

Fish Banks Game

Sept 15, 2004

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FishBanks - What did we see?

- Externalities
- Unplanned/unintended effects of market behavior.
- Pursuit of individual ends has collective consequences: "tragedy of the commons"
- Effects not included in (external to) the "price" of good: Market does not capture these effects.
- Actions with private benefits → social costs & private costs
 - By-catch of turtles, sharks

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FishBanks - What did we see?

- Challenges of collective action
- Lag between development of problem and perception of problem.
- Difficult to get agreement on problem and the need to act
- Actions with social benefits → private costs
- It's hard to get people to accept private costs or forsake private benefits for a collective good.
- Threat of "free riders" can undermine commitment
- People disagree about whether, when, and how to act and who should act.

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FishBanks - What did we see?

- Consequences
 - Fish stocks collapsed
 - Fishing industry collapse
 - Personal/fleet bankruptcy
 - Collapse of top levels of Ocean trophic levels
 - Start of new social problems
- *Is this a public problem?*
 - *Should the government get involved?*

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Challenges of public action: Is there a problem?

- When did you perceive there was a problem?
- What was the problem?
 - Too many boats?
 - Actions of big companies?
 - Restrictions on private action?
 - Achieving maximum sustainable yield?
 - Ensuring a secure harvest (and future)?
- Did the data the data define the problem? What else comes into play? Values?
- Did people disagree about what the problem was? What effect did this have?

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Challenges of public action: When should you act?

- Was there a clear threshold when you knew there was a need to act?
- Did the facts create consensus on the need to act? Did people agree about what the facts "meant"? What were the problems with facts you had? What problems did this create for efforts to take action?
- When was it possible to act? Were there windows of opportunity? What happened to them? Was it hard to secure and sustain commitment?

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Challenges of public action: Who should act?

- Individuals? Groups? Whole community?
 - Were actions by subgroups possible? Effective?
- There was no recognized collective body to turn to and no rules for making choices about when and how to act. What were the challenges in creating such a body?
- Even with such a body, would there still be disagreements about who should act?
 - Individual vs. collective; Federal vs local regulation.
- Who has authority to compel action? Where does it come from? Is it possible to act without it?

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Challenges of public action: How should you act?

- What are some of the ways you could respond?
 - Provide information on effects of fishing;
 - Ban fishing
 - Set limits on catch; time and/or place; number of boats (total or per company?); technology; size of fish
 - Create tradeable property rights
 - How many? How do you distribute them?
 - Buy back boats . . .
- Does your view of the problem affect which response you favor?
- Do these actions have problems? unintended consequences?
- Did people disagree about what was the best response? What was the effect of this?

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What next?

- Is there a new problem in FishBanks land?
- What is it?
- Who should act?
- When is it possible to act?
- How should they act?
- How do we reach agreement on these questions?

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