



Panelists, in regards to public participation in watershed management planning and implementation name and describe a program, event, meeting or other public participation "endeavor" you have implemented that was extremely successful. Please tell us about the name of the program include when it was held, the format, the reason and content of the program, how you went about promotion, and the outcome, impact, or input attained. In covering all these points - share with us what went well and why? What tools or advice can you offer all of us to get lots of public participation?

Blue Thumb-Planting for Clean Water is an on-going, web-based program designed to help minimize stormwater runoff pollution by encouraging residents to do what they can to control runoff on their own properties. Since 78% of the land in Minnesota is privately owned, what residents do on their own property greatly impacts our waters.

I started the program when I ran the cost-share program for the RCWD and I realized that there was not enough of me to go around and that I somehow needed to automate the system and have residents be able to answer some of their questions on their own. A resident pointed out to me that even if folks wanted to implement native plantings, raingardens or lakeshore stabilization projects using plants, it was very difficult for the average person to figure out how to accomplish the project, who to ask for help, where to find plants and other materials like erosion control blankets, etc. Four years ago I started "One-Stop Shopping to Restore Your Yard & Shore" to help address these questions. The program soon evolved into "Landscaping for Clean Water" and then, in August of 2007, it finally became Blue Thumb.

Another reason I started the program is because I wanted to offer materials the MS4s within the RCWD could use to help fulfill their outreach/education and public participation mandates. Since the problem of stormwater runoff is a general problem, it made sense to make nice resources that everyone could use and so I wouldn't have to tailor them for each of the 28 cities within the RCWD boundaries.

The program took off when it was renamed "Blue Thumb-Planting for Clean Water" and when it had an attractive logo. **When developing programs, sign, brochures, websites, it is worth the money to hire a graphic designer. Eye-catching materials and logos are key to success.** I've never had to recruit a partner, since the program filled a niche and united so many different public, private and non-profit entities under one umbrella.

From April 25, 2007-May 25, 2009, the BT website has had 40,206 visits, 213,220 page views (an average of 5.3 pages/visit). The average user spent 3 minutes and 38 seconds on the site and 70% of the visits were new visitors. We have reached thousands of residents through workshops, booths, mass media campaigns etc.

The BT program currently (6-4-09) has 62 partners who have agreed to put in a minimum of 30 hrs./year of volunteer time or “action hours” or \$1,500/yr. or any combination thereof. Most of the partners opt to fulfill their agreements through with time rather than money contributions. Therefore, with its current membership BT will have about around 1,860 hours of time from other organizations this year which averages out to nearly 36 hrs./week or basically have another full-time staff person! This doesn't include the fact that many of the watershed districts and SWCDs contribute considerably more than their minimum requirement.

Things I've learned: In order to reach the public effectively, you must work with others. It cannot be done alone. More partners means more workshops can be given, more fairs, booths and expos that can be staffed, more one-on-one conversations with home-owners, more mass media efforts...

Things that have worked well in running an effective partnership:

- To ensure that all partners are contributing, have a signed agreement with outlining member responsibilities and expectations
- To reduce administrative time, allow new partners to join during a specific enrollment period. Also allowing partners to update their own profiles, enter events, their own contributions, etc. reduces administrative time
- Have partners renew their membership on an annual basis to keep them involved
- Level the playing field by allowing partners to contribute time/talent or money
- Make bridges whenever possible, be inclusive – sometimes rules have to be bent or changed to accommodate good partners However, this partnership may not be a perfect fit for every organization and that's o.k.
- Combine efforts of public, private, non-profit and civic entities

In regards to the same program you just spoke about - or another one involving public participation, what did not work successfully? Share with us what didn't go well to achieve a successful public participation program? What would you tell all of us to avoid or not try?

Long name without a decent logo

Having the partnership without expectations for what each partner was going to contribute

Having me do most of the administrative work – 10 minutes here and there adds up!

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