

Top 10 Watershed Lessons Learned: An Introduction

For the past six or so years, EPA, in partnership with many others, has been pursuing a watershed approach* to protecting our lakes, rivers, wetlands, estuaries, and streams. For a federal agency with a strong regulatory tradition, this is a new way of doing business. Taking on the role of community helper and partner has been a challenge. As with any change of this magnitude, there has been a lot of trial and error, and important lessons have been learned by us and our many partners that are worth sharing. Oftentimes, these lessons have been shared informally through networking at conferences, by phone, or over the internet. This series of Watershed Lessons Learned is an attempt to identify the top lessons and present them in one place.

The target audience for this publication is what I call “watershed practitioners and those who support them.” By this, I mean anyone who is trying to make watershed work happen or support it. This can include concerned citizens, scientists, government employees (on the local, state and federal levels), corporate sponsors, nonprofit groups, among others.

We believe this document meets two real needs. First, it will help readers learn what works and does not based on past experience. Second, it will assist people in reaching important resources and contacts that exist across the nation that can help them. The need for such information was pointed out in the conclusion of a presentation made by Robert Nuzum, Manager of Natural Resources, at East Bay Municipal Utility District in Oakland, CA. ***After working on a watershed plan for four years, he said that if he had to do it over again, he would spend more time educating participants on ‘what works’ and ‘what doesn’t’ prior to beginning his watershed planning effort.***

As for how this product was developed, a focus group comprised of 20 members of the target audience was assembled. This included representatives from River Network, Know Your Watershed, Center for Watershed Protection, Maryland Office of Planning, EPA Regional Offices among others. This group reacted to the idea, refined it, and developed the “top 10” watershed lessons learned. That list was circulated and improved with the insights of approximately 100 watershed coordinators and their supporters across the nation. These practitioners helped to identify the best examples to illustrate each lesson and the resources that have worked for them. Such testimony is very powerful.

In terms of using this piece, each lesson is stand-alone and contains a short description of the lesson, a few examples to illustrate it (with a contact where more information can be obtained) and a list of key contacts and resources associated with the lesson. In addition, we have included in the appendix indices to help guide you - the reader - through the information. This includes answers to commonly asked questions - the ones that we

heard over and over again as we developed this piece. *So, if you are pressed for time, we suggest you begin there.* In addition, this document is up on our fully searchable web site at <http://www.epa.gov/owow/lessons> if you prefer to see and explore information that way.

EPA wishes to thank the many reviewers and contributors to this piece. Their contributions were invaluable. It was very rewarding to have the opportunity to connect with so many experienced practitioners and to learn from them. In addition, the feedback on the first draft was quite positive, so we feel strongly that we are meeting a true need, and that is exciting. If you have feedback, please use the form provided in the back.

- Benjy Ficks, U.S. EPA
Watershed Outreach Coordinator

* Many EPA documents are available that define what we mean by 'watershed approach.' See *Watershed Approach Framework*, EPA 840-S-96-001, <http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/watershed/framework.html> or *Watershed Protection: A Statewide Approach* EPA841-R-95-004, <http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/watershed/state/> Call 1-800-490-9198 for a free copy.

PLACE IN BOX:

TOP 10 WATERSHED LESSONS LEARNED:

- 1. The Best Plans Have Clear Visions, Goals, and Action Items*
- 2. Good Leaders are Committed and Empower Others*
- 3. Having a Coordinator at the Watershed Level is Desirable*
- 4. Environmental, Economic, and Social Values are Compatible*
- 5. Plans Only Succeed if Implemented*
- 6. Partnerships Equal Power*
- 7. Good Tools Are Available*
- 8. Measure, Communicate, and Account for Progress*
- 9. Education and Involvement Drive Action*
- 10. Build on Small Successes*

Key Contacts and Resources

"LESSON LEARNED" RESOURCES (Also See Appendix 1)

- ***Top Ten Hint List*** from Know Your Watershed is a very popular hint list for watershed coordinators and is based on extensive interviews with watershed coordinators across the nation. Conservation Technology Information Center, 1220 Potter Drive, Room 170, West Lafayette, IN 47906, 765-494-9555, 765-494-5969 (fax), kyw@ctic.purdue.edu, <http://ctic.purdue.edu/KYW/KYW.html> (See Appendix 1).
- ***Lessons Learned: A Casebook for Successful Urban River Projects***, June 1997, American Rivers, Victor McMahan, Director, Urban Rivers Program, 1025 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 720, Washington, D.C. 20005, 202-547-6900, 202-347-9240 (fax),

amrivers@amrivers.org, <http://www.amrivers.org/> Documents lessons learned by urban river project groups across the country and offers advice for others. Includes contact information for each project.

- ***Innovations In Coastal Protection: Searching for Uncommon Solutions to Common Problems***, EPA 842-F-94-002, Call 1-800-490-9198 to order, <http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/coastal/cookbook/>, features innovative public outreach and education, management, and scientific approaches to protecting coastal resources and their watersheds. Indexed by author, keyword, and state.
- ***Nonpoint Source Pollution Information/Education Programs: National Conference Proceedings***, October 22-24, 1996, includes over 30 papers many of which include lessons learned. Copies of proceedings can be obtained from Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Water Pollution Control - Planning Section, P.O. Box 19276, Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276, 271-782-3362, 217-785-1225 (fax).
- ***Watershed Management - What Works and What Doesn't***, presentation by Robert Nuzum based on his 24 years of experience in watershed management. Robert Nuzum, Manager Natural Resources, East Bay Municipal Utility District, 375 Eleventh Street, Oakland, CA 94607-4240, 510-287-0407, nuzum@ebmud.com.
- ***Merrimack River Initiative, Watershed Connections: Lessons Learned in Subwatersheds***, January 1996, 24+ page document. Contact Carolyn Jenkins, New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, 255 Ballardvale Street, 2nd floor, Wilmington, MA 01887, 508-658-0500.

NATIONAL WATERSHED RESOURCES

- ***Watershed '96 Conference Proceedings***, national conference where hundreds of papers were presented all of which are on-line and searchable, <http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/watershed/Proceed/>, many lessons learned are shared.
- ***America's River Renaissance: Innovative Approaches to River Protection - Nine Success Stories***. A report by River Network, September, 1996. P.O. Box 8787, Portland, OR, 97207, 503-241-3506 (phone).

REGIONAL WATERSHED RESOURCES

- ***Restoring Our Watersheds: An Assessment of River Stewardship in New England and New York***, Appalachian Mountain Club, Peter Donahue, 5 Joy Street, Boston, MA, 02108, 617-523-0636, 617-367-8878 (fax).
- ***The Watershed Sourcebook: Watershed-Based Solutions to Natural Resource Problems***, University of Colorado School of Law, Natural Resources Law Center, Campus Box 401, Boulder, Colorado, 80309-0401, Doug Kenney, (303) 492-1288, (303) 492-1297 (fax), Douglas.Kenney@Colorado.EDU, concise case studies of 76 watershed initiatives in the western United States. Center is also examining the state and federal roles in supporting watershed groups.