United States Environmental Protection Agency

Getting in Step:

Engaging Stakeholders in Your Watershed

2nd edition

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The Importance of Stakeholders in Watershed Protection

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Government agencies are eager to work with partners to help restore and protect America's watersheds. National environmental groups acknowledge the power of activating and motivating people and institutions. The business community has begun to embrace open, inclusive, performance-based environmental management systems to save money and improve performance. No matter what you call it—cooperative resource management, civic environmentalism, a watershed partnership, place-based management, or environmental democracy—involving stakeholders in protecting natural resources is here to stay. Local residents are tired of talk and want action.

Stakeholder involvement in watershed issues has gained momentum in recent years because of the nature of water quality problems in our country. Forty years ago, most water quality problems were linked to discharges from factories and wastewater treatment plants. Today, however, about 40 percent of our nation's waters do not meet their water quality goals because of runoff from streets, farms, mines, yards, parking lots and other nonpoint sources of pollution. Solving these problems requires the commitment and participation of stakeholders throughout our communities.

Stakeholder involvement is more than just holding a public hearing or seeking public comment on a new regulation. Effective stakeholder involvement provides a method for identifying public concerns and values, developing consensus among affected parties, and producing efficient and effective solutions through an open, inclusive process. Managing that process requires some attention to the logistics and synergies of creating and operating a team of diverse people pursuing a common goal.

Successful watershed management involves—and benefits—everyone.

A stakeholder is a person (or group) who is responsible for making or implementing a management action, who will be significantly affected by the action, or who can aid or prevent its implementation. For the purposes of this guide, engaging and involving stakeholders means recruiting stakeholder group members and using their strengths and knowledge through an active stakeholder committee, group or board.

Coalfield "bucket brigade" helping streams in Pennsylvania

The Little Toby Creek watershed in Pennsylvania benefits from "bucket brigade" remediation projects that add granular limestone to streams heavily impacted by acid drainage from abandoned coal mines. The limestone adds alkalinity as it tumbles downstream and dissolves, reducing acidity and raising stream pH to healthier levels. The projects are both low-tech remediation activities and social outings, and they achieve results that provide an important sense of making a difference in the watershed.

Stakeholder involvement enhances communication, cooperation and shared responsibility.

Purpose of this guide

This guide is intended for federal, state, tribal and local agency personnel, as well as nongovernmental organizations, that are involved in watershed management activities and are building a stakeholder group. The guide can also help private organizations interested in recruiting stakeholders and involving stakeholders in local or regional watershed efforts.

Stakeholder groups are formal or informal assemblies that represent a variety of interests and points of view within a watershed. Although not every single interested party needs to be a member of the board (it's important to keep the size of the group manageable and efficient), you should make sure all the key groups in the watershed are represented. For example, there might be three farmer organizations in a watershed, but it might not be necessary to include representatives from all three in the stakeholder group. Instead, the participation of one, well-respected farmer from the community might be adequate.

Section 2 describes how to identify the driving forces and goals within your watershed and how to organize and build the stakeholder group. After identifying the key members that should participate in the stakeholder group, you need to get them to make an initial participation commitment. Once they've made this commitment, the group members need to be engaged and their interest and enthusiasm sustained. They must be provided with the pertinent materials needed to spread your watershed messages to your constituents and beyond. An organized and well-run outreach plan will make these tasks more productive and easier to implement. Outreach information pertaining to generating interest, engaging stakeholders, and properly equipping them is presented throughout this guide.

The purpose of this guide is to provide the tools needed to effectively engage stakeholder groups and use such groups to communicate with others to restore and maintain healthy environmental conditions through community support and cooperative action. This stakeholder guide serves as a companion to EPA's *Getting in Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns* which is available at www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox. The outreach guide provides advice on how watershed groups, local governments, and others can maximize the effectiveness of public outreach campaigns to reduce nonpoint source pollution and protect the lakes, rivers, streams, and coasts. The appendix at the end of this stakeholder guide provides a summary of the six steps for developing and conducting outreach campaigns (which are covered in detail in the outreach guide).

What's inside?

This guide is meant to provide real-world information that you can apply to your situation. It has six sections. Each section builds on the previous one, but you may skip around to any topic. References to related information are indicated with a ☞.

The last section includes resource information, case studies, websites, and other how-to guides related to watershed protection. Case studies are included throughout the guide to highlight success stories that may help you move forward in your own watershed. Wherever possible, a contact and website are provided.

Why involve stakeholders?

If you're responsible for developing and implementing a watershed management program, you need support from relevant stakeholders—those who will make decisions, those who will be affected by them, and those who can stop the process if they disagree.

Giving disadvantaged communities a voice in watershed planning in California

Nearly 70% of the cities and communities in the Santa Ana watershed in Southern California are considered disadvantaged or contain disadvantaged communities as defined by the state. That translates into more than one-fourth of the watershed population. When the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) set out to develop its 2009 Integrated Watershed Plan (www.sawpa.org/owow/the-plan/), it became apparent that to fulfill the goal of direct involvement of the environmental justice community, it would be necessary to go to communities in disadvantaged census tracts and engage the residents directly. Several environmental justice issues in watershed, including the following, were identified early in the process:

- *Localized groundwater contamination from industrial operations and leaking septic systems was present.*
- *Small water companies in low-income communities lack the resources to upgrade their infrastructure and provide up-to-date treatment technologies for waste.*
- *Language barriers, a reliance on word-of-mouth communication, and low educational levels limit the ability to provide reliable, factual information that is easy to understand by members of disadvantaged communities.*

SAWPA knew that these issues would be important to address in the watershed plan. However, to get an even better understanding of the concerns of the residents of minority or low-income communities, the Authority conducted a series of one-on-one interviews and community group meetings (in English and Spanish) over a period of two months in 2008. In these sessions, SAWPA learned that there is widespread fear among these communities that their drinking water is contaminated. In fact, residents of these communities are so fearful of the quality of their water that they consistently buy large, expensive bottles of water for drinking and cooking.

Therefore, in addition to addressing previously known environmental justice concerns, SAWPA learned through this inclusive process that it also needs to address issues involving the perception of unsafe water where water supplies are clearly safe for public consumption so that families can make informed decisions. Spending scarce funds to protect themselves from a perceived risk is a key environmental justice issue.

Over the past 30 years, watershed managers have found a lot to like about involving interested parties in their work. Involving stakeholders

- Builds trust and support for the process and outcome
- Shares the responsibility for decisions or actions
- Creates solutions more likely to be adopted
- Leads to better, more cost-effective solutions
- Forges stronger working relationships
- Enhances communication and coordination of resources
- Helps to ensure that any environmental justice concerns are identified at an early stage

It's important to note that public involvement processes can greatly enhance watershed management efforts, but they can't override laws and regulations enacted by elected officials and public agencies. In fact, stakeholder group processes are used most often to *support and complement* legally required actions such as achieving water quality standards, protecting drinking water supplies, restoring habitat, and generally making the nation's waters fishable and swimmable.

Another important aspect of stakeholder involvement is utility. If you convene a group and don't somehow include their input in the process or product, they'll likely wonder why they wasted their time. Make sure that stakeholders' contributions are recognized and are used in some manner to achieve the goals of the watershed program, and that stakeholders are informed about how their participation has affected the outcomes.

In addition, a robust stakeholder involvement program can help to identify any potential environmental justice concerns that might be present in the watershed. Including representatives from minority or low-income communities in the stakeholder group can help you to identify any such concerns early in the planning process. Then the watershed plan can include addressing situations in which certain groups are disproportionately affected by water quality problems.

Each stakeholder group is unique!

This guide provides tools and tips for working effectively with stakeholders, but it is important to recognize that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach. Each stakeholder group is unique, and its makeup and operation will depend on several factors—the driving forces of the effort, the agencies' internal goals, the geographic scale, the time frame needed for decision-making, the available budget, the willingness and availability of key stakeholders, the authority and responsibility to effect change and implement decisions, and the political climate. Before a stakeholder group is formed, all of these factors must be considered to determine the best way to proceed.

There is no "one size fits all" approach.

Sometimes, after you have completed an internal assessment of the driving forces and issues, you might determine that convening a stakeholder group is not the best approach to achieve your goals. It might make more sense to form a small technical workgroup and

Too much too soon on the Santa Ynez?

Dense stands of willows along the banks of the Santa Ynez River in California's Lompoc Valley impede stormwater flows from vegetable and flower farms, causing flooding and erosion of the riverbanks. In 1994, a group of politicians, planners, and farmers approached the California Coastal Conservancy for help. The Conservancy enlisted the well-respected Land Trust for Santa Barbara County, and launched a program to establish a watershed-wide plan to control flooding and deal with other possible issues.

The Land Trust hired a project manager and professional facilitator and convened a stakeholder group composed of property rights advocates, environmentalists, farmers, and resource agency representatives to begin developing the plan. Almost immediately, political currents, mistrust, and confusion threatened to derail the initiative. Some landowners perceived the effort to move beyond the willow issue to address other concerns in the watershed as a direct attack on land and water rights. The lack of motivation and a strong foundation—common issues, trust, broad support, acute problems requiring immediate attention—caused the process to unravel soon after it began.

People were confused by and suspicious of the attempt to develop a comprehensive basin plan just to address the willow problem. "Why are you doing this?" was a common refrain throughout the first few months. The Conservancy and Land Trust believed that support for a basin plan existed, but that belief was based on early interviews with flood-impacted farmers and others who did not necessarily represent other important stakeholders in the watershed. As the process unfolded, mistrust and suspicion grew. People wanted to know why a plan was being developed if it was not required, and they questioned the authority of the Land Trust and Conservancy to "force" a plan on local residents.

Less than a year after the planning committee was convened, it was disbanded because of an inability to agree on the scope and objectives of the process. Organizers noted that "a truly comprehensive approach to resource management must be allowed to evolve at its own pace, especially where most of the resources are on private land."

"The fatal flaw on the Santa Ynez was rushing the process and telling landowners, water districts and special interest groups that they were going to collaboratively develop a watershed plan," said Carolyn Barr, project director for the Land Trust. "We did not take the time to understand their interests and fears, and we tried to impose a process that was not appropriate for the place and time."

(Excerpted from California Coast & Ocean*, summer 1996)*

Public participation leads to better TMDL

Stakeholders sometimes know more about what is happening in their watersheds than do state agencies, as was the case for Lake Yazoo in Mississippi. In June 2004 the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality prepared a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Lake Yazoo using the only available data at the time, which was from 1979. The data described the lake as contaminated with phenols and hydrocarbons, noting that there were no nonpoint sources of pollution. Many stakeholders were concerned that the TMDL would not be an effective tool in cleaning up Lake Yazoo because it was based on such outdated data. In fact, two public commenters were aware of a ship-building yard in the watershed that had not been accounted for, and brought this information to light. During the public comment period for the TMDL, these issues were raised and the state added the stormwater permits issued for the area to the TMDL as potential pollution sources. As a direct result of public comments, the language of Lake Yazoo's TMDL now reflects the fact that nonpoint sources of pollution are "unknown" rather than "zero."

Source: www.rivernetwork.org

proceed with your work, especially if the project is small and involves only a few outside parties.

Launching a full-blown basin planning and management program to address a limited set of issues can backfire if the situation is not ripe for a broad-based, cooperative approach. Building awareness and trust, conducting educational activities, engaging stakeholders, and convening a planning group take commitment, time and resources. Forcing the process can complicate things, as the case study on the Santa Ynez River demonstrates (see page 5).

On the other hand, important partners and even potential critics should be included to make sure their concerns and interests are addressed early in the process.

There are common elements to be considered when working with stakeholders. This guide provides tips and tools to increase the effectiveness of your efforts to involve and engage stakeholders in protecting water quality.

Let's get to work!

Section 1:

Stakeholders and Watershed Management

Whatever the reason for conducting watershed management activities, stakeholders can help. Inclusive processes increase awareness and understanding of issues and challenges, generate more data, help determine priorities, increase support for remediation programs, and generally enhance the likelihood of success. Stakeholder processes often provide the reality check for scientific efforts: They seek to synthesize ecological, technical, social, cultural, political and economic concerns through a process that helps to define what's actually doable.

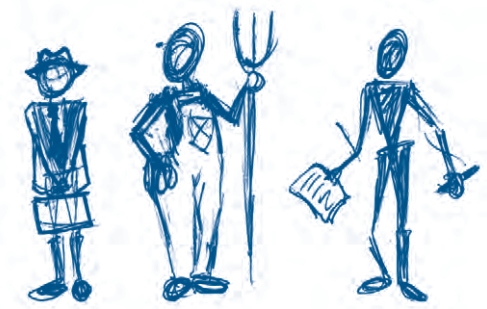
The move toward integrated, holistic watershed management has meant that more attention must be paid to factors beyond the water body itself—how land is used, what type of vegetative or other cover it has, and how it is managed. Such an approach requires the involvement of landowners, developers, farmers, urban governments, homeowners, recreational groups and other constituents in the watershed if real progress is desired.

Using a watershed approach

Organizations in both the public and private sectors have enthusiastically embraced a watershed approach to protect and preserve the quality of surface water and groundwater. This approach has developed rapidly over the past 20 years at the federal, state and local levels. Many states now manage their water resources through river basin programs that consider all impacts in a drainage area rather than discrete programs to address point and nonpoint sources of pollution.

What's in Section 1?

- Using a watershed approach
- Involving stakeholders throughout the planning process
- Where are we now and where do we want to go?
- How do we get there?
- How will we know that we've arrived?



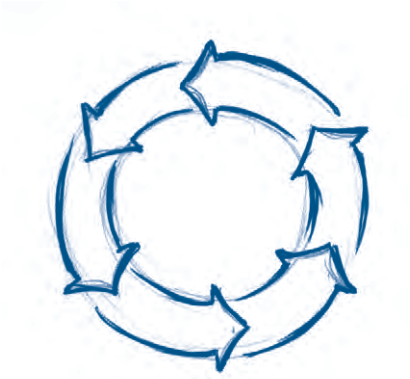
All types of stakeholders should be involved.

Public support and sufficient participation are essential for project success. A high rate of participation is key in voluntary projects because nonpoint sources of pollution are widespread.

—North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service

A watershed approach is particularly helpful in addressing tribal, federal, state and local responsibilities under various Clean Water Act programs. For example, the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program requires cleanup plans for waters that don't meet the minimum water quality criteria associated with the designated use of the water body, such as swimming or fishing. Development of a TMDL involves identifying the pollutant(s) that exceed water quality criteria, assessing the sources (point and nonpoint) of those pollutants and developing target reduction levels. The next logical steps are to develop and carry out an implementation plan with selected actions designed to lower pollutant loads so the water body meets the minimum water quality criteria.

EPA requires that states subject TMDL pollutant loads and reduction target calculations to public review and recommends public participation to implement load allocations for nonpoint sources. For example, a TMDL for sediment might include an analysis of sediment loads from construction sites, timber harvest activities, row crop farming, and stream bank erosion caused by increased flows. These analyses—and any plan to address sediment loads—would benefit greatly from the involvement of construction contractors, loggers, farmers and stormwater managers in the affected watershed. Their intimate knowledge of the activities and land management practices contributing to sediment loads and their participation in developing remediation actions designed to reduce them significantly enhances the scientific and technical validity of the loading analysis and increases the likelihood that appropriate control measures will be implemented.



A cyclical, iterative process continues to improve the management plan.

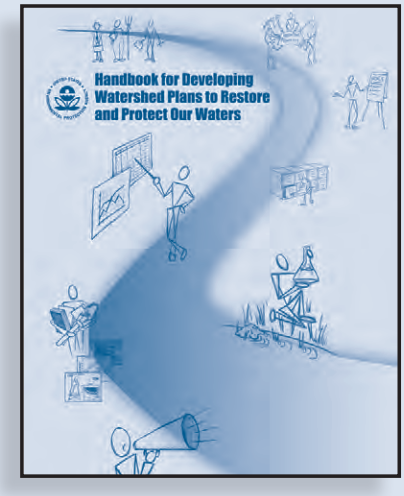
Clean Water Act regulations to prevent the degradation of cleaner waters also require public participation. Under Title 40 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR), section 131.12, antidegradation programs must include a policy for ensuring that waters which meet or surpass minimum water quality criteria are protected from degradation and must also include a method for implementing that policy. Public participation and intergovernmental coordination are specifically required when considering proposals (e.g., National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits, section 404 permits) that would lower the quality of waters already meeting the criteria for their designated uses. Engaging and involving the public in refining and implementing antidegradation policies can help to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of a state antidegradation program. For

example, West Virginia's antidegradation implementation procedure allows for public notice and comment regarding reviews, findings, and decisions and outlines a nomination process for "any interested party" to request higher protection levels for state water bodies.

In addition to Clean Water Act requirements for public participation, other federal and state laws have specific public notice and involvement requirements. For example, the Safe Drinking Water Act, which provides for the control of contaminants in public water systems, requires adequate public notices, public comment periods and public hearings for major permit modifications, revocations, reissuances and terminations. Other laws, such as the Clean Air Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, also have similar public involvement requirements. For more information on the public participation activities required for environmental permitting decisions, refer to *Public Involvement in Environmental Permits* (*http://www.epa.gov/osw/hazard/tsd/permit/epmt/publicguide.pdf*). That publication also contains details on how to conduct public meetings and hearings, produce public notices, respond to comments and much more.

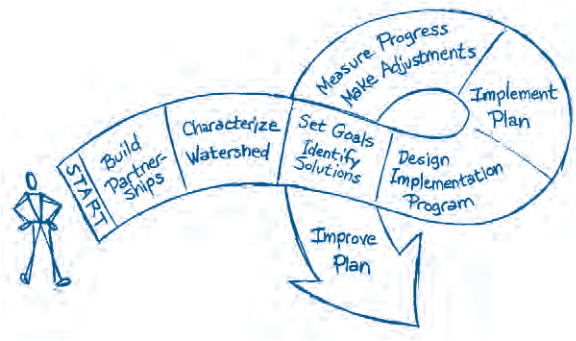
Clearly, engaging and involving stakeholders benefits both regulatory and non-regulatory actions to restore and protect America's waters. Synthesizing perspectives, policies, priorities and resources through a watershed approach blends science, technology and statutory responsibilities with social, economic and cultural considerations.

In 2008 EPA released the *Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters (Watershed Handbook)*, which provides comprehensive information on all aspects of watershed planning. The next several pages of this guide describe the watershed planning process and highlight key areas where stakeholder involvement is critical in the process. All watershed planning efforts follow a similar path from identifying the problems to, ultimately, implementing actions to achieve the established goals. Many groups find that informal scoping and information collection prior to plan development provides valuable input during the early phase of planning. Scoping activities include pre-planning data review and discussions with stakeholders that can help to define the planning area, identify other stakeholders, and help to solicit opinions and advice on how to proceed before launching into the plan development process.



You can download EPA's Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters *at www.epa.gov/nps/watershed_handbook.*

Another great resource is EPA's Watershed Plan Builder—an online tool at http://java.epa.gov/wsplanner that walks you through a series of pages where you can input information about your watershed. The end product is a customized outline that can be used to develop a watershed management plan.

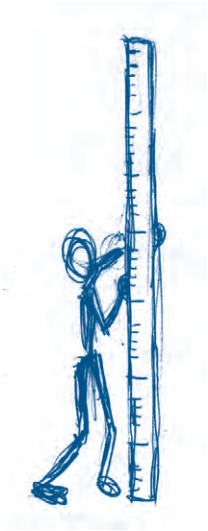


Steps in the watershed planning process

In the *Watershed Handbook*, the watershed planning process is presented in the following major steps:

1. Build partnerships.
2. Characterize the watershed to identify problems.
3. Set goals and identify solutions.
4. Design an implementation program.
5. Implement the watershed plan.
6. Measure progress and make adjustments.

Stakeholder involvement is not conducted in a parallel course with watershed management but rather is woven throughout to strengthen the end result. Keep in mind that the overall process is iterative or cyclical, not linear, so it can be initiated at any phase. Recognize also that you might not conduct every activity in each phase. Some activities can be skipped with sufficient justification. It helps to know, however, what you're skipping and why in case those issues need to be addressed during later iterations of the cycle.



Both the knowledge and needs of stakeholders provide a yardstick to measure solutions.

Involving the stakeholder group throughout the watershed planning process

The stakeholder group needs to be involved at each stage of the watershed planning process. Their knowledge of local social, economic, political and ecological conditions provides the yardstick against which proposed solutions must be measured. Also, the goals, problems and remediation strategies generated by stakeholders clarify what's desirable and achievable. Weaving stakeholder input, legal requirements, and resource protection strategies into an integrated tapestry for managing surface water and groundwater resources is what the watershed approach is all about.

The following questions will lead you through the watershed approach, highlighting where stakeholders are critical to the outcome:

- Where are we now and where do we want to go?
- How do we get there?
- How will we know that we've arrived?

1. Where are we now and where do we want to go?

Asking this question helps to guide your assessment of current conditions and define the problems you want to address, which typically include meeting water quality standards for waters that are impaired, improving the quality of threatened waters, and protecting high quality waters. Stakeholders need to be brought in at this phase to review waterbody use designations, numeric and narrative water quality criteria, and consider other issues that might warrant attention. For example, stakeholders might be aware of localized flooding, old dump sites, popular recreational areas, and other aspects of the watershed not captured in monitoring or other reports. They can also help to identify social and environmental concerns in the watershed, assist with gathering data, initiate public outreach, build support for the planning effort, and create a vision for the future.

At this stage, it is important to carefully consider the composition of your stakeholder group, to ensure maximum effectiveness. For example, if the watershed under study is mostly agricultural, involving farmers and/or the local conservation district will help to engage an important constituency early in the process. Stakeholders might need some orientation regarding water quality standards, watershed assessment, identification of impairments and threats, and relevant management practices. Some stakeholders might be a bit reluctant to participate at first. However, as the process unfolds they can provide key input on how to approach challenges identified in the watershed assessment or scoping study. Agricultural producers also represent an important constituency that can often help to leverage resources needed later for BMP cost share funding and implementation.

Be as strategic as possible when developing your initial stakeholder group. If issues are likely to be controversial, involving a small group of key people in some small, early discussions can help to identify important issues, barriers, opportunities, and resources vital to the success of the planning effort. As the planning process proceeds, additional stakeholders can be brought in as needed, to supplement the core group.

2. How do we get there?

This question identifies specific activities that will be conducted to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the previous phase. The stakeholder group will assist with identifying the strategies to be implemented, often taking the lead on the actions. Stakeholders can also support funding opportunities for sustaining the watershed efforts in the future through grants, in-kind services, education and outreach.

Planning and implementation—The issue is not whether to plan but rather how to develop plans that lead to action. The most effective plans contain a comprehensive analysis of existing conditions and ecological, social, economic, cultural and political issues. However, they focus mostly on identifying, prioritizing and targeting problems

Watershed planning checklist

Where are we now and where do we want to go?

- ❑ *Include the geographic extent of the watershed covered by the plan.*
- ❑ *Identify the measurable water quality goals, including the appropriate water quality standards and designated uses.*
- ❑ *Identify the causes and sources that need to be controlled to achieve the water quality standards.*
- ❑ *Estimate the pollutant loads entering the water body.*
- ❑ *Determine the pollutant load reductions needed to meet the water quality goals.*

Watershed planning checklist

How do we get there?

- ❑ *Identify critical areas in which management measures are needed.*
- ❑ *Identify the management measures that need to be implemented to achieve the load reductions.*
- ❑ *Prepare an information/education component that identifies the education and outreach activities needed to implement the watershed management plan.*
- ❑ *Develop a schedule for implementing the plan.*
- ❑ *Specify what steps will be taken, and by whom, if progress has not been demonstrated.*
- ❑ *Estimate the costs to implement the plan, including management measures, information and education activities, and monitoring.*
- ❑ *Identify the sources and amounts of financial and technical assistance and associated authorities available to implement the management measures.*

and generating possible solutions based on real-world conditions. Watershed plans must be understandable to the public and lead to strategic actions that improve water quality and habitat. The plans should be viewed as management tools rather than merely as technical studies.

The issue of scale—The scale of the planning/management program greatly influences how it will unfold. Efforts to manage smaller watersheds (less than 100 square miles) can be as complicated as programs in large basins. The scale chosen usually depends on the land and water issues of concern. If the issue is forest management and the basin is mostly rural, a large basin may be effectively managed by a single partnership. On the other hand, urban regions facing industrial, residential and commercial impacts might have to be addressed at a much smaller watershed level.

Attempts to manage watersheds that are too large can fail because communication and stakeholder interaction can be difficult and interests may diverge over a broad region. The scale chosen should be based on a common-sense analysis of the people, issues, and activities in the watershed under study. Of course, when smaller management units are indicated, some attempt should be made to coordinate with other watershed groups that share the basin. Interaction among these groups must be handled carefully and on a case-specific basis. Efforts to create an umbrella management program with representation from each smaller unit can cause tension, especially if the overarching program attempts to dictate policy or process to its constituent groups. A loose, flexible arrangement that focuses on communication and cooperation rather than structure and process is often the best approach for umbrella organizations that serve to aggregate separate, independent watershed groups.

3. How will we know that we've arrived?

A key step to watershed protection is determining when you have achieved your goals and objectives. This involves developing appropriate indicators to evaluate the progress of the watershed efforts, as well as conducting monitoring to measure improvements in the watershed. Stakeholders should be involved in developing the indicators to be used and also can assist with monitoring efforts through volunteer monitoring programs or by acting as watchdogs across the watershed.

Measuring success—Stakeholders and the public want to achieve success, and that usually means improvements in water quality or aquatic habitat. Success also means development of an effective, sustainable long-term process capable of recruiting new leaders, participants and resources.

Measuring environmental success is not difficult, though often improvements occur many years after restoration and new management practices are implemented. Indicators should be quantitative so that the effectiveness of management practices can be predicted.

Watershed planning checklist

How do we know that we've arrived?

- ❑ *Develop interim, measurable milestones for determining whether management measures are being implemented.*
- ❑ *Develop a set of criteria (indicators) to determine whether loading reductions are being achieved and progress is being made toward attaining (or maintaining) water quality standards.*
- ❑ *Develop a monitoring component to determine whether the plan is being implemented appropriately and whether progress toward attainment or maintenance of applicable water quality standards is being achieved.*
- ❑ *Develop an evaluation framework.*

Examples of environmental indicators

Description of indicator type	Examples of indicators
Document the extent to which programmatic, regulatory, and other actions have been taken	• *Number of permits reissued with new limits* • *Number of point sources in substantial noncompliance* • *Elapsed time from identification of serious discharge violations until correction* • *Number of targeted facilities/properties that have implemented BMPs* • *Amount of fertilizer sold or used* • *Number of estuary acres monitored* • *Number of communities enacting zoning or stormwater management ordinances* • *Number of public water systems with source water protection plans* • *Number of public outreach activities and citizens reached*
Describe actions or conditions which are likely to impact surface or groundwater quality	• *Nutrient loadings from each type of point and nonpoint source* • *Pollutant loadings to groundwater from underground injection wells* • *Stability and condition of riparian vegetation* • *Percent imperviousness upstream* • *General erosion rate upstream* • *Amount of toxics discharged in excess of permitted levels* • *Amount of toxics discharged by spills* • *Number of businesses and households that have altered behaviors or processes to reduce pollutants (via survey estimate)*
Measure the extent to which ambient water quality has changed	• *Pollutant concentrations in water column, sediments, and groundwater* • *Frequency, extent, and duration of restriction on water uses—drinking, fishing, shellfishing* • *Percent of stream miles or lake or estuary acres that support each designated use* • *Percent of stream miles with impaired or threatened uses* • *Number of beach closure days per year*
Measure direct effects on the health of humans, fish, other wildlife, habitat, riparian vegetation, and the economy of the region	• *Aquatic community metrics, including diversity indices* • *Waterborne disease in humans* • *Size of wetlands or riparian habitat lost, gained, protected or restored* • *Size of commercial and recreational fish harvest* • *Estimated number of jobs and income due to recreation*

Success indicators should be derived from the goals established by the partnership, and goals should be **SMART**—**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, and **T**imely. Targets can be based on water quality standards or, where numeric water quality standards do not exist, on data analysis, literature values or values representative of conditions supportive of water body uses.

Although a variety of environmental indicators can be used, some might not be relevant to stakeholders or the public. The Green Mountain Institute defines indicators as "direct or indirect measures of some valued component or quality of a defined system used to assess and communicate the status and trends of the system's health." The World Wildlife Fund calls indicators "tools to simplify, measure and communicate complex events or trends."

Communicating environmental conditions—The ability of indicators to communicate defines their relevance. Stakeholders may glaze over at graphs of dissolved oxygen trends, sediment transport, or substrate embeddedness, but they might exhibit keen interest in a simplified, consolidated fish health index. Public agencies are increasingly adopting indices that incorporate a suite of indicators to more effectively communicate environmental conditions. For example, the state of Florida issues periodic bioassessment ecosystem summaries known as ecosummaries. The ecosummaries contain brief overviews of assessment, stressor and trend data, along with a consolidated speedometer-type graphic (a bug-o-meter) that gauges conditions ranging from poor (red) to good (green). The Tennessee Valley Authority uses a simple bar graph template that represents the ecological health of reservoirs over time as poor, fair, or good. A simple table includes the most recent year's ratings (poor, fair or good) for individual ecological health indicators such as temperature, sediment and dissolved oxygen.

Technical teams that design and conduct monitoring and assessment programs should consult with stakeholders to determine what kinds of indicators or groups of indicators are understandable and useful. Innovative approaches, such as using transparent plastic cups of muddy agricultural runoff to visualize the need for rice farmers to control sediment pollution from flooded fields, can bring about greater awareness and adoption of BMPs.

EPA's Watershed Academy

www.epa.gov/watershedacademy

The Watershed Academy provides online learning modules and Webcasts to teach stakeholders how to implement watershed approaches and conduct watershed planning. The free, self-paced online training modules provide a basic and broad introduction to the watershed management field. The modules are appropriate for a wide array of audiences—from government employees to interested citizens. The Watershed Academy also offers periodic Webcast seminars, which can be accessed live or downloaded later (see www.epa.gov/watershedwebcasts).

Indicators for the Chesapeake Bay

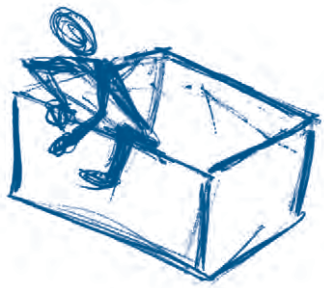
The Chesapeake Bay Program tracks a considerable number of environmental indicators, including those associated with nutrients, living resources, toxics and programmatic activities. A comprehensive list of these indicators and other information regarding their level in the reporting hierarchy, categorization, and use is available on the Web at www.chesapeakebay.net/track/guides.

Regardless of the indicator scheme adopted, showing stakeholders how chemical, physical and biological parameters are used or incorporated into indices helps develop an appreciation for scientific and technical principles and processes. Linking indicators to water quality and habitat conditions further aids this effort, and it is an important consideration in any assessment and monitoring program.

4. Repeating the cycle: Where do we want to go next?

Because watershed management is cyclical, you're never really done. Management is dynamic: Conditions, priorities, resources, and capabilities can all change over time. Repeating the cycle provides an opportunity to update assessments, priorities, goals and management strategies and address issues that were not dealt with during previous iterations because of resource constraints or other reasons. The process of moving cyclically through the planning and management steps and making constant adjustments is called *adaptive management*. This approach allows consideration and use of innovative and even experimental strategies and avoids the narrow-minded pursuit of activities just because they're in "The Plan."

Section 2 focuses on the nuts and bolts of starting a stakeholder involvement process and defining how the participant group will operate.



Innovation and experimentation help stakeholders improve watershed conditions.

Stakeholders collaborate to restore the Corsica River watershed

The 37.5-square-mile Corsica River watershed in eastern Maryland drains both agricultural and residential areas and ultimately flows into the northern Chesapeake Bay. Numerous pollutants have degraded the river for years. The state of Maryland declared it impaired for sediment (1996), nutrients (1996), polychlorinated biphenyls (2002), fecal coliform (1996, in restricted shellfish areas), and impacts on biological communities (2002 and 2004, in non-tidal areas). In September 2005 high nutrient levels fueled a large algae bloom that eventually killed 50,000 fish.

Stakeholders joined forces in 2003 to address pollution problems. Representatives from the town of Centreville teamed with citizens, community groups and technical staff from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) in 2004. This highly acclaimed watershed plan outlines the steps required to restore and protect the Corsica River. The Corsica River WRAS identified numerous actions that, if implemented, would restore the Corsica and address the existing total maximum daily load (TMDL) requirements. The strategies include planting cover crops and riparian buffers; controlling urban stormwater; educating the public; upgrading septic systems; incorporating low-impact development strategies; and restoring oyster populations, submerged aquatic vegetation and wetlands. The WRAS also identified code and regulatory changes that the Town of Centreville and Queen Anne's County could implement to protect the watershed in the future.

Numerous federal, state and local partners are helping to implement the WRAS, including the Maryland DNR, Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), Queen Anne's County, the Town of Centreville, the Oyster Recovery Partnership, and the nonprofit Corsica River Conservancy. Funding to support the implementation steps in the WRAS has been provided from numerous public and private sources, including EPA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Maryland DNR, Maryland's Bay Restoration Fund, the Oyster Recovery Partnership, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust. To view the strategy, visit www.dnr.state.md.us/irc/docs/00013839.pdf.

Section 2:

Getting Started

What's in Section 2?

- Identifying driving forces
- Defining organizational goals and objectives
- Developing a framework for stakeholder involvement

In this section you will learn to identify the driving forces that prompted your watershed management effort, determine your organization's goals and objectives, and outline how the stakeholders will complement and support your overall program. Keep in mind that once the stakeholder group convenes, the goals and objectives you first identified will be modified to include their issues. Taking the time to discuss any inconsistencies in goals and to reach consensus on how to proceed is the most important aspect of the stakeholder process.

What are the driving forces?

Identifying driving forces

When initiating a stakeholder group involvement program, you must first identify the driving forces behind your effort. This will help you determine the scope and level of participation throughout the rest of the process. For example, many programs under the Clean Water Act require or strongly recommend stakeholder involvement to implement efforts related to source water protection, coastal zone management, protection of estuaries, TMDLs, and water quality criteria and standards. The permitting process for wastewater discharges,

Citizens successful in keeping local lake from becoming a stormwater detention basin

The City of St. Peter, Minnesota, began dumping its stormwater directly into nearby Lake Hallett in the mid-1960s. The city moved to officially designate Lake Hallett as a stormwater detention basin and purchased the lake in 1998. If designated as a city-owned stormwater detention basin, the lake would not be subject to water quality protection. The city's efforts alarmed local residents. In 1999 concerned citizens formed the Lake Hallett Association (LHA) to end the stormwater dumping. The group discovered that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) had assigned the lake an official lake identification number, making the lake a public water of Minnesota, which the city could not legally purchase. LHA increased public awareness of Lake Hallett by talking to people, hosting educational booths at events, writing letters to the local newspaper editor, and encouraging people to use and appreciate the lake. Both the MDNR and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency worked with the city for several years to resolve the issue. By 2007 the city had finally closed its stormwater pipe and built a new stormwater detention basin to capture and treat the city's stormwater. The new basin, however, is designed to overflow into Lake Hallett, so the LHA continues to work with local and state officials to protect the lake from pollution.

stormwater management, and combined sewer overflow control also requires public input and involvement, as do activities conducted under state and federal nonpoint source pollution programs and the Endangered Species Act.

Why stakeholder groups form

The driving force for initiating a stakeholder involvement effort often centers around a specific issue such as water quality violations in a stream segment, an NPDES permit upgrade to expand wastewater treatment capacity, or the need to reduce loadings of a specific pollutant into a water body.

Development of a TMDL or a cleanup plan for waters not meeting minimum criteria also spawns the creation of many watershed groups. When TMDLs address nonpoint sources of pollution, stakeholder participation is even more helpful. Stakeholder involvement is also extremely valuable in reviewing the relevant water quality criteria and water body use designation for appropriateness, identifying likely sources of problem pollutants, developing strategies for reducing pollutant loads, and implementing the selected strategies.

Why stakeholder groups form

- ***To strengthen TMDL implementation.*** *TMDL guidance from EPA notes that "adequate public participation should be a part of the [impaired waters] listing process to make sure that all water-quality limited waters are identified." In addition, the guidance encourages strong state and local involvement in the TMDL development process: "States and involved local communities should participate in determining which pollution sources should bear the treatment or control burden needed to reach allowable loadings. By involving the local communities in decision-making, EPA expects that a higher probability of successful TMDL implementation will result."*
- ***To inform project implementation.*** *Any watershed plan funded with incremental Clean Water Act section 319 funds must meet the nine elements spelled out in EPA's* Guidelines for Award of Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grants to States and Territories*, one of which is to develop an information and education component to enhance public understanding and encourage stakeholder participation in designing and implementing the watershed plan.*
- ***To follow recommended guidance.*** *EPA's* Guidelines for Ecological Risk Assessment *outline a process for risk assessment that includes engaging stakeholders and interested parties to help ensure that assessment information is robust and inclusive.*
- ***To comply with new legislative requirements.*** *The 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act require stakeholder involvement in developing programs to protect rivers, lakes, reservoirs, wellhead recharge zones and other sources of drinking water.*
- ***To respond to federal decisions.*** *The Black Bear Conservation Coalition was formed when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced its decision to list the Louisiana black bear as threatened under the guidelines of the Endangered Species Act.* www.bbcc.org
- ***To address conflict over specific issues.*** *The Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) Stakeholders group formed when a small group of people who live, work and use the water resources in the ACF Basin came together to identify ways to resolve conflicts over management of the water resources in the area and develop equitable solutions among stakeholders that balance economic, ecological and social values.*

Watershed residents and land managers usually have a richer knowledge of potential pollutant loading activities than do other stakeholders, as well as a better perspective of what's likely to work in terms of remediation. For example, the Rouge River Wet Weather Demonstration Project tapped area residents' knowledge of possible waste disposal sites and found dozens of small, leaking landfills that were not registered in state or local databases. The Center for Watershed Protection and other technical support organizations report that targeted workshops with homeowners on how to reduce residential stormwater impacts associated with home, yard and garden practices are more effective than brochures or media campaigns that don't feature workshops.

In many cases, direct engagement with groups to address a specific issue provides the basis for forming a stakeholder group. In other cases, stakeholder involvement is driven by a desire to develop proactive responses to potential future threats. These stakeholder programs are often the most challenging because the driving force is more subtle, making it tough to motivate action—especially if there is no specific time frame for accomplishing activities such as acquiring a permit or complying with a regulation. These issues might include managing the long-term growth of a region in an environmentally sensitive manner, exploring options for sharing water resources among localities, or preserving the cultural heritage of a region.

Regardless of the reason for watershed planning and management initiatives, there are clearly significant legal, logical and logistical reasons to engage and involve the public and other agency stakeholders. Identifying the driving forces for including stakeholders is an important step in designing the stakeholder involvement program because it will define the scope and level of participation throughout the process.

Defining organizational goals and objectives

Once you've determined why you're undertaking a watershed planning or management initiative, it's important to examine your organization's goals and objectives regarding the project. Addressing this issue before involving stakeholders will help you determine which stakeholders need to be involved based on your goals and objectives. Internal goals might overlap somewhat with the driving forces, but they usually go beyond mere compliance with legal or logistical requirements. The following are typical *programmatic* goals:

- Characterize and resolve an existing problem (e.g., flooding, water quality violations).
- Clarify the scope and magnitude of a perceived problem.
- Deal with impacts from future agricultural, industrial, commercial or residential development.
- Protect important recreational or habitat resources.

Goal of the Umatilla River Fisheries Restoration Program

The Umatilla River Fisheries Restoration Program is a collaborative effort between the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (which have treaty rights to the river), federal agencies, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the local community. The goal of the Program is to restore approximately 31,500 salmon and steelhead to the river. Between 1993 and 1999, program partners completed a multi-phase project that diverts water from the Columbia River, where there is no shortage of water, and delivers it to three of the five irrigation districts in the Umatilla Basin. Other projects have included instream flow enhancement, structural passage improvements, hatchery actions, tributary habitat enhancement, and monitoring and evaluation. Before completion of the diversion project in 1999, only 1,000 to 3,000 salmon and steelhead returned to the river. Between 2000 and 2006, the return numbers ranged from 12,648 to 36,392.

Internal *management* goals such as the following also need to be considered:

- Efficiently coordinate the deployment of public agency resources.
- Generate awareness and interest in resolving potential problems.
- Build trust in the sponsoring organization and its partners.
- Create support for funding and implementing selected management practices.

After you outline the general goals you hope to achieve, you must identify specific objectives to accomplish them. For example, if one of your goals is to alleviate flooding in the county, your objectives might be to conduct an inventory of drainage areas, to perform hydrodynamic modeling, and to implement a stormwater education program.

Remember that agency programmatic and management goals are only a subset of the overall aims of the planning/management process. Stakeholders will bring to the table their own set of goals and objectives, which will be incorporated into the overall project goals.

Sample driving forces, goals, and objectives for a watershed management effort

What are the driving forces for the watershed management effort in Starshader County?

- *Need for a TMDL to address excessive sediment loads in the 303(d)-listed Salmon River.*
- *Angler demands for cleaner water and better habitat to support recreational fisheries.*
- *Localized flooding caused by faster runoff from urban areas.*

What are the goals of the watershed management plan?

- *Increase awareness about water quality issues in Starshader County.*
- *Develop and implement a TMDL for sediment in the Salmon River.*
- *Restore fish habitat and water quality to improve the fishery.*
- *Reduce flooding impacts by addressing flows and/or floodplain development.*

What are the key objectives?

- *Identify, engage and involve relevant stakeholders.*
- *Characterize land uses and land management practices in the watershed.*
- *Assess land use/management practices on fish habitat.*
- *Identify activities and/or areas that significantly contribute to sediment loading.*
- *Identify land use/management practices that might exacerbate flooding.*
- *Assess cyclically flooded properties to determine impacts and possible options.*
- *Develop management strategies targeted at reducing flooding impacts, sediment and habitat degradation.*
- *Identify resources to implement the selected management strategies.*
- *Evaluate the success of implemented actions; adapt as necessary.*

Developing a framework for stakeholder involvement

After assessing the driving forces and identifying your internal goals and objectives for the project, you should be able to (1) determine whether stakeholder involvement is needed and (2) define the level of involvement. This is the time to start outlining a structure for the stakeholder group, possible roles and responsibilities, and decision-making methods. Keep in mind that this is just a preliminary framework. The stakeholders will comment and provide their own input on how they think they should operate (☞presented in Section 3). When developing a stakeholder involvement framework, you must answer questions such as

- How will the group be structured? (e.g., fully empowered management entity, advisory body, subset of the management committee, ad hoc group)
- How "quiet" or "loud" does your stakeholder process need to be?
- How will decisions be made? (e.g., majority vote, consensus, input received but decisions made by responsible party)
- What is the membership of the group? (e.g., one representative from each locality or interest group, cross-section of the watershed residents, open to all interested persons)
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders? (e.g., provide input into scope of efforts, outreach, select management options, represent larger constituencies, review and comment on reports)

The rest of this section reviews these questions to help you decide which approach best fits your circumstances.

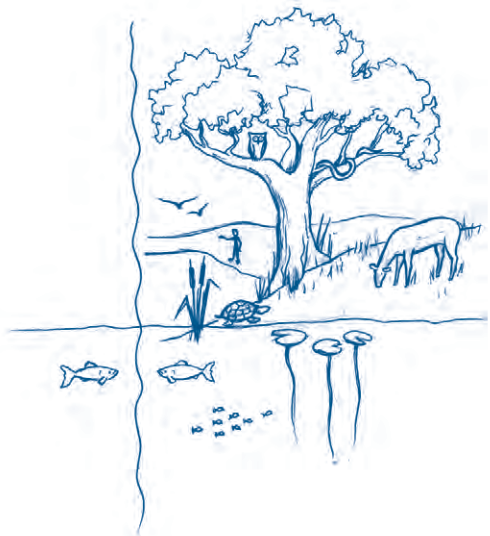
Organizational structure

Watershed stakeholder groups range from informal, ad hoc groups to highly organized and well-funded nonprofit corporations. Some are comprised mostly of government agencies, with a sprinkling of interest group and citizen representation. Most adopt a mission statement or vision (e.g., "*to protect, conserve, manage, and restore land and water resources through a cooperative/consensus process designed to meet the needs of present and future generations*").

Some stakeholder groups focus on a single aspect of the resource (e.g., fisheries, aesthetics), whereas others adopt a holistic or ecosystem approach. Watershed groups are very much driven by the interests, capabilities and contacts of participants. Because stakeholder groups often emerge in response to problems, they might be highly focused on those concerns initially. Gentle guidance can help expand a stakeholder group's mission over time to encompass a broader, more holistic approach, if necessary, but it is best to let this maturation process evolve at its own pace.

Massachusetts' collaborative approach to restore wetlands

Stakeholders created the Massachusetts Wetlands Restoration and Banking Program in the mid-1990s to support comprehensive wetland restoration efforts across Massachusetts. In 2005, representatives agreed to change the name to the Partnership to Restore Massachusetts Aquatic Habitats, broaden the program to include all types of aquatic habitats, and expand the membership to all state programs involved in aquatic habitat restoration. Partners consist of state and federal restoration and regulatory programs and corporate and nonprofit conservation groups. Participating partners communicate regularly to discuss all aspects of habitat restoration, including science, policy, planning, permitting, funding, monitoring and project implementation. The active collaboration enables partners to more efficiently match funding opportunities with project needs and work together to address common issues.



Groups might focus on a single aspect ... or take a holistic approach.

Watershed partnerships take time!

Professor Paul Sabatier and his watershed partnership research team at the University of California–Davis found that it takes time—frequently about 48 months—to achieve major milestones such as formal agreements and implementation of restoration, education or monitoring projects. Stakeholders in general perceive that their partnerships have been most effective at addressing local problems, even serious ones. On the other hand, they perceive that partnerships have occasionally aggravated problems involving the economy, regulation and threats to property rights. Indeed, Sabatier and his team found that partnerships apparently have the most positive impact on the most serious problems in the watershed. This finding contradicts the fear that consensus-based processes often avoid important issues and generate ineffectual agreements.

—Stakeholder Partnerships as Collaborative Policymaking: Evaluation Criteria Applied to Watershed Management in California and Washington, *UC Davis*

Stakeholders in a group usually bring different backgrounds, interests, and agendas.

Although it might seem desirable to merge resource planning and management groups in the same basin into a comprehensive structure, many of these small, focused organizations value their independence and might resist efforts to force them into a larger group. Coordination and communication are the best approaches to build cooperation. Keeping interest groups informed of larger planning and management efforts and seeking their input and expertise at every opportunity can create an effective, efficient management program without the burden of rigid, overarching structural and procedural components.

Working with manageably sized stakeholder groups

There are several ways to balance the need for inclusion of multiple stakeholders with the desire for working with a group that's not too large. Committees of 25 or more people can present logistical and other problems and make it impossible to offer adequate time for participation by all members. Active stakeholders for the Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Initiative include municipal government representatives responsible for publicly owned treatment works and stormwater permittees, EPA, environmental groups, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and the Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District. A core group of stakeholders was convened in 1996 to serve as an advisory board to established decision-making bodies and local communities. The core group oversees the Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Initiative and supports implementation of its Watershed Action Plan, developed in 2003. As of 2010, active subgroups are working on watershed education and outreach, land use, product stewardship and a zero litter initiative.

Membership

Membership in watershed organizations is also highly variable. Some are composed of like-minded people who share a concern for a specific resource facing a highly focused threat (e.g., a lakeshore homeowners association dealing with elevated nutrient levels). Others are more like "textbook" stakeholder partnerships, consisting of people with very different backgrounds, perspectives, values, interests and agendas. In both cases, however, membership is often based simply on interest, commitment and energy. Of course, when the basin is large and the issues are many, it is often desirable to establish a representative board or committee to make decisions. This process is subjective by nature, but it must be based on honest efforts to ensure that all stakeholder perspectives are represented.

The stakeholder group should include experts from more than one discipline, people from different sectors of the community, and people who might see the watershed issues or concerns in different ways. There is no formula for who has to be in the group. In fact, some studies have indicated that both broad and narrow groups can be effective, depending on the situation. (Refer to "One Size Does Not Fit All: Matching Breadth of Stakeholder Participation to Watershed Group Accomplishments" by Tomas M. Koontz and Elizabeth Moore Johnson, published in *Policy Sciences* (June 2004).)

Often the biggest challenge when selecting stakeholders is to achieve a balanced representation among the various interests so that people don't feel that the deck is stacked against them. ☞ Section 3 goes into detail on how to identify key audiences in the community and select stakeholder representatives for participation in your effort.

"Quiet" versus "loud" stakeholder involvement

In cases where watershed problems are very focused and involve very few landowners/managers, it might be more appropriate to work quietly with a small set of select stakeholders over a long time frame rather than trying to conduct a very public outreach and stakeholder involvement effort. A "loud" stakeholder involvement effort could potentially alienate stakeholders that don't want attention brought to them or could be embarrassed about the watershed problems that have been identified on their land. When problems are specific enough to be addressed by one or two landowners, they are often more likely to be addressed by those landowners when they are approached and worked with one on one.

Decision-making methods

There are many approaches for considering input from stakeholders in final management decisions. Managers can gather input informally from individual stakeholders or interest groups to increase their understanding of stakeholders' perspectives and make a decision without ever convening a meeting. Conversely, the sponsoring organization can hand over significant authority to a formally organized stakeholder committee and agree to abide by whatever decisions it makes. Regardless of the approach, the process and its impact on the resulting product must be clearly stated at the outset. This enables decision makers to establish clear boundaries for the involvement of others, lets people know what to expect and what is expected of them, and helps build support for the final decision. Generally speaking, as the level of involvement in the decision-making increases, so does the level of commitment to the outcome.

Soliciting formal or informal input without sharing real authority is commonly practiced in natural resource management programs. Sharing of authority was relatively rare in the past, but it is becoming more common under the watershed planning and management approaches developing today. Giving stakeholders a real voice in making decisions might cause some discomfort at first, but this approach generates far more interest, involvement and commitment from participants and gives them a real stake in the outcome.

Most partnerships seek consensus on decisions, but a common concern to this approach is that it leads to lowest-common-denominator (rather than better) decisions or to discussions that avoid contentious or critical issues. ☞See Section 4 for specific guidance on making decisions by consensus.

Try to achieve a balanced representation.

Do we always need consensus?

Don't jump to the conclusion that consensus is needed for every decision. In some cases, it is more appropriate to gather input from the stakeholders and then make a decision. The factors to consider when selecting a decision-making method include time available, the importance of the decision, the information needed to make the decision, the ability of the group to make the decision, and the information required to make a decision. And remember, consensus is a decision everyone can live with, not necessarily a decision eagerly supported by all.

Ecosystem management through role reversal

Illinois Partners for Conservation (formerly Conservation 2000) includes a component for managing targeted ecosystems that turns the traditional agency-led approach on its head. Local stakeholder partnerships have primary oversight over nearly all aspects of the projects and are authorized to call in state agency resources as needed. The role reversal removes state agencies from the often-difficult task of resolving conflicts among various interests and gives the resulting consensus recommendations validity untarnished by charges that the management strategy represents only what "the state" wants to do. For more information, visit http://dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc.

Checklist for your stakeholder framework:

- ❑ *What are the driving forces behind this effort?*
- ❑ *What are our agency's/organization's internal goals?*
- ❑ *How will we achieve those goals?*
- ❑ *Do we need stakeholder involvement? If so, how much?*
- ❑ *What will be the structure of the group?*
- ❑ *What will be the membership of the group?*
- ❑ *How will decisions be made?*
- ❑ *What are some of the proposed roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders?*

Roles and responsibilities

Outlining proposed roles and responsibilities for the stakeholder group will help clarify expectations, reduce conflict, and encourage a smooth group process. There are two major areas for involvement—*process* and *content*.

The person responsible for managing the process is usually a facilitator. Using an outside facilitator (third-party person not connected directly to the sponsoring agency or other stakeholders at the table) is usually best. The facilitator should be perceived as a neutral party who will not contribute his or her ideas to the group. The facilitator should be objective and maintain a broad perspective, but should also challenge assumptions, act as a catalyst, generate optimism, and help the group connect with similar efforts. It's important to make sure that the stakeholders feel comfortable with the facilitator. Occasionally, even if the facilitator is truly neutral, some members of the group might perceive that their concerns are not being given due consideration. If this is the case, it may be best to reassess the fit of the facilitator to the group.

Stakeholders usually participate in determining the scope of the effort. This is why it is important to outline some possible roles and activities for the stakeholders. This is just a first cut at proposed roles and responsibilities. Once the stakeholders convene, they will have an opportunity to make changes.

Possible roles and responsibilities for stakeholders include the following:

- Clarify overall project goals and objectives.
- Ensure all relevant interests are adequately represented.
- Provide input on watershed problems.
- Help develop evaluation criteria for analyzing management options.
- Provide input on the preferred management strategies.
- Provide review and comments on TMDL reports or watershed plans.
- Help conduct community education and outreach throughout the process.

Once you have developed a preliminary framework for your stakeholder group, you're ready to move on to conducting outreach and identifying the stakeholder participants.

Section 3:

Building Your Stakeholder Group

What's in Section 3?

- Researching key interest groups
- Inviting the stakeholders to participate
- Running productive meetings
- Conducting the first meeting
- Building a stakeholder operating plan

So far, you have …

- ✓ Determined that you need stakeholder involvement for your project and that no existing group can accommodate your overall effort
- ✓ Identified the driving forces that led you to this point (e.g., violation of water quality standards, new regulations, potential threats to the resource)
- ✓ Outlined your initial programmatic and management goals for the project
- ✓ Developed a framework for stakeholder involvement, including the level of decision-making authority and the process to be used
- ✓ Conducted initial outreach to create awareness of your issues in the community

If you have not yet identified your own goals or developed a preliminary framework for how the stakeholder group will operate, go back to ☞Section 2. You must complete those steps before you identify and recruit stakeholders because (1) that information will determine who should be involved and (2) potential stakeholders will ask questions related to those steps. (How much time is involved? Will I be making decisions or serving in an advisory capacity? How will we make decisions?). You will need to be prepared with some answers.

Depending on the project, you might already have a fairly good idea of the likely stakeholders for your effort. But what if you're going into an unfamiliar watershed or you want to try to get better representation from some nontraditional interest groups? This section shows you how to research the key interest groups in a community and identify the stakeholder representatives who should be invited to participate. This process involves characterizing the community through various demographic, cultural and other approaches to ensure that you know "where they're coming from."

Identify stakeholders who should be invited to participate.

Community cultural assessment

EPA's Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place *provides examples, worksheets and a variety of methods for developing a detailed picture of a particular community. You can get a copy of the guide (document # EPA 842-B-01-003) from the National Service Center for Environmental Publications at 1-800-490-9198 or by sending an e-mail to nscep@bps-lmit.com. It's also available for viewing on the Web at www.epa.gov/nscep.*

Tip:

If your primary stakeholders belong to an organization that meets regularly, consider starting the process by attending their meetings. Providing information and initiating a dialogue on their turf can help get the ball rolling in a relaxed, nonthreatening environment. As other stakeholders become involved, the group can decide whether to start separate meetings or continue piggybacking.

Researching key interest groups

Before building your stakeholder group, spend some time researching the key interest groups in your community. If the community will be responsible for implementing the management strategies developed, it is vital that a cross section of the community participate in the process. When looking at key interest groups for watershed involvement, we tend to draw from the same groups—local elected officials, environmental organizations, and agency personnel. Key interest groups are not just power brokers like the mayor, the head of the Chamber of Commerce, or the president of the PTA. Remember that stakeholders are not only those who influence a decision but also those who are affected by it (positively or negatively) and those who can aid or prevent its implementation.

We also tend to select the people who ask to participate, but relying exclusively on this approach may exclude key constituencies that may be reluctant to come to the table. By researching key interest groups, you might uncover some nontraditional audiences such as church organizations, the local garden club, or university professors who have a strong role in the community.

When researching the key issues in a community or watershed, you will gather information to build a profile. By the end of your research, you will have defined the following:

- Primary geographic features, political boundaries and landmarks in the area
- Major organizations in the community
- Key activities and where they occur (e.g., school football games, agricultural fairs, concert series)
- Influential persons and opinion leaders
- Knowledge of your project issues in the community
- Methods of communication in the community
- Attitudes and perceptions regarding your project issues
- Barriers that prevent watershed improvement/ protection efforts or have prevented or sidetracked them in the past

Where do you start?

Several resources are available to help you to determine the key interest groups in the community. As a first cut, consider researching local government agencies, local organizations and the local media. This will give you a foundation on which to build. As you talk to people, ask them where you might find additional information about the community. See the box on the next page that lists typical departments in a local government to help you get started identifying who to ask about key interested groups.

You should also search EPA's online Adopt Your Watershed database of more than 2,600 watershed groups to find groups working in your community. The database contains names and contact information for each group, as well as a description of the types of activities in which the group is involved. You can search by ZIP Code, watershed name, city, county or state.

Local government

The first place to start is likely to be the website for the local government you plan to work with. Most will have centralized pages that will help you navigate to the departments or functional units you plan to work with. Alternatively, you may find what you need in the blue pages of the local phone book. Identify three or four departments to start with. These might include the department of public works, department of parks and recreation, the soil and water conservation district offices, the water and sewer authority, the office of economic development, and the planning department.

Local organizations

Local organizations can provide you with information on the community's interests and makeup. For example, if there are many churches in the area, the religious community might be an important key interest group. The local Chamber of Commerce can provide information on the kinds of businesses located in the community, business trends, and names of local business leaders. Recreational organizations can tell you about the kinds of activities available (e.g., birding, canoeing and rafting) and the numbers of people involved.

To build a list of local organizations to contact, start with the community newspaper. Look in the calendar of events section, which shows what organizations are active and when they meet, and provides contact information. And don't forget to look in the sports section, which might have a listing of upcoming popular local events.

Another way to find organizations that could be potential stakeholders is to look up grants given by county or city governments, or local utilities for environmental improvement/enhancement projects. Some water utilities award grants to organizations that undertake water supply education or watershed protection projects.

Information needed to identify potential stakeholders

Once you have identified several different groups to contact, you need to identify the kind of information that will be valuable in building your community profile and identifying potential stakeholders. There are no set questions to ask because the information you need will be related to your own internal goals. Some possible questions include the following:

- What are the problems affecting the watershed, from the community's perspective?
- Who has the potential to help protect the watershed?

Typical departments in a local government (to make the right connection)

Building and Development
Community Services
Economic Development
Emergency Management
Finance
Health
Information Technology
Land Records and Property Transfers
Libraries
Mapping and Geographic Information
Parks and Recreation
Planning and Zoning
Public Works
School Board
Social Services
Soil and Water Conservation
Solid Waste and Recycling
Tourism Board
Water and Sewer Services/Utilities

Research local government, organizations, and businesses to identify potential stakeholders.

Possible contacts for identifying potential stakeholders

Federal agencies
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Department of Transportation

State agencies
Department of natural resources
Environmental agency
Department of fish and game

Local government
Public works department
Conservation districts
Health department

Regional agencies
Councils of government
Regional planning authorities/commissions
Regional park authorities
Interstate commissions
Regional transportation authorities

Organizations
Civic organizations (e.g., League of Women Voters)
Religious organizations
Recreational organizations (e.g., Trout Unlimited)
Historical or cultural associations
Business organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce)
Environmental organizations
Financial institutions
Homeowner associations
Political organizations
Parent-teacher associations
Regional utilities

Individuals
Landowners
Youth
Seniors

- What are the political, cultural and economic factors in the community?
- What are the demographics of the community?
- How is your organization perceived in the community?
- Who are the influential leaders—religious, civic and business?

How do you get the information?

Once you have identified the types of information you need from the key interest groups, how do you get the information? You can use several different tools depending on the makeup of the community and your available resources (time and money). Any information you collect will be useful. A great place to start is the U.S. Census Bureau website (*www.census.gov*). Methods for gathering information range from visual observations to crunching data from research agencies. You'll probably use a combination of techniques that includes direct interaction with the community and indirect access through surveys, databases, and archives.

Indirect methods

Indirect methods to obtain information about potential stakeholders include surveys, newspaper archives, census data research, geographic information system data, and other techniques that do not involve face-to-face contact. The following sections provide some information about these methods. More in-depth information is provided in Step 2 of the companion guide, *Getting in Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns*.

Surveys by mail

Mail surveys are an excellent way to obtain baseline information about a community. Before conducting a mail survey, make sure you'll be able to get current mailing addresses. Keep in mind what information you want to collect, how you will use that information, and who will tabulate the data. This can save a lot of anguish once the results come back. From a respondent's perspective, make the survey relatively short (and explain up-front how long it will take to fill it out). State the objective of the survey clearly, make the format easy to read, and include a self-addressed stamped envelope to increase the return rate. If you want to make your results statistically significant, consult a marketing professional or college instructor for suggestions on random sampling techniques, follow-up prompting and other issues.

Pros and cons: Mail surveys allow participants to think about their answers before responding, can reach large numbers of people, and can gather data from people who might not be accessible in person. The disadvantages include printing and mailing costs, staff time required for tabulation of results, and the potential for low response rates.

Surveys by phone
Surveys conducted by phone can also provide good information about your key interest groups. Again, make sure you have access to current phone numbers and the resources available (phones and volunteers) to carry out the survey. The success of phone surveys tends to vary geographically: Rural audiences are more willing than urban audiences to take the time to answer questions. Standardize the greeting used by all of your volunteers, and practice proper phone skills. If a person called does not want to participate, thank the person and move on to the next one. Schedule calls at mixed times—some during weekends, some during the day, but most during the early evening (but not at dinnertime).

Pros and cons: Phone surveys allow you to gather data from people who might not be accessible in person, let you elicit immediate responses, and can accommodate many participants. The disadvantages include the need to access correct phone numbers for participants, lack of time for participants to think about their responses, the level of resources involved, and exclusion of those who will not respond to unsolicited calls.

Surveys by e-mail/Web
Done correctly, an e-mail or Web survey offers an anonymous way to gather information on the community. If you place surveys on your website, respondents visiting the site can respond to the survey through online forms. A website survey will gather responses from citizens who have access to the Internet. Upload the survey on your organization's website and draw plenty of attention to it. People visiting your site will have the opportunity to anonymously fill out the survey at their own pace.

Pros and cons: E-mail surveys take a short amount of time, are self-paced, and provide the sender with fast results. Computer issues can cause problems, however, if a server goes down or the user has problems downloading attachments. Web surveys assume that members of your community visit your website regularly. Keep in mind, however, that most visitors to your site might also be aware of the issues and your efforts. In addition, visitors to your site might not be the stakeholders you are seeking, and thus they could skew the survey results.

Databases
Many organizations collect information on their constituents and maintain the information in a database. Such data can provide you with strong demographic information and indicate trends. Local public agencies such as planning departments and property tax evaluation agencies can provide information on zoning ordinances, trends in development, and revenue sources. Soil conservation districts keep records on land use patterns, size of parcels, and farming practices. The Chamber of Commerce and other trade associations keep

Phone surveys could be used to gather information about your stakeholders.

What you need to know about potential stakeholders

- *What is their knowledge of watershed issues and what are their concerns?*
- *What are their attitudes and opinions about their community?*
- *How do they use the resource?*
- *What language and messages motivate them?*
- *Where do they get their information?*
- *Whom do they trust?*
- *What do they value in their community?*
- *What are the key local activities in the community?*

track of their constituents and the numbers and types of businesses located in the community.

Census data are collected every ten years and were last collected in 2010. Census data are available through the Internet from the U.S. Bureau of the Census at *www.census.gov* and from local libraries. If you don't have access to these files or don't have the resources needed to extract the information, consider asking a college marketing class for assistance. Often they are looking for real-world projects, and they might be willing to conduct a detailed analysis of the target group at no charge. Step 2 of the companion guide, *Getting in Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns*, has more details on using Census data.

Pros and cons: Databases can provide consolidated demographic data and can sort the data by different parameters. However, some databases can be unwieldy to work with, are not current, or require technical expertise to extract the data. Databases do not provide qualitative information on behavior patterns or attitudes.

Local newspapers
The local papers can provide a tremendous amount of insight into a community. This is particularly important for small towns. The sports page shows you which teams are active in the area, as well as popular recreational activities. Letters to the editor show you the issues and concerns of the community, and the events calendar provides information on the local organizations, cultural events and happenings about town.

Direct methods

Direct methods tend to be more resource-intensive than indirect methods but provide qualitative information on attitudes, values and behavior patterns. Direct interaction also helps you to start building relationships with potential stakeholders and allows you to pursue other lines of questioning that surveys might omit. Direct methods include focus groups, community meetings and one-on-one interviews.

Focus groups
Focus groups provide an opportunity to meet with several members of the community at once and allow them the chance to expand on comments and ideas. The focus group participants may be selected through surveys, recommended by a particular organization, or selected at random. Typically, up to 12 members are asked to participate for one or two hours. Be sure to schedule the focus group at a time and place convenient for the participants. For example, many people, including government officials of small localities, have jobs during the day and are available to meet only after 5:00 p.m. The focus group should be handled by an outside facilitator to avoid introducing bias into the results. The group is asked a series of

Yolo County, CA, farmers voice concerns about TMDLs

In response to a presentation made at a local Farm Bureau to introduce water quality issues and TMDLs, the Yolo County, California, Resource Conservation District convened a focus group composed of area farmers. Their concerns included the following:

- *We don't have time to come to meetings.*
- *We don't want a bunch of stakeholders that know nothing about farming telling us how to farm.*
- *We want to be the only decision makers on these projects.*
- *There are issues of private property rights.*
- *How are we going to afford to make the changes in practices?*
- *We don't want to do something now and then have an agency come to us in a few years and tell us what we did is wrong and* that *we have to change it.*
- *We don't feel there is enough scientific data in place to tell us what we should be doing.*

—Katy Pye, Yolo County Resource Conservation District

questions, and the answers are recorded on flip charts or video/audio media. Focus groups also enable you to start building a network of people you might want to use later to deliver your message.

Pros and Cons: Focus groups can provide insights about the interest group's composition, perceptions and beliefs; provide interaction among participants; and build support for further actions or outreach. The disadvantages are that the success of a focus group depends largely on the facilitator, focus groups can accommodate only a few participants, and the time demand on participants is considerable. Finally, focus groups might not be suitable for certain cultures where peer pressure or deference to others could inhibit discussion.

Community meetings
Community meetings provide a forum to collect information on a variety of topics for all members of the community. The meetings can be unstructured in an open-house type of format, or they can be focused around specific issues. It's important to remember that you are still gathering information so you want to allow plenty of opportunity for the participants to share their thoughts, concerns and suggestions.

Pros and cons: Once established, community meetings can be conducted on a regular basis to inform the group about stakeholder activities, solicit input and maintain communication. Organizing community meetings is time-consuming, and often you're competing with other regularly scheduled meetings (e.g., school board, local board of supervisors).

What do you do with the information collected?

Once you have a picture of the values and concerns of various interest groups within a community, you can invite potential stakeholder representatives to participate in your project. Go back again to your driving forces, goals and objectives to determine whether your list of stakeholders represents all the issue areas.

Conducting outreach to recruit stakeholders

Once you have identified your internal goals and objectives, developed a preliminary stakeholder framework, and researched key stakeholders that you'd like to involve, it's time to begin reaching out to those potential stakeholder group members with the goal of recruiting them for the effort. To do this, you need to establish a connection between the issues that are important to the stakeholders and the watershed effort. It is also important to realize that it often takes time to establish trust and commitment and to build enthusiasm among group members. If people are expected to exhibit concern for a water resource and support preservation or restoration proposals, they must be engaged through a planned,

What do you do when the landowner says "No"?

While certainly not the only model for making progress with reluctant landowners, the following example worked well in an Amish farming community in Pennsylvania.

One of the first landowners I asked about streambank fencing said "No." Since we felt like he was a key stakeholder, we didn't want to give up.

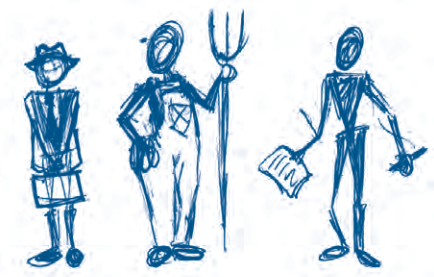
I would stop by when I was in the neighborhood and visit with him. We talked about everything but fencing. We were fencing in other areas at the time.

One day I stopped and asked him if fencing would be okay if I did it. He wanted to know how I was going to do it, me being a bureaucrat and all. I told him not to worry about that part. He finally agreed, if I did it.

I fenced it with a small grant for materials and I provided the muscle and sweat. He has been a good friend ever since and speaks highly of fencing.

—Frank Lucas, Pequea-Mill Creek Project, Natural Resources Conservation Service

See the Pequea-Mill Creek case study in Getting in Step: A Video Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns *at http://cfpub.epa.gov/npstbx/getinstep.html#video for more information about this example.*



You might need to use creative methods to involve some stakeholders.

Using data-gathering techniques to collect stakeholder information

Goal: *To determine the level of awareness of potential stakeholders and their willingness to participate in watershed protection activities, as well as to identify key community attributes*

Methods: *Focus groups, surveys by mail, community meetings*

Sample focus group questions

- *What community organizations do you belong to?*
- *Whom do you go to for advice about rangeland management?*
- *What are three things you value about your community?*
- *How do you spend your leisure time?*
- *For your community, what quality-of-life issues matter to you most?*
- *For your community, what environmental issues matter to you most?*
- *Where do you get your information on environmental issues?*
- *What are some key activities that occur in your community that help create a sense of place?*
- *Do you think the water quality in your community is improving or declining? Why?*
- *How is the land managed in your community (ownership, leased lands, and land-use planning)?*

Sample open house questions

- *Have you heard about our organization? If yes, from whom?*
- *Can you find where you live on this map?*
- *Can you name any nearby streams, rivers or lakes?*
- *Which environmental resource(s) do you think best describes your community (e.g., parks, marinas, birdwatching, fishing)?*

Sample survey questions

- *What do you think are the biggest problems facing your community?*
  - *(a) education*
  - *(b) crime*
  - *(c) water quality*
  - *(d) taxes*
  - *(e) other*
- *In your opinion, what is the best use of the Rio Platte?*
  - *(a) irrigation*
  - *(b) habitat for birds and wildlife*
  - *(c) recreation (hunting, fishing, canoeing)*
  - *(d) other*
- *Please indicate whether you have a positive or negative view about the following groups, or indicate if you don't recognize the group.*
  - *(a) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*
  - *(b) Friends of the Rio Platte*
  - *(d) Texas Fish and Game Commission*
  - *(e) Trout Unlimited*
  - *(f) Soil and Water Conservation District*
  - *(g) Northeast Water Supply Association*

long-term outreach program (☞See the appendix for more information on developing an outreach program). If you engage members at the very beginning, they will have a vested interest in the group and wish to see it succeed. If potential stakeholder group members are brought in late in the process, do not understand their connection with the group or the issues, or feel that their input and time are not valued, they will likely move on to other endeavors.

In the beginning when you are first interacting with potential group members, your primary outreach objective is to learn what your potential stakeholders know about the watershed and the watershed issues. Because you are gathering information on your target audience's knowledge and understanding of the watershed, your primary methods will probably be phone interviews, focus groups, surveys and small group meetings. ☞See the example in the box on page 32 for suggestions for gathering information from stakeholders.

After researching potential stakeholders, it's important to identify the issues and areas where there are awareness or knowledge gaps, such as not knowing the name of the watershed or being unaware of the key pollution problems. These are the issues for which you'll need to conduct educational activities or targeted outreach to educate stakeholders so that they have the understanding they need to get them interested in joining the stakeholder group. In addition, you might need to conduct some outreach around promoting a sense of place so that stakeholders understand where they fit in. Creating and distributing attractive watershed maps that include roads, local landmarks and other points of interest that your potential group members will find meaningful is one outreach method that can help generate awareness about where stakeholders are physically located in the watershed and their proximity to local water bodies.

Identify opportunities to make presentations where potential stakeholder group members regularly meet, and then schedule presentations at their meetings. Local newspapers might list some of these regular meetings. Make a point of connecting their important issues with the watershed effort. What will they stand to gain by supporting your group? Also consider asking key individuals for the names of others who might want to get involved, so that you can continue to build your network and engage those who are interested. If publicity is a goal, find out who the environmental reporters are and see if they would be interested in covering the planning effort.

Even at the beginning stages of the watershed planning or implementation process, you don't want long lag times between when you meet potential group members and when you provide watershed updates. Potential stakeholder group members are likely to be active in their community and will have competing interests for their time and attention. After meeting potential members, follow up with them shortly afterward and offer opportunities to learn more and to become further engaged. Webcasts and e-mail updates are good ways to reach large numbers of people quickly and to share pictures. You might also consider using some social media tools, such as Facebook, to generate and sustain awareness and interest. Keep in mind that eventually you may ask some of these people to make a commitment to be a stakeholder group member and work with you to develop and implement a watershed plan. Their level of commitment and engagement will be greater than what would be expected

Outreach efforts inform and invovle potential stakeholders as well as the general public.

Outreach to recruit stakeholders

What's happening…	Possible outreach products/activities
Awareness – Building the stakeholder group *You're just starting your project and you need to let people know what the issues are and the possible solutions.* *Use focus groups, surveys and one-on-one conversations to learn what their current level of awareness is and which issues are important to them. This can make them feel important to the effort and more likely to agree to become an active member of the stakeholder group.*	• *Prepare a map of the watershed with political boundaries and streets overlaid.* • *Prepare a 2-page background sheet on the issues and next steps.* • *Develop a list of media contacts.* • *Assemble a media kit (including the map, a background sheet, a contact list and three news articles with quotes).* • *Submit articles to local media outlets (newspapers, TV, radio).* • *Make presentations at group meetings, such as local government and other key groups with a particular interest in this topic* • *Learn the names of persons you could call to get additional ideas of what people know already and what they might need more information about before they are able to commit to joining the group.*

from the public at large. It's important to build a relationship with this small group of people. Handwritten notes, phone calls and face-to-face meetings are still very important elements for building these relationships. Be clear that you want them to be involved, and let them know that they can turn to you for the answers to questions they have or for support they might need.

Inviting the stakeholders to participate

Once you've developed a list of stakeholders, send them a written invitation. To increase the chances of participation, consider tailoring each letter with the reasons why they need to be involved in the project. For example, if you're trying to get representation from the building community, you might want to highlight the fact that no one from the building community is involved in the watershed planning process. If someone in the community recommended them, be sure to include that person's name in the letter.

Follow up your letter with a phone call to answer any questions and gain a verbal commitment to participate. Be prepared for resistance. Even getting the stakeholders to agree to attend just one meeting with no future commitment might be enough to get them interested and willing to come back. The social aspect of the group, along with clear goals and productive meetings, will help to ensure that people continue to stay involved. Another commitment-building technique is to ask all the attendees at the first meeting to sign a group pledge committing themselves to the process and to making a reasonable effort to attend stakeholder meetings. The simple act of pledging

publicly (and also in writing) that they will follow through with the effort is often enough of a motivator to drive people to be consistent with their follow-through. In addition, if the potential stakeholders say they can't participate in the kickoff meeting, make sure you send them any information that comes out of the meeting and ask if there is someone from their organization who could attend in their place.

Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, you won't be able to get key stakeholders to attend a meeting. This doesn't mean that you can stop trying. It means you have to use a different technique to keep them informed and enable them to participate in the decision-making process. For example, when working with farmers in a watershed, often the best communication tool is one-on-one contact with a farmer in his field. Use this opportunity to hear his concerns, explain the issues, and show him why it's important to be involved.

Sometimes stakeholders will say, "Just tell me when a decision is made." Again, it's up to you to continuously provide them with information and allow them to enter the process when they feel ready.

If you still have gaps in your stakeholder group in terms of representation, don't worry. At the first meeting you can ask for suggestions for additional representation. Stakeholders appreciate being asked for their input.

Hosting productive meetings

Because one of the primary tools for communication among stakeholders is "the meeting," this section presents some tips to make your meetings as productive as possible. There are four major elements to running a successful meeting:

- Provide advance notice to participants.
- Develop a strong agenda.
- Manage the process during the meeting.
- Follow through.

Provide advance notice to participants

One way to set your meetings off on the right foot is to provide plenty of advance notice to participants. This shows respect for their time, demonstrates good planning skills, and increases the chance of attendance. If the stakeholder group will meet regularly, try to establish a set date so everyone knows, for example, that you will meet on the third Tuesday of every month.

Advance notice also refers to any materials the stakeholders need for the upcoming meeting. As part of agenda development, you will determine what information your stakeholders might need ahead of time to make informed decisions at the meeting. Make sure stakeholders have adequate time before the meeting to review such materials.

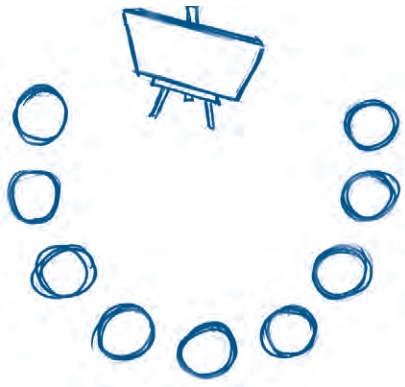
Successful meetings start with advance planning and advance notice.

What do stakeholders expect?

Researchers at the Social and Environmental Research Institute in Massachusetts summarized what participants expect of a public involvement process in a paper published in Society and Natural Resources: *access to the process, power to influence the process and its outcomes, access to information, a structure that promotes constructive interaction, facilitation of constructive personal behaviors, adequate analysis, and the enabling of future processes.*

Guidebook helps deliver effective meetings

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal Services Center released a guidebook called Introduction to Planning and Facilitating Effective Meetings. *Available online at www.csc.noaa.gov/publications/effective_meetings.html, the guide explains the role of a facilitator and describes how to plan and execute meetings that deliver results. In addition to covering how to conduct effective, productive meetings, it also includes tools and techniques for meeting facilitation and tips on conducting teleconferences, videoconferences and webinars.*



A semicircular arrangement allows members of the group to see each other.

Develop a strong agenda

The agenda will serve as a road map to accomplish your meeting objectives. As a general rule, the amount of time spent preparing for a meeting should be twice that devoted to the meeting itself. Before you can develop an agenda, you need to answer several questions. Each of these questions will provide information to help develop a strong agenda, which, when followed, will help you achieve your objectives.

1. **Why are you calling a meeting?** Often we call meetings first and then figure out what we want to accomplish in them. By first asking what you need to accomplish, you might determine that a meeting isn't necessary and that you can accomplish your goals some other way. Determining the purpose up front will set the stage for the rest of the elements that need to be considered. There are several reasons for calling a meeting. Some of the most common are sharing information, solving a problem, making a decision, tracking progress, celebrating achievements and evaluating results.
2. **What do you hope to accomplish?** Determine what you hope to leave with at the end of the meeting. Are you looking for agreement on an issue? Increased awareness of an issue? A list of goals for an activity? If you can't clearly outline the desired results, chances are you need to go back and focus on the purpose of the meeting.
3. **Who needs to attend and what are their roles?** Based on your desired outcomes, determine who needs to be involved in the meeting. Nothing is more frustrating than holding a meeting and realizing that you can discuss an issue to death, but the one person who can make a decision on that issue is not present. Determine what the participants' roles will be. Who will lead the meeting? Do you need a facilitator? Who will take notes? How will decisions be made?
4. **What topics need to be discussed to reach the desired outcome?** Deciding on topics will help determine if materials need to be sent out ahead of time so that an informed decision can be made. It will also help in allotting time on the agenda for discussion. You might find that you won't be able to discuss all the proposed topics and will have to narrow the list.
5. **What are the room layout arrangements?** Room layout is more critical to the success of your meeting than you might imagine. Considerations include seating arrangements, lighting and placement of equipment. If the room arrangements are not right, they can detract from the content of your meeting. The room layout will depend on several factors—the size of your stakeholder group, the length of the meeting, and the size of the meeting room. If possible, try to set up the seating so that all members can see each other, using a U-shaped or semicircular arrangement. Tables in front of the participants create a barrier, but they also provide a place for notebooks, cups and so forth. You want to create an environment that will stimulate discussion. Try to match

the room size with the size of the group because some people are reluctant to speak in a cavernous room.

Once you have answered the above questions, you can develop an agenda that is focused on the desired outcomes, allows enough time for discussion of key issues, and is structured so participants will feel they have contributed to the desired outcome.

Manage the process

The person responsible for managing the process of a meeting ensures that the desired outcomes are achieved and the participants believe they have contributed to the end result. It's not good enough to reach a decision if the participants don't feel good about the process.

☞Section 4 goes into more detail about managing the process during the meeting (such as getting agreement on issues, maintaining balanced participation and resolving conflicts), but for now, here are some tips to follow to start a meeting off on the right foot.

1. **Have the participants introduce themselves.** Even if the participants just say their names, speaking out loud breaks down a psychological barrier by paving the way to hear from participants later. If time permits, you might want the participants to share something about their community or themselves to start building relationships.
2. **Review the agenda and the desired outcomes.** Make sure everyone is clear on the objectives of the meeting and what you hope to accomplish.
3. **Review the roles of the participants and how decisions will be made.** Participants can play various roles in a meeting—participation, information management, process management and decision-making. Make it clear to the participants what their roles are. If there is an outside facilitator, the facilitator will introduce himself or herself and explain that he or she is there to manage the process, not the content, of the meeting. Explain the decision-making methods for reaching an agreement (majority vote, consensus, or information-gathering with another entity responsible for the ultimate decision).
4. **Develop ground rules.** Setting ground rules at the beginning of a meeting helps to focus the participants on the task at hand and provides a structure for the meeting. The facilitator should use the ground rules to guide the meeting and refer to them if they are not being followed. Typical ground rules include the following:
   - Honor time limits.
   - Speak one at a time.
   - Refrain from personal attacks.
   - Maintain confidentiality.

Visioning exercise

An excellent way to begin the stakeholder process is to conduct a visioning exercise, in which public agency representatives, stakeholders and other interested parties brainstorm on how the resource should look and function 10 or 20 years from now. Although vision statements are necessarily broad and lack detail, they are usually agreeable to nearly all participants and thus serve as an important touchstone later in the process, when discussions over devilish details require the perspective of a consensual "big picture."

Vision for the Beech Creek Watershed

The Beach Creek Watershed Association in north-central Pennsylvania states its vision as follows:

"The Beech Creek Watershed can be restored to the 'original quality of life' by undoing the harmful effects of factors such as acid mine drainage (AMD), chemicals, leachate and siltation. The entire Watershed can be "cleaned up" so that an informed, knowledgeable public can enjoy a multi-variable land use and activities while preserving, monitoring and protecting natural reproduction. This should include a sustainable, Class A, wild trout fishery, as well as habitat for a stronghold of wild birds, mammals, and diversified plant life."

www.beechcreekwatershed.com/index.html

Allow the participants to add additional ground rules they would like to see observed.

5. **Keep time on your side.** One of the easiest ways to lose credibility with a group is to disregard the time limits established for a meeting. If you said the meeting would start at 8:30 but you want to wait another 15 minutes for people who are late, you are in effect punishing the folks who made an effort to get there by 8:30. It also sets a bad precedent: No one will show up on time for the next meeting because they know you'll start late. The same is true for ending your meeting. People have other commitments, and it's presumptuous to assume that you can continue past the designated adjournment time. At the very least, you should poll the group and ask if people are willing to stay an extra 15 minutes.

Follow through

Once the meeting is over, you're still not done. Remember what your grade school teacher told you about how to write a story: Tell them what you're going to say, say it, and then tell them what you said. A successful meeting will conclude by summarizing what occurred during the meeting, identifying action items based on the discussion, assigning people to accomplish those action items, and thanking all the participants.

It is important to review the action items with the participants to make sure there is agreement on the next steps. Finally, remember that the final element of a successful meeting is producing and distributing a meeting summary. Effective meeting summaries are brief and well organized, and they are distributed soon after the meeting.

Conducting the first meeting

The first meeting with the stakeholder group can set the tone for the rest of the process, so careful planning is needed to ensure a smooth beginning. Before setting the date and time, poll the stakeholders on the most convenient day and time for them. Remember that most of your stakeholders have other jobs so they might not want to meet during the day. By asking them first, you are letting them know that this is their group and you are trying to accommodate their schedules, not just yours.

Send materials out early

Mail any agenda materials and background information well ahead of the meeting to allow participants time to review them. E-mail and website posting are tremendous assets for circulating pre-meeting information. In addition, personal phone calls to members to ensure they received the information and know how to get to the meeting location go a long way in building relationships. Use the phone call as an opportunity to allow the stakeholders to voice any potential concerns or needs that you can resolve before the meeting (*I'm a*

vegetarian … Is the building wheelchair-accessible? … I never got an agenda … You spelled my name wrong on the stakeholder list …).

Consider providing 3-ring binders or folders with pockets and the members' names printed on them at the first meeting. The stakeholders can use these throughout the project to organize all the materials distributed.

Include time for social interaction

Include time for socializing. Consider starting the meeting with a social hour. This immediately puts people at ease and allows them to meet their fellow stakeholders informally. If the meeting is to be held during the day, begin with lunch before getting into the agenda items.

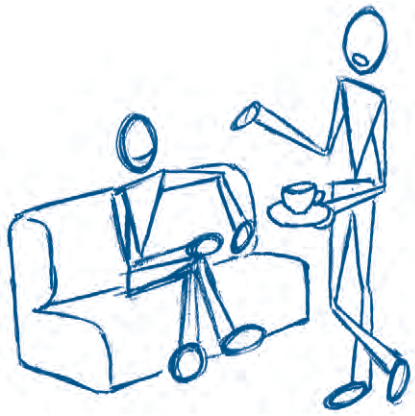
Also, make a point to remember members' names and to use them during the meeting. It's amazing how just a *"Good point, Bob"* or *"Justine was talking at the break about …"* or *"Tom, were you the one who mentioned …"* can go a long way toward making people feel worthwhile and included in the process. As people become familiar with the names of others at the meeting, they will become more comfortable and considerate in their discussions and deliberations.

Prepare an agenda

The agenda for your first meeting will obviously depend on your overall project objectives. It can be highly structured or simply a forum for group discussion. Whatever the case, it should be based on careful planning. In a watershed management planning process, the first meeting could focus on introduction to the issues and review of the preliminary framework to determine how the group will operate. Allow plenty of time on the agenda for group discussion to avoid one-way communication. As the watershed assessment, planning and management processes unfold, meetings will focus on reviewing past activities, making plans for the future, and adjusting the approach as new information comes in.

Look for what each stakeholder has to offer

During the first meeting it is often useful to ask stakeholders what kinds of skills and resources they bring to the stakeholder group and the watershed planning effort as a whole. A wide range of technical and "people" skills are needed for most planning efforts, and yours is likely to require the same. Some stakeholders might have access to datasets, funding sources or volunteers; others might have specialized technical expertise or communication vehicles. ☞One way to uncover these skills and resources is to ask stakeholders to complete a worksheet like the one shown on page 41, which is taken from EPA's *Watershed Handbook*. It might also be helpful to organize stakeholders into smaller interest groups or teams to work on specific aspects of the problem. This approach allows participants to feel more engaged and is likely to result in a more detailed assessment of problems and solutions.



Allow time for social activities to break the ice and put your group members at ease with each other.

Three simple questions to improve the success of a meeting

When planning an important meeting, it's essential to consider input from stakeholders regarding what they expect and what they would like to see. Stakeholders are more likely to share responsibility for implementation and success if they have participated in planning the work, assigning tasks, and identifying the resources required. The sense of ownership that comes from participation usually generates more cooperation and a sense of shared ownership in both the process and the product. When preparing for a meeting, ask the stakeholders these three simple questions:

1. *What are your hopes for this meeting?*
2. *What are your concerns, if any?*
3. *What advice do you have to help make this meeting successful? … Is there anything else I should know about the meeting or the issues we'll be discussing?*

Source: Interaction Associates.

Example stakeholder involvement issues to address during the watershed assessment, planning and management process

Why are we here, and what is the challenge we're facing?

- *Why do the watershed assessment/plan now?*
- *County's key objectives of this project. Develop a plan that:*
  - *Supports the intended uses of streams and lakes*
  - *Protects water quality and enhances water quality where needed*
  - *Alleviates flooding as development occurs*
  - *Provides for a safe, adequate water supply*
  - Supports wastewater, water withdrawal, and stormwater *permitting decisions*
  - *Increases awareness about causes of water quality problems and solutions to protect water quality*
  - *Increases the understanding about the linkage between land use alternatives and water quality and flooding*
- *Discussion: Are there any questions about the County's objectives or the situation that caused the project to be initiated? What are other objectives and considerations that should guide the assessment and evaluation of management options?*

Key milestones in the project

- *Characterize the watershed.*
- *Conduct scoping analysis of potential models.*
- *Conduct inventory of drainage features.*
- *Conduct field visits with the stakeholder group.*
- *Develop detailed water quality and quantity models.*
- *Identify promising watershed management strategies.*
- *Use the models to assess the effectiveness of the alternative strategies.*
- *Design and begin implementing a long-term monitoring program.*
- *Develop draft management plan.*
- *Committee recommends/endorses management plan.*
- *County (and others) adopts management plan.*

Stakeholder roles

- *Clarify overall project goals and objectives.*
- *Review the scoping-level analysis and recommendations for future general options to explore.*
- *Provide input on proposed water quality and quantity indicators and targets.*
- *Help develop evaluation criteria for analyzing management options.*
- *Help screen for promising management options to model.*
- *Review findings of the modeling analysis and provide input on the preferred management strategies.*
- *Review and provide input on the proposed monitoring plan.*
- *Review and provide input on the draft management plan.*
- *Help conduct community education and outreach throughout the process.*

Discussion questions

- *Do you have questions about any of the specific tasks or how they relate to each other?*
- *Are there questions about the input we need from you and how it will be used?*
- *Helping provide community outreach and education will be a key activity. What materials would be the most helpful for you to take out into the community?*
- *From your experience, are there other water quality issues that the community is concerned about that we should address in the plan?*
- *Given projected growth, can you think of potential future issues that we might need to address related to our scope of work?*
- *Are there other objectives and considerations we should weigh as we develop and evaluate solutions? (Note: These objectives might include other planning objectives, cost to utility customers, impacts on landowners, equity, etc.)*

Identifying Stakeholder Skills and Resources

Name: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Skills/resources	If you possess these skills or have access to these resources	Comments
Skills in Stakeholder Group		
Accounting		
Graphic design		
Computer support		
Fund-raising		
Public relations		
Technical expertise (e.g., geographic information systems, water sampling)		
Facilitation		
Other		
Other		
Resources Available		
Contacts with media		
Access to volunteers		
Access to datasets		
Connections to local organizations		
Access to meeting facilities		
Access to equipment (please describe)		
Access to field trip locations		
Other		
Other		
Other		

Please identify any other skills or resources you bring to the group:

Building a stakeholder operating plan

It's helpful for the stakeholder group to develop an operating plan to outline the roles, structure, membership and activities that will be conducted. There are many ways to develop this plan, and the approach used will depend on the group. A constant challenge to working with a stakeholder group is providing enough information to be useful in moving the process forward without undermining the group's input or giving the impression that decisions have already been made. It might be helpful to present the preliminary framework you developed when researching key audiences (☞Section 2) and then let the group tailor it to their needs at the first meeting. If your stakeholders are new to the group process, it's often helpful to give them something to which they can react.

Key elements of stakeholder operating plans

- ✓ *Program goals*
- ✓ *Ground rules*
- ✓ *Roles, responsibilities and decision-making methods*
- ✓ *Stakeholder goals, objectives and tasks to achieve the goals*
- ✓ *Products from the stakeholder program*

The operating plan might include the following elements: program goals, stakeholder goals, ground rules, roles, responsibilities, decision-making methods and products. Again, this is only a guide; the plan will change and evolve as your group progresses.

Using outreach to engage and educate stakeholders

In addition to being partners in developing the watershed plan itself, stakeholders need to be thought of as one of the audiences that need to be continually engaged and educated throughout the entire process. Outreach is conducted throughout all phases of the stakeholder involvement effort to *raise awareness* of the issues and the process, *educate* stakeholders and the community about the issues of concern, and *motivate* the community to take action to identify and implement solutions. As the awareness of your stakeholders increases, your outreach efforts will shift to engaging them in learning about possible causes and solutions. In addition to moving you along the continuum to develop a watershed plan, working with stakeholders to learn about and understand watershed problems and identify potential solutions will help maintain their interest in staying actively involved in the process. The depth of information that you provide will increase, and you will begin to address the "why and how" behind the issues affecting the watershed.

One of the outreach methods you can use is bringing guest speakers to the stakeholder meetings, such as biologists who have been collecting area macroinvertebrate data, local landowners grappling with stormwater flooding issues, or others with unique, key perspectives on watershed issues. The speakers can help maintain stakeholders' interest while also educating them on topics they might not otherwise have known much about.

Using clear visuals (charts, graphs, photos and illustrations) is another outreach method you can use to help explain complex watershed concepts or data. When creating these educational materials, don't forget to incorporate the members' interests and concerns. Any outreach products you develop need to be meaningful to stakeholders and must be easy to understand.

Don't forget that outreach is a two-way street. Providing the information is only the first step. Did the stakeholders receive it, understand it and learn from it? When creating outreach materials for stakeholder group members, include opportunities for feedback, response and engagement. Because your stakeholder group is likely to be fairly small (usually 20 people or fewer), one-on-one communication is much more manageable and more desirable than trying to reach the whole group at once.

Outreach to engage and educate stakeholders

What's happening …	***Possible outreach products/activities***
Education – The newly formed group is aware of the issues but requires more detailed information about the issues and solutions. *You've researched some key audiences in the community and have gathered information on their values, attitudes, concerns and communication channels.* *You've formed the stakeholder group and asked them what outreach products they would find useful.* *Now, create outreach products that take this stakeholder feedback into consideration.*	• *Prepare a map of the watershed with political boundaries and streets overlaid.* • *Continue to submit articles to various media outlets on the issues of concern.* • *Expand the list of media contacts to include other venues of communication within the community (e.g., periodicals, cable television stations, community newsletters).* • *Develop targeted outreach materials, such as fact sheets or flyers that include messages relevant to specific audiences.* • *Develop a general slide show on the project showing geographic scope, major issues of concern and possible sources of pollutants. Then, take the show on the road to reach your target audience.* • *Sponsor events such as a canoe trip, watershed festival, demonstration project or site tour.* • *Develop news items that can be included in stakeholder-related publications.* • *Prepare a newsletter or e-mail distribution list that can be used for communication within the stakeholder group and for distribution to the community.* • *Develop an online collaboration/ discussion forum.* • *Invite guest speakers to stakeholder meetings to provide a unique perspective or watershed data.* • *Provide technical training or a workshop/presentation to help stakeholders better understand the science that goes into a watershed plan. Repeat as necessary.*

Hosting informal dialogues, requesting thoughts on articles provided, and conducting online surveys (using a website such as *www.survey monkey.com*) are a few ideas for collecting responses and feedback on the information provided. Do the stakeholders understand the issues explained in the outreach products? Do they understand the importance? Can they make the connection between the actions and behaviors in the community and watershed health? Later on in the watershed planning process, your stakeholder group members will be a voice for your combined efforts, so it's important that they be knowledgeable messengers on your behalf.

Section 4:

Keeping the Ball Rolling

So far, you have …

- ✓ Identified initial goals and objectives
- ✓ Outlined a stakeholder framework
- ✓ Conducted outreach activities
- ✓ Researched key interest groups
- ✓ Identified and engaged key stakeholders
- ✓ Convened the first meeting
- ✓ Developed a stakeholder operating plan

Top 12 tips to move the process forward

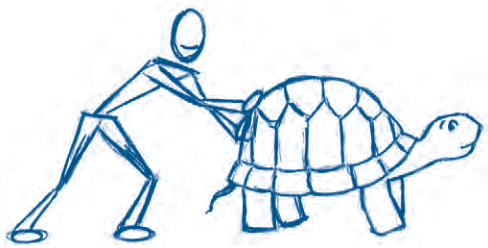
Although stakeholder processes can be long and involved, there are some specific tools you can use to smooth out the road ahead and build trust within the group.

Keeping the momentum going throughout the life of a stakeholder process can be challenging, to say the least. The two most common causes of burnout are too many meetings and the feeling that the process is not progressing or worthwhile. Through careful planning and common courtesy, you can reduce the chances of participant burnout and maintain the energy level of the group.

1. **Involve stakeholders as soon as possible.** Many agency personnel are reluctant to bring in stakeholders too early in the process. They would rather wait until they have something to "show." But the early stage is actually the best time to involve stakeholders because nothing can derail the process faster than asking for input after key decisions have already been made. As soon as you know that you need the involvement of stakeholders, work toward involving them as soon as possible. Allowing stakeholders to help set the tone and the pace of the effort as it begins helps to maximize interest and buy-in.
2. **Be honest.** Building on the previous tip, lay all of your cards on the table at the beginning. If you're not really sure how the process is going to work, tell the group. It's okay not to have all the

What's in Section 4?

- Top 12 tips to move the process forward
- Making decisions by consensus
- Resolving conflict



Keeping the stakeholder process moving can be a challenge.

Getting started with stakeholders

Dave Martin of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has some simple advice for managers who are initiating a stakeholder involvement program. He recommends attending regularly scheduled meetings of stakeholder groups (e.g., county soil and water conservation boards, environmental organizations, livestock producer committees, recreation groups), which provide a comfortable setting for stakeholders to hear about proposed watershed planning and management activities. Martin recommends "talking a little and listening a lot" when explaining new water quality or habitat improvement initiatives to those in attendance.

Why isn't this going to work?

Sometimes, if you start a process by asking why it's not going to work, you can disarm resistant attendees and uncover various interests, opinions and attitudes. Once you have identified the universe of barriers, you can address each one and try to find solutions that will move the process forward.

What do you do when stakeholders are reluctant to accept outside help?

In Virginia's Muddy Creek watershed, the Shenandoah Valley Soil and Water Conservation District (SVSWCD) and state and federal agencies identified ways to find common ground to help reduce bacteria and nitrate pollution. The local Old Order Mennonite community's religious beliefs preclude farmers from accepting government financial assistance to implement best management practices (BMPs). However, the Mennonite community strongly values healthy land and water resources and is willing to accept technical assistance. In 2001, the SVSWCD used Clean Water Act section 319 funding to hire two full-time staff members to work directly with these farmers and others in the watershed for the next 7 years. With the SVSWCD's technical support, the farmers in the Mennonite community voluntarily implemented numerous BMPs such as excluding livestock from streams and building numerous manure storage units. The Muddy Creek outreach project ended in 2008; however, it led to significant water quality improvements. The creek met water quality standards for nitrate beginning in 2002 and was removed from the impaired waters list in 2010. Although bacteria levels had not consistently met standards as of 2010, violation rates in Muddy Creek had dropped by approximately 24 percent.

answers, but it's not okay to mislead the group. This is particularly important where decision-making methods are concerned. If the group won't have any decision-making authority, tell them so up front. This will help reinforce to the group that there is no hidden agenda.

3. **Listen. Listening is not as easy as it sounds.** Often we're so focused on how we're going to respond to what's being said that we miss what's being said altogether. Active listening involves paying attention with both your body and your brain. Your body language—eye contact, stance, arm position—communicates a lot about how you're listening. Allow your brain to process what the person is saying without worrying about your response. Often the best response is no response. To make sure you have understood what was said and to let the speaker know you were listening, repeat what was said or ask a follow-up question to continue the dialogue.

4. **Communicate clearly and often.** Clear and frequent communication is essential. Do not assume your stakeholders understand the issues and processes. Many of your stakeholders might not be trained in the sciences and might not be comfortable with technical terms. Ask for feedback to see if the stakeholders understand the information being presented, or have them explain the concepts discussed to see if they understand. Avoid the use of acronyms and techno-jargon!

   Ask your stakeholders how they would like to communicate with each other and outside the group. Choose several formats (e.g., e-mail, newsletters, phone chains, websites and meetings) depending on the level of communication needed. Set a regular, agreed-upon schedule for progress reporting. Keep up-to-date meeting minutes and other stakeholder records and products to use in educating new stakeholders who are added later or who replace someone who changes jobs or moves from the area. This will bring new members up to speed more quickly and easily and increase their level of engagement.

5. **Don't leave out stakeholders because they're difficult.** Inviting to the table those expressing the most intense opposition might cause some initial discomfort, but doing so has many potential benefits. Such stakeholders will likely bring considerable energy and a host of new perspectives to the process. In addition, they might have the ability to educate and activate others who were not accessible to the original team. Finally, if the opposition group has the ability to stop the planning/management process through legal or other means, it might be wise to work with its members to avoid a showdown in the courts or elsewhere. Nothing is gained by excluding people from the stakeholder group purely because of their views, criticism or concerns. The ground rules for mutual respect, however, must be followed.

Be sure to recognize differences early on. It's okay to disagree. If you try to ignore conflict or make people think they're one big happy family (when they know they're not), you lose credibility. Accept and applaud the fact that everyone is at the table for different reasons, emphasizing that they are all there to accomplish common goals.

6. **Maintain strong leadership.** Good leaders are often the key to a successful stakeholder group. Good leaders are people who are consistent, decisive, fair, goal-oriented, honest, good at listening, enthusiastic, optimistic and somewhat visionary.

7. **Focus on their issues.** Remember that people will bring their own concerns and issues to the process. Instead of focusing on how you're going to meet your internal goals, concentrate on meeting their needs. This will keep them involved in the process and help build trust throughout the effort. Make sure you always show them how being involved in the process benefits them as well as the environment and the community.

8. **Establish mini-milestones.** Because stakeholder processes tend to be long and drawn out, it's important to achieve small successes and build on them. These mini-milestones can be used throughout the process to show success and keep the group energized and motivated. Start off with some projects that are likely to be noncontroversial and ones that will benefit most of the group members. This shows them that they can work together and produce something tangible. Examples of small projects include developing a slide show, holding an open house for the community, and creating a general brochure on the project.

   Use on-the-ground projects through which stakeholders (and the community) can see the results of their efforts. For example, host a stream cleanup, partner with a local school or garden club to landscape a common area, label storm drains with "don't dump" messages, or hand out watershed stewardship materials at local events.

Establish mini-milestones, such as community projects that will show positive results and keep the group motivated.

9. **Commit the resources needed to achieve your objectives.** Make sure adequate resources (personnel and financial) will be available to the group. Coordinating and maintaining stakeholder groups can be a substantial drain on resources. If your agency or organization is only providing seed money for the process, consider applying for grants (☞see Section 5) or getting in-kind services from members of the group. Keep your activities and projects in line with your budget. Don't go through the process of selecting activities that you know you won't be able to implement with your budget. And don't duplicate the efforts of other groups.

10. **Call a meeting only when it's absolutely necessary.** Are you calling a meeting just because you said you would, but you don't really have any new information for the group to consider? Meeting burnout is one of the most common by-products

Nothing succeeds like success

When trying to reach consensus on pursuing a regional approach to managing our water and sewer needs among five localities, there was a great reluctance among the board of supervisors to cooperate with each other. Instead of trying to establish a regional management entity up front, we identified a project that all of the utilities could agree on—developing a wasteload allocation for the region—to show that we could work cooperatively and that addressing these issues on a regional scale made sense.

—Thomas M. Slaydon, Director of Utilities
Spotsylvania County, Virginia

of the stakeholder process. Think long and hard before asking your stakeholders to take time out of their schedules to come to a meeting. Try to communicate information to stakeholders through a flyer, phone call relay, or website. Reschedule agendaless meetings for a later date when there will be more substantive information to discuss. This will show that you value stakeholders' time. It will also reinforce the notion that when a meeting is planned, it is because key issues will be discussed and stakeholders' participation is required.

Consider holding your meetings in creative locations to provide an educational opportunity for the participants. This approach gives the stakeholders a sense that each meeting is like a field trip. Possible meeting sites include the community wastewater treatment plant (try to arrange for a tour), the local high school (have a science teacher or a student make a watershed-related presentation), someone's home (this creates a warm, social environment), the zoo, the Chamber of Commerce, a marina or a local restaurant or coffee house. The possibilities are endless.

11. **Give feedback and praise.** We all like to know whether what we're doing is having any effect on the outcome of a process. Stakeholders are no different. Give feedback to the group to show them how their efforts are moving the process forward. Provide everyone with articles written about the project, publish data that they collected, and pass on positive feedback from key decision makers. After a key event or decision point, write a personalized letter to the stakeholders thanking them for their participation. Highlight key activities and participation by the stakeholders. Recognize the members who make substantial contributions of time and energy. If you produce an internal

The BBCC works to avoid "reinventing the wheel" and has fun at the same time

The Black Bear Conservation Committee was formed in 1992 to transform the image of a threatened species from a liability for landowners to an asset and to develop management plans for increasing bear habitat from the Tensas River in northeastern Louisiana southward to the Gulf. After convening an impressive group of more than 70 corporate, public agency, agricultural, environmental, private and university organizations, the BBCC developed restoration goals.

Attention to the human, social element—typified by informal, congenial cookouts prior to focused meetings designed to seek consensus and resolve conflict—has been cited as one of the more remarkable features of the group. As BBCC coordinator Paul Davidson puts it, "If your meetings aren't any fun, nobody will come to them."

The BBCC focuses its efforts on areas of concern that other entities are unwilling or not equipped to address. There is no need for the BBCC to get involved in land acquisition when other organizational members are already in that business.

The BBCC does excel in conflict management and educational efforts. "By not competing with other groups, we help to perpetuate positive attitudes and keep our efforts prioritized so that we get the most return on our investment of time and limited resources."

—Paul Davidson, Black Bear Conservation Committee

newsletter, consider profiling a stakeholder in each issue. Use quotes from stakeholders in articles.

In addition to giving feedback on the impact the group has had on watershed protection, it's also important to give feedback on how well the stakeholder process is operating. Things to look for include how the group's structure and membership have changed over time (for better or worse), how effective the leadership of the group is, whether members feel included and validated in the decision-making process, and whether there is a beneficial exchange between the individual members and the stakeholder group itself. In other words, do stakeholders feel that they are benefiting from being involved in the group and that the group is benefiting from each stakeholder involved?

12. **Make it fun.** The issues you're dealing with are serious, but that doesn't mean you can't have fun. Often the best way to start building relationships within the group is through social activities. These allow group members to interact and learn about each other on a personal level and can help alleviate possible conflicts down the road. Remember that meetings are not the only forums available to communicate with your stakeholders. Periodically, invite stakeholders and their families to an event that is purely social. Throw a barbecue along the river, sponsor a canoe trip, or have a crab feast. This allows relationships to be built and shows that you appreciate the stakeholders' hard work.

A purely social event can help build relationships between stakeholders.

Using technology to share and collaborate

Stakeholder involvement, by definition, requires collaboration—working together in a coordinated fashion toward a common goal. In addition to meetings and conference calls, today there are many newer interactive Web tools and technologies available that can help to foster more productive collaboration such as social media apps. Listed below are a few of the tools that you might consider using to facilitate information-sharing and collaboration during your stakeholder involvement effort. (Note: EPA does not endorse any product, service or enterprise. Any mention of a product, publication, report, entity or enterprise is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by EPA or the U.S. government.)

- **Document-sharing/collaboration tools.** Whether your stakeholder group is charged with writing a watershed plan, commenting on a plan written by others, or voting on various options for watershed management, there are many online document-sharing tools you can use to aid the process. Many of these tools are available for free and often based on an open-source model that offers many of the same collaborative features as proprietary brands. Examples of these include Google Docs, Scribd, Alfresco Community Edition and Knowledge Tree Community Edition which can allow stakeholders to share workspaces, maintain and access archives of various iterations of watershed planning

documents, track reviews and comments submitted, and more—just by using a Web browser. Google Docs is a service that offers a suite of tools for creating documents, spreadsheets, presentations and forms combined with online storage ("in the cloud") that facilitates real-time collaboration. You can read more about these tools at *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Content_management_system* or *www.weblogmatrix.org*. If you need a tool with more bells and whistles, you might consider purchasing software like Microsoft Sharepoint, Knowledge Tree, and other fee-based document management systems. [*Note: EPA does not endorse any product, service or enterprise. Any mention of such is for informational purposes only.*]

- **Discussion forums and blogs**. Online discussion forums structure their content as hierarchical trees of messages. These topic trees (called *threads*) begin with a single message (called a post), and the responses and replies to the responses create the rest of the tree. Replies to posts within threads are what defines the "discussion" in the term *online discussion forum*.

  There are many free online discussion sites hosted by large commercial companies that you can use to set up a forum for your stakeholder group—Google Groups and Yahoo Groups for example. Some groups choose to offer their own dedicated forums, gaining more control over the functions and structure. Some of the best forum software available is based on low- or no-cost software.

  A *blog* is the Web version of a journal or diary. (The word *blog* is a contraction of "Web log.") The content can be managed by a single user, a group of users, corporations, agencies or other organizations. Blogs can be written solely by individuals or can be composed of contributions by many authors. Some blogs allow authorized users or the anonymous public to provide simple comments below each blog story. They can serve as useful forums for discussion, debate, information exchange and dissemination. Most blogs allow the administrator to "turn" comments on or off. Blogs tend to be more personal and typically are spearheaded by one person or a small group of people, whereas online discussion forums tend to be decentralized forums in which members are equally responsible for content and comments. Unlike discussion forums, responses to posts are not usually the ultimate goal of a blog.

Free blogging hosts (most of which have premade templates to get you up and running quickly) include:

- *B2evolution.net*
- *Blogger.com*
- *Blogagotchi.com*
- *DiaryLand.com*
- *glFusion.org*
- *Livejournal.com*

- *JournalHome.com*
- *MovableType.com*
- *WordPress.com*
- *Weebly.com*

As with online forums, some groups choose to offer their own blog infrastructure for additional control and possible integration with other systems that may be running (document management, knowledge bases, news campaigns, public relations management).

Making decisions by consensus

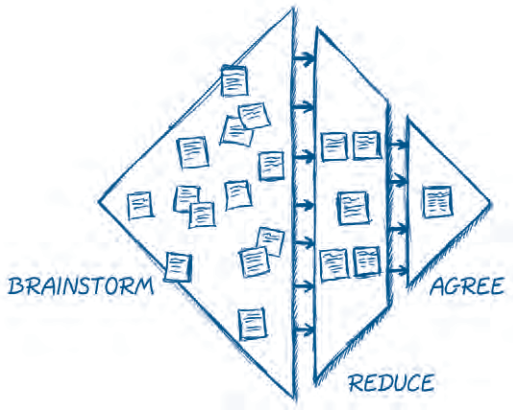
Because many stakeholder groups use consensus as a basis for making decisions, this section provides some tips on basic facilitation techniques to prevent the process from getting bogged down and stagnating. Often it's advisable to retain an outside facilitator to work through the consensus-building process or at least to have someone who is trained in facilitation and is perceived as a neutral party.

The definition of *consensus* is **a decision the group can live with**. Consensus is not a majority vote. It is important to remind the stakeholders that consensus does not necessarily mean that they are supporting their first choice but that they are willing to support the decision selected. When making decisions by consensus, you must indicate a fallback position, up front, if consensus can't be reached. For example, "If we can't reach consensus on the management options to pursue, the county will have to select the options, "or" If we can't reach consensus on which watershed projects to fund, we'll vote and go with the majority decision."

The key to any consensus-building process is to get agreement on something. It is, unfortunately, all-too-common of an experience to generate a room full of ideas, only to elude agreement on which ideas to pursue. This section briefly reviews how to build an agreement.

From brainstorming to consensus

One of the most widely used methods for reaching consensus within a stakeholder group involves opening the floor to a brainstorming session, organizing and reducing down the ideas to a smaller subset, and then reaching agreement together on which is the best idea or approach.



Before opening the floor for ideas, it is sometimes helpful to identify the screening criteria you will apply during the narrowing phase. This helps to bring forward topics that focus on the end result or key aspects of the overall goals and objectives. The screening criteria can be anything the group agrees to. Some common criteria include relative effectiveness, time limits, cost considerations, geographic focus and the ability to measure results.

Using sticky notes

Many groups use sticky notes to generate and sort through ideas. Have each participant write down one idea per note and then post the ideas on large sheets of paper taped to the wall. This allows you to easily group the information into categories and sort and rank the information later.

Brainstorm

In the brainstorming phase, the purpose is to generate ideas and stimulate discussion. It is important to stress to the group that you are not evaluating any ideas at this point. Several approaches can be used to open the discussion. The most common approach is to let people speak their ideas freely in any order. Another approach is to go around the table and let each person offer one suggestion at a time. Another approach is to ask each person the same focused question and have the person respond to that question. If you have a quiet group, you might want to start with an initial list of ideas and ask the group members to add to it. Taking turns and having people contribute one idea each time allows more people to participate, which promotes buy-in during the process. Using a free association approach could help if your group is bogged down with old ideas. Free association helps to facilitate discussion in a creative way. For example, you can show the group a photo of a degraded streambank or an aerial photo of a watershed to generate input. You can also use written articles, quotes or videos as the "prop" to spur discussion.

Once all the ideas have been generated, it's important to check back with the group to make sure everyone understands the ideas. If someone is confused, have the person who mentioned the idea explain it to the group. If your stakeholder group is a subset of a larger management effort, you might want to start the open phase with the proposed recommendations from the technical committee and then have the group add to them.

Reduce

During this phase, you are trying to organize the information you collected in the open phase and get a sense of priorities so that you can combine options if appropriate and prepare others to be eliminated in the next phase. It's important to stress that no decisions will be made during this phase. The first task is to combine any obvious duplicates. Remember to ask the group if it's okay to combine issues. Sometimes what might seem obviously related to you is distinctly separate to someone else in the group.

If some members of the group are confused about an issue or idea, you can use a simple clarification method called *starbursting* to flesh the idea out so that all group members can make an educated decision while narrowing ideas down. To do this, draw a large open six-pointed star on a flip chart and write the issue or idea in the center of the star. At each point of the star, write Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. Ask the person who suggested the idea or issue, or the group at large, to answer

Starbursting can help answer questions about an issue so that stakeholders are better equipped to rank all of the issues.

those questions about the issue, and write the answers off the tip of each respective star point. This diagram is a useful aid that enables everyone to gain a more robust understanding of the issue or idea. From here, the group will be better equipped to rank the issues and eliminate some in the next phase.

Techniques to organize the information include applying the screening criteria to the issues, grouping similar topics, taking straw votes, and giving each member a certain number of votes to rank his or her preferences. An easy way to determine how many votes each person gets is to count the number of items and divide by 3 (if there are fewer than 10) or 4 (if there are more than 10). For example, with 9 items, everyone gets to prioritize 3; with 20 items, everyone gets to prioritize 5. Voting can be done by raising hands or by using stickers or tape flags placed directly on the flip charts. You might also ask the stakeholders to rank their top choices on a notecard. Using notecards can help to remove any group bias that might occur when openly expressing priorities on a flip chart or raising hands. This ranking allows you to see which issues are the most active and which you can target for elimination.

After you have used the reduction techniques, it's important to give the group members a chance to advocate for a particular issue, even if it did not score very high in the ranking process. This allows members to express their views and provide background information that can sometimes change people's minds.

Once you have a sense of the participants' priorities, you can start the agreement process.

Agree

During the agreement phase, you remove ideas until you are left with the best approach or choice. The objective is to start with the ideas that have received the least attention. Based on the prioritization in the organization and narrowing phase, you should already have an idea of the level of interest in the various topics.

Ideas can be removed by negative polling. For example, you ask the group, "Is there anyone not willing to remove number 5 from the list?" If there is no opposition, physically remove it and praise the group for making progress. Then, working from both ends (using straw votes or negative polling), try to determine which topics the group wants to keep and which ones can be eliminated.

When two or three topics remain, you'll probably have more discussion on the merits of each and can determine whether these discussions influence the group. One quick way you can determine each stakeholder's level of support for the remaining ideas is the *fist-to-five* technique. To use this technique, the facilitator asks the group members to show their level of support for an idea by using a fist or the number of fingers that corresponds to the person's opinion. A fist

Setting restoration project criteria in the state of Washington

The King County Engineering and Environmental Services Division developed the Small Habitat Restoration Program in response to disappearing spawning and rearing habitat for salmon, extreme bank and channel erosion, sedimentation in stream and wetland buffers, and water quality degradation.

To meet program goals, a Habitat Advisory Group established a set of guidelines for selecting projects. These guidelines stated that projects should be located in or along natural stream systems and/or wetlands and their buffer zones; should originate from county staff members, the public or community groups; should include as partners other groups, governments, volunteer organizations and/or fish and wildlife agencies; and should be constructed primarily with Washington Conservation Corps crews and volunteers, using low-cost materials.

Different ways to generate ideas

Propose
(limited opening)
Someone leads off the discussion.

List
(moderate opening)
Let's list four or five items that we want to address.

Brainstorm
(wide opening)
Let's get all of our ideas out first.

Reducing the field of possibilities

Combine obvious duplicates
to eliminate redundancy.

Prioritize by using N/3:
Number of ideas divided by 3 = the number of votes each person gets.

Apply screening criteria.
Use straw votes *(show of hands).*

Advocate:
Allow anyone to advocate for an issue.

Agreeing on a final decision

Negative poll:
Is there anyone not willing to take number 5 off the list?

Build up/eliminate:
What can we add to option B to make it work for you?

Straw poll:
Let's get a quick show of hands. Who wants to keep this one?

Both/and:
Can we go with both of these?

(also called a fist block) is a "No" vote, whereas five fingers is a vote of full support. Anyone holding up fewer than three fingers should be given the opportunity to state his or her objections so the group can discuss them. Fist-to-five is a great way to discover if there is still anyone who has unaddressed concerns. The group continues the process until they achieve consensus (a minimum of three fingers or higher) or determine they must move on to the next issue.

Another option is the *build up/eliminate approach*, which asks what must be added to or removed from a particular idea for the stakeholders to support it. The *both/and* technique allows you to choose more than one option if the participants agree. Don't force yourself into choosing between two ideas if you don't have to. For example, if you're left with two potential watershed projects to fund, perhaps both projects can be funded by splitting the total funding between the two efforts.

Bring everyone along together

When building agreements with stakeholder groups, it's important to make sure that everyone is on the "same page" and that everyone is moving through the process together. It's like leading a group on a field trip to an art museum. You have to wait for the stragglers to catch up before you can begin talking about the next painting. If you rush to the next issue without ensuring that the group is with you, you risk having to discuss a topic again or realizing that their concerns were not addressed and you may need to go back to square one. The following are some common places in the process where you might get bogged down because you've lost part of the group:

No commitment to the problem. If you don't get agreement on what the problems are at the beginning of the effort, the stakeholders might not feel that it's worth the investment of their time.

Poor problem definition statement. Sometimes the group jumps ahead and states the problem as a solution. For example, stating a problem as "The watershed needs riparian buffers." is a solution. The problem statement might be "Increased sedimentation and elevated temperatures in the stream." Once the problems are clearly identified, alternative solutions can be proposed.

Resolving conflict

By following the steps above, you have reduced the chances for conflict to occur. You have structured an open, honest process with clear boundaries and expectations about roles and outcomes, listened

Example of consensus building in action

Situation:

Your watershed group (nine persons) has received $10,000 to fund a watershed project in the community. Which project will you fund? (Note: Techniques used are highlighted in **bold**.)

Screening Criteria:

- ✓ Project must be completed in a year.
- ✓ Project must contribute to an improvement in water quality.
- ✓ Project must occur in the West Fraser watershed.
- ✓ Project must be doable with $10,000.

Brainstorm

*"Let's **brainstorm** some projects that we can fund."*

1. Conduct storm drain labeling in the Town of West Fraser.
2. Plant a riparian buffer along Goose Creek.
3. Fence off 20 miles of stream along a section of dairy farms upstream of West Fraser.
4. Conduct a series of training workshops to educate development contractors on erosion control practices.
5. Conduct stream monitoring to determine levels of fecal coliforms in the West Fraser River and publicize the results in the media.
6. Hold a fall watershed festival.

Reduce

Combine any duplicates.
Apply screening criteria.
"Which projects don't meet the criteria?"
"Goose Creek is not in the West Fraser watershed." (Eliminates #2.)
"A watershed festival wouldn't really improve water quality." (Eliminates #6.)

Bob: *"I think we should leave in the erosion and sediment control workshop because even though there isn't a direct benefit to water quality, there is an indirect benefit."* (You **ask the group** to raise their hands if they would like to leave #4 up. The group agrees to leave #4 on the list.)

Vote for preferences: *"With the remaining projects, let's have everyone cast three votes for their choices."* (Using **N/3**, 9 people divided by 3 = 3 votes each.)

1. Conduct storm drain labeling in the Town of West Fraser. (6 votes)

~~2. Plant a riparian buffer along Goose Creek.~~

3. Fence off 20 miles of stream along a section of dairy farms upstream of West Fraser. (11 votes)
4. Conduct a series of training workshops to educate development contractors on erosion control practices. (2 votes)
5. Conduct stream sampling to determine levels of fecal coliforms in the West Fraser River and publicize the results in the media. (8 votes)

~~6. Hold a fall watershed festival.~~

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Advocate: *"Does anyone want to advocate for a particular issue?"*

Sheryl: *"I think fencing off the stream alongside the dairy farms makes the most sense. Those farms are the largest dairy operations in the county, and we already know that fecal coliforms and sedimentation are our biggest problems. A lot of that is probably caused by cattle grazing along the streams. But I think we need to do some sampling, too, so we can see if fencing the cattle out improves the situation."*

Agree

You are left with four choices and have to get to one. Based on the N/3 vote during the narrowing phase, you start with the choices that received the least attention.

Negative polling: *"Based on the discussions, is there anyone not willing to take #1 (storm drain labeling) off the list?"* (Agreement to eliminate #1.)

~~1. Conduct storm drain labeling in the Town of West Fraser. (6 votes)~~

~~2. Plant a riparian buffer along Goose Creek.~~

3. Fence off 20 miles of stream along a section of dairy farms upstream of West Fraser. (11 votes)

4. Conduct a series of training workshops to educate development contractors on erosion control practices. (2 votes)

5. Conduct stream monitoring to determine levels of fecal coliforms in the West Fraser River and publicize the results in the media. (8 votes)

~~6. Hold a fall watershed festival.~~

"Okay, we're left with numbers 3, 4, and 5. I haven't heard too much discussion on #4. Is there anyone not willing to take #4 off the list?" (Agreement to remove #4.)

~~1. Conduct storm drain labeling in the Town of West Fraser. (6 votes)~~

~~2. Plant a riparian buffer along Goose Creek.~~

3. Fence off 20 miles of stream along a section of dairy farms upstream of West Fraser. (11 votes)

~~4. Conduct a series of training workshops to educate development contractors on erosion control practices. (2 votes)~~

5. Conduct stream monitoring to determine levels of fecal coliforms in the West Fraser River and publicize the results in the media. (8 votes)

~~6. Hold a fall watershed festival.~~

Both/and: *"Okay, we're left with numbers 3 and 5. Can we combine numbers 3 and 5 to fence off the stream and conduct bacteria monitoring along just the dairy farms to see if the fencing program works? We'll probably get some good results from the sampling that we could publicize in the media. And that might convince others to fence off their streams."* (Agreement on amending and combining the two choices.)

Decision: The watershed group agrees to fund a $10,000 project to fence off 20 miles of stream next to a section of dairy farms and monitor the river to determine the water quality results. Findings from the monitoring program will be publicized.

to stakeholder concerns, and communicated with the stakeholders clearly and regularly. But when different personalities are involved and the stakes are high, conflict can result.

To resolve conflict, you must first uncover the underlying interests or needs that cause people to take a particular position on an issue. When those interests or needs are revealed, it's often possible to deal with them constructively.

Know the difference between a concern and a position

Often a stakeholder will express his or her concerns in the form of a position. It's very difficult to make progress when working with conflicting positions. Try to get stakeholders to state their concerns in terms of needs or concerns. For example, if a parking lot owner refuses to make any changes to his parking lot design to reduce stormwater runoff, ask him what his needs are for patrons. That might prompt him to state his concerns differently, providing you with some issues you might be able to work with.

Position: I won't add a grassed swale to my parking lot.

Concern: I desire plenty of parking spaces for peak customer times.

In this example, if the need for spaces during peak periods can be addressed, the parking lot owner might be willing to consider adding a grassed swale. Sifting through positions on issues to get to the underlying needs or interests can be a delicate process. Often, the concern relates to financial issues—funding for management practices, training on sediment and erosion control, incentives for setting aside riparian buffers, money to upgrade onsite wastewater treatment systems, and so forth.

Finding the resources to implement management strategies may draw from the energy of the entire stakeholder group. ☞Section 5 provides a brief overview of funding issues. Note that the best way to attract financial support is to build an energetic, unified stakeholder group committed to addressing the interests and needs of its members. Public and private entities like to fund projects that have lots of local support and enthusiasm.

Use your active listening skills

Active listening skills are crucial in identifying and resolving conflict. Some techniques to use include the following:

- **Clarify.** As a first step, ask people to state their positions and repeat them back to the group to make sure everyone is clear. *"John, could you restate your concerns for me?"*

Conflict is inevitable, but resolving it constructively is not impossible.

What is conflict?

Conflict results when people have different positions on an issue and they don't believe it's possible to reach an agreement.

Tip:

Avoid conflict by providing opportunities for stakeholders to interact at unstructured, informal social events. Watershed management may hinge on relationships among key stakeholders. It will be very helpful for them to understand each other's concerns if they are to build a cooperative, coordinated watershed program.

Establishing the real needs and concerns of stakeholders will help resolve conflicting positions.

- **Reflect.** Ask each party to restate the other's position. *"John, could you restate what Bob's concerns are about adding a grassed swale in his parking lot?"*
- **Ask open-ended questions** to help the group identify possible solutions to the conflict. *"What could Bob do so that his customers have ample parking?"*
- **Accept/legitimize.** Show the participants that you understand the problem. *"I understand that Bob's customers need ample parking spaces and that John is concerned about the stormwater runoff from the parking lot in the stream, which is causing the water quality violations."*
- **Build on small agreements.** This technique might include having participants agree to discuss the issue further without asking for a commitment. *"So, Bob and John, do you agree to meet with the city planner to explore possibilities for addressing parking needs? Great!"*

Separate beliefs from facts

Our view of the world is a product of our experiences and beliefs. Our beliefs include our values, perceptions, attitudes and opinions.

Some general observations regarding conflict and conflict resolution

- *Conflict is a natural and normal phenomenon and is associated with nearly all human relationships.*
- *There are several basic human needs that are especially pertinent to conflict and conflict resolution—the need for recognition, development or fulfillment, security and identity.*
- *People get involved in conflicts because their interests or their values are challenged, or because their concerns are not met.*
- *It is easy to resolve a conflict stemming from a clash of interests. It is more difficult to deal with a conflict that arises from a clash of values. It is even more difficult to handle a conflict in which at least one party's basic needs are not satisfied.*
- *It is extremely difficult for the parties to the conflict, even with outside assistance, to find a solution that would completely satisfy everyone's needs.*
- *Mediators, intermediaries and other third parties can't resolve conflict. They can only facilitate involving the parties directly so they can resolve it themselves.*
- *Despite the limited role of facilitators, some conflicts cannot be resolved without their help. The involved parties' perceptions of each other and of the issues of the conflict can be so biased and so limiting that they cannot mutually agree on satisfactory options even when they have the desire to settle their differences. It is in such cases that third parties can be the most helpful. By bringing to the conflict their own knowledge and experience, their own perspective, and, of course, their own power and leverage, they make previously unconsidered options visible and feasible.*

Source: A Brief Introduction to Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Dimostenis Yagcioglu, 1996 (www.academia.edu/1032320/A_Brief_Introduction_to_Conflict_Analysis_and_Resolution)

Sometimes we state our beliefs as facts, and they contradict other people's beliefs, creating conflict. It's important to separate beliefs from facts to keep the discussion focused on the issues.

Belief: There is not enough water supply in the county to support future growth projections.

Facts: The current water supply in the county is 15 million gallons per day, and the projected growth for the year 2030 is an additional 200,000 residents.

Turn the negative into a positive

When your stakeholders start talking about all the problems with the process or stating reasons why something won't work, take a break and regroup. Often the group will build on the negative energy being generated, so you'll want to try to steer the members toward something positive. Try asking the group to state their issues in terms of what they would like to see. Make them lead off with the statement *"I would like to see …"*

Example: *"This won't work because there are too many agency staff at the table."*

Restatement: *"I would like to see greater representation from non-profit groups and other organizations that should be participating in the process."*

This approach enables them to take one step toward a solution instead of dwelling on all the barriers. If you had the foresight to conduct an initial visioning exercise (☞see ***Conducting the first meeting*** in Section 3), it's a good idea to revisit the vision statement and talk about it again. Such a discussion can help to cast things in a new light and broaden the perspective on the issues under debate.

Top five reasons teams fail

1. *Team members don't influence and get support from key external stakeholders.*
2. *Team members don't set appropriate goals for the team and therefore don't build and implement a plan for reaching them.*
3. *Team members don't spend enough time planning how they will work together.*
4. *Team members don't know how to reconcile differences or resolve interpersonal conflict.*
5. *Team members don't conduct efficient meetings that produce results.*

Source: Interaction Associates, "The Greatest Internal Team Barriers to Success"

Focus on the positive.

Dealing with negative people

One of the challenges watershed programs face in developing a collaborative and open environment is dealing with negative people. This becomes an even larger issue in meetings. The following tips can help the leader and the group deal effectively with people who might become disillusioned or dissatisfied with group progress or otherwise create impediments to reaching consensus and implementing selected water quality improvement strategies:

- *Make sure participants have a vested interest in the meeting topic and understand their role. They are more likely to be active and cooperative.*
- *To set expectations at the appropriate level, communicate the scope of the meeting clearly.*
- *Establish the process to be followed at the beginning of the meeting and stick with it.*
- *Model a positive and receptive attitude, whether you're the facilitator, meeting leader or participant.*
- *Address objections or concerns directly and involve the group in dealing with them.*
- *Seek to understand all participant points of view by asking probing questions such as "How do you see this problem? What do you think is happening? How is the situation affecting your group?"*

Source: Interaction Associates.

Focus on the common goals

The looming threat of regulatory or other legal action, though often viewed as a negative, sometimes provides a powerful impetus to seek consensual solutions. Focusing the group on the vision or overall goal expressed initially and seeking to accommodate interests rather than positions can help spark creative, outside-the-box solutions that break through disagreement and past baggage.

For example, environmental groups in Kentucky and other states have actively lobbied for cost-share support for livestock waste treatment systems and other expensive management practices to help ease the burden of complying with clean water initiatives on the farm. Coalitions of groups that seemed to be at odds in the past are now powerful forces for changing policies and building support for implementing management strategies in these watersheds.

It should be noted that focusing on impending regulatory action as the sole (or most important) reason for developing a watershed management plan can backfire with stakeholders. Warnings that the planning process must proceed because "if we don't do it, the government will" can cause resentment and unnecessary ill will.

Using stakeholders for community outreach

As we've already discussed, during both the formation and active stages of your stakeholder process, you'll probably need to develop outreach materials to recruit stakeholders as well as to keep them interested and engaged during the watershed planning process. In addition to those outreach needs, you'll need to use your stakeholder group members as messengers for reaching out to their own constituents and social networks, as well as the watershed community at large.

Because you chose stakeholder group members who are active in the community and knowledgeable about a variety of community issues, it's likely that many of the members of your stakeholder group are trusted and respected members of the community. This makes them great messengers on your behalf. In addition, they can be used to piggyback watershed messages and information onto whatever outreach methods they use in their other community or social networks, such as newsletters of civic organizations they might belong to or booths at community events they actively support. Using stakeholder group members to piggyback watershed messages and information will help you to build awareness and support among the community as a whole.

Keep in mind that because stakeholder group members usually have full-time jobs or other commitments that compete for their time and attention, it is important that you create **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant and **T**imely (**SMART**) outreach objectives for them to

The Six Habits of Merely Effective Negotiators

James K. Sebenius, writing in the April 2001 Harvard Business Review, *summarized the "Six Habits of Merely Effective Negotiators" as follows:*

1. *Neglecting the other side's problem: If you want to change someone's mind, you first have to learn where that person's mind is. Solving the other side's problem as a means to solving your own requires understanding and addressing your counterpart's problem.*
2. *Letting cost/price bulldoze other interests: While price/cost is an important factor in many transactions, it's rarely the only one. Wise negotiators put the vital issue of price in perspective and don't straitjacket their views of the richer interests at stake.*
3. *Letting positions drive out interests: Three elements are at play in a negotiation: issues are on the table for explicit agreement, positions are one party's stand on the issues, and interests are the underlying concerns that would be affected. The goal should be to meet both sets of interests through joint problem solving so that an agreement can be reached. Probing behind the positions to flush out interests makes that possible.*
4. *Searching too hard for common ground: Common ground helps in negotiating agreements, but differences will drive the details of the deal. Flushing out differences (especially in interests) related to the terms of an agreement can unbundle them so each can be dealt with individually within the context of the overall agreement.*
5. *Neglecting BATNAs: The "best alternative to a negotiated agreement" reflects the course of action a party would take if an agreement is not possible. BATNAs set the threshold that any acceptable agreement must exceed, i.e., both parties must do better than their BATNAs or an agreement is unlikely. Knowing the BATNAs of your side and those of your counterpart will help you to define the level of benefits that must come from the agreement.*
6. *Failing to correct for skewed vision. The psychology of perception can lead to major errors during a negotiation. Getting too committed to your own (probably exaggerated) point of view, i.e., being too self-serving in your analysis of the facts and failing to accurately assess your counterpart's position are both common problems in negotiations. Seeking the views of outside, uninvolved parties is useful in addressing this phenomenon, as is reverse role-playing.*

—Harvard Business Review (April 2001)

Salmon listing spurs stakeholder coordination

When coho salmon were listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act in 1997, the California counties of Del Norte, Humboldt, Trinity, Siskiyou and Mendocino joined forces to focus on county land-use policies, plans and road projects that would better protect salmon. By 2010, these counties had removed or modified 53 fish barriers and opened up 130 miles of streams.

Watershed Wiki fosters communication

www.epa.gov/watershedcentral/wiki.html

EPA's Watershed Wiki (part of Watershed Central) is an application used for information-sharing and collaboration that allows users to:

- *Share best practices, case studies and lessons learned*
- *See what other watershed organizations are up to and learn from them*
- *Identify partners*
- *Rate and comment on watershed management tools or report on new tools*
- *View watershed maps and data*
- *Publish a watershed management plan for others to learn from*
- *And more!*

accept and help implement. During the process of creating SMART objectives:

- Identify the audiences that each stakeholder member is in regular contact with and the upcoming events or meetings at which the stakeholder might have opportunities to educate others on the watershed planning process.
- Identify instances where more than one member is reaching the same audience. Are there some audiences that are not being reached by the stakeholder members?
- Create a list of the stakeholders' influential contacts and relationships. Include elected officials, media, content experts (academia), celebrities and any other category of persons who might help to spread the word about your efforts to the community.
- Identify special skills and capabilities that will help with outreach. Refer to the initial stakeholder research you conducted when identifying stakeholders. Are some of your members gifted public speakers? Do they own a restaurant or public building that could be used for an event? Do they have information technology know-how or available property for demonstration projects? Are they, or do they have access to, gifted artists? Can these skills and capabilities assist with efforts to reach out to the community?

Whether it is giving community presentations, contacting other members of the community, fundraising, or any other form of outreach, your expectations for stakeholder group members should be clear. You might even consider instilling a sense of competition among the members by giving small awards at stakeholder meetings to those who have achieved results in their outreach efforts (e.g., those who brought the most people to an event, raised the most money for a project, successfully recruited new stakeholders, passed out the most brochures). If some members are consistently unable to meet the outreach objectives that the group has agree to, you might need to revise the objectives as a group or consider bringing in new stakeholders who are more productive. The number of seats in your stakeholder group is limited to what is easy to manage, and each member of the group needs to actively promote and advance the cause of the group.

Using stakeholders for community outreach

What's happening …	Possible outreach products/activities
Action – The group is ready to be a messenger for the watershed planning effort. *The stakeholder group is up and running and implementing parts of the management plan.* *The stakeholder group is knowledgeable about the watershed issues and is prepared to begin outreach to help implement solutions, promote the adoption of selected best management practices (BMPs), and generally build support for the watershed plan.*	• *Develop a Web page that combines existing monitoring data and mapping technology to keep volunteers and stakeholders engaged and up-to-date on the latest information on priority watershed areas.* • *Continue generating media coverage and piggybacking information on existing newsletters and other outreach products accessed by stakeholders (e.g., feature articles on BMP implementation, program activities).* • *Hold events to showcase successes and motivate the community to get involved in additional efforts that need to be taken.* • *Add new content and discussion to online collaboration forums to keep the process moving and stakeholders actively engaged.* • *Develop a speakers' bureau for the stakeholders so they can go out into the community to make presentations.* • *Develop a traveling tabletop display that can be used to support the speakers' bureau and other events.*

Section 5:

Beyond the Stakeholder Group

What's in Section 5?

- Establishing independent watershed management groups
- Types of organizations
- Securing funding
- A final thought …

Many stakeholder involvement processes are initiated by public agencies to accomplish a specific task or fulfill a legal or other mandate. Once the initial objective has been satisfied, however, stakeholder groups often coalesce into long-term partnerships to implement watershed plans or otherwise assist with management efforts.

Responsibility of government agencies

As discussed in the book *New Tools for Environmental Protection: Education, Information, and Voluntary Measures*, written by the National Research Council's Committee on Human Dimensions of Global Change (2002), stakeholder groups can be very effective on their own, but as contributors to change, their effectiveness is maximized by appropriate support from policy-making agencies. To provide the most support to stakeholder-led efforts, government agencies should enhance the stakeholder involvement skills of their own staff. They should also ensure that their policies provide the time and perspective necessary for community flexibility and responsiveness to environmental issues with the goal of supporting stakeholder-driven watershed initiatives.

Other ways government agencies can provide support are listed on the website for the Water Outreach Education—Best Education Practices (BEP) Project, which is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service and other partners (*http://wateroutreach.uwex.edu/beps/essential.cfm*). A few of their tips are provided below:

- Build value for education as part of policy development and implementation.
- Build staff skills for flexibility and responsiveness to environmental issues and for facilitating community engagement.
- Concerning a particular topic, ensure the commonality of goals across all levels of responsibility (individual, neighborhood, local

government, state agency, federal agency), but adapt the participation opportunity to each audience.

- Concerning a particular activity, match the target audience to the scale of the problem, e.g., train the stakeholder group about a locally significant topic and train agency staff to consider how information about several related topics informs policy development.
- Offer avenues for participation that are competent, are fair, and enhance involvement for all levels of responsibility.

Establishing independent watershed management groups

Establishing a separate, self-supporting entity to conduct watershed assessment, planning and management tasks has several advantages. These entities are by definition locally led, inclusive, and able to respond quickly to requests for information, support, training or management assistance. Public agencies often find it difficult to provide close, on-the-ground support to the dozens—or even hundreds—of groups representing local interests. Providing assistance to establish and maintain these groups complements river basin-scale management activities and distributes the workload among more partners.

When considering a shift from an agency-supported effort to a more inclusive independent approach, the most critical issues are organizational structure and funding. Watershed groups can range in structure from informal, ad hoc advisory groups to incorporated entities with hired staff and multiple programs. Obviously, the resources available to the watershed group dictate its capacity for action. Organizations involved in watershed management are most likely to be effective if their structure matches the scale of the problem. Local issues should be handled by local, self-organized watershed councils or groups, while larger organizations should deal with broader issues. Money, volunteers and donations of office space and other resources can support a broad variety of activities. Independent watershed groups are often more inclined than typical government agencies to use creative, interactive techniques for reaching individuals and keeping them engaged.

Defining the organizational structure and accessing resources are important considerations when moving from an agency-led approach with local support to a locally led approach with agency support. The following section outlines some issues to consider when establishing long-term watershed management programs.

Types of organizations

There are two basic types of organizations—formal and informal. Formal organizations are those established by law, initiated through formal public agency action, or incorporated under the laws of a state. Most watershed groups that are formally organized are nonprofit corporations; that is, they are incorporated under the laws of a state and meet the charitable, educational, scientific or other requirements outlined for tax-exempt corporations under section 501(c)(3) of the federal Internal Revenue Code.

Nonprofit corporations

Setting up a nonprofit corporation is not difficult, and many excellent books and websites are available to help with the process. The first step, establishing the corporation, involves filing articles of incorporation with the secretary of state and paying a filing fee. The articles outline the purpose, membership and other organizational aspects of the corporation, including the names and contact information of the officers. (Sample articles of incorporation are posted on the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits' website at *http://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/nonprofit-resources/start-a-nonprofit/samplearticles.pdf*.)

The second step, securing tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service, takes a little more time. Federal IRS reviewers conduct a thorough review of the application and supplemental materials to ensure that the organization will operate within the bounds of federal law. Up to 6 months—and longer in some cases—is needed for the review process, so applicants are urged to submit their materials long before their tax exempt status needs to be finalized.

Although some work is involved in setting up a nonprofit organization, there are significant benefits. Tax-exempt corporations are eligible for a wide variety of public and private grant and contract funding programs, and they can serve as the vehicle for funneling resources to smaller groups involved in monitoring, assessment or implementation of management practices. For example, nonprofit basin groups in many states operate mini-grant programs to fund projects conducted by smaller, unincorporated groups. These small groups could not access grant funds without a nonprofit "sponsor."

Information on the specifics of forming a tax-exempt organization is available on the IRS's website at www.irs.gov/charities.

Ad hoc groups can access funding through existing nonprofit or public agencies.

Ad hoc stakeholder groups

Although instituting a long-term watershed management program by establishing a nonprofit corporation builds quite a bit of capacity for action, ad hoc groups can still accomplish a lot. These groups can range from a handful of people who write letters or otherwise advocate improvements for a river or lake to large, highly organized watershed activist groups that conduct high-profile events, collect and spend money, sponsor monitoring programs, and develop sophisticated basin management plans.

Ad hoc groups often "will themselves into existence" in response to some real or perceived threat to a water resource. Some function for years, expanding and receding in tandem with the ebb and flow of interest in the resource and the ongoing public assessment of threats to the resource. There is no established criterion or benchmark for deciding when to incorporate an ad hoc group and apply for tax-exempt status. The most frequently used yardstick is eligibility for funding. Nonprofit corporations qualify for support from public agencies, private foundations and other sources. Ad hoc groups can solicit money from organizations and individuals, but there are no tax advantages for those who donate and many grant and other program funds are not available to ad hoc groups.

Though funds earmarked for nonprofit corporations are not directly available to ad hoc groups, such groups can often find a sponsor that will serve as a vehicle for funneling money to their projects. Unincorporated groups working on contaminated coal mine drainage, establishment of riparian buffers, streambank restoration and other issues frequently attach themselves to an existing nonprofit or even a public agency (e.g., resource conservation district, county soil and water conservation board) to access funds for special projects. This approach avoids the work of setting up a separate corporation and

Landowners act quickly to remove the need for buffer mandates

In 2000, landowners in Washington's Tenmile Creek watershed learned that the state was considering mandating wide streamside buffers as a tool to reduce bacteria levels in the larger Nooksack River watershed. The prospect of additional regulations spurred landowners in the Tenmile Creek watershed to join forces on a voluntary, citizen-driven watershed restoration project (see www.whatcomcd.org/tenmile). The group worked with the Whatcom County Conservation District to secure six grants between 2001 and 2008 to support a part-time project coordinator who worked directly with individual landowners to implement best management practices. Participating landowners planted more than 11 miles of riparian buffers, removed nonnative species and established native shrubs on 12.5 miles of stream habitat, improved fish passage barriers, installed seven in-stream habitat improvement structures, installed fences to keep animals out of the creek while providing alternative ways of watering animals, and implemented farm plans for better management. By 2009, bacteria levels in Tenmile Creek had dropped significantly.

applying for tax-exempt status and allows those involved to focus on the project rather than on organizational issues. The sponsoring organization benefits from the involvement of a group of energetic, motivated individuals and action on projects within its sphere of interest, making this approach a win-win approach for everyone. Support from ad hoc groups and citizen volunteers is often used as a cost-share or matching support for grant programs.

Finally, don't ignore the value of convening informal focus groups or task forces when no formal or even ad hoc organization exists. Public agencies and statewide or regional nonprofits often call together small groups of citizens and stakeholders to review management proposals, assist with specific projects, provide information to others, or conduct similar activities. Nurturing these groups for a few months or years can lead to the establishment of a more self-sufficient ad hoc or incorporated entity in the long term and provides valuable information and service in the short term.

Securing funding

Regardless of the organizational type, watershed partnerships require coordinated action among state agencies, local interest groups and other stakeholders. Many local organizations, however, lack the technical capacity, administrative assistance and infrastructure to adequately support watershed outreach, protection and restoration initiatives after the planning work has been completed.

State and federal funding support

States frequently offer financial support to local groups that are rich in commitment and energy but lack funds. States recognize that programs like these pay off by motivating volunteers to help with restoration projects, generating monitoring data, and identifying potential environmental problems. They also help foster local and regional outreach efforts, educational initiatives and resource coordination. This approach recognizes that agency staff cannot and should not be managing hundreds of local projects across a state simultaneously, and it is viewed as an efficient, productive use of public funds.

State agencies are important resources for the funding and implementation of watershed projects.

Some states provide grants or other assistance to nonprofit groups to support long- and short-term local watershed protection efforts. For example, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) provides grants to support watershed coordinator positions for watershed councils across the state. OWEB also provides grants to improve waterbodies, wetlands, and fish and wildlife habitat. Local citizens propose what needs to be done in their communities and work with the watershed councils and OWEB for funding and support (*www.oregon.gov/oweb*).

The New York City Watershed Protection Program (*www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25599.html*) provides financial assistance for projects that protect the quality of source waters of the New York City water supply

Monitoring partnership in Virginia offers multiple benefits

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has partnered with the volunteer water quality monitoring community for well over a decade, providing grant funds to groups since 1998. DEQ views volunteer monitoring as a way to help widen the network of water quality stations in Virginia—providing data on water bodies not currently in DEQ's sampling rotation and providing supplemental data for waters that DEQ is monitoring. DEQ uses citizen data in a variety of ways, ranging from educating landowners to the listing/delisting of impaired waters, depending on the type of data collected and the quality assurance protocols in place. DEQ believes that the partnerships formed over the years have helped to make Virginia a model for meeting EPA's mandate for states to use "any and all available data" when developing the biennial Clean Water Act section 305(b)/303(d) Integrated Water Quality Assessment Report. In fact, DEQ estimates that its latest Integrated Report (2010) incorporates citizen volunteer monitoring data covering 3,600 stream miles. For more information, see www.deq.state.va.us/Programs/Water/WaterQualityInformationTMDLs/WaterQualityMonitoring/CitizenMonitoring.aspx.

system. Both the state and federal government provide funding grants for watershed protection projects that improve water quality while enhancing and preserving the economy and rural character of local communities. In Florida, regional water management districts support local stewardship group efforts to build technical capacity and coordinate activities.

States are discovering new and creative ways to develop flexible funding programs and management policies that support and enhance local stakeholder-driven watershed planning. For example, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources provides Watershed Planning Grants (see *www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/WatershedImprovement/WatershedPlanning/WatershedPlanningGrants.aspx*) to organizations that want to assess the problems in their watersheds and create watershed plans to address them. In Washington, a landmark 1998 law requires state agencies to adopt rules and ordinances that ensure locally developed watershed plans are implemented. In practice, such an approach means that management of state land—parks, wildlife refuges, conservation areas and so forth—must be consistent, to the maximum degree possible, with watershed partnership plans and policies. After more than a decade, this law continues to guide watershed plan development in the state (*www.ecy.wa.gov/watershed*). For the period 2009 through 2011, Washington awarded $7 million to 29 watershed planning groups to help ensure that locally adopted watershed management plans would be put into action.

States recognize the benefits of partnering with nonprofit groups and work to foster collaboration as often as possible. Wyoming's Water Commission, for example, maintains a comprehensive online directory (*wwdc.state.wy.us/wconsprog/WtrMgntConsDirectory.html*) that lists all local, state and private organizations that offer financial and technical assistance for water management and conservation projects. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation offers a comprehensive online list of all grants that might be available for local watershed protection projects (*www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/grants.htm*).

Under section 319 of the Clean Water Act, EPA allocates federal funding to each state in two categories—nonpoint source program funds and watershed project funds. Watershed project funds are the funds EPA has designated for developing and implementing watershed-based plans for impaired waters. Nonpoint source program funds are used to provide staffing and support to manage and implement the state Nonpoint Source Management Program, as well as to implement projects to identify and address nonpoint source problems and threats. After the states have received their funding, they make those funds available through contracts and grants to both public and private entities, including local governments, tribal authorities, cities, counties, schools and universities, nonprofit organizations, state agencies, federal agencies, watershed groups, for-profit groups and individuals. For information

on eligibility and grant application requirements, visit *www.epa.gov/nps/319*.

The federal government also works to connect watershed groups with funding opportunities. For example, EPA's Office of Water maintains a watershed funding website (*www.epa.gov/watershed/funding.html*) listing numerous tools, documents and databases that can help groups identify the funding options that might be available to support a variety of watershed projects. The site links to useful information from both the public and private sectors, as well as to EPA's *Catalog of Federal Funding for Watershed Protection*, a searchable database that contains information on more than 80 federal financial assistance sources that provide grants and loans to support watershed protection and planning efforts.

As the level of financial support and staffing increases, partnerships must be careful to avoid minimizing the role of volunteers. The energy and creativity of interested, committed local residents bring to a partnership vitality and drive that are difficult to replace.

Assembling diverse resources

Although having staff and funds committed solely to the activities of the partnership might represent the ideal to some, many watershed groups have adopted creative and effective ways to access resources without dedicated funding. The rapid growth of volunteer monitoring programs over the years has greatly increased available water quality data in some states. Early concerns over data quality have diminished considerably, though appropriate data quality objectives, program goals, design, training and quality assurance/quality control remain critical to success.

The most effective approach for acquiring and deploying resources seems to be the case-specific overlaying of available technical, financial and human resources that characterizes most partnerships. Several states facilitate this approach by authorizing agencies to participate in monitoring programs, restoration initiatives and local planning/management activities. Many states have created statewide watershed management frameworks designed to support and coordinate

Stretching monitoring resources in the Bluegrass State

Kentucky adopted a five-stage watershed management framework more than a decade ago, but like many states it did not have the resources to conduct comprehensive assessments in each major river basin. A nonprofit citizens group called Watershed Watch in Kentucky obtained a small amount of funding from private sources and approached state agency officials, offering to conduct a volunteer monitoring project outside the existing agency monitoring program. The volunteer monitoring program was a tremendous success: Agency staff initially noted a tenfold increase in the amount of screening information available in the Kentucky River watershed. The volunteer program has been extended into the other basins in Kentucky, and state officials have successfully engaged additional agencies, public utilities and organizations in its growing basin assessment program. Volunteers and personnel from other agencies now regularly monitor several hundred discrete sampling sites, and the statewide volunteer groups have incorporated the "Watershed Watch in Kentucky" organization as a forum for dealing with common issues across river basins.

Smile! Have fun!

the actions of local partnerships. Creativity and cooperation remain the best assets for any watershed group seeking resources.

Also refer to Part 3 (Implementing the Campaign) of *Getting in Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns* for additional information on securing funding for your stakeholder effort.

A final thought . . .

As we said at the beginning of this guide, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to stakeholder involvement. Although engaging and involving stakeholders can be a long and sometimes frustrating process, it's still the best way to conduct comprehensive watershed assessments, identify and target problems, implement remediation strategies, and institute long-term management strategies.

Under the stakeholder approach, all the heavy lifting is moved to the front end of the process so things move more quickly later on. Remember: *Go slow to go fast*. And smile! Have fun!

Section 6:

Resources

What's in Section 6?

- Stakeholder invovlement and communication resources
- Facilitation and meeting management resources
- And more!

This section lists various resources that can help make your stakeholder involvement effort more successful. EPA does not endorse any product, service or enterprise. Any mention of a product, publication, report, entity or enterprise is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by EPA or the U.S. government.

Stakeholder involvement and communication

Board Diversity: Adding Diversity to the Conservation Partnership

This two-page brochure explains ways you can engage various segments of the community and recruit new partners. Available on the National Association of Conservation Districts website at *www.nacdnet.org/resources/guides/board_diversity.pdf*.

Breakthrough Strategies for Engaging the Public: Emerging Trends in Communications and Social Science

Produced by The Biodiversity Project, this document provides an introduction to some trends in the fields of social marketing, communications and social science that could benefit those planning public education, engagement and awareness campaigns. Available for download at *www.biodiversityproject.org/docs/publicationsandtipsheets/breakthroughstrategiesforengagingthepublic.pdf*.

Building Alliances

This guidebook explains the steps for creating an alliance (network, coalition, partnership or other cooperative effort for promoting conservation) to promote conservation goals. Available from the Social Sciences Team of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service at *www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1045548.doc*.

Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place

EPA developed this guidance document to support the social and cultural aspects of community-based environmental protection approaches. The guide provides a process and a set of tools for defining the human dimension of an environmental issue. Based on social science theory and methodologies (sociology, cultural anthropology, political science), the guide and associated training modules can be used by government and communities to identify environmental issues of concern. They are available from the National Service Center for Environmental Publications at 800-490-9198 or e-mail *nscep@bps-lmit.com*. A PDF version is available at *www.epa.gov/care/library/community_culture.pdf*.

Conservation District Board Member Recruitment and Community Outreach Guide

This guide (downloadable in Microsoft Word) from the National Association of Conservation Districts provides provide tools and techniques for extending conservation programs to all within the agricultural community. There are also recommendations for building productive working relationships. Available online at *www.nacdnet.org/resources/guides*.

Getting In Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns

EPA developed this guide to offer advice on how watershed groups, local governments and others can maximize the effectiveness of public outreach campaigns to reduce nonpoint source pollution and protect the lakes, rivers, streams and coasts that we treasure. It is the third edition of a 1998 publication by the Council of State Governments, titled *Getting in Step: A Guide to Effective Outreach in Your Watershed*. A companion DVD, suitable for viewing by stakeholders, educators or others interested in generating watershed outreach campaigns, is available to reinforce the steps outlined in the guide. The disc includes four different examples of watershed outreach campaigns that use the principles presented in the guide. To download the guide, visit EPA's Nonpoint Source Outreach Toolbox at *www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox*.

Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters

This handbook is a comprehensive guide to developing and implementing watershed plans to meet water quality standards and protect water resources—from identifying problems and setting goals to selecting solutions and measuring progress. Chapter 3 of the handbook provides details on building partnerships to help achieve water quality goals. Download the handbook at *www.epa.gov/nps/watershed_handbook*.

A Handbook for Stream Enhancement and Stewardship

This basic resource can help individuals, groups, organizations, companies, communities and others plan and carry out environmentally sound, cost-effective stream corridor assessment, enhancement and stewardship programs. It provides a solid foundation for volunteers to become informed observers, advocates, and organizers of stream enhancement programs and participants in their implementation. Available through McDonald and Woodward Publishing Company at 800-233-8787, or *www.mwpubco.com/conservation.htm*.

Handbook for Wetlands Conservation and Sustainability

This 220-page publication by the Izaak Walton League of America is filled with information on wetland ecosystems and how to start a wetland stewardship program. The guide includes case studies of volunteer conservation efforts nationwide. Available through the McDonald and Woodward Publishing Company at 800-233-8787 or *www.mwpubco.com/conservation.htm*.

How to Save a River: A Handbook for Citizen Action

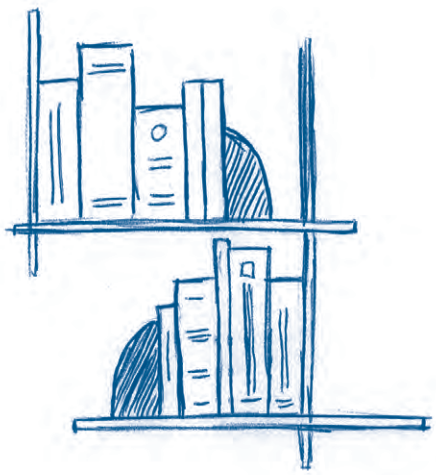
This handbook presents the wisdom gained from years of river protection campaigns across the United States. It covers the general principles of action, including getting organized, planning a campaign, building public support and putting a plan into action. Contact River Network at 800-423-6747 or *www.rivernetwork.org/marketplace*.

The Jossey-Bass Guide to Strategic Communications for Nonprofits: A Step-by-Step Guide to Working with the Media (2nd edition)

This workbook is intended for organizations and watershed campaigns that want to create successful communications strategies. It helps nonprofit organizations enhance their profiles, increase name recognition, boost fund-raising and recruit members. It provides guidance on effective media relations, as well as assistance in developing a communications strategy to create social or policy change. Available from the Jossey-Bass website, *www.josseybass.com*.

Marketing for Conservation Success Workbook

This workbook provides members of conservation partnerships with the tools needed to understand and use the marketing process, develop or improve marketing skills, and develop marketing plan. Sample worksheets from real-life case studies highlight examples of programs across the country that are using marketing techniques to communicate their conservation messages. It also describes the seven stages of a marketing plan and how to get the most out of marketing efforts. Available from the USDA NRCS Social Sciences Team at: *www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1045542.doc*.



Public Involvement in Environmental Permits

This guide provides basic information about public participation requirements and gives examples under several major permits issued by EPA's air, water and waste programs. It details what public participation activities are required under those programs, as a minimum, and suggests activities that could augment the regulatory requirements. Available from EPA at *http://www.epa.gov/osw/hazard/tsd/permit/epmt/publicguide.pdf*.

River Talk! Communicating a Watershed Message

River Network developed this manual to assist river and watershed advocates interested in encouraging key sectors of their community to effectively design a watershed-friendly future together. It guides the reader from developing a communication plan to identifying an audience to creating and promoting a message. Available from River Network, 520 Southwest 6th Avenue, Suite 1130, Portland, OR 97204, 503-241-3506, or at *www.rivernetwork.org/marketplace*.

Starting Up: A Handbook for New River and Watershed Organizations

Newly formed watershed organizations can use this tool to design an effective program. The 400-page handbook is based on the experiences of dozens of leaders in the watershed conservation movement. It includes information on choosing a name, developing a mission statement, creating a budget and more. Available from River Network, 520 Southwest 6th Avenue, Suite 1130, Portland, OR 97204, 503-241-3506, or at *www.rivernetwork.org/marketplace*.

Top Ten Watershed Lessons Learned

http://water.epa.gov/type/watersheds/outreach/lessons_index.cfm
EPA's Office of Water developed this valuable website. Drawn from the experiences of more than 100 watershed practitioners and those who support them, the website provides insight into important lessons learned and details about what works and what doesn't.

Tips for Working with Local Media

This one-page handout from the National Association of Conservation Districts provides tips for honing messages and building and maintaining positive relationships with local media outlets. Available at *www.nacdnet.org/resources/guides/Tips_for_Working_with_local_media.pdf*

A User's Guide to Watershed Planning in Maryland

This guide presents a watershed planning framework for Maryland communities, offers a compilation of planning resources in one place, integrates regulatory drivers, and presents the methods necessary for completing a local watershed plan. Available online from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources at *http://dnr.maryland.gov/watersheds/pubs/userguide.html*

Wetland and Watersheds: Six Case Studies

This 1999 report includes case studies from local governments in a variety of natural environments. The case studies provide ideas for restoration, funding, building partnerships and working with regulatory agencies. Available from the International City/Council Management Association , 777 North Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002, 800-745-8780, or visit the bookstore on the Association's website at *www.icma.org*.

Facilitation and meeting management

Interaction Institute for Social Change

www.interactioninstitute.org

The Interaction Institute for Social Change (IISC) is a nonprofit organization that provides consulting services that center around network building, consulting, facilitation and leadership development for networks and coalitions, nonprofit organizations of all sizes, public-sector agencies, schools and school systems, and foundations. IISC also conducts facilitation training workshops.

International Association of Facilitators

www.iaf-world.org

The International Association of Facilitators is an organization with more than 1,500 members. It encourages and supports the formation of local groups of facilitators to network and provide professional development opportunities for members. The website provides links to a host of facilitation resources, as well as a searchable database to find professional facilitators in your area.

Facilitation Resources, Volume 1: Understanding Facilitation

Developed by several University of Minnesota professors, this publication describes what facilitation is, including its stages and tasks. It describes 10 principles of effective facilitation and includes a tool for evaluating your facilitation skills. It's the first in a series of eight volumes on enhancing volunteers' group facilitation techniques. Available from the University of Minnesota Extension Store at *https://shop-secure.extension.umn.edu/Default.aspx*.

Facilitation Skills: The Art of Group Facilitation

Learn presence and presentation skills, as well as skills for listening, communicating, conducting meetings and group decision-making, through this free online resource from the University of Wisconsin–Extension. Available at *http://wateroutreach.uwex.edu/education/Facilitation.cfm*

Other resources and websites

Community Tool Box: Stakeholder Analysis

www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoolbox/index_comtoolbox.htm

This resource from the National Park Service provides tools and techniques for better public participation in any kind of watershed or environmental restoration process. It provides tips on decision-making methods, facilitation (e.g., active listening, brainstorming, ice breakers), building partnerships and task forces, working with volunteers, conducting outreach, performing stakeholder analyses, and more.

The Biodiversity Project

www.biodiversityproject.org

The Biodiversity Project is a nonprofit environmental communications group that designs and implements environmental outreach campaigns. A key part of its work is assisting and training other environmental and conservation organizations nationwide with strategic communications skills and resources. The website contains useful information on strategic communications planning, public opinion research, communications workshops, publications and more.

EPA Office of Water's River Corridors and Wetlands Restoration

www.epa.gov/wetlands/restore

Resources and information on the benefits of a restoration project are available on this website. The site also describes different watershed improvement programs across the nation that are part of EPA's Five Star Restoration Grant Program to restore wetlands and streams.

Hawaii Association of Watershed Partnerships

www.hawp.org

The Hawaii Association of Watershed Partnerships (HAWP) is composed of nine Watershed Partnerships on six islands. Watershed Partnerships are grant-based, voluntary alliances of public and private landowners and other partners working collaboratively to protect forested watersheds for water recharge, conservation and other ecosystem services.

Izaak Walton League of America

www.iwla.org

Save Our Streams (SOS) is a national watershed education and outreach program run by the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) since 1969. The website offers helpful informational tools for an effective stream improvement project. IWLA also runs the Project Watershed program, an environmental education and community outreach program that engages central New York high school, middle school, and college students, and adult volunteers, in monitoring water quality and conserving local streams. Additional programs run by IWLA include the Clean Boats Campaign and Protect Our Wetlands program. The website provides publications, fact sheets, videos and handbooks on stream restoration, wetland ecology and monitoring, and stream monitoring.

Klamath Watershed Partnership

www.klamathpartnership.org

The Partnership is a community-based organization that provides watershed education and restoration in the Upper Klamath Basin in Oregon. It is involved in a wide range of large and small voluntary restoration projects throughout the river basin. More than 15 federal, tribal, state, local and nonprofit organizations are partners.

Potomac Watershed Partnership

http://potomacpartnership.org

The Potomac Watershed Partnership (PWP) is a collaborative effort among federal, state, and local partners to restore the health of the land and waters of the Potomac River Basin, thereby enhancing the quality of life and overall health of the Chesapeake Bay. The Partnership organizes conferences, workshops and outdoor adventures, as well as on-the-ground restoration and improvement projects.

River Network

www.rivernetwork.org

River Network is dedicated to supporting river and watershed advocates. The River Network website provides online resources and information on funding opportunities and fund-raising ideas. It also contains a comprehensive resource library with links to manuals, publications, web pages, articles, videos, presentations and more.

Watershed Academy

www.epa.gov/watershedacademy

EPA's Office of Water developed this website as a resource for online and classroom training, webcasts and watershed publications. The site contains more than 50 training modules on topics such as watershed science, best management practices, effective communications, monitoring, climate change, and watershed planning and management. The site also provides access to monthly, live webcasts conducted by expert instructors on a range of watershed topics, including low-impact development, the Clean Water Act, watershed protection and planning, and nutrient management. All webcasts are archived on the site for viewing/listening 24 hours a day.

The Watershed Management Council

www.watershed.org

The Watershed Management Council is a nonprofit organization whose members represent a broad range of watershed management interests and disciplines. The organization provides a forum for the integration of knowledge from a wide array of technical disciplines, identifies research needs and priorities, provides training, promotes policies and legislation relating to watershed management, assists in information exchange and education, and fosters networking among watershed organizations.

The Western Governors' Association

www.westgov.org

The Western Governors' Association consists of governors from western states who identify and address key environmental and public issues. The Western Governors' Association works with stakeholders to advance water supply and water management strategies for a sustainable future. The website outlines current initiatives and provides access to the Association's many publications.

Appendix:

Building Blocks of Outreach

EPA's *Getting in Step: a Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns*, a companion document to this guide, provides information on developing and executing outreach programs with the goal of changing behaviors to protect water quality. To download an electronic copy of the guide, visit *www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox* and select "Getting In Step Outreach Series."

Throughout this stakeholder guide we have provided information about when outreach is needed during stakeholder group development, all the way through watershed plan development and implementation. Refer to the companion outreach guide for greater detail on how to conduct effective outreach as part of your stakeholder involvement effort. The guide provides detailed information on each of the following six steps of outreach:

1. Define the driving forces, goals and objectives.
2. Identify and analyze the target audience.
3. Create the message.
4. Package the message.
5. Distribute the message.
6. Evaluate the outreach campaign.

Within each step you must gather information to be able to effectively target your messages to the right audiences. Each step more or less builds on the previous step, so it's important to address each one. Too often, outreach efforts start in the middle of the process and important steps—identifying measurable objectives or defining target audiences, for example—are ignored. Such an unfocused approach is ineffective and wastes resources. Following is a brief summary of each step presented in the companion outreach guide as it relates to stakeholder involvement.

Objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely.

Step 1: Define the driving forces, goals and objectives

Your goals and objectives will reinforce the overall goals for the watershed effort because your goals are related to the forces that are driving the need for your program. For example, if one of your goals is to restore the water quality of Cane Creek, one of your outreach objectives might be to educate farmers about the benefits of fencing off their streams to livestock. Another could be to make the landowners living adjacent to the stream aware of failing septic systems and educate them about a cost-share program available through the health department.

Your outreach objectives should be SMART—specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely. You will probably develop several objectives for each issue you're trying to tackle. Keep the desired outcome in mind when forming your objectives. Do you want to create awareness, provide information, or encourage action among your target audience? It's very important to make your objectives as specific as possible and to include a time element as well as a result. This approach will make it easier to identify specific tasks for achieving the objective and will enable you to evaluate whether you've achieved the objective.

Target your audience—narrowly identify the groups of people you want to reach with your message.

Step 2: Identify and analyze the target audience

Your target audience is the group of people you want to reach with your message. Keep in mind that your stakeholder group is only one target audience; you will target other groups in the community as well, such as elected officials, homeowners, farmers, volunteers and business owners. Raising general awareness of the value and function of a water resource might include a very broad target audience like watershed residents. Define your target audience as the narrowest segment possible that still retains the characteristics of the audience. If your audience is too broad, chances are you won't be able to develop a message that engages and resonates with those you are targeting. Be creative in defining and developing perspectives on target audiences and in finding out what makes them tick. This is where your stakeholders will be invaluable. Use them to help gather information needed to segment your audiences into manageable, reachable parts.

One you've identified your target audiences, you need to begin to think of them as your customers. You want to sell your customers a product (e.g., environmental awareness, membership in an organization, participation in a stream restoration project, or some voluntary behavior change), so you need to find out what will make your customers buy the product. The kind of information needed to characterize and assess the target audiences might include:

- What is the demographic makeup of the audience?
- How does the audience receive its information?
- What is the knowledge base of the audience regarding the issues involved?
- What is the perception/attitude of the audience on those issues?

The tools provided in ☞Section 3 on researching potential stakeholders can help you get the answers to these questions. In addition, Step 2 of *Getting in Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns* provides detailed information on how to research audiences and uncover barriers to behavior change.

Step 3: Create the message

After gathering information on the target audience, you are ready to craft a message that will engage them and help achieve your objectives. To be effective, messages must be understood by the intended audience and appeal to them on their own terms. The message should be specific and tied directly to something your target audience values. Remember that these are your customers, and you want them to buy your product! These are some benefits you might want to include in your message:

- Money savings
- Time savings
- Convenience
- Free of charge
- Health improvements
- Efficiency
- Drinking water quality
- Stewardship
- Recreation opportunities
- Habitat protection
- Satisfaction of doing the right thing

Effective messages should also state specific actions required to achieve the desired results. Instructions should be clear, nontechnical and understandable to the audience. Providing a means for the target audience to become more involved or receive additional information through a toll-free telephone number, Internet site or other means always helps. Focus on making everything—the behavior change requested, the involvement needed, and the support required—"user-friendly."

Georgia surveys elected officials to focus its coastal outreach efforts

The Georgia Coastal Management Program (GCMP) has been faced with the challenge of educating a rapidly growing public about the natural resources on which its sought-after quality of life is based. Because most land use decisions are made at the local level, much attention has been focused on local government and elected officials.

To develop a personal relationship with more than 80 local government officials, staff from the GCMP conducted face-to-face surveys with them. "We asked them what the most important natural resource issues were in their communities and how they thought the Coastal Management Program should focus its efforts." The results showed that 75 percent of local government officials recognized the importance of protecting groundwater resources from saltwater intrusion and contamination, but only 25 percent of the officials mentioned nonpoint source pollution as a natural resource issue for their communities. "We know that nonpoint source pollution is a widespread problem in our coastal area, and the fact that the elected officials are not aware of it shows us where to concentrate our outreach efforts."

—Beth Turner, Georgia Coastal Management Program

Develop a message with benefits that will attract your target audience, and package it effectively.

The stakeholder group will be a valuable resource in verifying that the messages are appropriate for the target audience and will be understandable to them.

Step 4: Package the message

You've defined your objectives, assessed the target audience, crafted messages and identified potential outreach strategies. Now it's time to determine the best format for communicating the messages to the target audience. In some cases the format will define the distribution mechanism (newspaper articles, radio spots, public events). When choosing alternative formats, consider the following:

- Will the format work with the particular target audience?
- Will the target audience understand it?
- Does it accomplish the objective?
- How will the target audience access and use the information?
- Is it something they will hear about once or will there be multiple opportunities?
- Can it be organized in-house, with existing resources?
- How much will it cost, and who will pay for it?

If your goal is to communicate a specific nugget of information, repeat it, repeat it, repeat it! The formula for success in the marketing world is

Reach x frequency = results

where reach is how many people are exposed to the message and frequency is the number of times they hear or see it.

There are a variety of ways of communicating with stakeholders or other interested persons. Look for format ideas by searching through EPA's Nonpoint Source Outreach Toolbox (*www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox*), which contains a variety of already-developed outreach materials from all over the country to help you get started on developing an effective and targeted outreach campaign. It contains more than 700 viewable or audible TV, radio and print ads and other outreach products to increase awareness or change behaviors.

Combining different formats can reinforce your message.

Print. By far the most popular format is print. Printed materials include fact sheets, brochures, flyers, magazine and newspaper articles and inserts, booklets, posters, bus placards, billboards and doorknob hangers. They can be easily created, and the target audience can refer to them again and again.

Media and advertising. Working with the professional media—newspapers, television, magazines and radio—will help to reach target audiences. Opportunities to place your message in the media

include informational news stories, people features, issue analyses, public service announcements, interview programs, call-in shows, editorial columns and feature items related to sports, recreation, or outdoor living. With the incredible growth and maturation of the Internet and the ease-of-use, low cost and potential reach of Web 2.0 technologies, consider using nontraditional media to develop your messages. Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, podcasts, and other online resources can be both cost-effective and timely.

Events. Events like demonstration site tours, watershed festivals or stream cleanups can be the most energizing formats targeted at awareness, education or direct action. An event is an opportunity to present your message and also help to meet other goals and objectives of your watershed planning effort. In urban areas, where knowing your neighbors and other members of your community is the exception rather than the rule, community events can help to strengthen the fabric of the community by creating and enhancing community relationships, building trust and improving the relationships between government agencies and the public. And, of course, they can be lots of fun!

Step 5: Distribute the message

Once you've developed the products and activities for getting your message out, theory meets reality. What you do and how you deliver your message determine whether your audience is attracted and stays involved. Often the people who are most effective at successfully delivering programs are teachers or other education professionals. Natural resource professionals should consider asking education partners for help when it's time to distribute outreach messages.

Figuring out ahead of time how you will promote your messages can affect the development and design of the products and activities. Common distribution mechanisms include direct mail, door-to-door contact, phone calls, the use of targeted businesses, presentations, handouts at events, the use of media outlets, e-mail distribution, and posting your message in public places. Internet technologies have become a powerful means of distribution. The options available—from social networking sites to website ads to text message campaigns—are endless.

One of the disadvantages of using the Internet to get your message out is the fact that Internet technologies are evolving at a dizzying rate and being replaced with something newer and better. What is popular today might not be popular in five years, so choose your methods carefully and stay up-to-date with the latest tools and technologies. Remember, too, that a Web-based approach is geared to a certain target audience—one that is "plugged in." If your research shows that your audience doesn't get information on watershed issues online, Internet formats should not be your primary or exclusive choice.

Online tool generates outreach materials

The Source Water Collaborative (SWC), a group of federal, state and local partners working to protect America's drinking water, recently released a toolkit called "Your Water. Your Decision." Using this interactive, online toolkit, you can create a customized drinking water outreach guide targeted at your local policymakers. In just a few minutes, the tool will generate a printable document that emphasizes your local or regional drinking water issues, lists available local and state resources, and includes concrete steps that local officials can take to protect source water. To get started, see www.yourwateryourdecision.org.

Tip:

Piggybacking your efforts by including your outreach information in existing publications or presenting your information at standing meetings of important target audiences is both efficient and effective.

Remember that you don't always have to distribute the message yourself. Depending on where you are in your outreach efforts, your stakeholders can also serve as a distribution vehicle for your invitation to get involved.

If your target audience subscribes to an existing periodical, piggybacking your message onto that publication might be effective. It will certainly save you the trouble of dealing with mailing lists, postage costs or news media releases. It will also increase the likelihood that your message will actually be read by members of the target audience because they are already familiar with the publication.

Feedback is crucial to improvement of your outreach program.

Step 6: Evaluate the outreach campaign

Evaluation provides a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement of your outreach efforts. Many people don't think about how they will evaluate the success of their outreach program until after it has been implemented. Building in an evaluation component from the beginning will ensure that at least some accurate feedback on the impact of the outreach program will be generated.

Any robust outreach program evaluation should include the following three types of evaluation:

- Process evaluation: Includes indicators related to the execution of the outreach program itself (activity indicators). (For example, what effect did the effort have on the process? Did people attend the meetings? Did the message get to the media?)
- Impact evaluation: Includes indicators related to achievement of the goals/objectives of the program. These could be social indicators (behavior-based) or environmental indicators. (For example, did the audience adopt the new behavior? Have nutrient levels decreased as a result of the behavior change?)
- Context evaluation: Includes indicators related to how the project functions in the community as a whole, how the community perceives the project, and the economic and political ramifications of the project. Context indicators can provide some background and perspective on why certain approaches appear to be working well while others are not. (For example, was the effort well received by the public?)

Although impact evaluation might be the hardest type of evaluation to conduct, it is perhaps the most important of the three. In addition to tracking performance measures such as increased awareness, knowledge of an issue, changes in perceptions or behavior, repeat participation in a targeted activity, or goal-oriented measures of water quality improvements, impact evaluations can also help to identify and define any unintended outcomes that might result from an outreach program so the approach can be revised.

Available time and resources will determine the degree to which you evaluate your outreach program. At a minimum, you should review the outreach plan with the staff or watershed team to determine whether your objectives were attained or supported, the target audience was reached, and so forth. Outreach programs ideally feature pre- and post-tests of randomly selected people to measure what knowledge or behaviors existed before the program was implemented and after it ended. This approach is used mainly for large-scale, high-level efforts because of the resources involved.

Your stakeholders can assist in evaluating your outreach efforts by providing feedback from their constituents. You should track the following: What was the response rate on any outreach materials distributed? Was the message understood? What was the response to the information?

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