

Maintain Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team
Local Engagement Workgroup Conference Call
March 31st, 2014
9 AM – 11 AM

Participants:

Donnelle Keech (The Nature Conservancy), Wink Hastings (National Park Service), Jason Dubow (Maryland Department of Planning), Renee Thompson (U.S. Geological Survey), Daniel Rosen (Maryland Department of Planning), Dan Murphy (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service), Jamie Baxter (Chesapeake Bay Trust), Kevin Case (Land Trust Alliance), Tuana Phillips (Chesapeake Research Consortium), Bevin Buchheister (Chesapeake Bay Commission)

Purpose of meeting: To generate an initial set of ideas about what the Local Engagement Workgroup will do, and present these ideas at the next Maintain Healthy Watersheds Goal Team meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

Review of Goal Team Goals and Outcomes, Workgroup Description

Donnelle Keech provided some background on the Maintain Healthy Watersheds Goal Team and new Local Engagement Workgroup.

- The Healthy Watersheds Goal Team has developed goals and outcomes that will be included in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement:
 - Consensus overarching Goal: Sustain state-identified healthy waters and watersheds, recognized for their high quality and/or high ecological value.
 - Consensus overarching Outcome: 100% of state-identified currently healthy waters and watersheds remain healthy.

For links to maps of State-identified watersheds:

- (Chesapeake Stat website)
http://stat.chesapeakebay.net/?q=node/131&quicktabs_21=0
- (Map of healthy watersheds and protected lands)
http://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel_files/21249/healthy_watersheds_11_25_13.pdf
- The Local Engagement Workgroup will use the Maintain Healthy Watershed Goal Team's roles as aggregators, supporters, and conveners to **build capacity for local actors** and help further healthy watershed and water protection at the local level.
For a link to the Workgroup's Vision document:
 - http://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel_files/21634/localengagementworkgroup_description_final_2.pdf

Other discussion points:

- We should consider past local engagement efforts led by other Goal Teams and Bay Program groups, and collaborate with existing efforts. In addition, with the new EPA

GIT Competitive pool funds and reorganization of the Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting (STAR) group, there is a lot of potential for collaboration on local engagement strategies in the future.

Overview and Discussion of the Situation We Seek to Change

If we are trying to act strategically, it is important to have a mutual understanding of why we are doing what we are doing. That can be grounded in the understanding of the situation we seek to change. What is our hypothesis of the world as we know it? How can we change that?

Donnelle read the following list of initial assumptions:

- Healthy watersheds provide various local and Bay water quality benefits.
- Cumulative impact of land use change is the primary threat to “healthy watersheds.”
- Land use change is controlled to a significant degree by local decisions and local factors.
- The status quo is loss of healthy watersheds.
- Change in locally-driven land use trends will be required to maintain healthy watersheds, and “local engagement” is the proposed intervention.

Workgroup members were given the opportunity to react to and discuss these assumptions. Their comments are summarized below:

- The relationship between land use change and water quality or stream health is more complicated than we think.
For instance, the following studies suggest that not all streams are similarly affected by agricultural or residential development:
 - From USGS, *The Quality of Our Nation's Waters Ecological Health in the Nation's Streams, 1993-2005*
<http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1391/>
 - From TNC, *Conservation Status of Fish, Wildlife, and Natural Habitats in the Northeast Landscape: Implementation of the Northeast Monitoring Network*
<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/massachusetts/state-of-nature-report.pdf>
 - From TNC, *Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Conservation in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Region*
<http://www.cakex.org/sites/default/files/documents/TerrestrialResilience020112.pdf>

Perhaps a more appropriate assumption would be that unsustainable development is the primary threat to healthy watersheds. Unsustainable development, or the conversion of high value farm and forested land to development, can increase nonpoint source pollution and compromise the condition of riparian corridors.

- Local actors may vary. Actors include governments, businesses, energy developers, land trusts, etc.

- Land use change is controlled to a significant degree by local decisions. Some decisions almost always reside at the local level, e.g.: mining laws, zoning regulations, etc. However, state decisions can affect land use change as well.
- Local jurisdictions vary in size throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.
- It was suggested that it may be more helpful for the Healthy Watershed Goal Implementation Team to further explore this issue related to the “situation we seek to change” specifically related to land use, and provide guidance to the workgroup.

Local Engagement as a Strategy

What do we mean by local engagement? Do we all mean the same thing?

- The following Chinese Proverb can serve as a guide: *Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.* There is a lack of basic understanding of what a watershed is, how it works, or how to fix it. Local engagement is people actively working or improving the land, and becoming stewards.
- There is a broad spectrum of activities that we could put into the “local engagement” category. While there are many levers at state and federal levels, at the end of the day the implementation of those larger guidelines and decisions that are made on a regular basis are addressed at the local level. Efforts throughout the region have been at the higher levels of government. Building the capacity of local nonprofit sector to help local government build their capacity is essential.
- This is a complex question. Local engagement is getting the boots on the ground to move. That is, moving people to action. One question that needs to be asked is: who is doing the engaging? Depending on the situation, that question elicits a different response. Local governments could be doing the engaging with watershed groups, or vice versa. Who are the actors and the actee (engager or engage)?
- Local engagement is engaging with local politicians at the city and county level. It is also making local citizen groups aware of the available tools that may be helpful. Many local politicians are advised by “expert” developers. Meanwhile, little local groups are trying their best to combat development. Local engagement is putting all of these pieces together.

What do we know about what works and doesn't work?

What works:

- Meeting people where they are physically and mentally. A big factor in building local capacity is getting everyone at a common understanding of issues and how to address issues effectively.
- Using what people are interested in as an entry. It is important to recognize that maintaining healthy watersheds is not everybody's priority. Yet, it is often possible to address an issue and, at the same time, accomplish or support a different objective. Case in point, Mercersburg, PA, started a healthy eating program to counter childhood obesity and diabetes, and developed a trails concept plan for healthy exercise. They carried that

one step further through a NFWF technical assistance grant to develop a watershed plan for the creek that flows through town and help restore the environmental health of the area.

What doesn't work:

- When local officials lack “fire in their bellies,” which non-profits can provide.

Other Discussion Points:

- Land Trusts across the country are realizing that the future of voluntary land conservation depends on the ability to connect with existing communities and build a stewardship ethic with citizens. As a result, Land Trusts are reaching out to previously untapped groups, prompting a shift towards what is known as “Community Conservation.”
 - In recent months, Land Trust Alliance (LTA) launched a national program for land trusts to integrate more community conservation into what they do, i.e. conservation-related activities that build support and understanding within communities.
- It is important to build support for communities and programs that can influence politicians.
 - The Chesapeake Bay Program's Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) is starting an initiative to help local officials understand that communities value clean water and healthy watersheds.
 - In Mattawoman Creek, Charles County, a community was able to protect vital headwaters habitat for trout partly because of an active local official. This success story could be a good Case Study for the Workgroup.
- We can use a hierarchical strategy to understand barriers and determine who would benefit most from capacity building. This would require a community assessment: are efforts top-down, or bottom-up? In places where there are no local official leaders active in the effort, building capacity for community leaders is critical. On the other hand, areas with active local officials would benefit most from tools that help citizens, for example, understand environmental efforts and support the need to increase taxes. The MD storm water tax can be an example of this.
- There is also an educational component needed to address split communities.
- Who are the leaders in a community? There are all sorts of leaders. A good constituency is needed to influence political leaders and policy.

What is the role of the Chesapeake Bay Program and Local Engagement Workgroup?

- Having access to the science from the Bay Program can be helpful for those trying to make a difference.
 - Questions we should consider: What kind of science? Does it need to be reformatted for the audience? Is this something the Chesapeake Bay Program's Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting (STAR) group could help us with? How can we ensure that local actors know such information exists as well as how to access it?
- Linking expertise with locals is helpful as well. We can ensure that local actors have tools and access to experts and research.

- The Chesapeake Network for Education of Municipal Officials (NEMO) effort developed a number of pilot projects and tools for communities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and coastal bays.

For more information:

http://archive.chesapeakebay.net/pubs/calendar/IC_07-19-07_Handout_2_8294.pdf

What is missing/needed on the ground?

- Many people lack a basic understanding of what watersheds are, whether they live in a healthy watershed, etc.
- The Chesapeake Bay Program does a very good job of tracking implementation. However, the Bay Program does not measure local capacity. For an example of how local capacity can be tracked:
 - A team of graduate students in the Thomas Jefferson Program in Public Policy at the College of William & Mary surveyed local government staff and tested four categories of watershed protection tools: watershed management, zoning ordinances, development management, and natural resources protection. Their findings are described in a report found [here](#).
- Community capacity assessments to help target efforts. A very helpful guide for building local capacity is *“Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets”* by John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight.

Outcome of the Workgroup:

- One idea is to compile, or aggregate, building capacity reports and other useful information that can be made available on a website or published as a document.
 - An online resource could be organized into different sections: one section for local governments, another section for local non-profits, etc.
- Our goal is to make a difference.
- Another idea is to provide a list of experts from the Chesapeake Bay Program. This list would include experts on science and funding. Who are the willing experts to be contacts for various subjects?
- A potential role for the workgroup would be to map/connect expertise, resources, and funding sources.

Summary of Action Items:

- For our next Local Engagement Workgroup meeting:
 - Part 2 of our discussion can be used to hone in on some concrete recommendations of good actions to be presented to the Healthy Watersheds Goal Team.
- We should consider having a conversation with the Goal Team on what exactly threatens healthy watersheds (e.g., land use? Unsustainable development?). It might also be possible to identify key indicators for healthy watersheds to strengthen monitoring.
- Ideas for future meetings:
 - We can use a future Local Engagement Workgroup meeting to learn more about Community Conservation efforts. Many Land Trusts are still learning “what

works,” nonetheless we could invite someone from Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, for instance, and have them share their experiences with Community Conservation.

- Jamie Baxter can share the work The Chesapeake Bay Trust has done related to building advocacy capacity for non-profits and grassroots organizations focused on clean water issues.
- Recruit new members who we think are currently missing from the table.
 - Someone from the Environmental Finance Center.
 - A local engager actor.
- Conduct a survey of locals.
- Provide speaker suggestions for the next Healthy Watersheds Goal Team meeting.
 - The Mattawoman Creek project, mentioned earlier, is a potential Case Study.
- Reach out to ongoing efforts related to local engagement.
 - Julie Winters’ Bay Program Local Engagement initiative.
 - The Foster Chesapeake Stewardship Goal Team at the Bay Program has goals related to stewardship and local leadership.