

Virginia Water Monitoring Council Steering Committee
Strategic Planning Session
Tuesday, September 19, 2000
DOF Building, Charlottesville, VA

Prior to the meeting, everyone was given the following “homework” questions to consider:

- What are the most important key upcoming challenges and circumstances that will need a response, involvement, or action by the VWMC in the next 1-5 years?
- In one or two years, what will have been the most important accomplishments of the VWMC – i.e., those things that you would really *regret* if they had NOT been accomplished?

Tanya Denckla, with the Institute for Environmental Negotiations, was introduced to the group. She explained her role as facilitator and reviewed the agenda for the session. Each person introduced himself or herself and offered one hopeful accomplishment of the strategic planning session. The following ground rules were proposed and accepted: 1) All views are respected and welcomed, 2) Everyone has the opportunity to participate and be heard, 3) Everyone will stay focused on the topic and be mindful of the time 4) Everyone will be open and honest so there are no regrets at the end of the session 5) Decisions will be made by consensus. Tanya explained that in consensus everyone must be able to 1) “live with” the decision and 2) support the full package. A scale of one to three was chosen for consensus with a “three” representing wholehearted support of the decision, a “two” signifying reservations and concerns but acceptance of the decision, and a “one” indicating questions or concerns which lead to non-acceptance of the decision.

Tanya provided background on the interrelatedness of a vision, mission, objectives/strategy, and goals and plans. The major goals of the VWMC were reviewed (Enhance communication, cooperation, and collaboration among government agencies, organizations, and individuals involved in monitoring. Encourage effective and efficient use of monitoring resources. Facilitate the transfer of water monitoring information.). The VWMC has a mission and established goals, but the vision, or idea of what the Council is to be, has not been discussed. It was decided to meet again before the November 7, 2000, annual meeting to discuss the vision of the VWMC and other topics.

Tanya reviewed the concept of SMART objectives, those that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. She then asked everyone to draw upon his/her thoughts from the homework questions to answer the following question: “What are the most important accomplishments to have realized within one to two years?” Each person provided the most important accomplishment, in his/her opinion, for the VWMC to achieve. The ideas of Steering Committee members who were unable to attend the session but had provided verbal or email answers to the homework questions were also recorded. Everyone was given additional opportunities to suggest other accomplishments to aim for within the next one to two years.

Once the brainstorming session ended, the ideas were grouped into similar or related thoughts and identified with a group name. Each person was asked to rate each idea from one to three, with “three” being the most important task to attempt to accomplish in the next one to two years, “two” indicating an “OK” task to attempt to accomplish in the next one to two years, and “one” suggesting the task should not be attempted to be accomplished within the next one to two years.

The overall priority rating was determined by adding each person's individual rating. The higher the rating, the more support was shown for attempting to accomplish the task within the next one to two years.

Answers to the question: "What are the most important accomplishments to have realized within the next one to two years?" and the overall priority rating in parentheses are provided below.

Operations:

- Lock in funding for the Council (30)
- Have an active and growing membership (including having members serve on committees) and publish the membership (30)
- Have Council permanently established with an Executive Director, membership, and funding (30)
- Create a common vision for the VWMC (Steering Committee needs to decide this and bring it before the membership) (28)

Inventory:

- Publish comprehensive inventory of sources of water monitoring data (31)
- Publish contact names for all water monitoring efforts in Virginia (30)
- Compile and publish possible uses and limitations of data (27)
- Identify and assess gaps of published water monitoring programs (25)
- Define coverage needs by water monitoring groups and publish (22)

Communications/Outreach:

- Create mechanisms for communication of VWMC activities such as a newsletter, newspaper, and web page (31)
- Increase communications through educational workshops and skill sharing (26)
- Every citizen group should have the knowledge and skills to collect reliable data (to the level they desire) (21)
- Develop a method of communicating data in lay terms that are easy to understand (20)

Scientific/Enrichment:

- Support improving water quality (23)
- Assist with the development of watershed monitoring programs (18)
- Develop infrastructure among members to facilitate remediation and water quality improvement (18)
- Suggest and recommend measurable criteria for minimum instream flow and publish them (14)

Coordination:

- Produce a report that shows collaborative work and publish it (25)
- Increase collaboration between water monitoring groups (through the membership at the annual meeting and record the number of web site hits for the inventory) (23)

From the identified high priority tasks, committees need to be formed that will accomplish these activities. Following the Operating Guidelines, the VWMC Steering Committee will charter the working committees, and the committees will be comprised of the Council’s membership. Each committee has a Committee Chair and Vice-chair lead the committee meetings and provide a communication link between the committee and the Steering Committee. The committees formed at the annual meeting in November will be asked to identify a specific plan of work with a timeline and submit budget needs to the Operations Committee by the end of January.

Because “lock in funding for the Council” received a high priority, a plan of action for how to accomplish this task was initiated. The plan is outlined in the table below.

Table 1. Plan of Action for Funding the VWMC

TASK	WHO	WITH	WHEN
Establish Budget	Operations Committee	Committee Chairs	January
Set Fundraising Goal	Operations Committee	Committee Chairs	January
Identify Generally Available Grants and Funding Sources	Steering Committee (Jane Walker will start)		Ongoing Agenda Item
Identify Budget Categories and Needs—Funding Priorities	Steering Committee	Operations Committee	October
Apply for Grants & Other Funding Sources	VWRRC		Ongoing
Legislative Funding	Steering Committee	Members	Explore at Annual Meeting for 2002

Owing to time constraints, we were unable to establish committees and define the role of the committees. A meeting was slated for Oct 17, 2000 at the USGS office in Richmond at 11:00 a.m. for final preparations for the annual meeting and to continue the dialogue on strategic planning. If possible, Tanya Denckla will also come to this meeting to facilitate the strategic planning and possibly help to begin developing a vision for the VWMC.