

Escaping the Tragedy of the Commons by Creating
Local Water Users Associations
Presented at the Navajo Nation Water Users Workshop

Troy Lepper

3/28/06

Sociology Water Lab
Colorado State University

Tragedy of the Commons

- In 1968 Garret Hardin concluded that human interaction with the natural environment; especially extraction of natural resources from the commons ultimately leads to “the tragedy of the commons.”

Hardin's Trap

- For Hardin the destruction of the commons was inevitable without state control of the collective good. Hardin's, and for that matter most of the field of economics view of individual resource use patterns based on the assumption that individuals seek their own short-term, narrow interests even when presented with situations where everyone's joint returns could be substantially increased.

3 Types of Property

- Private Property
 - High Excludability,
 - High Rivalness of Consumption
- Common Property
 - Moderate Excludability
 - Moderate Rivalness of Consumption
- Collective Good
 - Low Excludability
 - Low Rivalness of Consumption

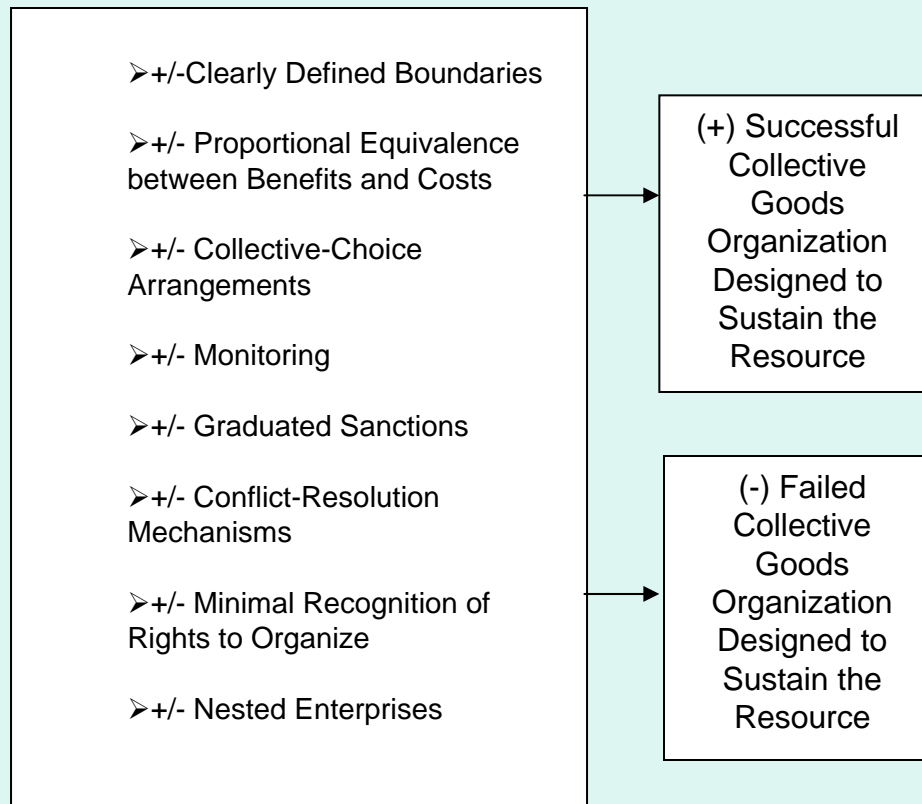
Collectively Solving the Tragedy of the Commons

- “The assumption that individuals are able to engage in problem solving to increase long-term payoffs, to make promises, to build reputations for trustworthiness, to return trustworthiness with trust, and to punish those who are not trustworthy, leads to a different type of policy analysis than the assumption that individuals seek their own short-term, narrow interests even when presented with situations where everyone’s joint returns could be substantially increase.” (Ostrom, 1999, 507)

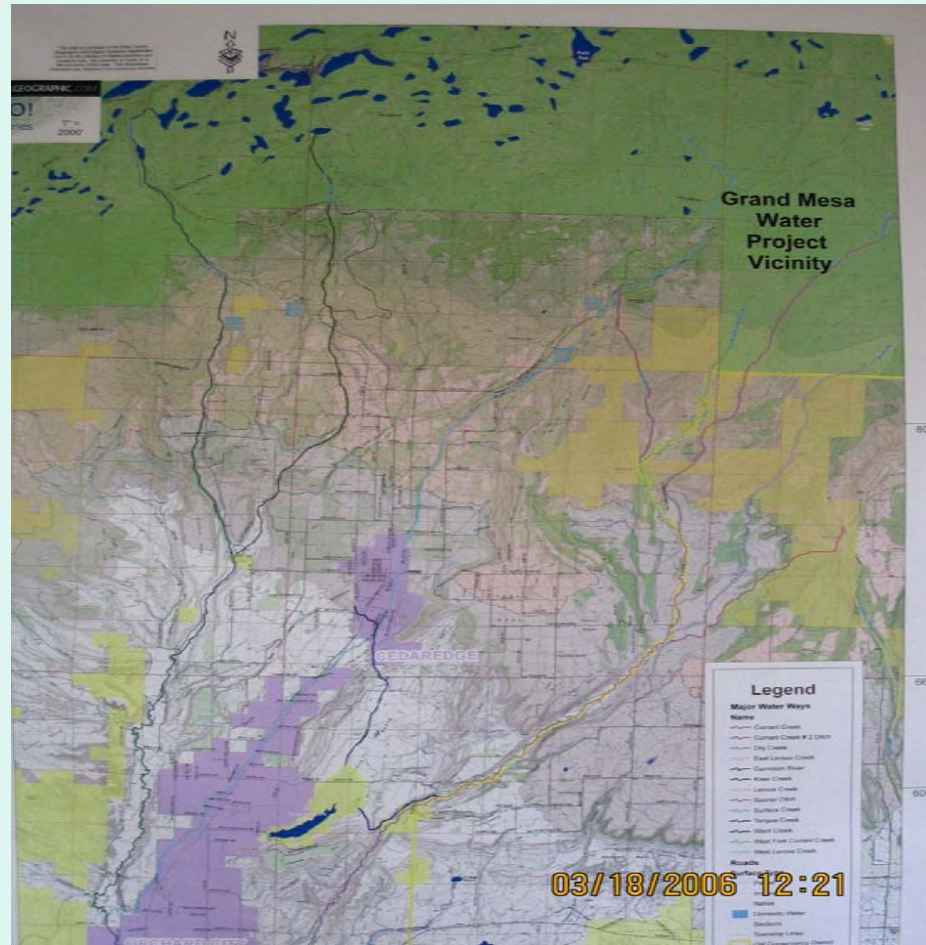
Every Organization Needs a Home



Ostrom's Organizational Design Principles



Clearly Defined Boundaries Allow Users to Exclude Free-riders



Monitoring Water Deliveries Keeps the Organization in Tune with Resource Management and the Delivery System



The Best Organizations are Made up of Local People Like You and Me

