

Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtable “Stakeholder Involvement and Facilitation”

January 25, 2011

9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Texas AgriLife Research & Extension Center at Temple

SUMMARY NOTES

9:30 – 9:45 a.m. Welcome & Introductions [Kevin Wagner, TWRI]

Roundtable purpose:

- How do we engage stakeholders and get them involved in meaningful decision making?
- How do we get participation and how do we maintain that participation in the long haul?
- Hear the experiences of others around the state

Purpose of the Roundtable is to encourage dialogue – hear issues from others – hear what is working and what is not working in your watersheds.

Introduction of participants – click [here](#) for participant list

9:45 – 10:45 a.m. [Decision Support System for Cypress Creek](#) [Jason Pinchback & Adrian Vogl, River Systems Institute at Texas State University-San Marcos]

- *Developing a DSS and how local stakeholders can be involved in manipulating data to make decisions on BMPs*

Jason Pinchback:

Program phase 1 – January 2009 to August 2010 – setting the stage for phase 2 to build a watershed protection plan

Cypress Creek Watershed: south central Texas – flows down to the Blanco River which hits the San Marcos River. Creek itself is around 15 miles long, just under 4,000 acres (the entire watershed) – the lower 6 miles of the Creek is referred to as the wet portion and the upper 9 miles are referred to as the dry portion (Jacobs Well –the headwaters of Cypress Creek)

Team Members: Vanessa Lavender, Adrian Vogl, Andrew Samson

Dilemma with WPP: We have been in conversations with the community at a number of levels for many years and essentially the dilemma the community was facing is – what do we do as we build on this community – relatively urbanizing (still rural in nature) watershed.

- As we see growth – what do we want our quality of life to be like? How do we want our stream to behave? And how is this going to be impacting our daily lives as well as economics?
- How develop and implement a vision around a healthy stream?

Developed partnerships with community leaders, organizations, etc. to try to create a concerted effort in developing a watershed protection plan

What we are trying to do with the Decision Support System is provide an unbiased tool – a natural resource witness – for the community to utilize to understand on watershed basis how varying land uses will be impacting the stream

Adrian Vogl:

Cypress Creek Decision Support System: developed to help guide watershed management decisions in the Cypress Creek Watershed; to develop a watershed simulation model that can simulate adequately water quantity and quality in the creek; and develop scenarios and analyze impact of these scenarios on water quantity and quality (input from stakeholders that would be needed [outputs] to assist in making management decisions

Recruited a technical subcommittee to provide input on Decision Support System (conceptual framework – to make sure adequately addressing issues in watershed and other factors they may want to see incorporated).

Stakeholders identified their goals they wanted to see of DSS:

- Evaluate location and density of development

- Identify sensitive areas (high potential loading, high recharge potential)
- Evaluate structural BMPs
 - Retention ponds, location & size
 - Constructed wetlands/vegetative buffer strips
 - Rainwater harvesting
- Evaluate NPS load reductions per dollar spent
- Inform WPP Elements A through C

One of the only proactive projects that TCEQ has funded (impending impairment)

Took input from stakeholders – did a sweep of available models – and found that USDA-ARS (Tucson, Ariz.) model:

- Automated Geospatial Watershed Assessment Tool (AGWA) – automates the parameterization and output evaluation of several commonly used hydrologic models. Extension to ArcGIS – uses commonly available input data - incorporated two models – KINEROS and SWAT

Cypress Creek DSS - added a function to automatically input the spring flow in Jacob’s Well (user can alter spring flow and examine differences and hydrology downstream under different scenarios.

View Adrian’s [presentation](#) for model results or visit the Watershed Planning website to [hear](#) her presentation.

10:45 – 11:00 a.m. Networking Break

11:00 – 12:00 p.m. Panel Discussion: Involving stakeholders in meaningful decision making

- *Facilitator:* Diane Boellstorff, Texas AgriLife Extension Service
- *Panelists:* **Ward Ling**, Texas AgriLife Extension Service (Geronimo Creek Watershed);
Jody Carton, Trinity Basin Conservation Foundation (Trinity River Basin);
Rachel Powers, Houston-Galveston Area Council (Bacteria Implementation Group)

How do you get people to continue to be involved in the process – how do you get people to the table who are able to make decisions or influence decision makers?

Ward Ling:

- With TCEQ TMDL team for about 10 years - TMDL vs. WPP development – each has appropriate use if used correctly.
- Personally feels like TMDLs are appropriate for watersheds that have a large amount of point source discharges to them; WPP really more suited for those areas that have few of those.
- TMDL and WPP development relies on stakeholder input and involvement
- Geronimo – little over a year; in the middle of drafting sections of the WPP; hope to get out to public in early spring

Did you have the right stakeholders at the table/How did you get the right stakeholders to the table?

- Had pre meetings before public meetings – met with the folks that would know the people on the ground within the watershed
- Met with the media – news stations, radio, newspapers – kept contacts active through phone calls and emails and one-on-one communication as we moved through the project
- Relied upon the local people that lived there – that you can trust – to get you to the right people that would be active in the plan
- Be prepared to handle stakeholders who come in at the “11th Hour” and make suggestions or demands that would completely change the project – do a broad outreach to prevent this

How did your group develop ground rules?

- Fairly extensive ground rules that outline if we get to a contentious issue – we can go to a vote by the steering committee members (has not happened yet in any of the meetings)
- Steering committee has an option to form a chairperson

Lessons Learned:

- New ways of reaching stakeholders, especially in rural areas - Don’t always rely on e-mail or internet. Rural areas may not have access, or prefer to get a letter in the mail (call a week or two in advance)
- Look for other ways to reach folks

Jody Carton:

- Worked at Appalachian Trail Conservancy for about 10 years; built a volunteer infrastructure
- TBCF is a landowner-led grassroots non-profit; started off as a wildlife coop in the middle basin (focused on white-tailed deer)
- Focused on education and outreach, landowner stewardship, information clearinghouse

- Trinity River Basin provides water resources for about ½ the population of Texas (about 45%)
- 11.5 million acres; 7-9 million people – seeing changes in land-use trends
- Are not in the middle of a WPP process; grassroots led, already motivated, get a head of the curve and work to engage more people to take action on their own properties

Did you have the right stakeholders at the table/How did you get the right stakeholders to the table?

- Speaking from the other side – representing a group of motivated people – it’s their job to go and find more people
- Boils down to, it’s personal, it’s one-on-one
- If you can’t make and sustain connection – you won’t make a difference long term
- Which process will net you the end result you are looking for – process driven systems tend to keep folks in the process

How did your group develop ground rules?

- Our ground rules are guided by the organizations framework, our strategic plan, our vision for working together
- Target specific constituencies – make a sense of personal connection – so stakeholders have a vested interest in the outcome

Lessons Learned:

- Prioritize more to where you can grow and support grass roots – especially if you have preexisting elements to build on – when directing grant program

Rachel Powers:

- Area about the size of Delaware and Houston is a part of it (10 counties, 50 cities, 120,000 OSSF)
- Have 100s of actively involved stakeholders (150 to 200 meetings in the past two years)
- 80% of streams in area are considered impaired for bacteria
- Bacterial Implementation Group (BIG) – came into the process after stakeholder involvement had started for a couple of the TMDL projects

Did you have the right stakeholders at the table/How did you get the right stakeholders to the table?

- A lot of stakeholders represented (if not active) in the selection process
- Anyone could participate actively on the committee
- Keep stakeholders updated so they can make suggestions and remained involved throughout the entire process and avoid “11th and 12th hour” suggestions
- Inserted opportunities during development of plan to obtain public input

How did your group develop ground rules?

- Have about four pages of ground rules; do not have a chair

Lessons Learned:

- We had a 3-month public comment period towards the end of the process (did not have initially) – we have received two comments so far

12:00 – 12:30 p.m. Catered working lunch (or bring your own) [RSVP required]

12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Panel Discussion: Re-engaging Stakeholders in Implementation and Adaptive Management and Reporting Success

- *Facilitator:* Roger Miranda, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- *Panelists:* **Jaime Flores**, TWRI (Arroyo Colorado);
Debbie Magin, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (Plum Creek);
Lucas Gregory, TWRI (Pecos River, Buck Creek)

Jaime Flores:

- Already had funding for Watershed Coordinator from a grant. Stakeholders were already informed and were able to get involved immediately
- Cities were eager to get involved to get WPP produced
- 319 renewed to keep to project going
- Year away from getting Tax Exempt Status, make it easier to request money and raise local funds
- Task Force would fund partnership through the ACC and will provide \$10,000 a year as seed money to keep partnership going
- Engage stakeholders individually to communicate since there are many who are not active in meetings and may fall to the wayside

Lucas Gregory:

- Property rights are a main concern for people dealing with stakeholders

- Board of Directors in the Pecos River, Buck Creek area is now defunct due to lack of popularity
- Consequently, that is no longer a source of funding for the project
- Not an urbanized watershed, no river authority
- Landowners take most initiative so it is very important to work with them and gain their trust
- Stakeholders are sometimes difficult to deal with, but it is important to stay non-confrontational

Debbie Magin:

- Plum Creek is part of the San Marcos Tributary and was assessed in 1998-2005 for bacteria content
- Plum Creek was contracted with AgriLife Extension to develop a WPP and is now accepted by EPA
- Currently developing inter-local agreements to shift funding from AgriLife to stakeholders
- Develop Watershed Coordinator position to keep the WPP local and keep community involved
- Submit 319 grant to provide funding for Watershed Coordinator position

1:30 – 2:00 p.m. Stakeholder Facilitation and Conflict Management [Steven Mikulencak, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Coastal Watershed Program]

- Alternative Dispute Resolution: Conventional vs. Alternative. The conventional approach is a win/lose situation with a fixed pie. Alternative approaches provide joint gains and both sides contribute to making the pie bigger.
- Negotiation concepts: Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement
- 5 Stages to creating Mutual Gains: Assess and report conflict; be clear about the process when setting rules and avoid positional decision making, keeping in mind ethical issues; maximize joint-gains rather than compromise “gain-gain”; try to keep outcomes fair, efficient, wise, and stable;

2:00 – 2:15 p.m. Networking Break

2:15 – 2:45 p.m. Watershed Action Planning (WAP) Process [Kerry Niemann, TCEQ; Arthur Talley, TCEQ]

- Status update
- Why do we need something new? Some states and the EPA were sued in the 1990s for not implementing rules and regulations
- Watershed Action Planning—better coordinate and prioritize water quality planning activities
- State water quality programs need stakeholder participation to have input into developing and implementing water quality planning strategies
- Use Water Quality Standards Review to avoid lawsuits
- By using the WAP Database, groups are able to list strategies to address impairments and communicate to the public
- Prepare WAP discussions for the public to keep them informed

2:45 – 3:15 p.m. Community-Based Planning [Mel Vargas, Parsons Water & Infrastructure Inc.]

- Leon River Watershed in the Brazos River Basin and cuts through 3 counties in Central Texas
- Topics for Consideration:
 - 1) How do you achieve acceptance that information used on the best available science, data, and evaluation methods?
 - 2) What hurdles are stakeholders most concerned about at the outset of water quality improvement efforts?
 - 3) How can you get feedback during the course of the project on whether the stakeholders are supportive of the process?

3:15 – 3:30 p.m. Wrap-Up [Kevin Wagner, TWRI]

- Texas Watershed Steward Program [Nikki Dictson]
- TWS Program Goals:
 - 1) Increase citizen awareness and knowledge about watersheds
 - 2) Inspire individuals to take leadership roles involving community water issues
 - 3) Enhance stakeholder involvement in WPP/TMDL
- Updates on the Texas Watershed Planning project
 - Next Texas Watershed Planning Short Course – November 14-18, 2011
 - New website as a resource (<http://watershedplanning.tamu.edu/>)
- Next meeting (July 2011)