



TASK 6: STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION & PUBLIC OUTREACH

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TASK 6: STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION & PUBLIC OUTREACH

Introduction

A comprehensive watershed assessment program should encourage the participation of stakeholders in developing water quality objectives and priorities for the basin. A stakeholder is defined as any individual or entity that has a vested interest in the basin's waters, and includes the general public, institutions, government, industry, fee payers, and other interested parties. The Clean Rivers Program provides the opportunity for direct public participation to ensure that local water quality concerns are addressed.

Building a strong stakeholder group and maintaining an active participation level is accomplished through the Steering Committee process as well as other public outreach activities, including educational presentations and workshops, volunteer monitoring programs, additional public meetings, web site updates, news releases, public service announcements, advertisements, and the distribution of fact sheets, newsletters, book covers or videos to the general public.

Stakeholder involvement, public outreach and other CRP goals and objectives are outlined in the CRP Long-Term Plan, at <http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/assets/public/compliance/monops/crp/CRP-LongTermPlan06.pdf>.

Stakeholder Participation

In each stage of planning, development and implementation of watershed activities, it is important to get support from relevant stakeholders: those who help make decisions, and those who will be affected by them. Stakeholder knowledge of local conditions often provides the reality check for scientific efforts and helps to define what is actually desirable and achievable. It is also important to make sure that the contributions of stakeholders are both recognized and used in some manner to reach the goals of the CRP.

Basin Steering Committee

A Steering Committee is an essential component of the public participation process that provides for meaningful input by citizens and organizations that reside in or near the watershed. As one of the most important elements of the CRP, the active participation of a strong Steering Committee is also one of the best opportunities for expanding stakeholder participation. Planning Agencies have the responsibility to organize and lead a basin-wide Steering Committee that serves as the focus of public input and assists with the:

- Creation of specific, achievable water quality objectives and basin priorities,
- Review and development of work plans and allocation of resources,
- Review, development and approval of major reports,
- Establishment of monitoring priorities and development of monitoring plans,
- Identification of priority problem areas and possible actions to address these problems and pollutant sources.



Membership Guidelines

It is a primary responsibility of each Planning Agency to establish and maintain a diverse and representative basin-wide Steering Committee. To ensure that the different interests, concerns and priorities of each watershed are addressed, TAC rules specify that the Steering Committee will include stakeholder volunteers from across the basin, representing:

- citizens
- fee-payers [identified in Texas Water Code TWC 26.0135(h)]
- political subdivisions (including local, regional, and state officials)
- appropriate state agencies including:
 - Texas Commission on Environmental Quality regional staff
 - Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
 - Texas Water Development Board
 - Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
 - Texas General Land Office
 - Texas Department of State Health Services
 - Texas Department of Agriculture
 - Texas Railroad Commission
 - Texas Department of Transportation
- other entities interested in water quality matters including:
 - environmental and public interest groups
 - agriculture
 - business and industry.

Steering Committees should consist of stakeholders who are committed to identifying water quality issues in the basin, prioritizing resources and monitoring plans, and providing input on reports. Because the general public is often the least well represented stakeholder group, special emphasis should be placed on engaging and recruiting citizens to serve and attend meetings.

To maximize the potential for increasing participation, Planning Agencies should take every opportunity to promote the CRP and the role of the Steering Committee. This includes using applicable CRP meetings, letters, the CRP promotional video, e-mails, web sites and questionnaires to introduce potential members to the CRP and promote participation in the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee volunteers must regularly be reviewed against the CRP guidelines to determine if reasonable representation is being maintained. If listed groups are not represented, efforts should be made to recruit replacements before the next Steering Committee meeting. A list of all Steering Committee members and their affiliations will be maintained by the Planning Agency and submitted to the CRP Project Manager upon request. *To reduce duplication of efforts, membership confirmation can be combined with the notification of the upcoming Steering Committee Meeting. Planning Agencies should contact all Steering Committee members with a questionnaire or survey to confirm their continued participation, provide a list of the upcoming meeting agenda topics, and request additional topics and potential stakeholders.* See Exhibit 6A for a sample stakeholder questionnaire and meeting announcement.

Communication

In addition to confirming ongoing participation in the Steering Committee, it is recommended that an additional form of regular communication be established with Steering Committee members and other interested stakeholders in order to keep them informed of basin activities. The communication could be via e-mail or list server posting, phone calls, newsletters, or mailed letters. By encouraging frequent



feedback from recipients, this process will contribute to project planning and Steering Committee meeting agenda development. Priority items to be considered for inclusion in Steering Committee communication consist of:

- Proposed changes in basin priorities
- Work plan and resource allocation issues and development
- Basin water quality monitoring, assessment, coordination, and QA activities (including 305(b) Water Quality Inventory, Total Maximum Daily Load studies and Watershed Protection Plans)
- Relevant CRP administrative, funding and budget issues
- Announcements, upcoming events, and agendas for upcoming meetings

Meetings

Steering Committees will meet publicly and should play an active role in the development of meeting agendas and promotion of stakeholder involvement. To ensure program priorities are met and stakeholder issues are addressed, Planning Agencies should incorporate the following guidance into their Steering Committee meeting planning process.

Scheduling

Each fiscal year, it is required that Planning Agencies conduct at least one Steering Committee meeting to address basin-wide water quality issues. Due to the size and diversity of individual basins, it may be difficult for a single annual meeting to fully accomplish all meeting requirements. All attempts should be made to schedule convenient dates and times for meetings, and allow time for stakeholders traveling from other parts of the basin.

In order to allow the Steering Committee to provide input towards water quality priorities, allocation of resources, monitoring coordination and required annual reports, it is recommended that at least one meeting be scheduled after the draft *Basin Highlights (or Summary) Report* is completed, and prior to the annual Coordinated Monitoring Meeting. It is important that Planning Agencies negotiate mutually agreeable Steering Committee meeting dates with their TCEQ Project Manager before stakeholders are notified of the meeting date.

Meeting Announcements

To provide adequate notice of upcoming Steering Committee meetings, it is recommended that Planning Agencies issue a *"save the date" notification a minimum of 45 days in advance* of the next meeting. As discussed in the Membership Guidelines section, Planning Agencies should contact all Steering Committee members with a questionnaire or survey to confirm their continued participation, provide a list of the draft meeting agenda topics, and request additional topics and potential stakeholders. See Exhibit 6A for a sample questionnaire. A final meeting announcement with the proposed agenda should be distributed *a minimum of 15 days in advance* of the meeting by use of written or electronic invitations, the Planning Agency's web site, public postings or press releases provided to local newspapers.

Agenda Topics

Priority items that require assistance of the Steering Committee for development and review include:

- **Water Quality Objectives and Priorities** - Development of monitoring priorities
- **Basin Summary/Highlights Report** - Review, suggestions for modification, and approval of the draft Basin Summary/Highlights Report prior to publication
- **Work Plans and Allocation of Resources** - Operation and effectiveness of the CRP work plan and the use, adequacy and allocation of the program's costs and funds
- **Public Participation** - Upcoming events, public outreach, and educational activities



Additional items that should to be addressed during Steering Committee meetings on an annual basis:

- Overview of the CRP (including its goals and how the program is funded)
- Recent Planning Agency accomplishments achieved with CRP support
- Identification, selection, and status of special study projects
- Recognition of efforts by Steering Committee, stakeholders, volunteers, and others

Along with the above topics, Steering Committee meetings will also provide the opportunity to discuss any topics that are of significant interest to stakeholders, including non-point source pollution issues, groundwater quality or availability, illegal dumping, basin-specific problems, agricultural issues and clean-up efforts. To provide additional viewpoints and expertise, Planning Agencies should seek out subject matter experts to present on applicable topics.

In order to meet these requirements, it is important that Planning Agencies provide Steering Committee members with all necessary meeting materials, including the agenda, draft reports, summaries, work plans, special studies, maps, monitoring schedules and other items to be discussed.

Meeting Evaluation and Feedback

It may be useful to distribute an evaluation at the end of the meeting to determine if stakeholders needs and concerns have been met. After each meeting, Planning Agencies have the responsibility to ensure that stakeholder input, comments and decisions are appropriately addressed, subcommittee meetings are scheduled if necessary, and meeting minutes are posted to the web site.

Subcommittee Workgroups

For certain activities designated as priorities by the Steering Committee, it may be beneficial and more efficient to create smaller subcommittee workgroups with the responsibility of a more focused look at special studies, project planning, development of monitoring priorities, and implementation activities. In establishing a subcommittee workgroup, the Steering Committee should attempt to bring together the most appropriate skills and resources available to advance projects.

Education & Outreach

Planning Agencies should work to increase public awareness and interest, and enhance public participation in setting and implementing basin priorities. Opportunities for participation in the CRP that support overall program goals include:

- presentations or booths at schools, public meetings and conferences
- distribution of applicable educational materials, curriculum, and CRP video
- development and/or distribution of fact sheets or newsletters
- news releases, public service announcements, and advertisements
- toll free hot lines, e-mail groups, up to date CRP web site, and email list servers
- participation in volunteer monitoring programs
- participation in the Texas Watershed Stewards program

With prior approval, funds may also be applied to outreach activities such as community action projects; including clean-up events, collection or disposal of hazardous household or agricultural products, watershed surveys, and storm drain stenciling.



EPA Outreach Documents

Informing stakeholders of the issues, educating them about what needs to be done, and motivating them to take action will help Partner Agencies meet both the legislative obligations of the CRP and other water quality objectives. To help Planning Agencies accomplish this, two EPA publications; *Getting in Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns*, and *Getting in Step: Engaging and Involving Stakeholders in Your Watershed*, are recommended as resources. The guides provide the tools needed to develop and implement an effective outreach campaign as part of a regional water quality improvement effort, and will help with understanding the audiences in your watershed, creating messages that resonate, and finding appropriate ways to communicate.

See Exhibits 6B and 6C for an overview of the two EPA outreach documents.

Volunteer Monitoring

Monitoring of local water bodies by citizen volunteers is an excellent way to meet many of the goals and responsibilities of the CRP. Volunteer monitoring activities can be used by Planning Agencies to:

- Educate citizens about water quality and watershed management issues
- Enhance public participation in setting and implementing basin priorities
- Collect water quality data for planning purposes

Planning Agencies can choose to implement a volunteer monitoring program based on their own pre-determined set of guidelines, or can choose to implement activities supported by the Texas Stream Team Volunteer Monitoring Program.

Texas Stream Team

The Texas Stream Team Volunteer Monitoring Program can serve as a resource for a variety of outreach and training materials. Through a partnership with TCEQ, USEPA, and Texas State University, the Texas Stream Team supports environmental education activities and volunteer monitoring data collection programs throughout the state. The program also provides assistance to participating partners and develops, promotes, and maintains environmental education activities. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the Texas Stream Team directly, or visiting <http://txstreamteam.rivers.txstate.edu>.

Planning Agencies that choose to implement volunteer monitoring should determine the appropriate methods and focus for these activities in their basins. As it relates to CRP, the collection of volunteer water quality data is considered to be an educational activity used to promote or enhance public awareness of water quality issues and involvement in CRP goals. To support this, the Texas Stream Team's QAPP limits the designated use for volunteer data to education and research, problem identification, local decision-making and planning purposes.

Planning Agency Web Site

Planning Agency web sites have been established to circulate information more effectively and to enhance the ability of the public to gain access to detailed information regarding CRP activities. The TCEQ considers this form of communication a very important tool for increasing stakeholder and public awareness and improving involvement in the CRP.



Requirements

During the upcoming biennium, Planning Agencies will continue to update and improve their CRP web sites. To meet CRP goals, it is required that Planning Agency web sites include the following items and information:

- **Explanation of CRP, the Planning Agency, program goals, and the planning process**, to include: basin specific priorities developed from stakeholder input, a description and promotion of the Steering Committee process, defined roles for stakeholders, Steering Committee meeting minutes, and information on how to get involved.
- **Upcoming events and project updates**, including: Steering Committee meeting announcements and agendas, updates on special studies or a summary of project activities, and notification of other applicable and upcoming public outreach events occurring in the basin.
- **Contact information for Planning Agency**, to include: e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, mailing address and physical address.
- **Links to outside resources**, including the TCEQ Clean Rivers Program, other CRP Partners, and the Texas Stream Team Volunteer Monitoring Program.

Deliverables to Post

The following is a summary of the required work plan deliverables for all Tasks in the FY2010-11 CRP Guidance that must be posted on the Planning Agency web site.

Project Administration

Final Work Plan

Project Planning and Quality Assurance

- Complete Quality Assurance Project Plan OR:
- Monitoring/Project Objectives (A6, B1)
- Measurement Performance Specifications (Table A7.1)
- Special Study Appendices

Water Quality Monitoring

- Special Study Reports
- Link to CRP Coordinated Monitoring Schedule (<http://cms.lcra.org>)

Data Management

Water Quality Monitoring Data or link to TCEQ Water Quality Data

Data Analysis and Reporting

- Basin Highlights Report (with archived reports for the last five years)
- Basin Summary Report (at a minimum: Executive Summary & maps)

Stakeholder Participation and Public Outreach

- Announcements and agendas of Steering Committee and CRP public meetings
- Steering Committee meeting minutes or summaries



Special Projects

- Special Studies and/or Project Reports

Updates

The web site will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure that information and announcements remain current and relevant. *It is required that the Planning Agency also include summaries of revisions to the web site with the corresponding quarterly Progress Report.*

Deliverables required to be posted to the web site will follow the due dates indicated in the individual work plans. Posting dates for certain reports and project plans that are based on completion of the document or meeting should be negotiated with the CRP Project Manager.



Exhibit 6A

Stakeholder Questionnaire and Meeting Announcement



EXHIBIT 6A

Clean Rivers Program Stakeholder Questionnaire

In order to better serve our stakeholders, the River Authority would like to know about topics and other water issues relevant to our stakeholders that should be addressed in future Clean Rivers Program (CRP) meetings. The following are topics for discussion for our next stakeholder meeting, which will be held on May 1, 2008. Please rate them on a scale according to how important these issues are as they relate to inclusion in our next CRP meeting agenda. You will be contacted with further information regarding our next CRP Steering Committee Meeting. We appreciate your past participation and look forward to your continued participation.

1. Implementation of nutrient standards in TPDES permits

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Very Important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know | |

2. Construction/Development Impacts to Water Quality

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Very Important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know | |

3. Permitting Trends in Wastewater

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Very Important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know | |

4. Proposed changes to water quality standards in the Basin

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Very Important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know | |

5. Review what the CRP actually represents and how customers benefit

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Very Important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know | |



6. Water Bodies Not Meeting State Water Quality Criteria

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Very Important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know | |

7. Environmental Enforcement, Illegal Dumping and Illegal Discharge

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Very Important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know | |

8. Watershed Protection Plans

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Very Important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know | |

9. Are there any other water quality related issues in the Basin that you would like highlighted and/or discussed in more detail?

10. Are you still interested in receiving correspondence from the River Authority regarding CRP meetings and other stakeholder events?

11. Can you provide the names or organizations of potential stakeholders that may be interested in CRP activities?

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey!

To facilitate future communication please provide the following contact information:

- Name:
- Organization/Agency:
- Address:
- Phone #:
- E-mail address:

If you have questions or need additional information about this meeting please contact:



Exhibit 6B

***Getting In Step:* A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns**



EXHIBIT 6B

Getting In Step: **A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns**

This publication was prepared by Tetra Tech, Inc., under a contract with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Complete copies of this and other EPA outreach materials can be obtained at: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/outreach/documents>.

The purpose of this guide is to provide the tools needed to develop and implement an effective outreach campaign as part of a state or local water quality improvement effort. Whether you're charged with developing a watershed management plan to restore impaired waters or protecting your local water resources for the future, this guide will help you understand the importance of reaching out to people and motivating them to act. It will help you understand the audiences in your watershed, create messages that resonate with them, and find appropriate ways to communicate your message.

The guide will also provide new information on how to incorporate social marketing techniques into your campaign to generate sustainable behavior changes that will protect water quality. The guide will teach you how to listen to the needs of your audience rather than just blindly handing out fact sheets or reports that sit on shelves and collect dust. It will show you the important roles that audience research and program evaluation play in changing personal behavior. The step-by-step approach in this guide will help you to determine the most effective vehicle to reach the target audience.

As a companion to the guide, EPA and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food have jointly developed a how-to video called *Getting in Step: A Video Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns*. This 35-minute video provides background on the six steps for conducting an environmental outreach campaign and includes four in-depth case studies that showcase successful local outreach programs from across the country.



Exhibit 6C

***Getting in Step:* Engaging and Involving Stakeholders in Your Watershed**

EXHIBIT 6C

Getting in Step: **Engaging and Involving Stakeholders in Your Watershed**

This publication was prepared by Tetra Tech, Inc., under contract to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Complete copies of this and other USEPA outreach materials can be obtained at: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/outreach/documents>.

Why involve stakeholders?

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.

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.

Over the past 20 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 product
- Shares 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

It is 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 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 with you. Make sure that the contributions of stakeholders are both recognized and used in some manner to aid the goals of the watershed program.

Involving stakeholders throughout the watershed planning process

Stakeholders need 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 define 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.



Using outreach to strengthen stakeholder efforts

Once you have identified your internal goals and objectives and developed a preliminary stakeholder framework, you need to start conducting outreach and education activities. If people are expected to exhibit concern over water resources, gather and process assessment information, and support preservation or restoration proposals, they must be engaged through a planned, long-term outreach program.

Outreach is a process that involves communicating information to an audience and getting a response from that audience. How you communicate the information (fact sheets, news articles, watershed festivals, web sites, etc.) will depend on the audience, the message you're trying to deliver, and your budget.

Inviting the stakeholders to participate

Once you've developed a list of stakeholders, invite them to participate in writing. To increase the chances of participation, tailor 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 with the planning process.

Follow up your letter with a personal phone call to answer any questions and confirm their participation. Be prepared for resistance. 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.

Top 12 tips to move the Stakeholder process forward:

- 1. Involve stakeholders as soon as possible.** Nothing can derail the process faster than asking for input after a decision has already been made.
- 2. Be honest.** Lay all of your cards on the table at the beginning. It's OK not to have the answers, but it's not OK to mislead the group.
- 3. Listen.** Often we are so focused on how we are going to respond to what is being said, that we miss what's being said altogether.
- 4. Communicate clearly and often.** Clear and frequent communication is essential. Do not assume your stakeholders understand all the issues and processes.
- 5. Recognize differences early on.** It's OK 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.
- 6. Don't leave out stakeholders because they're difficult.** Inviting those expressing opposition may cause initial discomfort, but they'll likely bring energy and new perspectives to the process.
- 7. Focus on their issues.** 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.
- 8. Establish mini-milestones.** Because stakeholder processes tend to be long and drawn out, it is important to achieve and build upon small successes to keep the group motivated.



9. **Commit the resources needed to achieve your objectives.** Make sure the needed resources will be available, but don't select activities that you know you won't be able to afford to implement.
10. **Call a meeting only when necessary.** Think long and hard before asking stakeholders to take time out of their schedules. Try to communicate information through flyers, e-mail, or web sites.
11. **Give feedback and praise.** Give feedback to the group to show them how their efforts are moving the process forward. Recognize key activities and participation by the stakeholders.
12. **Make it fun.** Although you're dealing with serious issues, that doesn't mean you can't have fun.