Communicating to Gain and Maintain Buy-In
The Logan Todd Regional Water Commission
This presentation was originally presented in 2012 as part of a four-part webinar series to promote system partnerships. The webinars were provided by the U.S. EPA and U.S. Department of Agriculture to jointly promote sustainable rural water and wastewater systems.
Presentation Topics

• What are water system partnerships?
• The Logan Todd Regional Partnership
  – Background on the Partnership
  – Communicating to gain and maintain buy-in
  – Lessons learned
What are Water System Partnerships?
A tool for building technical, managerial and financial capacity.
What are Water System Partnerships?

- Do you know a system that faces any of these challenges?
  - Technical
    - Inadequate or aging infrastructure
    - Limited/poor source quality/quantity
    - Lack certified operator
  - Financial
    - Diseconomies of scale (few households = high costs)
    - History of water rates that are too low
    - Limited knowledge of financing options
  - Managerial
    - Limited part time management attention
    - Lack of expertise in long-term water system planning or operations
Different Types of Partnerships

**Increasing Transfer of Responsibility**

- **Informal Cooperation**
  - Work with other systems, but without contractual obligations.
  - Examples:
    - Sharing equipment
    - Sharing bulk supply purchases
    - Mutual aid arrangements

- **Contractual Assistance**
  - Requires a contract, but contract is under system's control.
  - Examples:
    - O&M
    - Engineering
    - Purchasing water

- **Joint Power Agency**
  - Creation of a new entity by several systems that continue to exist as independent entities.
  - Examples:
    - Shared system management
    - Shared operators
    - Shared source water

- **Ownership Transfer**
  - Takeover by existing or newly created entity.
  - Examples:
    - Acquisition and physical interconnection
    - Acquisition and satellite management
    - Transfer of privately owned system to new or existing public entity
Presentations

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• **Roger Recktenwald**, Former Director of Kentucky Infrastructure Authority / Current Director of Research and Planning for Kentucky Association of Counties

• **Julie Roney**, Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection, Division of Water

• **Vernon Brown**, Communities Program Director for USDA-RD-RUS Kentucky State Office
Logan-Todd Regional Water Commission
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Water system partnerships encompass a range of opportunities for systems to work together in order to sustainably provide drinking water services.
Logan-Todd Regional Water Commission

Legend
Surface and Spring Sources
- LOGAN/TODD REGIONAL WATER COMMISSION
Water Treatment Plants
- LOGAN/TODD REGIONAL WATER COMMISSION

Map created by Anne G. Powell on December 21, 2011 utilizing data from the EEC GIS Portal.

Kentucky Unbridled Spirit
Logan-Todd Regional Water Commission
The Twelve Partners

• Customers Served:
  – About 300-3,300 customers
  – 7 systems served <1,000

• System Ownership:
  – 8 municipally-owned systems – with their own treatment plants
  – 3 water districts – purchased finished water; 1 treated water
  – 1 privately-owned water association – purchased finished water

• System Sources:
  – Several flashy springs, some lakes and rivers
Why the Systems Came Together
Why the Systems Came Together

- Russellville was a key plant – it served 3 other systems
- Drought
- Not enough water for industry
Logan-Todd Regional Water Commission
Logan-Todd Regional Water Commission

• Management determined by Kentucky Statutes
  – Regional Water Commission by-laws, positions
• Board has 12 members, one from each member system
• Each member has one vote on the board
Major Milestones in the Partnership

Logan-Todd Regional Water Commission (LTRWC)

1988 – Drought prompts systems to consider alternative sources

1991 – Logan County Water Advisory Group formed

1995 – LTRWC was formed by the Logan County fiscal court; and the first meeting took place in Russellville

1996 – Engineering study was completed that identified the need to develop a raw water source

1998 – LTRWC was denied funding for intermediate solutions by several funding agencies. They would have to build the entire project.

1998 – 11 systems in Logan and Todd Counties agree to purchase water from the LTRWC

1999 – Oak Grove joins and the governor provides a $2 million grant to get the LTRWC started.

1999 – 11 systems in Logan and Todd Counties agree to purchase water from the LTRWC

2001 – Design work finished; construction contracts were awarded.

2003 – Formal grand opening with all water systems online.
Funding

- Total project cost of regional project was about $77 million. Water Plant currently serves 40,000 people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding sources:</th>
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<tr>
<td>USDA Loan Amount</td>
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<tr>
<td>DWSRF</td>
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<td>KIA 20/20 Grant</td>
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<td>Appropriation – Earmarks</td>
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<td>State Funds</td>
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<td>Area Development Grant Fund</td>
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<td>Systems’ Contributions</td>
<td>$19 K</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Funding</td>
<td>$4 M</td>
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</tbody>
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Success

• Good \textit{quality} water and \textit{consistent} service
• Ability to attract \textbf{industry}
• Resilience
• Good \textit{neighbors}
• Recognition
Communicating to Gain and Maintain Buy in
Communication

- Bringing in **new members**
- Working on the **future** of the system
- Working out **sticky** issues
- **Continuing** communication
Historic Rivalries

• Rooted in school traditions and local identity
• Need to address this directly by talking about it with other potential partners
• Hold meetings in communities other than the county seat
Sense of Unfairness

• Everyone brings different assets or different challenges to the table
• Not all partners will benefit equally
• Some communities may just have a greater need
Loss of Control

• Instead of focusing on loss of control, focus on the ability to gain control over other aspects of the system
• Customers don’t care about water loss as long as there is quality service and reasonable rates
• Bring decisions about a partnership to the broader community
Focus on Commonalities

• What do you the systems have in common?
  – Need a new source?
  – Need funding for new infrastructure?
• Remember the long-term goal: potable water
• Focus on the numbers
Focus on the Wins

• System wins:
  – Resiliency and redundancy
  – Focus on distribution

• Political wins:
  – Have a unified voice
  – Funding agencies recognize and applaud partnerships
Communicating with the Community

• Explain the need
• Communicate about the partnership process at the beginning
• Go door-to-door
• Regulatory agencies are partners
• Remember that, while no one likes higher water bills, not having water is worse.
What have we learned?
Regulatory Partners

• Regulatory partners can help with messaging and can provide technical information to the communities
  – Can play a “white hat role” in communicating about public health problems, violations
  – Can encourage partnerships by talking to commissioners and governors

• KY DEP attended public meetings and board meetings to explain regulations, diseases, and non-compliance
What have we learned?
Funders

• Funding Coordination
  – Frequent communication
  – Bring funders in early

“Maybe. . . But let’s talk about it. . .”
What have we learned?

Enabling Legislation

Kentucky Statutes that Authorize Regionalization & Consolidation

- Drinking Water
  - KRS 74.420-520 (source r&f)
  - KRS 65.210-300 (all dw +)
  - KRS 74.361 (PSC-merger)

- Wastewater
  - KRS 65.8901-8925 (treatment)
  - KRS 76.231-233 (all ww)
  - MSD - ‘normal’ KRS 220 & 67.715 (all ww)

Kentucky’s Community-based Water and Wastewater Planning & Project Development Process
Kentucky’s Process of Community-Based Water and Wastewater Planning & Project Funding

15 Area Water Management Planning Councils. Each develops an area-wide plan with GIS data.

Kentucky Water Management Plan Water Resources Information System (WRIS)

Project Recommendations and Funding for SRF Applications

Once construction is complete on a community project, digital “as built”s are enrolled in WRIS.
Water Resource Information System: GIS Map Layers and Attributes for All Systems

- Water: 17 layers with over 300 attributes in addition to financial and management information.
- Wastewater: 11 layers with over 175 attributes in addition to financial and management information.

Contributors/users:
- Over 400 water and wastewater systems
- 15 Area Development Districts
- State and Federal Water and Wastewater Agencies
- State and Federal Emergency Management Agencies
- Utility Support Associations
- Engineering Firms
Water Resource Information System: GIS Map Layers and Attributes for All Systems

• Principal Uses:
  – Local Community Planning
  – Decision Support – Regulatory and Funding Agencies
  – Advocacy: Legislators are provided wall maps annually, illustrating existing water and waste water facilities and proposed projects in their districts.
  – Emergency Planning & Response
  – State Economic Development, Highway & Public Facilities Planning

• For additional information, visit http://kia.ky.gov/wris/
Increased Access to Drinking Water Systems
Increased Access to Waste Water Systems
Closing Remarks

- Remember, communities have rivalries that cannot be ignored
- Find common ground
- Focus on the numbers
- Be aware and accommodating of different systems’ limitations
- Remember the bottom line – supplying potable water into the future
Additional Information

For more information on the benefits of Water System Partnerships, please visit: https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/water-system-partnerships-meeting