



# PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER UTILITIES: *COMMUNITY CONSULTATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING*

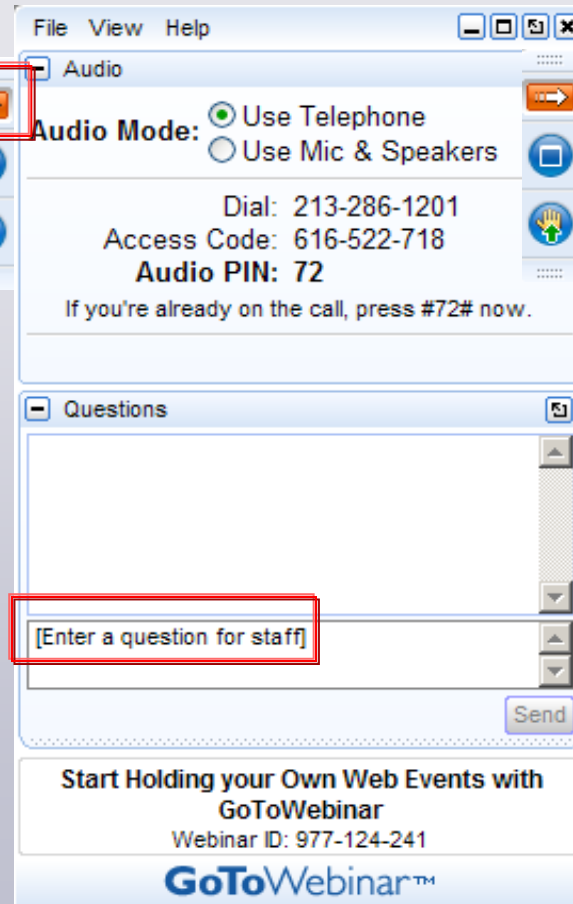
US EPA WEBCAST SERIES FOR WATER AND  
WASTEWATER UTILITIES

September 13, 2013



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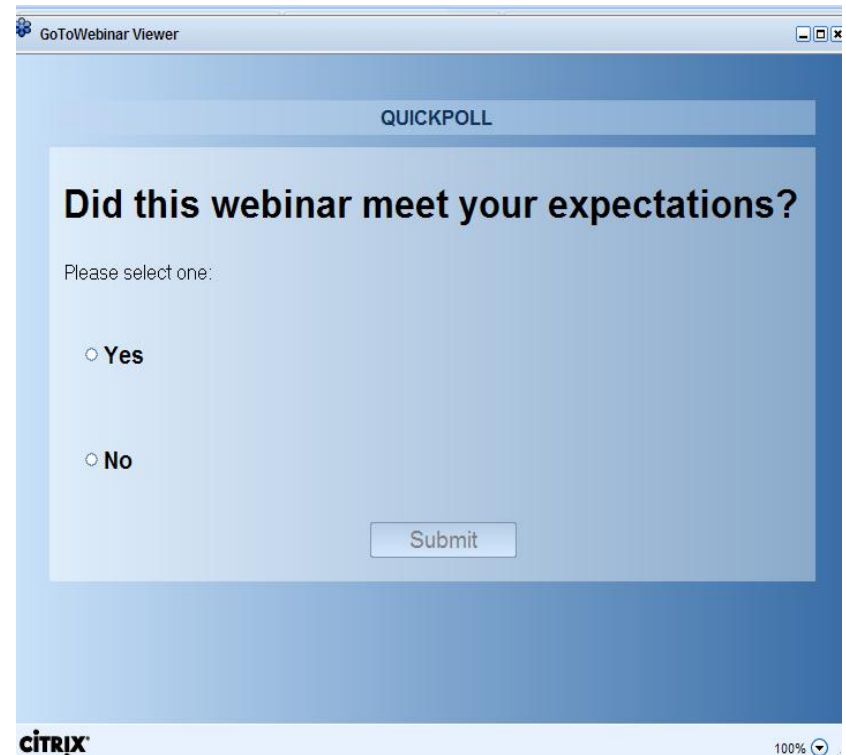
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# Quick Poll



# Webcast Agenda

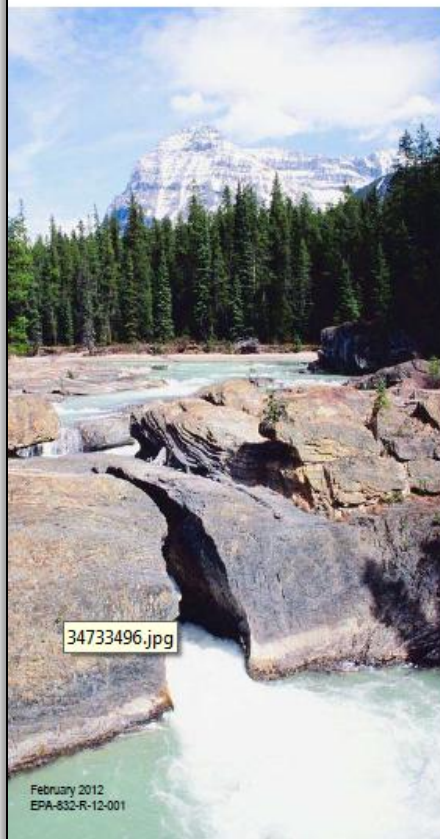
- *Community Consultation for Sustainability Planning*, Jim Horne, EPA Office of Water
  - Brief Overview of *Planning for Sustainability Handbook*
  - Focus on Planning Element 1: Goal Setting—Establish Sustainability Goals that Reflect Utility and Community Priorities
- Community Perspective: Mike Beezhold, Senior Planner/Project Manager, CDM Smith (Case: Lenexa, Kansas)
- Questions and Answers



# Planning for Sustainability



## A Handbook for Water and Wastewater Utilities



<http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/sustain/upload/EPA-s-Planning-for-Sustainability-Handbook.pdf>



# Background

- For the past several years EPA has undertaken a number of efforts to promote the sustainability of water infrastructure, utility operations, and communities. More information is at <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/sustain/index.cfm>
- These efforts are embodied in our *Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Infrastructure Sustainability Policy*, issued in October, 2010
- Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized the importance of up-front planning to guide effective infrastructure decisions, before the infrastructure solution is decided
- Effective planning is also closely tied to our 2007 partnership with leading associations to promote effective utility management based on the *Attributes of Effectively Managed Utilities and Keys to Management Success*
- Finally , the Handbook can also help utilities focusing heavily on climate change through EPA's Climate Ready Water Utilities Initiative; more information is at: [http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/watersecurity/climate/upload/crwu\\_brochure\\_v15\\_lowres\\_1.pdf](http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/watersecurity/climate/upload/crwu_brochure_v15_lowres_1.pdf)

# Overview of Planning for Sustainability Handbook

- Handbook is organized around a set of Core Elements to help utilities incorporate sustainability in their planning
- Helps utilities enhance their existing planning through core elements and steps—not a new planning guidance
- Developed with extensive input from utility and other stakeholders—from initial concept to final review
  - Water and wastewater utility representatives, including large and small systems
  - Water, wastewater, and public works associations (WEF, AWWA, AMWA, NACWA, APWA, ASDWA, NRWA)
  - State SRF officials
- Handbook published in February 2012



# Benefits of Planning for Sustainability

- **Minimize costs** by optimizing investment choices, operating water and wastewater systems more efficiently, and pursuing cost-effective investment and management strategies
- **Maximize results** of investments to ensure continual compliance, a reliable source of water, treatment, and discharge capacity, as well as financing capability
- **Improve the ability to analyze a range of alternatives**, including both traditional and non-traditional infrastructure alternatives
- **Engender greater support** for the utility by aligning infrastructure choices with community values and sustainability priorities
- **Ensure that financial and revenue strategies are adequate** to finance, operate, maintain, and replace essential infrastructure throughout its operational life for all community members

# Core Planning Elements

## 1. Goal-Setting

*Consider goals that reflect utility and community sustainability priorities*

## 2. Objectives and Strategies

*Establish objectives and strategies for each sustainability goal*

## 3. Alternatives Analysis

*Based on sustainability objectives, analyze a range of alternatives, based on explicit and consistent evaluation criteria*

## 4. Financial Strategy

*Develop a financial strategy reflecting adequate revenues to ensure alternatives chosen are sufficiently funded, maintained, and replaced over time*

# Planning Element 1: Goal Setting—*Establish Sustainability Goals that Reflect Utility and Community Priorities*


Step 1. Identify sustainability priorities and potential opportunities for the utility



Step 2. Identify community sustainability priorities



Step 3. Engage the community about its sustainability priorities



Step 4. Identify and document sustainability goals

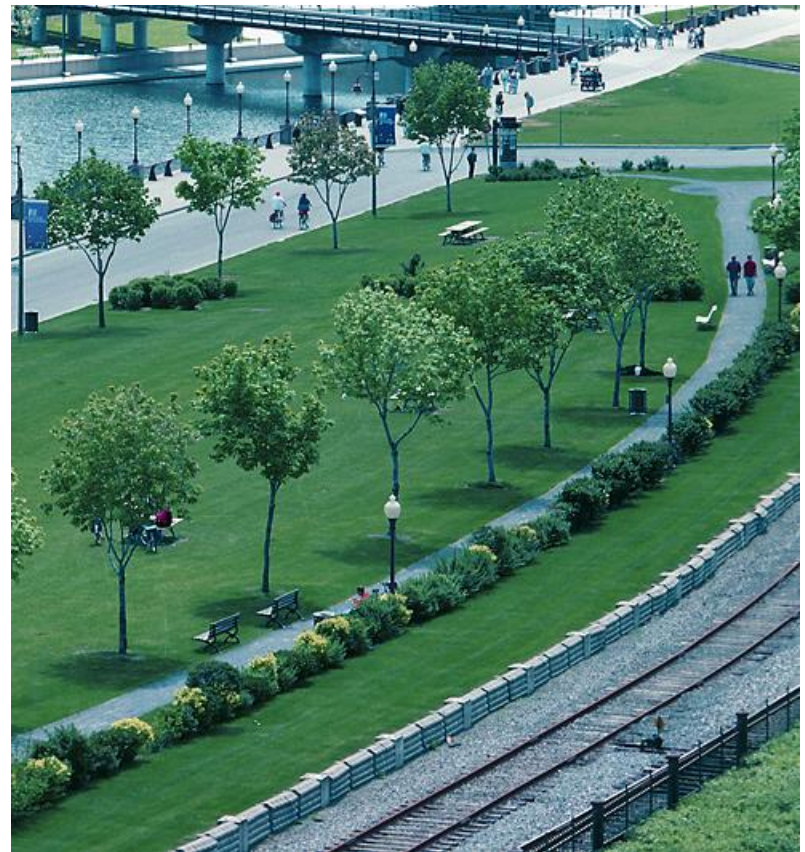
# Step 1. Identify sustainability priorities and potential opportunities for the utility

- Internal assessment of infrastructure and operations that may provide opportunities for increased sustainability and improved performance
- Informed by several factors including:
  - Utility's mission and strategic direction
  - Regulatory and legal requirements
  - An assessment of vulnerability related to sustaining operations and financing
  - Customer expectations about services and rates
  - Financial and other benefits



## Step 2. Identify community sustainability priorities

- Review planning documents or efforts (e.g., transportation plans, climate action plans, watershed plans, community “vision” documents. Etc.)
- Become familiar with planning processes underway
- Potentially get involved in planning efforts (e.g., as part of steering committee)





# Step 3. Engage the community about its sustainability priorities

- Focus on:
  - Identifying community and utility sustainability priorities
  - Understanding how water infrastructure decisions affect a community's ability to achieve priorities
  - Identifying how communities and utilities can align their sustainability efforts
- Ideally occurs as part of ongoing engagement about services, key decisions, and revenue needs
- Should address what communities are willing and able to afford if new infrastructure or programs are needed

## *Key groups for consultation*

- Economic development, transportation, and other agencies that set local long-term growth and development strategies
- Watershed groups
- Neighboring utilities
- Local decision-makers
- Businesses, ratepayers, and environmental groups

# Approaches for Involving Stakeholders in Planning

- Participating in direct discussion with other planning institutions and community bodies early in their planning processes
- Getting involved in existing community-wide planning efforts
- Aligning utility planning with existing community plans
- Convening a stakeholder process for water planning



## Step 4. Identify and document sustainability goals

- Document goals to inform later stages of planning
- Communicate goals to boards, other oversight bodies, and utility employees
- Maintain regular communication with stakeholders and relevant regulatory agencies throughout the planning process to help lay the foundation for subsequent decisions about strategies and investments

# Potential Sustainability Goals

- Improve compliance and overall efficiency
  - *Example: Establish collaborative partnerships with neighboring utilities to increase or maintain capacity or to share information and expertise.*
- Reduce energy costs
  - *Example: Invest in more energy efficient equipment or explore operational changes that can enhance energy optimization.*
- Align water infrastructure projects with other community priorities
  - *Example: Partner with other community agencies to coordinate infrastructure projects such as road repairs with service line replacement rain gardens.*
- Extend the projected adequacy of current water supplies
  - *Example: Implement consumer water conservation programs, implement water metering, fix distribution system leaks, or make use of reclaimed water.*
- Address wet weather impacts
  - *Example: Implement non-traditional infrastructure alternatives such as green infrastructure with integrated stormwater and combined sewer overflow control.*



# Implementing on a Smaller Scale

- Smaller utilities without the staff or resources for a formal community consultation process can:
  - Gather information through documents (e.g., comp. plans)
  - Hold discussions with key individuals in the community (e.g., town manager or clerk)
- Regardless of size, utilities need to garner community support for critical decisions
- Handbook provides further guidance on how to implement steps on a smaller scale
- *EPA's "Strategic Handbook for Small Water Systems" is a useful planning resource for small utilities*

[http://www.epa.gov/ogwdw/smallsystems/pdfs/guide\\_smallsystems\\_stratplan.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/ogwdw/smallsystems/pdfs/guide_smallsystems_stratplan.pdf)

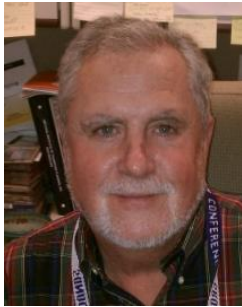
# Community consultation in other aspects of sustainability planning

- **Alternatives analysis (Element 3):**
  - Community input on evaluation criteria and alternatives
  - Weighting factors that reflect community priorities and values
- **Financial sustainability (Element 4):**
  - Building customer appreciation of value
  - Creating understanding about adequacy (or not) of rates
- Overall transparency in planning is critical—helps to build ongoing community trust and support

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# Questions and Answers



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Mike Beezhold, Senior Planner/Project Manager, CDM  
Smith (Case: Lenexa, Kansas)

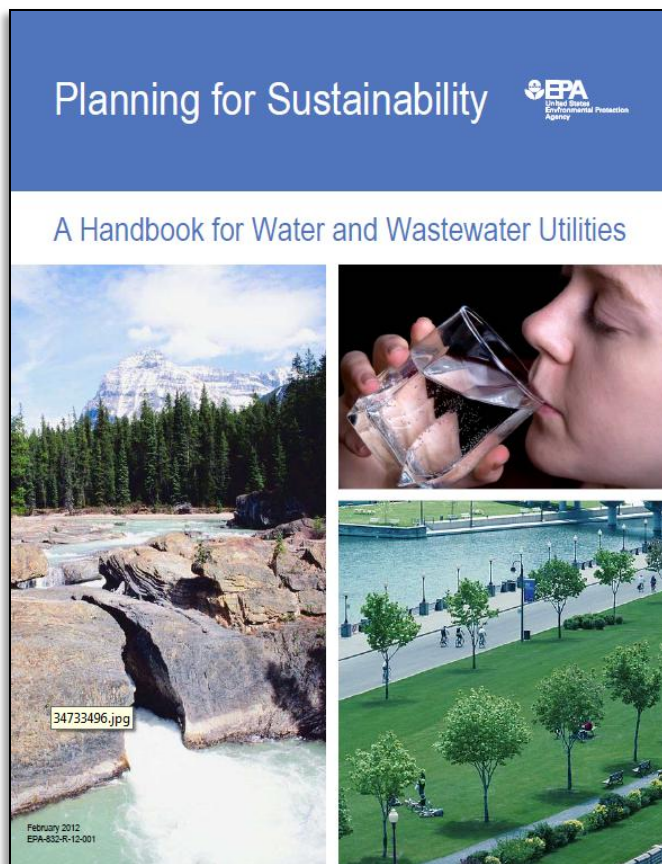
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# Future Webcasts on Planning for Sustainability

- Incorporating Sustainability Considerations into Alternatives Analysis (December 2012)
- Ensuring Financial Sustainability (February 2013)

# Thank you for participating



Please take a moment to provide feedback through the poll you receive when you exit the webinar

<http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/sustain/upload/EPA-s-Planning-for-Sustainability-Handbook.pdf>