Chapter 7: Making It Happen

Staying on Track for Your Watershed's Future

This chapter will help you:
- Market your plan to those who can make it happen
- Find resources to implement your plan
- Track your progress
- Evaluate and adjust your plan for long-term success

As in every chapter, this one also provides:
- Active Options
- Write It Down

Find related information about this stage of watershed planning in Chapters 12 and 13 of EPA's Handbook.

Introduction

Now that your team has determined what needs to be done and illumined a path to better waterways, it's time for action. Action is all about people and money, about finding both and keeping them effectively on task. Some of the plan's goals and action items can be met with current partners, but it's likely that other goals will require participation from people, businesses, and/or organizations that have never heard of your plan – or a "watershed" or "BMP," for that matter.

Securing and managing financial resources is a crucial part of implementation and may require new partners or contractors, people with administrative skills.

As you begin action steps, it is crucial to track your progress. Tracking progress is mandated by funders, but also necessary to encourage yourselves. Plus, it helps when you are advocating the plan. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, evaluating progress will help identify changes needed: adjustments to your original plan that will make it be more effective and meet the goals you have set.

7.1 Advocating for Your Plan

Convincing people to support and implement action items requires outreach and marketing: advocacy for the plan. Think strategically about whose support you need and who needs to take the actions. You especially need to reach those who you've identified as responsible parties or target audiences. (See also Muddy Creek example in section 6.2.2, Table 6.5.)

Make smart decisions about how you package the news and how you get the word to your audiences. What will they listen to? What will they understand?

Be sure you continue to advocate for your plan as you implement it and begin to see progress. Initial progress is a sure selling point!

7.1.1 Reach Out

Although you have made efforts to engage the community, you now must share the plan – and sell it - to anyone who hasn't been involved and has the ability or authority to make the changes it calls for, and to the larger community who may have influence. People need to know about your plan, what needs to happen for it to succeed and how they fit in.

> Resources helpful in developing education and outreach strategies will continue to be helpful during plan implementation, especially *Getting In Step*: 203
> Also, the outreach toolbox: 204

Consider producing one or more outreach events, and invite a local reporter. Videotape an outreach event and post it on the Internet. Seek invitations to existing groups' meetings or events that may include your target audiences, for example Conservation District events, places of worship in the watershed, Boy Scouts, civic clubs, your fiscal court, etc.

Continue reaching out as you implement your plan. Keep in touch with your stakeholders and political leaders. Share your progress with them. These people are keys to the long-term success of your plan.

7.1.2 Communication Alternatives

Most people will not want to read the entire plan, so you'll need some other way to communicate what you've done and what needs to be done, without all of the details. One watershed team wrote an executive summary for each chapter of their plan and uses those summaries to share the plan with others.

No matter what format(s) you choose, the purpose of executive summary presentations is to continue to build support, marketing especially the aspects of the plan that require public labor, influence, or funds. Create one or more ways to present your executive summary, a way to get the information to people who don't yet understand what you have done. Consider a variety of communication methods, for example storyboards, Facebook or Website pages, slide presentations, brochures, newsletters, newspaper insert, flyers, age-appropriate school curriculum materials, or others.

An executive summary can be used to highlight the key goals, strategies, partner commitments, and vision for a healthier watershed future. Explain just enough about the work for them to understand the principles they need to grasp the plan and to understand that your team is diverse, thoughtful and committed.

Be ready to tailor your summary presentation to different audiences, and keep it fresh and current. If you have a slide presentation, change it for your audience or as implementation progresses. Sometimes the audience only needs a one-page briefing, while another wants a pared-down version of the complete plan. Make sure you use language your audience will understand! Remember, most people haven't thought about watershed or best management practices.

No matter what your format, your summary information should look professional and be well-organized. Make enough copies for members of your planning team, key stakeholders, and elected officials for the jurisdiction of your watershed. Make some extras to have them available for grant and other funding applications.

Once you have begun making progress and achieving even small amounts of success with your plan, you'll want to share those results. It is especially important to share results with your target audiences, the ones you've identified as responsible parties for action items, but you'll want to share them with the community at large as well and, in particular, with their elected leaders. Again, creatively consider formats and stay professional. How about a report card showing where your waterway has raised its grade from C to A?

7.2 Securing and Managing Financial Resources

Whether you have funding for implementation or need to find some, there's work to be done. You'll need at least one person with patience for figures and administration. The more financial resources you have, the more you will need to pay someone to manage them.

Anyone giving money will want to know that you have a good plan for it and that you will efficiently use the funds for the agreed purposes. They will also want to see the results. This means telling them:

- What activity you will do with the funds, as specifically as possible. For example "plant 200 trees along Mill Creek where it passes through the Hanover subdivision" is better than "Mill Creek stream restoration activities."
- How the activities they could fund fit into the big picture. What goal will the activities serve, and how? Provide enough background information that they understand both the goal and the action, based on your understanding of their knowledge of watershed principles, your plan, and the situation in your watershed.
- How much money you need and how you will spend it. Give them a specific budget showing other funds you need or have, and how their funds fit into the overall picture. Be sure that your budget is realistic; do your research to determine costs. As much as possible, build in compensation for the person who

is responsible for managing the funds and implementing the action items. Budget in a little buffer for those things you may overlook, such as the cost of making photocopies of reports, etc.

For any potential funder, you need to know:
- How they want the request packaged. Foundations and government grants provide very specific instructions, so use them.
- Their interests and goals. Which part of your plan coincides with their interests?
- Reporting requirements. What documentation do they expect or require about the activities and the funds used: how often and with what level of detail? See also section 7.5.
- Their needs for credit and publicity. Should their name be on publications or flyers? Do they want photos of the results?

Basically, funders should understand what the team expects to do and what is needed to do it. It is helpful to create a set of bullet points that can be fashioned into a variety of requests for funding, to augment the summary presentation document described above.

It is easier to secure donations or grants if your organization either finds a nonprofit partner who will accept a grant on its behalf or as an associate, or the organization formalizes as a nonprofit. Donations to IRS-approved non-profits are tax-deductible. One of your partners may be able to provide advice about this.

Once you have secured funds, you need protocols for how they are managed. Generally and regardless of the trustworthiness or skills of any one person, no one should have complete power over expenditure decisions and checkbooks. Your organization should require regular reporting on funds and progress. Reports to funders should be prepared in a timely manner and be reviewed by at least one other designated person than the author. If you secure a significant amount of money, you probably need to pay someone to look after it.

7.3 Implementation Functions and Roles

The shift from plan design to plan implementation adds responsibility for your team leader(s) or project coordinator(s), who is now accountable to a work plan as well as to the team's ongoing guidance. Your watershed has an established timetable, and sticking to that timetable will require resources, including one or more person(s) who will take responsibility for momentum, for getting things done. In addition, other specialized skills may be required. That level of responsibility almost always requires financial compensation.

An overall coordinator, often termed a **Watershed Project Coordinator**, is a benefit to most plans. This could be a funded part- or full-time position, depending on the scope of the plan. All 319 program grants require and can fund the time of a person who manages the grant, and this person could act as the Watershed Project Coordinator. If this position is not federally or 319-funded, then the Watershed Coordinator's time could be counted as match for the grant.

In addition, a subcommittee (Implementation Team) should be formed to perform the following implementation functions:

- Make sure tasks are implemented as scheduled
- Review monitoring information
- Take advantage of new resource opportunities as they become available
- Share results with the larger team (see section 7.5)

Finally, a subcommittee (Technical Team) will need to monitor water quality data and technical aspects of plan implementation. The Technical Team would include partners as well as any technical consultant.

7.4 Adapting to Changes and Challenges

Waterways are not static, and neither are good plans. To achieve your goals, your watershed plan will need adjustment and change. You need to make a commitment... to be flexible!

If you've achieved most of your goals from your first round of watershed planning, you have good reason to celebrate. However, here's the tough part: the watershed and human impacts on it are dynamic, always in a state of change and frequently undergoing unexpected changes. Your action items will create changes in the watershed, and some of these will be unexpected, too – although hopefully in a positive sense. This is another reason to track and monitor your results (see section 7.5).

This dynamic nature of watersheds and planning means that protection and restoration must be regularly re-evaluated. You're going to have to go back and check on it—more than once. In some cases, teams have restored waterways only to discover that years later the situation has regressed. So, you'll need to ensure that your progress is maintained

As you reach the milestones in your plan, you'll need to convene a meeting of your team to ask the hard questions: What is needed to maintain and advance waterway health? Should we expand our vision? Should we set new goals?

Planning in general is an iterative process, one that entails continual review and repetition of the planning process itself. There's a good chance you'll need more monitoring and analysis if you really want your watershed to be improved and protected in the long run. It's a good idea to let people know now that a realistic plan must be updated and amended to remain vigorous.

7.5 Measuring Progress and Success

To know if you are moving toward or accomplishing your goals, and in order to help you adapt your plan, you must measure progress. Your action item timetable and the indicators you selected in Chapter 6 will help guide this activity. Remember that your actual success, over time, is indicated by desirable changes in how the land is used and improvements in the waterway's water quality. An array of regularly scheduled water quality and ecological "checkups" should be included in your plan for each.

This section is also discussed in Section 12.6 of the EPA Handbook.

7.5.1 Tracking Progress

While it's not a measure of improvement in the waterway, monitoring how reliably the activities in the plan are implemented will indirectly indicate success. The "Action Item Worksheet" developed for each objective will be a good foundation for evaluating implementation, because it identifies the person or organization accountable for each step and sets some interim goals. Reviewing progress against the worksheets can be a regularly-scheduled function of the implementation team or the Watershed Project Coordinator.

7.5.2 Improvements in Watershed Health or Practices

The benefits of implementing best management practices in a watershed are difficult to measure, and sometimes the quality of their maintenance defeats their purposes. For example, if a diverse vegetative buffer is added to a riparian area but city maintenance crews mow it regularly, it will revert to lawn. If livestock is fenced away from the creek but a flood tears down part of the fence and it is not repaired, the livestock will return to the creek.

It is challenging to measure improvements that are a result of best management practices with broad-based application, such as riparian corridors or erosion controls on construction sites. Ideally, the process used to implement the practice will include some accountability measure that tracks their appropriate installation and maintenance. For this reason, partnering with an organization for the implementation of a best management practice is important. The organization will often have some process for accountability that it can use for the new function it has been asked to provide.

It is also difficult to measure how much your activities have changed behaviors or attitudes. Opinion surveys can be an effective way to measure behavior change by large groups of people. Universities or public health departments may be valuable partners in devising objective surveys that can be telephoned or mailed to random samples from a target audience for behavior change. You can create a simple, online survey with tools such as Survey Monkey 205.

7.5.3 Improvements in Water Quality

Your plan identified key outcome indicators associated with action items and/or goals. A method for sampling for these pollutants or conditions over time should be part of your plan as it is implemented. This is referred to as success monitoring.

Just as you selected your BMPs based on conclusions about conditions and sources, your success monitoring plan should be designed to specifically measure results. The monitoring plan for assessing present conditions that you developed in Chapter 3 may continue to be useful to measure implementation success, but it may not. It may not be sufficiently robust, and/or it may have included parameters that are no longer the concern of the plan. For example, if some sites were below a discharge facility that is no longer operating, cut those monitoring sites. If earlier monitoring measured both bacteria and nutrients but you have since learned that nutrients are not of concern, bacteria monitoring will suffice.

Success monitoring may require new sites, in addition to earlier monitoring sites. Measuring directly below a BMP is recommended, although you will want beforeand-after monitoring if possible. Where early monitoring was at the mouth, success monitoring may need to include additional sites in headwater areas.

While it’s certainly possible and even desirable to use volunteers to monitor water quality, monitoring for a watershed plan will have certain design constraints that call for expertise in designing water quality monitoring programs:

- The parameters that are monitored should relate directly to the pollutants and concerns of your plan.
- The monitoring plan must collect sufficient data to answer the question you’re asking. Streams are dynamic systems and may require sampling a number of times under a variety of conditions to account for all the variables.
- The plan will require statistical analysis.
- A Quality Assurance Program Plan (QAPP) will be required for monitoring funded by the 319 program.

Sometimes, it’s possible to avoid a full frontal assault on stream parameters to meet the plan’s monitoring needs. A partner may be monitoring the indicator as part of its own regulatory compliance. It may be possible to choose an indicator that is not the pollutant itself. For example, using an example from the EPA Handbook, it may be possible to take a “creel census” from anglers as a cost-effective alternative to calculating a fish index when the concern is aquatic health. Creativity in monitoring outcomes and coordinating the existing work of partners conserves and focuses precious resources and keeps partners involved.

7.6 Group Vitality

Your team may have become impatient with exploring the data and making planning decisions, yet sometimes the shift to implementation, the part that sounds productive and exciting, can also be difficult.

Go back to your original list of potential partners, or perhaps partners that did not remain active during the planning stages. Let them know you are moving to action and see if they want to renew their participation.

Maintain the interest and support of your partners and other planning team members. Give them regular progress reports, reports on progress that aren’t necessarily the technical reports provided to funding sources. Keep them involved by scheduling trainings offered from time to time by state and national watershed organizations and encouraging their involvement in the evaluation of your plan.

Kentucky Waterways Alliance [206] and River Network [207] provide organizational development assistance to watershed teams.

Active Options

You’ve done so much hard work. Take a break and go out and enjoy your beautiful watershed:

- Celebrate! Consider holding an event near your waterway (Creek Celebration Day!) that formally recognizes the hard work of the members of your planning team, but also have some informal arts or recreation activities that reflect back to the watershed or to some specific aspect of your plan. This event should be upbeat and optimistic about success, while clarifying that the work has only begun.

- Make a video about your project and put it on local cable and YouTube
- Organize a bicycle ride through the watershed
- Go fishing or kayaking…

Write It Down

Executive Summary or Summaries

Whether you create an Executive Summary for each chapter or one for each chapter (or both), add these to your plan.

Organization

Briefly describe how you will oversee the implementation phase of your planning. Identify key people, their organizations, and their roles, including (if applicable) Watershed Coordinator, Implementation Team, and Technical Team. Update lists of team members and partners.

Presentation and Outreach

Briefly describe how you will share the plan and progress reports with political leaders, stakeholders, important audiences, and the public. Describe plans for outreach events and other marketing methods.

Fundraising

Briefly describe your fundraising plans. If you have a budget for the complete project, consider including it - perhaps as an appendix.

Monitoring Success

Describe how you plan to monitor progress on action items, watershed health or practices, and improvements in water quality.

For the water quality outcome indicators in the plan, describe how the team's earlier monitoring plan might be revised to better monitor results. If feasible, specify who will provide the monitoring, the monitoring schedule, and the schedule of regular reports on progress toward pollutant load reductions. If the team decides to apply for 319 funds to implement your plan, the application will require an approved Quality Assurance Project Plan for monitoring results.

Evaluating and Updating Your Plan

Describe when and how you will evaluate the implementation of your plan, and who will be involved in the evaluation process. Ideally, evaluation will occur soon enough to influence the achievement of short-term, mid-term and long-term goals.

Specifically, describe:

- How you will evaluate the implementation of your action items
- How you will evaluate the outcome indicators associated with Load Reduction targets
- How you will evaluate your outreach activities

Briefly discuss how modifications to your plan may occur. Address the role of key partners, stakeholders, and the wider planning team in plan modifications.

Other Records

Document the specific responsibilities of any person or committee. If a contract is involved, be very specific. Keep copies of any financial management policies you develop, marked with the date they became effective. This is especially important, of course, if you have or expect to receive significant quantities of funds.

Document your outreach events: how they were announced, efforts to secure press and other coverage, participation, and evaluative information.

Generally track the distribution of any Executive Summary, and specifically list presentations made.

Keep copies of any fundraising letters or proposals and budgets that are not included in the plan.

Update contact lists.

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