An Introduction to Structured Decision Making

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Salmonid conservation is a classic case of a challenging conservation problem, with complex governance structures, multiple potentially competing values, and scientific uncertainty. In order to solve conservation problems effectively, the fundamental task of managers is to make difficult decisions. Why not, then, call on the many decades of research that answers the question, “How can people make decisions most effectively?” Structured decision making (SDM), or decision analysis, is the application of this body of science. I will review the basic framework underlying SDM, describe when it is useful and when it is not, and discuss the use of SDM within collaborative multi-agency decision processes. I will also provide some examples of ways in which SDM might be applied in salmonid conservation.