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ABSTRACT SPECIFICATIONS

Title:

Natural resource managers: magicians or mythical beasts?

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Abstract:

There are many candidates for the title of 'natural resource manager'. Resource managers include those working as scientists or educators, government officials or lawyers, Traditional owners or indigenous rangers, land owners to community leaders, consultants or conservation volunteers and of course, includes our politicians.

Possibly a sticky NRM decision (the decisions that stay with us for decades) are a mythical beast that everybody has heard of but nobody has actually seen or experienced. Or maybe that view is too cynical and we simply need to clarify resource manager's roles and recognise the contributions different types of managers make. This paper reflects on our understanding of who can make 'sticky decisions' about how we manage our resources, whether they will actually make them and whether that is a good thing.

Natural resource managers make decisions based on a mandate or the power vested in them to do so. Their power described in a variety of governance arrangements. In some instances these governance arrangements set unrealistic expectation for a nominated manager, who must attempt to 'pull a rabbit from a hat' regardless of the constraints of the situation in which they work or their capacity to represent affected stakeholders.

Based on thirty years of work, across Australia and internationally, the author explores some of the difficulties with establishing effective NRM governance and decision making processes. Some novel (hopefully magical) alternative approaches to current Australian NRM governance models are suggested.