

## Virginia Water Monitoring Council Steering Committee Meeting

December 12, 2000

DOF Building, Charlottesville, VA

### Visioning Session

Notes taken by Steve Talley and Jane Walker

The purpose of this part of the December 12, 2000 Steering Committee Meeting was to develop or at least begin to develop a shared vision for the VWMC. Steve Talley, with the Canaan Valley Institute and member of the VWMC, facilitated the discussion. He explained that for an organization to know where it is going, it needs a shared vision. A vision encompasses “the future we are trying to create.” He further explained that a vision is the highest goal and not simply something for which we will settle.

Steve contrasted a vision from a mission as follows: A vision is a noun, whereas a mission is a verb. The mission tells how to reach the vision. Steve reminded us that the VWMC has a mission: To promote and facilitate coordination of water monitoring programs throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. He further described that we have a “machine,” the VWMC. He then asked, “What is the reason for this machine?” In other words, “What is your vision for...?”

Steve explained that sometimes it helps to define the problems, barriers, or “what’s broke” concerning the area of interest. Each person was asked to describe something that is “broke” with the present water monitoring efforts in Virginia from the perspective of the organization he or she represents. These issues were captured in a short brainstorming session (Issue/Organization giving it):

- Lack uniform standards for water monitoring (across all groups/agencies). WQAAC, VAMWA
- Difficult to find who is monitoring, where, and what (whole machine). CWQM.
- Lack of collaboration among groups monitoring. Redundancy of effort and gaps. VDH.
- No forum for communication sharing. DCR
- Lack of ease in sharing data information, methods, knowledge, skills, and resources. CVW
- People don’t know what we do. What type of monitoring. Don’t know what data are available and how to get it. USGS
- Lots of data, but they are not being used when making decisions. VWRRC
- Monitoring not organized within context to address ecological questions. DOF
- Don’t know where to find data. Don’t know whether data is any good. AWWA
- We can manage our data, but the “out of agency” data is hard for us to capture, evaluate, and use. DEQ
- Concern that data has quality. Afraid management decision will be made on poor quality data. VMA
- Low cooperation and acceptance of data by all players. VASWCD
- Local governments do not think their data is being used. Local Government

A discussion followed on what type of vision we were seeking—one for the VWMC organization, a vision for the waters of Virginia, or a vision for the status of water monitoring in Virginia. It was decided that the Operating Guidelines provide the information for the structure of the VWMC organization. After some discussion, the group reached a consensus that it was after a vision for: The status of water monitoring in Virginia and of water quality within five years.

Each person was asked to write his or her vision of the VWMC from this perspective. Volunteers were asked to offer elements from those visions. The following is a “Quick and Dirty” sampling of elements from the individual visions:

- Seamless communication of resources information.
- Uniform water standards, monitoring methods, QA/QC guidelines, data management procedures.
- Seamless integration of information into management decision-making.
- Willing and effective collaboration among stakeholders to sustain all water resources.
- Clearing house to optimize the generation and usefulness of all water monitoring data in Virginia (cost factors and protocols).

Steve reminded us that our goal is to develop a vision for the VWMC that we can publicly support. After much discussion, a fairly strong consensus seemed to be in place for accepting this proposed VWMC vision, which will be further discussed at the next meeting:

*Information of appropriate quantity and quality is available so that the status of Virginia's waters is known and effective and informed decisions can be made for their preservation, protection, and use.*

The following is a listing of vision statements offered individually by group participants:

Number 1

- Coordinated sharing of data that is provided in a uniform format.
- Screening of data to ensure quality of methods.
- Easily and publicly available central clearinghouse shared among all agencies, citizens, etc. for data.
- “Optimize” exchange of data.
- Water monitoring will be performed utilizing consistent, uniform quality controlled methods that generate data in a format that can easily be stored in a clearinghouse to be readily available for all.

Number 2

- Water monitoring data sets are collected from and shared by the full range of monitoring sources (e.g. state, district, local governments, environmental organizations, citizens) in a central clearinghouse.
- Several levels of uniform standards have been developed and are used. Data are categorized by standard level so that data can be used appropriately.
- Shared data is leveraged to make effective watershed management decisions to protect and improve the waters of Virginia.

Number 3

- Seamless communication of water resources information
- Seamless integration of the information into management decision-making
- Willing and effective collaboration among stakeholders to sustain all water resources

Number 4

The VWMC promotes collaboration of monitoring efforts and communication of monitoring results such that any citizens making use of data from or conducting water monitoring in Virginia will have access to complete and accurate information and/or data on monitoring (coverage and monitoring gaps or needs, historical data, pilot and special studies, ongoing studies) and monitoring contacts to make efficient use of resources and eradicate redundancy of effort.

All citizens of the Commonwealth and neighboring states will know the water quality status of Virginia waters and be able to make an informed decision on whether to use, recreate or drink any ground, surface or finished drinking water source in Virginia.

Number 5

Water monitoring efforts in Virginia:

1. Are carried out by many state, federal and local agencies as well as many community-based volunteer organizations,
2. Address many aspects of water resources,

3. Are coordinated to use the limited resources of monitoring organizations in an efficient and effective manner.

Water monitoring data is analyzed and used based on uniformity agreed upon and understood methodology, quality assurance, quality control and data use.

#### Number 6

All water monitoring efforts and the water quality and quantity of all aquatic resources and watersheds in Virginia are known by the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

#### Number 7

Information of appropriate quality and quantity are available, and the status for Virginia's waters are known, and informed, effective decisions can be made to preserve and protect these waters.

#### Number 8

- The right (highest priority) Virginia waters will be monitored.
- The monitoring data will all be of sufficient quality.
- The people who need the data will obtain it and make sound decisions based upon it.

#### Number 9

In Virginia, there is a forum where all watering monitoring information (data, methods, resources, standards, skill and knowledge) is easily exchanged. Further, Virginia has uniform:

- Water standards
- Monitoring methodologies (field and laboratory)
- Monitoring equipment guidelines
- Quality control guidelines
- Data management procedures.

#### Number 10

- Monitoring is the ultimate audit of the success of water management programs in Virginia.
- Good management decisions depend on high quality information of adequate quantity.
- The VWMC members should work together to ensure that monitoring resources are used to maximum efficiency and effectiveness for the long-term benefit of the citizens of the Commonwealth.