

ISAT BLANK FORM

Background

Developing competencies that enhance your effectiveness in whatever role you play in wildlife management is mission critical given the many challenges faced by conservation agencies and non-governmental organizations. Recognizing that there are many facets to “effectiveness,” a recent study focused on habits and practices leading to good reasoning and judgment found among consistently high-performing agency staff. The study was supported by a Multi-State Conservation Grant from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; the Center for Conservation Social Sciences, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University; the Wildlife Management Institute (Washington, DC); Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; Fish and Wildlife Division, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; Wildlife Division, Michigan Department of Natural Resources; and Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University.

The study identified numerous categories of habits and practices that contribute to reasoning and judgment of consistently high-performing fish and wildlife professionals. The habits/practices can be organized into 5 broad groups based on similarity and/or complementarity: Critically Inquisitive and Continuously Learning; Multi-level, Integrative Systems Thinking; Self-disciplined; Balanced Approach; and Interactions with Others. These groups can be thought of as clusters of competencies characteristic of consistently high-performing fish and wildlife professionals.

Purpose of the Tool

This self-assessment tool was created as an aid for guiding wildlife professionals in development of the habits and practices uncovered in the recent study. The tool will assist you in identifying how well your habits and practices align with those that have been identified as associated with high performance. The habits and practices considered in this tool emerged from literature review, interviews with wildlife agency employees and two-rounds of input from a panel of over 70 wildlife professionals from across the U.S. who are recognized by their peers as being especially effective. Review of the habits and practices identified, coupled with personal reflection on how consistently you apply each, can guide your efforts toward self-improvement aimed at gaining greater competency in whatever role you play in conservation.

Using the Tool

The tool is easy to use. It consists of a series of statements incorporating the habits and practices described above. The statements are organized into the 5 groups listed above. After thinking about each statement, rate your consistency of application of each habit or practice

This tool is part of the [“Accelerating Development of Reasoning and Judgment”](#) guide book.

indicated in the statement, using a three-point self-rating scale: “I typically need prompting to remember to do this;” “I sometimes put this into practice,” and “This is my common practice.” Just mark the bubble that most closely corresponds to where you think you are with respect to applying the particular habit or practice. If the statement is not applicable to you, skip that line.

Compiled responses will be provided to you shortly after completing the ISAT. This will allow you to identify those habits and practices you apply consistently and those for which you need additional prompting.

Critically Inquisitive and Continuously Learning	I typically need prompting to remember to do this	I sometimes put this into practice	This is my common practice
I ask questions of others to clarify assumptions, data, analyses, or conclusions. <i>[Skeptical/critical]</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am reflective about my own actions, typically being self-critical and engaging in evaluation of my performance for the purpose of improving. <i>[Reflective]</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I take a fresh look at a situation and search for factors that may have been missed in the past in an attempt to improve understanding of the broader context. <i>[Open-minded]</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I reserve the right to change my mind and expect others to be able to do so, too, if new understanding of a situation indicates that is prudent. <i>[Flexible]</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I approach projects/assignments from the perspective of learning while doing, thinking of management as an experience from which I can learn. <i>[Adaptive]</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learn as much as possible about a conservation issue and context in which it is embedded so I can identify consequences of actions. <i>[Inquisitive]</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ask lots of questions about the “how” and “why” of an issue and seek new evidence to evaluate existing perceptions. <i>[Curious]</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Multi-level, Integrative Systems Thinking	I typically need prompting to remember to do this	I sometimes put this into practice	This is my common practice
<p>I am mindful that any specific conservation situation is embedded in a larger context that either affects or is affected by actions at any level. <i>[Comprehensive thinking]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I can see many of the elements of difficult problems, how the parts fit together and identify what's missing. <i>[Holistic]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I seek information about and include any stakeholders in a decision or action and attempt to secure their input and involvement. <i>[Inclusive]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I look for opportunities to adapt or create new solutions to a problem at hand without undue concern about diverging from conventional practice when situations seem to call for it. <i>[Creative/divergent/imaginative]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Self-disciplined	I typically need prompting to remember to do this	I sometimes put this into practice	This is my common practice
I approach technical assessments by means of scientific methods and principles, in a systematic or methodical manner. [Scientific]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I evaluate the scientific methods used to address an issue to ensure the conclusions or recommendations are sound. [Scientific]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I practice clear, logical reasoning, which I can clearly communicate to others, when developing my understanding of a problem. [Logical]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I analyze a situation or program methodically with clear focus on stated objectives. [Systematic]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I examine things very carefully, taking an organized, thoughtful approach that helps define complex issues and resist an unorganized stream of consciousness approach to thinking about a problem. [Analytic]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I work in a well-organized and competent way that gets good results using no more funding, time, social capital and other resources than is necessary to achieve the desired outcome. [Economic/efficient]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I avoid being inappropriately influenced by my own personal feelings and opinions or by those of others who expect special treatment. [Impartial/objective]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I operate in a manner that avoids harm to people, wildlife or the environment. [Ethical]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I routinely consider disparate positions held by stakeholders. [Ethical]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't let delays and problems derail me from working on a project with a positive attitude despite difficulties encountered. [Patient]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Balanced Approach	I typically need prompting to remember to do this	I sometimes put this into practice	This is my common practice
I work in a sensible and realistic way that is based largely on a practical rather than theoretical perspective. [Pragmatic]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I anticipate and when necessary prepare to take action to control a situation rather than just respond to it after the fact. [Proactive/strategic]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am oriented toward achievement of established objectives (results- or outcomes-oriented) rather than being overly focused on process (means). [Purposeful]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I build a clear understanding of the political ramifications of alternative choices, without allowing those realities to influence the integrity of the biological/ecological, social, and ethical assessments conducted to serve decision making. [Political awareness]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect and can accommodate change in process, protocol or program as needed to adapt to different circumstances. [Adaptable]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Interactions with Others	I typically need prompting to remember to do this	I sometimes put this into practice	This is my common practice
<p>I ask stakeholders, staff and partners for their thoughts and listen to those offered unsolicited, whether from familiar or novel sources, or whether they represent views consistent or inconsistent with agency policy, professional convention or my own beliefs. <i>[Attentive/active listening]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I work in multi-party teams, populated with individuals from within and outside the agency who are willing to work together to achieve shared conservation goals. <i>[Collaborative]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I am polite and show deference and humility when working with others, thereby avoiding appearing self-important or better than others. <i>[Humble/respectful]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I am truthful and candid, avoid obfuscation or deceit, and behave in a way that expresses honesty. <i>[Transparent/truthful/honest]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I readily comprehend and genuinely identify with other people's feelings or attitudes, including their pains and struggles, and show gratitude for contributions of others to conservation. <i>[Compassionate/empathetic]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I freely show gratitude toward others for their contributions to conservation. <i>[Appreciative/supportive]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I openly convey strong feelings, emotions or beliefs without dominating or intimidating others. <i>[Passionate]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I take a favorable view of events or conditions and work in a way that expresses hope and confidence about the future. <i>[Optimistic/positive]</i></p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>