoint as well" (SEG, 2000c, p. 120). By emphasizing the interests of agencies, these members limited the characterization of stakeholder to these groups. Brownell and King also used their titles to emphasize the need for the studies. In

turn the titles, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the FWS, acted as ideographs to motivate the GPA to fund the research.

Similar strategies were used by members to urge for the GPA's approval of the research proposed by the Fish and Wildlife Service. When these studies were not yet approved three months after their introduction, Pricilla Wendt argued, "I would just like to say, on behalf of the South Carolina DNR, that it seems like that would be very important . . . I would hope they are funded" (SEG, 2000c, p. 17). In this statement, Wendt used her title as a representative of the South Carolina DNR to motivate the GPA to fund the Wildlife Refuge studies. In essence, the title functioned ideographically as authority for her argument in contrast to earlier meetings where SEG consensus represented decision authority. John Robinette of the Fish and Wildlife Service agreed. He argued that "the FWS made those points at the meeting too" (p. 18). Finally, Press Brownell attempted "to lend some support" to their arguments by arguing that "those are definitely essential components to our ability to develop an information base that will provide decision-making in the broad public interest" (p. 18). By highlighting their agencies' interests these members limited the characterized stakeholder to just these groups in contrast to earlier characterizations where all members were considered stakeholders and agency members simply had more power than others did. They also vocalized their respective agencies' titles in order to bring authority to their arguments that the research was needed and in turn, motivate the GPA to fund it. In this way, the titles functioned as ideographs.

The clearest example of this vocabulary was demonstrated during the discussion over forming a committee to review the work of Chuck Watson in June. Watson was the researcher who questioned the GPA's assessment of the impact of deepening on tidal amplitude. Schaller conveyed Watson's request "to meet with a small group of SEG representatives to include a representative of the F&WS, a representative of DNR, along with perhaps GPA, to review his study efforts" (SEG, 2000f, p. 14). In this statement, Schaller indicated that a representative

group of the SEG stakeholders would consist only of members of agencies and technical groups. He limited the characterization of stakeholder to these groups. Next, John Robinette from the Fish and Wildlife Service identified "ATM and FWS" as groups with "people that are competent in these modeling efforts" (p. 16). Finally Bill Farmer suggested that "the MTRG group has been bragged about, as far as the quality of the modelers in that particular committee. Perhaps all of them or some of them should attend" (p. 17). By the end of this discussion, the representative committee that had emerged consisted of the FWS, the DNR, the GPA, the ATM, and the MTRG. By suggesting that a representative committee would consist only of these groups, these members limited the characterization of stakeholder to agency representatives and technical experts. At the same time, mentioning these titles intimated that the issue would be dealt with fairly and fully. The titles acted as authority for this decision process in contrast to prior usage of the SEG consensus for this purpose.

Members' emphasis of the authority titles that represented scientific and technical expertise worked in a similar fashion. Accentuation of the titles of scientific expertise appeared most often in arguments defending the MTRG's control of the model development process. In May, Brewton questioned this control. Schaller responded by emphasizing the expertise of committee members. He stated, "there are 12 to 16 experts who are involved in the MTRG, highly regarded professionals, very competent individuals" (SEG, 2000e, p. 45). Here Schaller drew on the term "MTRG" strategically to assert that this group was competent and professional. In this way the title worked to motivate members to accept the MTRG's direction of model development. By suggesting that the MTRG should have control, Schaller also limited the characterization of stakeholder to this group. Since they directed the process through their deliberation and input, the MTRG alone acted as stakeholders. This characterization incorporated only the top layer of the hierarchically arranged characterization found in past meetings. Later that same meeting, Neff McIntosh demonstrated a similar characterization of stakeholder. In

support of the MTRG's control of the modeling effort he stated, "I've been impressed with the scientific credentials and the work they have put it and have been told to keep my layman's status as it is" (p. 111). In this comment, McIntosh made a sharp distinction between members with scientific credential and laypersons. He indicated that those with scientific credentials should guide the scientific study process while laypersons should stay out. In this sense, only those members with scientific credentials acted as stakeholders.

In June, some members again questioned the MTRG's command of model development. In defense of the MTRG, the Georgia DNR representative Stuart Stevens argued that

> I've checked with two professors that we consider to be two experts involved with the MTRG, and they have been very pleased. I want to compliment Bo and your staff . . . they're very pleased with how the model is working (SEG, 2000f, p. 155).

Committee chair Bo Ellis responded, "I appreciate that. We have a great group that works hard, goes through the technical deliberations of the MTRG" (p. 155). Both Stevens and Ellis emphasized the technical expertise of the MTRG members in order to argue for their continued direction of the model development process. With the MTRG leading the study process and determining technical decisions they alone acted as stakeholders. In this way, Stevens and Ellis characterized stakeholders as these technical elite. Both members also used the title, the MTRG, and the expertise and status associated with it, to support their claim that the group should maintain control of the development effort. The title acted as an ideographic authority for a decision in favor of their claim. The use of expert titles in this way differed from prior uses of consensus to establish authority for a decision.

In summary, from January 2000 to June 2000, the SEG members drew on the authority of agency and scientific titles in order to move along on their mission. By acting as the primary source of motivation, these titles replaced consensus as the authority for the SEG's decision-making. Focus on the interests of agency members and scientific experts alone also worked to

limit the characterization of stakeholder to the upper echelon of the SEG members in contrast to past characterizations where all members were included but also arranged hierarchically. Although this vocabulary helped to move the group along on its mission, it also may have facilitated the illusion of group unanimity and the self-censorship of less powerful members, two symptoms of group think (Janis, 1982).

Douglas Amy contends that "unequal power between participants in environmental mediation" produces a process which is far from "representative, fair and voluntary" (1987, p. 150). This was definitely the case with the SEG as a characterization of stakeholder as the scientific and agency elite produced a narrative where these members worked directly with the GPA to define issues and achieve progress. This narrative differed from past narratives of elite control because in the past although experts controlled the process they still incorporated the SEG. Now this group bypassed the SEG altogether.

At the heart of this narrative was a scientific mission. This movement from a mission of "good responsible trade-offs" (SEG, 1999g, p. 1) to a "scientific mission" complete with "scientific studies that need to be done" (SEG, 2000a, p. 25), reflected a shift in stakeholders' notion of the common good. The good was now to move forward and "develop what kinds of studies and issues need to be addressed" (July 2000g, p. 25). This narrative was clearly demonstrated in the discussion of three issues.

The first issue was beach erosion. During the January meeting, committee chair Bill Farmer reported on a study of the "course/fine ratio for sand placement on the beach" (SEG, 2000a, p. 120). He outlined how "the committee was getting ready to develop that recommendation to the SEG . . . [when] Charles said, ok, we'll just go ahead and study it" (p. 120). Farmer continued to describe how

> Charles said the Port Authority would study that. He immediately turned to Bo Ellis, who is ATM on the same committee and requested ATM to develop the task statement in very specific words, how to do it, when to do it, why to do that, and that sort of thing (p. 122).

In this narrative, the technical experts of the committee worked directly with the GPA to define and determine the study. Although the study by-passed the SEG's approval, it was efficient since the committee recommended it to Charles Griffen of the GPA whom "immediately" asked his consultant to develop a task statement. Brewton argued that he didn't think "we should forego the right of the SEG to have some input into the scope of study" (p. 123). However other members' acceptance of this narrative indicated their shared sense of efficiency as the common good. This notion contrasted with past conceptualization of the common good as trade-offs resulting from the interaction of all participants.

Committee member Stuart Stevens then attempted to assure Brewton that the study would not simply be the GPA's product. Instead, "I and others on the committee, would work directly with him [Ellis] to develop that scope of work" (p. 123). Since Stevens was a representative of the National Marine Fisheries Service, his suggestion that he would work with a technical expert to develop the scope of study revealed a narrative where agency experts and technical elite made decisions for the SEG. Fish and Wildlife Service representative Andrew King then ended the discussion with an approval of this narrative. He stated, "I think the committee has heard from the group on how important we think that is, now let them work" (p. 145). King's suggestion that "we let them work" indicated that the SEG members accepted this narrative for the purpose of efficiency. In this sense, it was a good shared by all members. Although in April Farmer's comment that "we ran into a little difficulty in the fact that the Georgia Ports Authority is a little sensitive about having to spend money for costs"(SEG, 2000d, p. 126) revealed that the process was not without its problems, the SEG continued to support this more efficient narrative for this

BEC study. This narrative where experts bypassed the SEG altogether contrasted with prior descriptions where the elite controlled the process yet still incorporated other members.

In April, the BEC outlined a narrative where committee experts not only bypassed the SEG, but also the GPA in order to secure funding for a study. During this meeting, committee member Stevens stated,

> we've been interested . . . to see a comprehensive study done related to the movement of sand. I've met with Congressman Kingston to discuss that as part of order 99. Last week when I was in Washington, the Coastal States Organization that I represent, that Governor Barnes is on . . . did pass a resolution that was sent to Congress to encourage the money to be appropriated to do this Corps study of erosion, as well as, a comprehensive look at how sand is handled within the districts (SEG, 2000d, p. 126).

Here committee experts worked directly with Congress to get studies implemented. Central to this narrative were the titles of the Coastal States Organization, Governor Barnes and Congressman Kingston. These titles acted ideographically as sources of authority to motivate the SEG members to support this effort.

The second issue, which clearly demonstrated a narrative of coordination between experts and the GPA, was the Striped Bass Committee research. When outlining the studies to the SEG in January, Tom Meronek argued that

> this is a time sensitive thing. We really would like to get it funded as soon as possible, get it rolling. We may not be able to wait until the next SEG meeting. The group, the Striped Bass Committee has kicked around the idea of possibly getting this approved outside the group (SEG, 2000a, p. 163).

Here Meronek suggested that efficiency demanded that the group follow a narrative where committee experts worked directly with the GPA to develop and implement the studies. The

FWS's representative Andrew King commended the committee for "trying to get things settled outside of this room" (p. 166). Even Ben Brewton proclaimed that it was

> this group's wish here that we authorize the Striped Bass Committee to work this out as soon as possible with GPA, and present that to them without the necessity of having to come back to this body next month first, and then inform us after the fact what was done (p. 173).

Here Brewton vocalized the SEG's acceptance of a narrative where the Striped Bass Committee bypassed the SEG and worked with the GPA to perform the research. Stakeholders' support of this narrative indicated their desire for a process that ensured efficiency.

By February the committee had yet to secure funding from the GPA. However, Rees asserted that the GPA's representatives were continuing to enact this narrative by "trying to work at the committee level, rather than put[ting] the GPA and the SEG on the spot" (SEG, 2000b, p. 32). He then indicated that he would be meeting with "Tom and the Corps . . . later this week . . . [to] see what needs to be done, and how it can be done, and still meet the timing and so forth" (p. 83). Here, Rees supported the notion that this narrative was the most efficient way to develop studies. Stakeholders shared this conception of the good and they promoted this narrative in the hope of getting the studies implemented by March 1st.

Finally, the studies proposed by the FWS in January followed a similar narrative. In his presentation of the research, Sam Drake acknowledged that the recommended studies "didn't come up through the normal process with the SEG. It didn't go to committee first. We got kind of an ad hoc committee that developed this proposal" (SEG, 2000a, p. 199). By not following the standard committee review process, the studies bypassed gaining the deliberative input of the SEG membership. Reasoning that "the relationship between FWS and ATM and GPA is working well" (p. 206), SEG members accepted a narrative where the two agencies worked closely together to study the issue of concern. By allowing this narrative to continue because it was working smoothly, stakeholders demonstrated that efficiency had come to represent their

common good instead of the balanced trade-offs of all participants. Member Terri Leffek captured this sentiment in her statement,

> rather than adding another committee . . . maybe we should just leave the relationship as it is . . . I think that appears to be the clearest and most direct direction to go without adding any more bureaucracy (p. 206).

Leffek sanctioned a narrative where the FWS and the GPA determined the issue through closed deliberation because it was the most efficient process.

Discussion of the above three issues clearly demonstrated that the SEG more readily accepted a narrative of group process where technical experts and agency elite determined and defined issues for the group because it was the most efficient. In fact, in February, GPA representative Morgan Rees argued for the need to "fold" in to the operating guidelines "matters relating to the actual operation of the SEG, you know, that we've adopted over the 14 months that we've been active here (SEG, 2000b, p. 80). Even the staunchest supporter of the myth of free and open deliberation accepted the need to craft a narrative of group process that actually worked. Efficiency was now the shared good. Yet, this narrative may have also facilitated excessive optimism and illusions of unanimity, which often led traditional decision making groups to the flawed decision making of groupthink (Janis, 1982).

Although at times, articulations of a consensus based characterization, myth and ideograph continued to emerge, its appearance worked merely to highlight the inappropriateness of this vocabulary for the SEG's tasks. For example, in April Corps representative Bill Bailey reported on the meeting he had with committee chairs to assess the SEG's progress. Following this report, facilitator Dysart attempted to assert the characterization of stakeholder as representative and equal by asking for an

> overview of progress on studies from SEG in general. We've heard from the committee chairs, and now the next thing presumably is how do you feel about progress on studies, as far as just all around the table? Anything need to be added? (SEG, 2000d, p. 137).

The fact that no one answered revealed the unsuitability of this characterization for the SEG. Technical and agency elite were now the primary stakeholders of the SEG. This silence also suggested the presence of "self-censorship of deviations" (Janis, 1982, p. 175), a clear symptom of groupthink.

The participation of a new member in May similarly revealed the impracticality of a characterization of all stakeholders as equal. During the period reserved for introductions, a new attendee introduced himself as merely an observer, not a participant. Dysart retorted, "I might say a criteria for being a member of the SEG is you walk through the door over there. So you are an interested party. You are welcome as a new member" (SEG, 2000e, p. 4). However the individual continued to assert that he was not a member and did not speak the entire meeting. In this sense, Dysart's assertion that a person who attended his first meeting 17 months into the process was equal with more seasoned members revealed the impracticality of this vocabulary for the SEG. With only the upper echelon of membership qualifying as stakeholders, private citizens were excluded from the process.

Although articulations of the consensus-based myth emerged at times, like the similarly based characterization of stakeholder, its appearance merely emphasized the unsuitability of this vocabulary for the SEG. For instance, in January Dysart attempted to enact the myth of free and open deliberation by allowing all stakeholders input on the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. This move produced a confused and somewhat comical debate. As Dysart instigated discussion, Andrew King asked, "one action item I've got to throw in here is closure to the issue we had last month on the web site and the Communications Committee" (SEG, 2000a, p. 16). Dysart then affirmed this request stating, "that's item 5 roman V-7" (p. 16). Rob Mikell then

requested that the agenda contain “Bill Farmer’s matrix” (p. 17). Dysart questioned, “would that be considered V-4, the update on appendices B and C” (p. 17). Stevens interjected, “aren’t you talking about old business V-1” (p. 17). Brewton then asked, “could somebody refresh us to what V-4 is at appendices B and C” (p. 15). Next, Rees attempted to clarify stating, “If I may, in looking at those two items, Roman V-1 and Roman V-4, I think they’re the same item” (p. 17). Dysart then asked the group “which ones of the committee reports are indeed action items” (p. 18). Confused, Stevens asserted “without having the reports, we wouldn’t know that” (p. 18). This discussion revealed the unsuitability of a narrative of free and open deliberation for the SEG. With all members providing input on the agenda, the debate became confused and rambling, occupying four pages of the transcript. Such discussion was truly inefficient. Since the shared good was now efficiency, the SEG readily accepted the creation of a steering committee comprised of committee chairs to meet at the end of every meeting in order to compose the next month's agenda.

Later during this same meeting, members further demonstrated the unsuitability of the myth of free and open deliberation in a discussion of tidal amplitude. Brewton attempted to enact a narrative where all stakeholders defined the SEG issues. He suggested that because “we don’t know right now the extent to which the MTRG has actually looked at the issue, or it’s been considered a focus of the model” (SEG, 2000a, p. 44), the group should

> establish, I’ll say an ad hoc committee at this point, and ask Chris and Neff, and others here who are interested in that issue, to perhaps talk with ATM, as well as some of these independent experts to determine . . . the extent to which the ATM, MTRG model will do in predicting tidal amplitude change . . . examining the area that it covers, and see if the area that the model covers is adequate for the evaluation of tidal changes (p. 44).

In this narrative, all members could provide input to determine the extent to which the MTRG’s model addressed the issue of tidal amplitude. Rees then highlighted the fact that this committee

would merely duplicate the efforts of the MTRG. He stated, "My understanding of the MTRG is to do precisely what Ben . . . [is] asking to be done" (p. 61). In this sense, Brewton's request to enact the myth of free and open deliberation was impractical and inefficient. Charlie Moore then suggested that

> instead of forming a committee to go find out, come back, and they're going to spend 15 minutes telling us what they found out secondhand, let's ask the experts to come in and basically tell us what they're looking at, what approach they're taking, where they are, and hear any of our concerns (p. 68).

Moore suggested a narrative where experts defined the issue as the more efficient and workable solution. Since the common good was now efficiency, members accepted this narrative. Jennings then emphasized the impracticality of attempting to enact open deliberation. She complained, "how ever much time we've spent on this, what we've ended up with, I cannot see any difference than what we started out with. I really can't" (p. 69). Brewton's attempt to enact the myth of the open debate sent the group in circles ending with a call for a more capable narrative.

A final example where stakeholders' attempts to enact open deliberation emphasized its impracticality occurred during a discussion of committee record keeping practices in March. During a prior meeting, the Communications Committee suggested that each committee outline its record-keeping plan. When committee chairs indicated that record keeping would merely consist of meeting summaries, McIntosh and Brewton attempted to enact the myth of free and open deliberation. First, McIntosh questioned, "because there are state and federal funds involved, is there not a responsibility to the public to have documents centralized somewhere the public can access them" (SEG, 2000c, p. 78). Schaller answered that the GPA "would be happy to make a file available to put materials sent to us" (p. 70). However, he also indicated the impracticality of this request. He stated, "the way I see it, these are, by and large, I think . . . in terms of committee chairmanship, citizen volunteers, who may not accept the burden of

collecting every document and transmitting it to the GPA" (p. 70). Schaller suggested that this narrative was a burden and utterly inefficient. At the same time, he indicated that he accepted the distinction between the elite inner circle of agency and technical stakeholders and other individuals. Meronek agreed and articulated a narrative where committee chairs determined what information was important. He stated, "if it's decided by the committee that this is not beneficial, I'm having a hard time understanding why it should be filed and documented" (p. 80). Jennings supported this assessment arguing that "we have to trust the work of the committee to realize what's relevant and what a less involved person might want to see" (p. 86). These members voiced a preference for a narrative where the agency and technical elite made decisions regarding citizens' access to information. Finally Andrew King appealed to the good of efficiency and argued that the SEG should "trust the committee to do their work. I'd like to say let's do that. Let's not ask them to do more . . . we've spent enough time on this month" (p. 90). In the end, the group chose to accept this more efficient narrative as Dysart concluded, "I hear a virtual consensus to trust the judgment of committee chairs" (p. 92). The consensus that resulted was based on the words of the scientific elite. This effort to enact the myth of free and open deliberation only highlighted the unsuitability of this vocabulary for the SEG.

Although agency and scientific titles replaced consensus as the authority for making decisions, the meaning of consensus as rational, authoritative agreement did emerge only to reveal its unsuitability for the SEG. For example, in January Brewton attempted to assert the authority of the SEG's consensus decisions. At the beginning of the meeting, Dysart submitted the agenda for the SEG's approval. Brewton quickly pointed out that

> there's been a little bit of change from the format that the group approved several meetings ago, in that the old business within that category, action items were supposed to come first, and then discussion items. And you have it segregated it by a different method of what you

> call—in your judgment are science, and mission specific and administrative (SEG, 2000a, p. 10).

Dysart retorted that ““it’s pretty much what you approved last time” (p. 11). However, Brewton asserted the authority of the SEG’s consensus decisions with his response that “there was actually an official action taken on the October report that specifically says . . . that action items would come before discussion” (p. 12). He went on to argue that “the recommendation . . . simply called for . . . old business before new business . . . and action items before discussion items . . . the additional separation, apparently has been done by the facilitator” (p. 14). Dysart then interjected that

> every time the group has been asked what their priorities and preferences were, they have clearly indicated a primary interest in focusing on science . . . when the body has spoken clearly, I do not feel that I have the latitude to ignore that (p. 14).

Here, Dysart suggested that the words of experts had come to have authority over the SEG’s consensus. Brewton then advocated that

> the distinction first be given to action items. After you take action items first, within the subcategory of action items, then we take the scientific action items before the administrative action items, but all action items should be completed before discussion items (p. 16).

This nonsensical rant further emphasized the unsuitability of the use of SEG consensus as authority for this group. Urging for efficiency, Schaller suggested “I think, let’s move on” (p. 16).

In short, although the consensus-based vocabulary emerged periodically, its appearance merely highlighted its unsuitability as well as the drastic shift that had occurred in the group’s vocabulary. In order to move forward on their mission, the SEG had adopted a vocabulary that ensured progress. They followed an efficient narrative where agency members and technical experts defined issues, made decisions and implemented studies without the input of the SEG. They began to characterize only this inner circle as stakeholders and used their names and titles as

authority in their arguments to urge the completion of particular studies. With titles as guiding ideographs, decisions reflected the words of experts rather than the consensus of the group.

This traditional vocabulary did enable the SEG to progress on its mission. As Schaller proclaimed in March "events" started to outnumber struggles over "the written word" (SEG, 2000c, p. 59) and the SEG started "making real progress" (SEG, 2000c, p. 59). Stakeholders excitedly pronounced that, "the SEG is—has stepped forward" (SEG, 2000c, p. 49), "we're making real progress" (SEG, 2000c, p. 59), and "we're moving along just fine" (SEG, 2000c, p. 59). Members began to accept the meeting agenda without argument, complete it and even finish early. By May, committee chairs concluded that most needed studies had been approved. At the same time, led by this vocabulary, the SEG clearly acted like a traditional decision making group and demonstrated similar shortcomings. This situation proved particularly problematic when a few private citizens entered the SEG forum in the July.

July 11, 2000

When Dysart initiated proceedings at the July 11th meeting, he was immediately struck by the "great turnout" (SEG, 2000f, p. 3) of attendees sitting around the table. A news article in the *Savannah Morning News* on July 10th had enticed a number of individuals to attend. In the report, Krueger covered the issue of aquifer intrusion and claimed that it had caused "environmental concerns over the deepening" to shift "from preserving freshwater marshes along the river to preserving freshwater for the coast" (Krueger, 2000g, p. 2). With the harbor deepening a current topic of public debate, indications that it could cause pollution of the Floridan Aquifer in the midst of the "third hot, dry summer in Georgia" (Krueger, 2000g, p. 4) brought concerned water officials from Savannah and neighboring towns, representatives from a variety of area businesses, and two members of the public to this meeting. Even Blan Holman from the Southern Environmental Law Center, the group suing the Corps over the project, attended. As the SEG attempted to work through this issue as well as others, they used the workable vocabulary they

had crafted in prior months. To achieve the good of efficiency, members characterized stakeholder as the upper layer of agency and technical elite, voiced a narrative where these stakeholders bypassed the SEG to implement and develop studies, and emphasized their titles as authority to motivate the group toward decisions. They also demonstrated problems typical of these types of approaches.

In the following section, I demonstrate the workings of this vocabulary in discussions of saltwater intrusion, peer review and the BEC beneficial use of materials study. As in past chapters, I begin with a brief overview of each issue. Then I examine stakeholders' characterizations, group narratives and ideographs.

Saltwater Intrusion in the Floridan Aquifer

Guoming Lin "speaking as the general public" (SEG, 2000g, p. 46) introduced the issue of the Aquifer early in the meeting to make sure that he wasn't " wasting your [SEG member's] time" (p. 47). Mr. Lin indicated that he was a "geotechnical engineer" with a "Master's degree on ground water" and "a Ph.D., studying mining subsidence in Virginia" (p. 48). He then stated how he was enticed by the newspaper article to attend the meeting. He expressed fear that the alarming article might mislead the public and then began to refute claims that the deepening could damage the Aquifer. Lin claimed that the Corps' Tier I EIS study was adequate and that the issue did not need further study. Corps representatives happily agreed and added that the article appeared "one-sided" (p. 49). However, other stakeholders quickly pulled the welcome mat from under Lin's feet. They disregarded his claim, attacked his credibility and defended their concern by citing a variety of geological experts who had assured them that the Corps' study was incomplete and that saltwater intrusion was a legitimate issue that required further study. At one point, Dysart attempted to calm raging tempers. Discussion ended without consideration of Lin's input as members advocated continued investigation of the issue.

As the SEG stakeholders dealt with Mr. Lin's oppositional viewpoint, they employed the vocabulary they had developed in prior months. Guided by more traditional meanings, their discourse demonstrated characteristic symptoms of group think which had increasingly isolated the SEG from citizens like Mr. Lin. Although both Mr. Lin and Dysart attempted to enact consensus-based terms, their attempts merely revealed the unsuitability of these meanings.

Mr. Lin began discussion by admitting that he knew "very little about what's going on" (p. 48). He claimed he "read this paper and decided to come here and speak" (p. 48) because he believed that "from a public point of view, wow, this is alarming" (p. 48). Since he, as an expert knew "a lot about soil information" (p. 48), he asked the SEG if they would allow him "to go ahead, probably 5 minutes or 10 minutes?" (p. 48). By interjecting and asking for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Lin attempted to participate in the myth of free and open deliberation.

Possibly believing that Lin would support their position due to his expert status, the SEG allowed him to speak. Lin continued:

> The Miocene along the Savannah River, this Miocene at least, especially in the Georgia Ports area, is at least 200 feet thick. This material is very impervious. Right now were talking 40 to 48 feet. That's minimum compared to the overall thickness . . . so I see that dredging 8 feet will virtually have no impact. To a point, there's no need to study it at all . . . I saw where Mr. Schaller say we're going to study – nobody say why going to study. Again, from an engineer's standpoint, I do not see a need to study. I would offer this opinion (p. 48).

By offering an opinion that was in direct opposition with the predominant view voiced by the SEG stakeholders in previous months, Lin attempted to enact the myth where the "common good" was defined through the debate of competing alternatives.

Surprisingly, Dysart responded with a narrative where the SEG experts defined and determined the issue outside the realm of the SEG. Suggesting that engaging in discussion of this

topic here was inappropriate, he stated, “last month this body established, I believe, a committee dealing with the aquifer, and Dr. Schuberth is the chairman of that committee” (p. 49). According to Janis (1982), groups experiencing group think often have “self-appointed mindguards-members who protect the group from adverse information that might shatter their shared complacency about the effectiveness and morality of their decisions” (p. 175). Dysart’s articulation of this narrative was an effort to shield the SEG from this opposing point of view.

Relieved to have a member of the public on the Corps’ side, Colonel Schmitt welcomed Dr. Lin “to come over and talk to us about it” (SEG, 2000g, p. 50). However, working from a narrative where the inner circle of the SEG stakeholders defined and determined issues outside the SEG forum, other members were not nearly as willing to open up deliberation to this non-stakeholder. Brewton provided the first response. He questioned, “you’re Dr. Lin and you’re with?” (p. 52). Now that stakeholder was defined according to agency or technical group membership, Lin’s reference group was a significant fact. Lin responded, “I’m with the company of S&ME, but we have no involvement” (p. 52). Brewton then retorted “S&ME. I don’t know”(p. 52). In this statement, Brewton referenced the established arsenal of SEG authority titles. By indicating that he didn’t know the company, Brewton suggested that Mr. Lin’s group was not included in this list and that as a result he did not have decision authority. Since the characterization of stakeholder excluded individuals not on this list, Brewton’s comment also intimated that Mr. Lin was not a “stakeholder.” Brewton then drew on this arsenal to establish authority for the SEG decision to pursue further study. He explained that “Dr. Ram Arora, I think formerly with Georgia State or Georgia Tech, and also Rich Krause, former director of USGS Southeastern office” (p. 53) had produced a report

> that was sent to members of the Aquifer Committee that was going to be discussed by the members of that committee on the 21st of August at the next meeting . . . [that] explained in quite a bit of detail why there’s a reason to be concerned (p. 53).

These agency titles represented decision-making authority. They functioned as ideographs to assert the authority of the committee's decision to pursue further study. Since these experts believed that further study should be done, it should be done. By arguing that representatives from Georgia Tech and State, the United States Geological Survey [USGS] and the Aquifer committee would handle the issue, Brewton also limited the characterization of stakeholder to this group. This limited characterization contrasted with the hierarchical characterization voiced in prior months where all members were considered stakeholders; some just had more power than others.

True to Brewton's style, he continued, asserting that further research was needed because the Corp's Tier I study was not credible. Brewton stated,

> at the last meeting, I think we spent several hours with various professional geologists and others explaining why they thought the methodology of the study was not adequate to support the conclusions made. There's a whole list of things here. I'm not a geologist . . . One of the things this committee is working to do is to try to sort out the work that has already been done by the Corps, to sort out some of the questions and concerns and critiques that have submitted, and to recommend back to the SEG what types of additional studies, if any, be needed to support a clear conclusion about whether there is or is not a potential problem (p. 55).

Here Brewton outlined a narrative where professional geologists and the Aquifer Committee researched and defined the problem through careful consideration of the facts apart from the SEG. By indicating that he did not participate in this narrative since he was "not a geologist," Brewton also limited the characterization of stakeholder to these technical elite.

Neff McIntosh then directly "challenged" (p. 68) Dr. Lin's comments. He argued that the newspaper article was not "alarming at all" (p. 68). It merely conveyed "new evidence" (p. 68) that the SEG experts were considering. He outlined a narrative of this process. McIntosh stated,

"we've talked about it at length in these meetings . . . there were several defects in the prior studies that will also give light to and cause for additional studies" (p. 68). Recognizing that this narrative of closed expert deliberation was far from the myth he had believed the group followed, Lin then commented,

> Again, what I'm come here—I don't know this group, actually I hardly know anybody here. What I tried to offer was an opinion here . . . I think before any further study, you need to look at what is the existing data to see what kind of study is needed (p. 69).

By stating that he didn't "know this group" but wanted to express his opinion anyway, Lin demonstrated an attempt to enact the myth of open deliberation where all could provide input. However, McIntosh disregarded Lin's suggestion and continued to describe a narrative where committee experts defined the issue and "spell[ed] out what additional studies might be undertaken, or at least suggest they should be undertaken, given the new evidence of the fissures" (p. 70). McIntosh then contrasted this well thought out decision to pursue scientific study with Mr. Lin's claim, by suggesting that his conclusion was flawed. First he indicated that Lin's claim was based on incomplete information. He asked, "are you aware of the fissures" (p. 70). Unhampered by McIntosh's assertion, Lin again tried to state his claim. He stated, "I can envision with the dredging is really not much chance for increase for the water going down. Again, my opinion" (p. 70). By continuing to forward his opinion, Lin attempted to perform the myth of open and free deliberation. Next McIntosh questioned Lin's scientific judgment with the statement, "that would be your opinion" (p. 70). In this line of dialogue, McIntosh contrasted a decision reached by following a narrative where experts stakeholders carefully considered evidence and facts apart from the SEG with Mr. Lin's subjective and incomplete conclusions. This contrast affirmed the superiority of the more efficient SEG narrative over a myth where individuals like Mr. Lin could provide input. It also worked to exclude Lin from debate by clearly distinguishing him from the inner circle of the SEG stakeholders.

Recognizing Lin's attempts to enact free and open deliberation, Dysart then articulated this myth. He stated,

> I would personally say that I am delighted to see Dr. Lin here as a representative of the public. It is always nice to see when there is plain, old representatives from the public of which there are many sitting around here, who come in . . . and so we're always happy to hear views. We are also happy to hear spirited discussion of thoughtful, different views put on the table here, and presumably at committee meetings as well (p. 71).

In this statement, Dysart evoked the consensus-based myth where stakeholders participated equally around the table and determined the common good through free and open deliberation. Dysart's effort in the midst of members' attempts to exclude and ignore Dr. Lin merely revealed the impracticality of this myth.

Next, Schaller and Schmitt attempted to ease contentions between the stakeholders and Mr. Lin. Schaller stated,

> I would just like to state for the record that there will be no devastating consequences on the aquifer associated with the project. The state DNR has veto authority, if there are water quality issues to be concerned about. The Georgia Ports Authority won't sponsor and won't propose a project that would have a devastating consequence with respect to the aquifer. It's not going to happen (p. 73).

Here Schaller emphasized the title of the DNR to assure participants that the project would not be constructed if it posed a threat to the Aquifer. Because the DNR would oversee the process, stakeholders could be assured that the best decisions would be made. "DNR" worked as an ideograph to assert the authority of the decision process. By arguing that the DNR and the GPA would ultimately determine the feasibility of the project, Schaller also limited the characterization of stakeholder to these groups. Schmitt similarly drew on authoritative titles as he followed

> on Mr. Schaller's comment that from the federal perspective, and my responsibility, naturally my successor when that occurs as well, the responsibility that we have to uphold the NEPA process, in partnership with the other agencies, that will be taken into a consideration and an evaluation made (p. 75).

Schmitt emphasized the title the National Environmental Policy Act to assure SEG members that the best decision would be made. Because NEPA was overseeing the effort, decisions would be based on a careful consideration of the issues. In this way, NEPA acted as an ideograph to establish the authority of project decisions. By indicating that "federal" agencies alone would provide input and make final decisions regarding the project, Schmitt also limited the characterization of stakeholder to this group. Finally Rees concluded the discussion. He stated,

> We've decided to assemble a group of experts with the correct credentials, hydrogeologists or whatever is needed, and ask them to work in conjunction with the Aquifer Committee to make sure that the right studies get done and the right evaluations get done. We would particularly invite Georgia DNR and South Carolina DNR to provide their participants with the proper expertise in this . . . we want to be sure those two agencies participate fully and directly in this group of experts, and with advice and consultation with the Aquifer Committee (p. 98).

Rees also emphasized the titles of agencies and experts to assert that the issue would be dealt with credibly. These titles provided authority to the SEG decision process. Using the titles of agencies as authority for decision-making contrasted greatly with earlier meetings where the SEG's consensus was used to establish such authority. In addition, Rees' listing of agency representatives and technical experts as potential participants limited the stakeholders to these groups.

As Dr. Lin and the SEG members debated the feasibility of the Tier I aquifer study and the need for future research, stakeholders employed a more efficient vocabulary. They limited the

characterization of stakeholder to agency members and technical experts and followed a narrative where these stakeholders made decisions without the SEG's input. Members emphasized authority titles to assert the credibility of these decisions. In their use of this vocabulary, stakeholders' also demonstrated staunch resistance to oppositional views, a symptom of groupthink, which often plagued traditional decision-making groups.

Peer Review

The second issue discussed by the SEG at this meeting was the issue of peer review. This issue arose during a discussion of the MTRG's data report. In past months, Brewton had requested a schedule of the activities associated with the MTRG data report. When Rees indicated that it would not be presented to the SEG for a long time, Brewton suggested the need for external review. In the discussion that followed, expert stakeholders assured Brewton that peer review was already occurring within the committees. In the end, the committees agreed to work with the Operating Guidelines Committee to determine the need for external review.

As the SEG members discussed this issue, they employed a vocabulary based on traditional notions of stakeholder, group process and decision making. Stakeholders were limited to agency and technical elite, this group defined the issues and their titles were used as authority for decisions. However, in their use of this discourse, the SEG members also demonstrated problems associated with such groups.

Rees instigated discussion by attempting to answer Brewton's inquiry since Ellis was "not exactly sure what the request is" (p. 78). In his answer, he outlined an efficient narrative where experts discussed and considered the data report apart from the SEG. He stated,

> there is a data report. It's been drafted and distributed to the MTRG. I think you got a copy . . . written comments to be submitted, I thought by July 15. The written comments would be reviewed by the end of August by the MTRG, and a final report developed and then submitted to the SEG. That's what I understand (p. 79).

In this process, the technical experts of the MTRG examined and refined the data report through exclusive technical deliberations. The conclusions of their debates would then be presented to the SEG. Limiting deliberations in this way clearly seemed like the most efficient process.

> Brewton's response revealed that he accepted this narrative. He stated,
>
> the studies and so forth that have been recommended by the SEG, they all go to the GPA as recommendation. And then GPA funds them, contracts them, and so forth, and basically all parties doing the studies are reporting and under contract to GPA (p. 80).

In this narrative, the GPA and technical experts developed studies, performed them and judged their findings. Because only these members participated in deliberations, the characterization of stakeholder was limited to this group. This narrative and characterization differed from recent practices where although those at the top of the SEG hierarchy led the process, members could still provide input. Brewton then suggested expanding this narrative to include a "true peer review effort by – in a formal – in a formal matter" (p. 80). Stevens then refuted Brewton's suggestion arguing that

> to some extent we do have a peer review that's going on in the MTRG . . . certainly, from our perspective, I think the two best experts we deal with are Dr. Blanton and Dr. Simon. They are involved in the process . . . We need to provide moral support and give them the opportunity to do a careful job, and one not pressured by unrealistic deadlines (p. 81).

In this statement, Stevens emphasized the authoritative titles of Ph.D. scientists to support his claim that the MTRG did not need peer review. They acted as sources of authority for a decision against external review. Stevens continued, stating that

> their job is critical to everything we're going to do in this process. We need to let them do the job and produce the best model to do the job, whatever they need to do before we start using that model to make decisions (p. 83).

Here, Stevens argued that for the sake of efficiency, the SEG needed to follow a narrative where the MTRG continued model development unhampered. Including outside experts would be inefficient because peer review was already "going on in the MTRG." Stevens' attempt to isolate the group from outside experts was also a symptom of groupthink that often plagued traditional decision-making groups.

Jennings likewise considered peer review unnecessary. She stated, "I see a state-of-the-art model developing. Now, as far as peer review . . . I find that totally and completely unacceptable . . . So I expect complete and thorough peer review by every interested person" (p. 84). By suggesting that all SEG members should act as "peers" to review the MTRG model, she attempted to evoke consensus-based notions of stakeholders as equal and deliberation as free and open. Brewton's response emphasized the inappropriateness of these terms. He responded,

> we, like you and others try to attend the meetings as much as possible. However, what I've been told by experts in the field is that that is a very, very specialized subspecialty. The fact that someone is an engineer, scientist, or even Ph.D. scientist does not necessarily qualify them to be an expert and review on all aspects of modeling (p. 88).

Brewton limited the characterization of stakeholder to the technical elite who understood the process. Since they were the only ones who could provide input on the model development process, they were the stakeholders. Bill Bailey then expanded Stevens' narrative. He stated,

> the Corps is participating in most every committee. I think we see our participation on those committees as a form of peer review. On the MTRG, we have brought in an expert from our research facility in Mississippi to sit there and review the work that is proposed, to review the model. Fish and Wildlife Service has brought in someone from USGS to be their technical expert to provide—to review the work of the MTRG, provide comments, suggestions. As Stuart said, Skidaway Institute has been brought in as Stuart's expert. I think peer review is going on now (p. 87).

In this statement, Bailey used the authority titles of agencies and technical groups to support his argument that peer review was not needed. These titles acted as sources of authority to motivate members to decide against peer review. Accepting the words of experts as decision-making authority contrasted with the group's earlier practice where group consensus acted as authority for decision-making.

Next, Patty McIntosh revealed an acceptance of the narrative of unhampered model development by the MTRG. She stated, "in terms of peer review, the discussion so far sounded like the peers are on the MTRG" (p. 90). Her acceptance of this narrative revealed that she shared the good of efficiency. She then questioned, "some of the studies are being done outside that process. I would assume there's, you know, a team of peer reviewers looking at the other studies" (p. 90). Bailey answered McIntosh's question by again drawing on authority titles to support the claim that outside peer review was not needed. He asserted,

> We, in our participation on the BEC, we have our engineers that are—that do that for a living, that do—evaluate beaches and sand movement. They participate on that committee, and as a peer in our perspective, as a peer reviewer, participating equally in looking at those studies (p. 92).

In this comment, Bailey emphasized the title of engineer to argue that peer review was not needed. In this way, the title acted as authority for the acceptance of a decision against external review. His suggestion that issues could be determined adequately through the deliberation of experts and agency representatives limited the characterization of stakeholder to this group. Finally members accepted a suggestion offered by Rees. Rees mentioned that

> it would make sense to have the Operating Guidelines Committee . . . go through some kind of committee level activity, and [lay] out what kind of review is already built into the process, and then see what additional review, if any, might be appropriate (p. 86).

Agreeing that Rees' suggestion was a "good solution" (p. 92), the SEG members accepted this narrative where committee experts determined their own need for review. Members' support of this more efficient narrative revealed that they shared this sense of the good. This notion of the good was very different from past conceptualizations of the good as the balancing of interests.

This SEG discussion clearly demonstrated stakeholders' acceptance of more traditional terms. To ensure a more efficient process they limited the characterization of stakeholder to agency elite and accepted a narrative where these members determined their need for peer review. They also emphasized agency titles to give this decision authority.

The Beach Erosion Study

The final topic of discussion during this SEG meeting was the BEC's massive benefit/cost study to determine the feasibility of combining the deepening project with beach renourishment projects. In January, the BEC reported their consideration of a study determining the costs and benefits of combining these two efforts by using the sand resulting from dredging and continued maintenance to directly renourish Tybee Beach. Although they initially deemed the study beyond the scope of the project, in subsequent meetings the BEC reported trying to develop it for the SEG's consideration. The problem was that since the GPA was responsible for deepening and the Corps was responsible for renourishment, determining who should pay for which parts of the research was difficult. The BEC returned with two studies in March but had trouble working out the details. In May they then requested that the Corps and the GPA take the studies and develop one scope of work. In the July meeting, the BEC reported that this task had been completed and the study was waiting for funding by Congress. Stakeholders then discussed this funding process.

Within this short discussion, the SEG members voiced a vocabulary that limited stakeholder characterization to agency and technical elite narrated a group process where this

elite determined issues and used their titles to support particular decisions. This discourse also demonstrated elements of group think that often plagued more traditional groups.

> Farmer began discussion by reporting that
>
> Bill Bailey has been tasked with the task of running the combined scope of work. He has a draft out which is underway. Also, Jack Kingston's office was successful, as I understand, in getting $500,000 from the federal government to accomplish part of this work. So I believe the work is underway, and we look forward to the results (p. 100).

In this report, Farmer outlined a narrative where a member of the Corps developed the study and worked with the Congressman to secure funding. In this process, deliberation and decision-making occurred outside of the realm of the SEG in contrast to recent notions where less powerful members were at least consulted. Corps representative Plachy then continued the narrative. He stated,

> what has occurred is Congressman Kingston has successfully inserted language in the 2001 appropriations in the House version for funds. It's going to go to committee, still has to be fashioned into a law before the funds would be made available eventually. So nothing will occur within the Corps for six months (p. 101).

In this part of the narrative, Congress debated the funding of the study amongst them selves. Here, even technical elite was excluded from deliberations. In addition, Plachy used the titles Corps, Congressman and House to assert the authority and legitimacy of this decision process. The use of these ideographs to assert the authority of decision making contrasted with the previous use of the SEG's consensus to establish authority. Corps representative Schmitt continued the narrative by outlining the study process. He stated that the research would "assess what's there. The material that's in the harbor currently, if there is deepening, it will certainly tell us whether or not the material would be suitable for placing on Tybee Island" (p. 102). In this section of the narrative, the Corps would carry out the research with no input from the SEG. The

combined contributions of Farmer, Plachy and Schmitt crafted a narrative where the BEC study was developed, funded, and implemented through the interaction of the Corps of Engineers and Congress. In this sense, the BEC study would be carried out with virtually no input from any of the SEG members. This narrative where the SEG members were excluded from the deliberation differed from recent practices where the process was still in the control of the SEG even though experts dominated it.

Wondering if and when the SEG would regain control of the study Stevens asked, "assuming everything works ok, is that money that would be available come October 1?" (p. 103). Congressman Kingston's representative Trip Tollison responded,

> appropriations have to be completed by the end of this session, especially since this is an election year, members want to get back and get reelected . . . there's a push to get everything wrapped up by October 1st" (p. 103).

In this answer, Tollison reemphasized a narrative of elite control. The representatives of Congress, who were concerned more with re-election than the ability of the SEG to produce quality studies, controlled whether the research would receive appropriations and would be implemented.

As the BEC reported on the status of their study, discussion revealed a research process dominated by the Corps and Congress. These groups developed, funded, and implemented this study through closed deliberations. Their titles served as sources of authority for this process. In this narrative, the SEG members were not only limited in their contribution but where actually excluded from all debates. Since this was probably the most efficient process, members' acceptance of this narrative revealed that they now defined efficiency as the common good.

Conclusion

Motivated by attacks from the public sphere, the SEG worked steadily to define scientific studies and complete the first half of its mission from January 2000 to July 2000. By May, this

phase seemed to be nearing completion. Most of the committees including the Striped Bass, Fisheries, BEC, and MTRG, as well as, the FWS had concluded that all studies needed to assess impacts of the deepening had been recommended. In July, the GPA even began preparations for the Tier II EIS, the document to be produced from these studies (Krueger, 2000h). The SEG had to abandon all meanings of their consensus-based vocabulary in order to reach this point.

The SEG's abandonment of this vocabulary is hardly surprising. Consensus-based meanings seemed impractical from the beginning. Articulation of its terms despite inconsistencies between vocabulary and practice stifled the group from January 1999 to June 1999. In practice, stakeholders hardly seemed equal and representative, deliberation hardly seemed to produce a sense of the common good through open deliberation and consensus decisions hardly seemed authoritative and rational. As stakeholder worked to dearticulate this inaccurate vocabulary, the facilitator and the GPA's representative rearticulated its terms. These interchanges created long, confused debates, facilitated distrust and anger and caused the Fish and Wildlife Service to leave the group.

Congressional appropriation and ensuing Corps' approval in the summer months brought the return of the FWS as well as increased pressure on the SEG to enact a more workable vocabulary. Members employed a variety of rhetorical strategies to challenge the inappropriate consensus-based characterization, myth and ideograph more forcefully. They began to voice acceptance of a stakeholder characterization that recognized power inequalities between stakeholders, a narrative of group process where the elite controlled deliberation and a meaning for consensus as majority voting and later negotiation. As the SEG increasingly resembled a traditional decision-making group, they also began to demonstrate symptoms of groupthink, which made them less representative and hindered their ability to determine the common good. Their consensus-based vocabulary constrained them from complete acceptance of these meanings

however, until continued assertions of this more workable vocabulary created a collapse of consensus-based meanings by November of 1999.

Motivated by increasing public interest and critique, in January of 2000 the stakeholders finally adopted the more efficient meanings they had been moving towards. Stakeholder meant the inner circle of agency and technical elite rather than representative and equal participants. Group process followed a narrative where expert stakeholders defined studies and moved the project forward to achieve the common good of efficiency rather than a myth where all stakeholders determined a common good through free and open deliberation. The words and titles of experts symbolized decision-making authority rather than the SEG's consensus. In short, the SEG's original symbolic hierarchy had reversed.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Throughout the following year, the SEG members readily practiced a vocabulary of efficiency. The group became more exclusive and isolated from the local community as agency members and experts guided activities. Eventually the SEG lost its status as a "public" participation effort since private citizens, business organizations, and environmental groups turned to other outlets and the media lost interest. In this chapter, I discuss this final movement of the SEG, outline how the consensus stakeholder model functioned in this case and discuss implications for public argument.

The SEG from July 2000 to the Present

Engaged in a narrative of efficiency, the SEG remained firmly focused on achieving its mission throughout the following year. Guided by their new vocabulary, the body finalized study on the unresolved aquifer issue in the fall of 2000. In September, the SEG heeded a memo written by five scientists arguing that additional study on the Floridan Aquifer was needed and agreed to have this group of experts designate the type and scope of the research (Krueger, 2000k). The Economics Work Group also began its economic analysis of the project while other committees conveyed information to the group regarding the progress of their studies. Since most deliberation occurred outside the SEG forum, the bimonthly meetings grew shorter and started to end by noon. In May of 2001, Dysart even remarked that in "the last couple of meetings we seemed to proceed in a very orderly manner, gotten through all the reports, and have finished on time" (SEG, 2001b, p. 16). In essence, with agency and technical elite alone acting as stakeholders, the group achieved its common good of efficiency.

With the proceedings of the SEG running smoothly, attacks in the public realm created hurdles for the project as a whole. On the national level, the Corps continued to suffer from harsh criticism. The SEG seemingly functioned in isolation from these attacks. In late July, three Democrats in Congress attempted to force agency reforms by creating the Army Corps Reform Act 2000. This bill called for "a requirement for independent, outside expert review of all large or controversial projects, increased stakeholder involvement, making environmental protection an equal purpose of Corps future projects, and requiring mitigation for Corps levees and dams that harm rivers and wildlife" (TCS, 2000b, p. 1). Then in October, the *Washington Post* ran a series of articles claiming "that the Corps regularly rigs cost-benefit and environmental analysis to justify large-scale projects sought by powerful congressional sponsors" (Corps needs change, 2000, p. 2). Local Corps' officials approached such criticism locally with nostalgic appeals to Savannah's history and economic appeals to its citizen's pocket books in news editorials. For example, in an editorial from January 13th 2001, district leader Colonel J.K. Schmitt argued that the Corps had been contributing to the prosperity of Savannah since it built Ft. Pulaski in 1829 and that the agency was presently the city's "sixth largest employer" (Schmitt, 2001, p. 2).

On the local level, the Savannah project became trapped in the wake of opposition to nearby Charleston harbor's proposed improvement project. At this time, The South Carolina Ports Authority was also engaged in a campaign to gain support for a proposed project of deepening combined with the construction of a 1,289 acres Global Gateway terminal. The proposal was undergoing sustained attack from citizens, environmental groups and also state and local officials. In August of 2000, a board member of the South Carolina Authority wrote a letter to the Chairman urging the agency to team up with the GPA and to study the feasibility of a combined terminal on the Carolina side of the Savannah River (Bartelme, 2000, p. n.a.). Proponents painted pictures of prosperity, arguing that "if we can get a joint effort between Georgia and South Carolina, it would be the dominant port, and a Global Gateway, on the entire Eastern Seaboard,

bigger than anything in Florida and bigger than New York" (Kreuzwieser, 2000, p. 1). Yet, both the GPA and the South Carolina Port Authority were unconvinced. News reports framed the GPA as neglecting its environmental responsibility in order to achieve victory in a political turf war (Kruezwieser, 2000, p. 2). In September, Juliet Cohen, a representative from a group opposed to the Charleston Port attended the SEG meeting to discuss the joint port. Members quickly disregarded this issue as beyond the scope of the group despite the fact that the terminal seemed like an environmentally superior option. The proposed location was "nine miles closer to the open sea than the Georgia Ports Authority's docks . . . [which meant] less deepening and less dredging" (Krueger, 2000j, p. 1). In January, ten private citizens attended the SEG meeting to address this issue again "marking the biggest attendance so far by the general public" (Krueger, 2001, p. 1). Members also again refused to deliberate the issue and reasoned that the GPA would consider the alternative in their final Tier II analysis. According to Krueger, this answer was "not direct enough to satisfy people" (Krueger, 2001, p. 4). Even as the Greater Beaufort-Hilton Head Economic Development Partnership and Jasper and Hampton county development boards endorsed the idea of an alternative port site, the stakeholders denied consideration of the issue (Huckaby, 2001).

Local truck drivers also organized against the GPA and staged protests at their facilities. The drivers criticized the agency for being more concerned with international shipping companies than the well being of local workers. They pointed to low pay scales and inconveniences caused by a newly installed computer system at the terminal gate as evidence for this claim (Truckers protest at Savannah., 2000, p. 25). Despite the noise caused by the truck drivers, the EWG did not consider their complaints as within the scope of the SEG's economic analysis.

Similar to the Corps, the GPA pointed to the economic prosperity brought by deepening to calm tempers. Director Doug Marchand asserted that the port's growing pains were easily counter-balanced by "bright spots" of record increases in container tonnage and a new state-of-

the-art intermodal transfer container facility opening in January of 2001 (Werner, 2000). Throughout the year, the GPA's representatives continued to emphasize increased profits with "year-to-date revenues and earnings soaring above estimates" (Williams, 2001, p. 1) and pointed to the mega-retailers such as Best Buy, Kmart, and Walmart that the port had attracted.

The facts that the SEG remained distant from the controversies surrounding the deepening and disregarded repeated expressions of public concern revealed how distant from their constituents they had become. Each meeting was "like a reunion" (SEG, 2001a, p. 3) and stakeholders' single-mindedly focused on producing the "final work product of our group" (SEG, 2001b, p. 11) rather than voicing public interests. In fact, in the May 2001 meeting a private citizen attendee appealed to the group for a "stronger understanding . . . of public interest" (SEG, 2001b, p. 12).

Groups began to turn to other outlets to express their concerns over the problems of harbor expansion. Local truckers approached the Teamsters and did not even contact the SEG for support in their critique of port activities (Krueger, 2000i,p. 1). After repeated appeals to the GPA and the SEG to consider the South Carolina combined port, local Carolina officials excluded both groups from its agreement with Stevedoring Services of America to build a large private container terminal at the proposed spot. Unsatisfied by their representation on the SEG, local environmental groups joined together to form the Georgia Water Solutions Network. This coalition voiced citizen concerns that the polluted state of Georgia's rivers combined with a three-year drought, water use wars between Georgia and Florida and Alabama and the impact of deepening on the Aquifer created a "serious need for water policy" (Krueger, 2000l, p. 1). The City of Savannah also expanded its research on the water quality of the lower Savannah River by appealing directly to Congress to fund $1.3 million for a sewage study. This study was to "supplement the research being done by the Authority" (Williams, 2001, p. 2). In short, citizens,

environmental groups and local officials began working independently to voice their concerns over harbor deepening.

The local media also started to recognize the isolated and exclusive nature of the SEG. In October, for example, Krueger called the SEG a “consortium of groups” (Krueger, 2000m, p. 3). In later reports she even labeled their discourse “arcane” (Kreuger, 2001, p. 1). Her tone toward the SEG also started to change. In November for example, Krueger suggested that “the whole project could be less than correct” (Krueger, 2000n, p. 2) because many of its assumptions were based on the GPA’s original Tier I EIS which had now become outdated. Possibly realizing that the SEG no longer reflected public concerns regarding the project, Krueger stopped regular coverage of the SEG’s activities after the January 2001 meeting.

In summary, guided by a vocabulary of efficiency, the SEG acted like an exclusive decision making group isolated from the concerns and interests of the local community. Both the public and the media began to consider the SEG as neither an outlet nor a gauge of public concern regarding the deepening project. In essence, the Stakeholders Evaluation Group could no longer be considered an effort of “public” participation.

The Function of the Consensus-Based Stakeholder Model

Over the past decade, researchers have increasingly identified the consensus-based stakeholder model as the new panacea for environmental public participation (Rabe, 1991). Proponents argue that the equal participation of stakeholders in an open deliberative process is superior to traditional methods of participation such as public hearings and comment periods for a number of reasons. First, they contend that this collaborative process meets the demands of previously under represented groups such as the public and grass roots environmental organizations by giving them an equal voice in decision-making. Since these groups will presumably be more accepting of a final decision in which they participate, the model also serves the interests of agencies by legitimating their actions in the eyes of such groups (Steven & Pops,

1991). Finally, since all stakeholders are included in deliberation, resulting decisions are more valid and fair (Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990). The case of the Georgia Ports Authority's Stakeholder Evaluation Group reveals that this model functions quite differently in practice. In the following section, I draw on the example of the SEG to outline the ways in which the model actually works.

Surrounded in a sea of debate, the Georgia Ports Authority's primary purpose in creating the consensus-based SEG may have been to legitimate the project to the numerous groups that expressed disapproval. With these groups participating in the creation of the Tier II environmental impact assessment and mitigation plan, they may have been more accepting of the GPA's actions. In this way, the process could have worked to legitimate the project in the eyes of opposition groups. Toward this end, the GPA's representatives and their facilitator worked from the very beginning to articulate a vocabulary derived from the consensus model. They characterized stakeholders as equal and representative since all had "a place at the table" (SEG, 1999a, side 2). They narrated a guiding myth of "open . . . public involvement government" (SEG, 1999a, side 3) where a sense of the common good emerged from the interaction of participants in free and open deliberation. They identified rational, authoritative "consensus, not . . . majority vote" (SEG, 1999a, side 4) as the decision making mechanism.

At the same time, members of the public and environmental groups expressed the belief that the process would provide a forum in which they could voice their concerns. Brewton's protest of the GPA's attempt to limit the SEG's agenda during the second meeting demonstrated this point. He argued that it was important for the SEG to address all of the issues from the Tier I EIS because, "these things are the very essence of what the stakeholders are" (SEG, side 2). Here Brewton expressed the expectation that the stakeholder group would function as a forum in which stakeholders' concerns would be aired and addressed.

Despite the fact that the GPA may have expected legitimacy and participants may have expected a voice in decision-making, in practice the model functioned very differently. As early as the second group meeting, it became apparent that the vocabulary of equality, freedom, rationality and consensus was inconsistent with actual group practice. In this meeting, the GPA acted inconsistently by distinguishing between "primary agencies" (SEG, 1999a, side 2), "scientific folks" (SEG, 1999a, side 2) and other members, excluding less knowledgeable members from the technical deliberations of the MTRG and disregarding consensus decisions. Recognizing these inconsistencies, perplexed stakeholders worked to craft a vocabulary that better reflected group practice by dearticulating consensus-based terms. In response to such challenges, the GPA and the facilitator simply rearticulated the consensus vocabulary. This practice resulted in long, circular and heated debates, which kept the SEG fixed on procedural issues and caused the frustrated FWS to withdrawal from the SEG after the meeting.

In this way, the consensus-based model worked to slow group progress. In turn, members began to employ rhetorical strategies such as metaphor, analogy, narrative and dissociation to challenge consensus-based meanings in ensuing months. They crafted hierarchical characterizations of stakeholder, narratives in which experts and agency members debated and defined issues for the SEG, and meanings for consensus as temporary interim approval and majority vote. This vocabulary was not only more consistent with actual group practice, it also enabled them to get things done. By following traditional practices such as limiting the agenda, letting those with more power exert power and defending themselves against outsiders, the SEG began to inch ahead on their mission. However, hoping to maintain the model's function of legitimacy, the GPA and the facilitator continued to articulate consensus-based notions. In this way, consensus-based meanings continued to slow the group down and kept participants tied up in debate.

While the SEG struggled internally, the deepening project sped along legislatively. Such a disconnect between legislation and participation is common when these processes are used (Amy, 1987). In the case of the SEG, the project continued to move on the legislative fast track with congressional appropriation and ensuing Corps approval by the summer of 1999. In contrast, the participation effort lagged behind with little research actually in place. Noticing that the traditional vocabulary had made them more efficient in recent months, the group stepped up their challenges to the consensus-based terminology. They started to resemble a traditional hierarchical decision-making group very closely and became plagued by issues of credibility and groupthink that often troubled such groups. At times, articulations of the consensus-based vocabulary by members of the GPA and the facilitator would slow the group down and demonstrate its impracticality for the SEG. However, the consensus process finally collapsed in November of 1999.

Legislative pressure was compounded by increased public criticism as the SEG entered its second year of deliberation. Still far from fulfilling the first half of their scientific mission and no longer constrained by consensus-based meanings, stakeholders readily moved toward a more efficient vocabulary. They limited participation to the upper crust of the SEG hierarchy and allowed these members to direct the study process and their words to replace the authority of consensus in decision-making. Adopting this terminology completed the SEG's transformation into a traditional decision-making group. Rather than all participants voicing their opinions, deliberation became a power struggle between the upper echelon of the SEG's members. As the economic backbone of the project, the GPA possessed the economic power of the group. The GPA would assert this power by deciding which studies to fund or not to fund. The DNR, EPA, EPD, FWS and the Corps of Engineers possessed the "kill switch authority" granted to them by congressional authorization. When they disagreed with a decision made by the GPA, such as the decision not to conduct the Front River striped bass study in February of 2000, these groups

threatened to pull the "kill switch." From January 2000 to the present, the SEG's deliberations consisted of alternating assertions of power between these two groups. This shift in vocabulary left members outside this group with little choice. They could either assert rhetorical power by pointing out how these practices were clearly inconsistent with stakeholder vocabulary, as Brewton often did, they could allow the agencies to speak for them, or they could voice their concerns outside of the SEG forum. Most SEG members chose to align themselves with the environmental agencies while private citizens adopted traditional outlets for public expression such as lawsuits and petitions. In this way, the stakeholder group not only failed to give the previously underrepresented public an equal voice in decision-making but failed to legitimize the project for the GPA. With these groups either silenced or working outside of the SEG, all perspectives would not inform the resulting decision.

In summary, proponents of the consensus-based stakeholder model contend that this approach to participation functions to produce better decisions, include members of traditionally underrepresented groups in decision making and legitimate projects for agencies. The case of the SEG indicates that in reality the model functions quite differently. Consensus-based meanings primarily work to slow the group down, keeping project opponents from pursuing traditional efforts of protest and litigation so that proponents can easily gain legislative support (Amy, 1987). Because these meanings are inconsistent with group practice, participants spend months debating group definitions. Such discursive struggles tie up participants and keeps them from engaging in traditional efforts of protest and litigation. Meanwhile, the proponent can push the project through legislatively. Once approved in this forum, legislative pressure creates the need for efficiency and pushes such groups into accepting traditional decision processes where environmental decision-making is a power struggle between scientific and agency elite (Williams & Matheny, 1995). Less powerful participants, such as members from environmental organizations and the general public, are excluded from voicing their interests. They can either align themselves with one of the

more powerful groups or pursue traditional efforts of protest and litigation. However, these efforts may be too late. In this way, the consensus-based model also masks and even facilitates the exclusion of less powerful groups from the environmental decision-making arena. The stakeholder group's resulting decisions do not represent the interests of all. In this sense, the model also functions to frame partial decisions as representative of all interests.

Implications for Public Deliberation

For the past few decades, numerous scholars have identified and lamented the breakdown of public deliberation by American society's increasing reliance on technical reasoning and scientific knowledge (Condit, 1987a; Fisher 1984/1995; Goodnight, 1982; Panetta & Hasian, 1994). These scholars reasoned that scientific and technical argument was of a different type than public deliberation. Scholars drew on disciplinary evidence to craft technical argument for the forums of journals and conferences. Specialized audiences judged this argument according to set standards embedded in disciplinary traditions (Condit, 1987a; Goodnight, 1982; Hassian & Panetta, 1994). In contrast, public discourse emanated from the diverse traditions of the community and appealed to the collective reasons of the heterogeneous citizen audience. In the public arena, knowledge was not created through a refereed process of judgment and legitimization but rather through the struggle of various interests forwarding arguments and vying for power (Goodnight, 1987, p. 429). According to these scholars, the prevalence of technical argument in the public realm reduced the validity of public argument and facilitated the exclusion of citizens from the ideally open political forum (Fisher, 1984/1995). Such deliberative practices produced decisions that reflected partisan interests and evaded "the modifications, compromises, and larger goods wrought through agonistic competition between values and interests" (Condit, 1987a, p. 83) characteristic of deliberation in the public realm. Believing that public argument was essential for collective life, these scholars made urgent appeals for the resurgence and restoration of genuine public deliberation.

With claims of equality, representation, open deliberation and consensus, the stakeholder model appears to offer the possibility of crafting and facilitating open and free public deliberation in the public policy arena of environmental decision-making. However, as discussed above, in practice, the model does not function as intended. In this section, I discuss the implications of the workings of the consensus-based model for public deliberation.

The consensus-based stakeholder model is clearly intended to create a space for the public deliberation of environmental decisions in contrast to past practices where decision making occurred in the technical realm. In this forum, representative and equal stakeholders from all walks of life are to come together and engage in open and free deliberation. Through such deliberation, individuals will overcome differences to unite in the spirit of the common good and reach a rationally determined consensus. Because decision making occurs through the open contest of competing interest resulting decision will be legitimate and fair.

As the case of the SEG demonstrated, the consensus-based model worked very differently in practice. Inconsistencies between actual group practice and the consensus process tied up opponents, which allowed the GPA to gain legislative approval with little disruption. Legislative progress caused the SEG to adopt traditional decision-making practices, which resulted in the exclusion of less powerful groups from voicing their own interests in the SEG forum. Private citizens and those outside the SEG arena were excluded altogether whereas non-agency members of the SEG were co-opted into supporting the interests of the agency representatives and technical elite. As a result, decisions considered only the interests of these powerful members, making them partial rather than representative and fair.

In this sense, rather than creating a space for genuine public deliberation, the consensus model creates a quasi political space where public ideals of freedom, equality and openness are articulated but where decision making is controlled by the technical elite to the exclusion of the citizenry. This is not simply a case where the members of the technical sphere seem to be making

decisions suited for the open debate of the public forum. Instead the consensus-based model creates a pseudo public space where all types of participants from both spheres deliberate and forward arguments grounded in the community ideals of freedom, openness and participation as well as technical ideals of efficiency and scientific credibility. Technical terms and scientific evidence exist side by side with personal narrative, metaphor and common knowledge. In this space previous divisions between the two spheres have collapsed.

The case of the SEG clearly identified the danger associated with the creation of this space. Here, the technical ideals of efficiency and good science and the interests of more powerful technical elites prevailed over public values and interests. The resulting decisions reflected only these interests but were framed as resulting from a genuine effort of public deliberation.

Because the consensus model facilitates technical control of this pseudo political space, we as scholars must ask ourselves if we should continue to forward it uncritically as a superior model for public deliberation. In fact, there is an increasing battery of research, which indicates that these grand communitarian type models are doing little to better the state of American politics (Burgess & Burgess, 1995; Cohen, 1997; McCarthy, 1992; Mouffe, 1999). Instead, I believe that we must first stop dividing deliberation along hard lines. We must realize that in contemporary society, "public policy decisions are both technical *and* social, scientific *and* political" (Stearney, 1996, p. 391). Once we recognize that public debates are always filled with a diversity of participants, languages, types of reasoning and evidence, we can move from a focus on conceptualizing the ideal pure public space to begin to understand how public argument actually works in practice. What this shift in focus will reveal is that essentially what allows the technical elite to control these process is not the fact that they use different types of reasoning or evidence but that they possess legislative and/or economic power. One of the main problems with the consensus model that critics site is that it ignores issues of power (Clary& Horney, 1995;

Glover, 2000; Mouffe, 1999; Stephen & Pops, 1991). Public deliberation, especially in the environmental decision making context, "is an intensely political phenomena- it contains its own political biases and it is inseparably linked to all the power plays and struggles over principles and values that characterize environmental politics as a whole" (Amy, 1987, p. 225). Once we recognize that power is an inevitable part of public deliberation, we can begin to explore strategies that help to empower less powerful groups such as the members of environmental organizations and private citizens as in the case of the SEG. The members of the SEG used metaphor, analogy, narrative and other strategies to challenge the consensus-based vocabulary and craft one that was more suited to their task. These strategies all worked rhetorically to redefine, break up, open new perspectives and tell stories (Burke, 1969). In this sense they empowered stakeholders to exert more control over the process. Research should begin focusing on the strategies that empower citizens in debate over public policy. The case of the SEG suggests the urgency of this task. SEG stakeholders' rhetorical efforts led them to endorse traditional scientific practices. In this sense participants became co-opted. This does not always have to be the case however. Identification of the rhetorical strategies that participants actually use to deconstruct prevalent vocabularies and muddle project progress could help facilitate empowerment rather than co-optation. I believe that public deliberation would be much better served through this effort than the continued pursuit of the ideal public space

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATM	Applied Technology Management
BEC	Beach Erosion Committee
CIMSL	Committee on the Impact of Maritime Services on Local Populations
CEO	Coastal Environmental Organization
CERCLA	Comprehensive, Response, Compensation and Liability Act
DOE	Department of Energy
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Association
EPD	Environmental Protection Division
ESA	Endangered Species Act
EWG	Economics Work Group
FS	Feasibility Study
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service
GPA	Georgia Ports Authority
MTRG	Modeling Technical Review Group
NED	National Economic Development Analysis
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service

NWF	National Wildlife Federation
SEG	Stakeholder Evaluation Group
SELC	Southern Environmental Law Center
TCS	Taxpayers for Common Sense
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WRDA	Water Resources Development Act

APPENDIX B

NAMES AND AFFILIATIONS OF REGULAR PARTICIPANTS

William Bailey	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sav Dist.
Jim Baker	Savannah Manufacturer's Council Harbor Committee
Fred. N. Beason Jr.	Bottom Line Echo Company
Will Berson	GA Conservancy
Sam Booher	NWF
Ben Brewton	Coastal Environmental Organization
Press Brownell	NMFS
Andrew Calhoun	Colonial Group
Robert Cooey	Georgia River Pilots
Chris Desa	Jonaro Technomar
Sam Drake	FWS
Ben Dysart	Facilitator/ Dysart Associates
Bo Ellis	ATM
Ed Eudaly	FWS
Bill Farmer	City of Tybee Island
Dodie Gay	Savannah Chamber of Commerce
Darrell Greenwood	Sierra Club, S.C.
Charles Griffen	GPA
Carl Hall	GA DNR- Wildlife Resources
James Handalik	U. S. Coast Guard/ Marine Safety Office
Ken Heitze	City of Hilton Head

Blan Holman	Southern Environmental Law Center
Judt Jennings	Coastal Group Sierra Club
Harry Jue	City of Savannah
Larry Keegan	Lockwood Greene Engineers/ GPA
Mitch King	FWS
Gail Krueger	Savannah Morning News
Dave Kyler	Center for Sustainable Coast Management
Terri Leffek	Fife & Clydsdale Plantations
Bill Maier	SC DNR
Jamie McCurry	GPA
Jim McDonald	U. S. Coast Guard/ Coastal Captain
Gwen McKee	Georgia Wildlife Federation
Neff McIntosh	Coastal Environmental Organization
Patty McIntosh	Georgia Conservancy
Tom Meronek	GA DNR- Wildlife Resources
Rob Mikell	SC DHEC
Gerald Miller	EPS
Ed Modzelewski	ATM
Charles Moore	SC DNR
Dan Parrot	U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sav District
Keith Parsons	GA DNR-EPD
Frank Peeples, Jr.	Peeples Industries
Florence Perling	League of Women Voters
John Phillips	GA DOT
Doug Plachy	U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Sav Dist.
Andrew Rae	Coastal Sierra Club

Morgan Rees	Rees Engineering & Environmental Services
Patricia Reese	GPA
Jim Renner	Golder Associates
John Robinette	FWS
Brittany Robinson	International Paper
Larry Rogers	GA EPD
John Sawyer	City of Savannah
Bob Scanlon	Savannah Manufacturer's Council Harbor Committee
David Schaller	GPA
Joe Schmitt	U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Sav District
Chris Shuberth	Chatham Environmental Forum
Card Smith	U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Sav District
John Stafford	Ogeechee Audubon Society
Stuart Stevens	GA DNR
Charles Sutlive	Savannah Maritime Association
Trip Tollison	U. S. Representative Jack Kingston
Cathy Vaughn	GPA
Charles Watson , Jr.	Watson Technical Consulting
Patricia Wendt	SC DNR
Lloyd Wise	EPA
Steve Zadach	Georgia Stevedore Association