



# River Voices

## Get Plugged In

# Successful Internet Strategies

By John Kenyon, Groundspring.org

The internet is helping organizations save rivers and watersheds in surprising ways every day. Just like donors and funders, polluters will size up your organization based on your website. Deborah, the Altamaha RiverKeeper in Georgia was surprised at the effect of their website on polluters. “We’ve never been in a meeting about a legal settlement that the party didn’t tell us that they looked at our website. I wasn’t expecting that the polluters would be perusing our website prior to meeting with us, but I have since found out they are the first ones to look at it.” Deborah’s experience of being evaluated by their online presence is not unique. Jenna Olsen of the Tuolumne River Trust in California has found, “Foundations look at our site before my meetings with them, as do government funders. It makes a good impression and the conversation can be more fruitful because we are starting the conversation further along.”

Everywhere today, watershed and river conservation organizations are profiting from using email campaigns and the Web as part of their communications and fundraising programs. Websites are used to inform, build community, advocate and even save valuable staff time. In addition to building relationships with current donors, online campaigns help bring many more people to your site, grow your email list, increase your visibility and help you raise more money.



Jordan Vinograd, Community Outreach Coordinator for the Johnson Creek Watershed Council (JCWC) in Oregon, earnestly describes their website as “An outreach tool we couldn’t afford not to have.” As an integrated part of their strategic plan, the internet increases JCWC’s reach, creates stronger connections in the community, allows the organization to work more efficiently and raise more money. Through the internet, JCWC connects with people outside the watershed’s urban Portland location, attracting supporters from around the state and the country.

Beyond reaching a larger base of supporters and raising more money, JCWC’s internet strategy has helped them free up staff for work that has more impact than answering phones. In the past, tracking wildlife sightings in the watershed meant time-consuming phone-calls, then periodic gathering, formatting and disseminating of the information on a regular basis. Now they’ve created a “critter watch” section on the web where people can post information on their wildlife sightings that neighbors, friends and even potential supporters can enjoy. The section requires almost no work from the organization but goes a long way to connecting people to their watershed. Frequent phone calls asking where to report a spill or where to get a map of the watershed were regular time-consumers for staff. With the wealth of information available on the site, JCWC can handle those calls in a much more efficient manner.

Building an online presence is about so much more than creating an online brochure for your organization. It’s about using the internet to build relationships with constituents so your organization can better fulfill and support its mission. Often, this



# River Network

*Connecting People, Saving Rivers*

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## From The President

S

ometimes it seems that “progress” makes our watershed protection efforts ever-more difficult. Some advances, however, work to our great advantage. Few have enhanced our potential more than the internet.

About two decades ago, I worked for a brand-new watershed group. We took great pride in our ability to gather information, get it to the right people and get results quickly. For example, when our volunteers detected a serious watershed problem, they would take photographs, have them developed and bring them to our office. We would organize the photographs and field notes, and then mail or hand-deliver them to the right people in business offices across town or government offices two or three hours’ drive away. In case of real emergency, we would also spend a few hours faxing crucial information to key people. We were often able to get results in days or weeks instead of months or years it would have taken without our group’s coordinated efforts.

Today, however, the “rapid response” program of which we were so proud would be irresponsibly *slow*. With a little modern hardware and training, these same volunteers could take water quality samples, digital photographs and GPS readings in the field and then upload all the information directly to a database and website. They could send an email with a website link to group members, public officials, environmental organizations, company executives and dozens of media outlets within moments. This could reduce the response time of responsible parties to hours or minutes. It could also create instant public awareness and political pressure for a solution.

This is just one of scores of ways that the internet is revolutionizing our work. The possibilities are limited only by our imagination. Let’s make the most of it by sharing our best ideas, beginning with those highlighted in this issue of *River Voices*.

Don Elder



## *Successful Internet Strategies, cont.*

cont. from page 1 means using the internet to complement existing programs; in other cases this means creating new programs that you couldn't have dreamed of before.

### **Why Do Nonprofits Need to Be Online?**

Initially, the Web created a revolution in "brochureware," allowing nonprofits to reach many new supporters and media with simple sites. Those sites are no longer effective as people now expect more informative and interactive sites. New services enable even nonprofits with the smallest budgets to sign up members, take credit card donations, sponsor online discussions, offer surveys, put up searchable databases and much more.

Potential donors use the web to research organizations that match their interests. They will often make the decision to become involved or donate based solely on your website. If your website is not engaging, does not cultivate involvement and does not give a clear impression of your organization's credibility, that potential donor will move on to another organization whose website effectively communicates and engages with prospective donors.

With the internet's growing importance, widespread use and influence, nonprofits have new opportunities for communicating with their constituents, getting their work done and garnering support. The internet isn't replacing other media, but it has taken its place alongside them. Most notable is the role that email is playing in the operational capacity of nonprofit organizations. Email has created a sea of change as a tool for communicating with donors and colleagues, alerting activists and disseminating information. As a complement to existing methods, the internet is a medium that has finally come of age for a nonprofit sector that is hungry for modern and effective campaign tools and techniques.

### **Who's Succeeding Online?**

Organizations of all sizes and types are using the internet effectively and enjoying the benefits. These organizations have been able to develop an online constituency devoted to their mission and give people reasons to come to their sites. From large organizations who have traditionally had success online to the smallest grassroots organizations, nonprofits are finding new supporters, raising additional funds and communicating more effectively with their stakeholders.

Bluewater Network, in California, is an example of an organization which has developed practices that helped them grow their email list from 1,700 names to 20,000 names in just over 2 years. Jennifer Sachs, Bluewater Network's Development Director says, "Online fundraising may seem daunting but it's not. We're a small organization, but we can seem large online without spending the dollars. We can't do the glossy magazine ad or a mailing to 100,000, but we can reach large numbers of people and look exciting online."

Arizona's Prescott Creeks Executive Director, Michael Byrd shared, "In the last five years, Prescott Creeks has gone from an obscure organization to one people now recognize. The website has played an important part in that. Fifty percent of our volunteer interest comes from our website and we've had a lot of folks say 'If I could pay with a credit card I would have donated long ago.'"

Johnson Creek Watershed Council, by accepting online donations through their website noticed a huge difference in their Friends' campaign response. After launching their email newsletter in November of 2004, they saw their weekly website traffic almost double in just 4 months.

## What Are Nonprofit

### Organizations Doing Online?

Nonprofits are trying a variety of creative ideas to take advantage of the internet. Along with disseminating information and providing services, raising money is another added benefit of being online. The internet continues to grow as a fundraising channel with online donations growing year after year. Raising money is only one part of using the internet successfully. As you develop your online fundraising program, remember to consider it as part of a much broader online presence.

### Marketing:

You can use the web and email to complement and maximize your overall marketing efforts. Your website can be a news service, an information library, an activist center, a community meeting place, a store and more, all in one. It allows you to present your mission and programs in their best light and interact in new ways with your constituents at their convenience.

### Education and Outreach:

As a constantly evolving repository of information, your website can play a unique role in disseminating information and engaging people. Its educational uses are as wide as you are creative and inventive. Make sure your education and outreach materials are easily accessible, downloadable or printable and up-to-date.

Nadananda, Executive Director from Friends of the Eel River in California, has seen this in action. “Our public outreach puts us in the position of having to be contended with. We can no longer be ignored. By getting your publications up on your website, you get to say what you want without someone else speaking for you. I think it’s absolutely vital.”

### Name Recognition/Branding:

Websites and email newsletters are key assets in creating a powerful and memorable brand for organizations. With your own internet domain name and the “look” of your website, you can create a memorable virtual experience for your constituents. Use every opportunity to reinforce that your website and email newsletters are fundamental parts of your organization. Just as people remember the name of your organization, they should also remember your domain name (URL).

### Service Delivery:

Some organizations can deliver their services online. If you provide information on river health, help people adopt rivers and watersheds or let people contact their local and national legislators, you can offer these services on your website. Consider online registration for events and other ways to include the web in your program and service delivery.

### Sales/Distribution:

Whether you’re enrolling people for your events (free or paid), selling products or distributing publications, your website can play a key operational role. Using an Application Service Provider, you can create a catalog of products and services and accept online credit card payments, or let users download documents for free.

### Advocacy:

Advocacy is one of the most important ways to engage people online. You can highlight important issues and suggest ways people can get involved—from volunteering to sending faxes to elected officials or corporate CEOs. Whether it’s a hot political issue or an enduring social problem, your website and email newsletters can become important resources for people seeking to make a difference.

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## Four Basics of Effective Online Fundraising

The foundation of effective online fundraising is your website. It is where both strangers and friends encounter your organization—and often the only place they interact with it. To support fundraising online, organizations need a website that is:

1. Updated regularly
2. Able to accept Online Donations
3. Easy to Navigate
4. Collecting Email Addresses

Every organization, no matter how small, needs these things to be effective online. Here are some tips on getting started:

- 1. UPDATING THE WEBSITE** – make a plan and assign responsibility for gathering content and writing stories about your organization, the people it impacts and the issues that affect your work. Ask board members and volunteers to write about their experience with the organization.
- 2. ACCEPTING ONLINE DONATIONS** – Sign up for a donation processing system like DonateNow. To help you select a service, go to different organizations' sites, make a small donation and evaluate the giving experience. Make sure your donation button is front and center on your webpage—don't make people search to donate. Ask for people's support and tell them what great things you will do with their contribution.
- 3. EASY TO NAVIGATE** – Have a navigation bar that stays in the same place on all of your pages. Ask board members, volunteers and others to find certain things on the site, then critique the site on how easy it is to find information. Look for other sites you like and that you find easy to navigate for ideas.
- 4. COLLECTING EMAIL ADDRESSES** – In order to widen your base of online supporters, you need to collect email addresses and keep in touch with people. Select an online email processing system that is easy for your staff to use—try out several systems to see which one meets your needs. Then start sending out regular emails to keep people updated on your activities.

### Collaboration:

The internet offers great opportunity for collaboration with other organizations and companies, as well as among your members and supporters.

### Fundraising:

Using a donation processing service, you can use your website to raise money, as well as keep your supporters informed about how their financial support gets put to use and reinforces your other fundraising efforts. By bringing people to your site and then making a compelling case for giving, you can begin to build a list of online donors.

Keep in mind that online fundraising can't exist in a vacuum. The success of your online fundraising program will be largely dependent on your organization's overall internet presence as well as your traditional offline fundraising activities.

### Developing Your Organization's Internet Strategy

The internet opens up a whole new world of opportunities, so using it effectively may mean rethinking and reinventing your organization. After launching a website or an email newsletter, many organizations draw such large and varied audiences that they begin to reexamine the way their whole organization works.

### Get Informed:

There are some excellent resources available for you to learn how to use the internet to your organization's advantage (See resources section, page 25). For example, after strategic

planning around membership development, Christina Newell of the Tuolumne River Trust took a course from Groundspring.org. The course included sections on effective websites, driving traffic to your site and online fundraising campaigns. Christina has found “The class was really great for me. [The website] has become a more integrated part of our entire membership development program. As a result, we are getting more people visiting the site and a lot more online donations.”

#### *Input from Organizational Stakeholders:*

When thinking about your online strategy, it’s important to get all the stakeholders in your organization together as a group, including staff, board members, volunteers and clients or other beneficiaries. Websites and email newsletters are often developed by one department, such as Communications or Development. But everyone in your organization should have a stake in them. Make the conversation broad, and connect your internet presence to the broader strategic planning issues in your organization. Your program’s progress will depend on a firm commitment at all levels of your organization.

#### *Integrating Online and Offline Strategies:*

A key factor in your online success is integrating the internet into offline programs. In your planning and analysis of all of your activities and campaigns, consider ways to bridge the real world and the virtual world of your website and email newsletters. Consider ways to modify your print materials (brochures, business cards, flyers, newsletters, fact sheets, booklets, books) to promote your internet offerings. Make sure the internet team in your organization thinks strategy, not just technical, and meets regularly with program staff to integrate the internet into their work.

#### *Committing Resources:*

Using the internet effectively means committing the appropriate resources. Website development and hosting, design, programming and promotion cost money and staff time; so does email messaging. Managers need to allocate time and money for staffing, budgets, relationships with vendors and deliverables. Your online efforts will probably grow, and technologies will change, so you should be planning now to increase your internet budget every year. Keep in mind that technology expenditures may increase your efficiency and save you resources elsewhere.

#### *Effect on Staff:*

Far too often, website maintenance and online communications are tacked on to an already over-worked, under-paid staff person’s responsibilities. But having an effective online strategy is staff intensive—they have to deal with vendors, create content, do outreach, evaluate effectiveness, handle a larger volume of email and deal with in-house issues. Staff who will be involved in your internet efforts should be clearly identified and empowered to get the work done. They’ll need time, focus, support from managers, training and software or tools.

It’s never too late to rethink how your internet strategy can integrate into your organization. No matter your size or capacity, the internet can help broaden your reach and gather supporters to help achieve your mission. Don’t just stand on the virtual riverbank, jump in!



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## Flowing Out into the WWW

# Creating an Effective Website

by Margaret McCoy

Web Manager  
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Creating a website is not hard. Navigating through all the options out there and keeping up with technology to create an effective website can be. But luckily, for us, many great resources exist—if you know where to find them. This article will provide you with some tools and options for getting you started—or give you ideas for a site upgrade if you already have one.

### Planning Your Site For Success

These days, integrating your site with your overall communications plan is key to your website success. If you are just getting started or are rethinking your current site, it is important to begin the process with some careful planning.

#### 1. Clarify Your Goals

When you create a website, or revisit your site design every year or two, use these questions to help you define your site goals:

- What is the purpose of our site?  
*to build credibility, get the word out, increase funding sources...*
- What action do we want visitors to take?  
*make a donation, send a letter to congress, sign up for our eNewsletter, download tips...*
- How will we measure success of the site?  
*number of emails captured, number of visitors to the site, number of downloads, number of actions taken, number of online donations...*
- Who's our audience?  
*donors, members, volunteers, board members, general public, recreationists, funders, media, policymakers, competitors, service providers...*
- What type of information are they looking for?  
*Information about us, about the river, about a meeting or event...*

- What type of information can we provide?  
*pdfs of newsletters, events calendar, staff bios, action alerts, interactivity, surveys, collaboration tools...*
- What image do we want to project?  
*professional, fun, credible, together...*
- How often will the different sections of our site be updated and by whom?  
*Daily, weekly, monthly; an easy way to add and edit content; news items and calendar events will change weekly...*
- Are we developing for high or low-end systems?  
*do people have fast or slow internet connections; current systems or older systems...*
- How will we promote or market the site?  
*links to the site from our eNewsletter, GoogleAds...*

When you've answered these questions, you will have the beginning of a document to inform the design and navigation of your site.

In your planning process, browse the web to see what others are doing with their websites for ideas. Identify who on your staff or board want to be involved in the planning of the site, and who will make the final decision about the look and goals of the site. The best planning team includes people representing different parts of your organization. If you are a mid-size to large organization, be sure to include a program staff member, someone from management or administration, a technical person and others to round out your unique organizational makeup. If you're an office of one, you can ask a board member or volunteer to join you in the planning process.



## 2. Identify Your Resources

You also need to consider what organizational resources you have available to build your site and plan accordingly. Who will design the site? Who will maintain it? Who will provide the content? What software will you need? What is your budget? If you plan to build the site in-house without much technical expertise or budget allocation, you'll want to find software that is easy to use and start out with modest goals. If you have people with technical and design expertise, or money to hire them, your goals for the site can be more ambitious. If you are building the site in-house, be sure to allocate time for research and training. And once the site is up and running, be sure to build in enough staff time for web maintenance so that it doesn't get tacked on to someone's job that doesn't realistically have the time.

If you're low on cash, solutions do exist. Prescott Creeks of Arizona keeps their site going through a workstudy agreement with Prescott College which funds their IT/website intern at 100%. Their student intern recently helped them rebuild the site from the ground up. The only cost to them was the cost of the Dreamweaver software he used to do it. Nandananda, Executive Director of the Friends of the Eel River in California notes, "Don't hesitate to work with some of the new students coming out. They know all the latest technology, they're a lot cheaper and they will be forever grateful."

Remember, as you begin, you don't need to do everything on your list of goals right away. Many groups start out by getting the basics in place and building in more features over time as time and money allow.

## 3. Define Your Site Navigation and Usability

Make your website user-friendly. Keep the design simple and its navigation scheme well-organized. Have a navigation bar that stays in the same place on all of your pages so people can quickly and efficiently find

information on your site. It's a helpful practice to provide a simple site map for users, and more advanced sites need to include a search function.

Your home page should feature the one or two most important actions you want people to take when they get to your site. The actions should tie in with your overall communication goals for your organization.

Do you want them to subscribe to your eNewsletter? Read your newsletter? Attend an event? Make a donation? Volunteer? People want to know what to do when they come to your site, so make that action prominent, obvious and easy to use.

Keep in mind also, that though Java and Flash have their place on the web, they can be barriers to those who don't have the latest systems and thus may not be able to browse your site. So don't rely solely on those platforms for the navigation.

## 4. Consider Your Content

Chances are you already have a lot of the content for your website. Pull content from your articles, brochures, annual reports, press releases and reports. Think about what content you will continue to generate over time. The best content is that which is unique to your organization. Not only does it give your audience information that keeps them interested in your organization, but search

### Signs Of An Effective Website

Effective websites:

- are well-organized, easy to navigate, quick to download;
- have content that is current and relevant;
- collect email addresses;
- give users an easy way to donate with their credit card through a secure site;
- provide action opportunities that are easy to find and use;
- are designed with the user in mind; and
- aren't necessarily organized according to the way you talk about your organization internally.

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## Creating an Effective Website, cont.

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engines (like Google, MSN and Yahoo) that “spider” the web, use your content to affect how well your site will rank when people use the search engines to find you.

Another point to consider is that people are interested in both the details of what you did and, more importantly, how you did it. So if you are describing a river restoration project, the “how you did it” part is what will motivate people to stay involved in your organization by donating, volunteering or coming back to your site in the future.

In addition to the content you have and generate on a regular basis, you may want to create new content that takes advantage of the interactive web medium to keep people



interested in your organization. The Johnson Creek Watershed Council’s “critter watch,” as mentioned on page 14, is a good example of new content that engages people and keeps them coming back to the site.

It is also a good idea to match the content on your home page to any mailing campaigns you send out so people coming to your site get a consistent message.

When writing for the web, you should know that people navigating through your site won’t read word-for-word; they look at the headlines, and a few words here and there.

Chances are you have less than 30 seconds to interest users, and if you don’t, they’ll move on. You’ll find lots of good tips on writing for the web at:

[www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/](http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/).

### 5. Your Site Design

Don’t let the design of your site get in the way of your message. Your website design should complement the content of the website, and help the site to achieve its goals. Maintain a consistent look across the entire design of the website. Keep the colors and layouts for each section consistent with the site and your organization’s image—your website should be an extension of your brand, not a redefinition of it. A clean design that is simple and easy to understand is much better than a highly stylized yet confusing one.

### Building and Maintaining Your Site

Now that you’ve defined your goals and figured out how much you can spend, it’s time to get started. So, what are the options? Who will design it? Do we need content management? What software should we use? Should we go with a fully integrated package? How will we maintain it? In this section, we will talk about the tools and options for both the design and content maintenance of your site.

#### The Design

There are a number of options for building your site design. You can do it in-house if you have someone on staff with web design skills—or the desire and time to learn. It isn’t hard, but there is quite a bit to consider when designing a site, so you’ll need to build in plenty of time for research and training. Another option is to hire a web designer to craft the look and navigation of the site. A good web designer has

experience and knowledge of the many things to consider when building a site. If you're thinking you'll save money by doing it in-house, consider the value of the finished product. A badly executed design can reflect poorly on your organization.

### Software for Design and Navigation

If you do choose to design the site in-house, you can use software like Dreamweaver, Contribute, GoLive or FrontPage to create the look and navigation of the site. If you have a more sophisticated design in mind, many people use Photoshop to create a design and ImageReady to add roll-overs and to build the HTML code. To get you started, visit Macromedia's On-Demand Seminars ([www.macromedia.com](http://www.macromedia.com)). They are free and can give you a good introduction to the possibilities. Another good inexpensive site for software training is: [www.lynda.com](http://www.lynda.com). Or find a class in your area that gives you hands-on experience. Remember, it is very important that your site loads quickly in people's browsers. Make sure your template images are optimized for the web.

If you choose to hire someone to execute your site design and navigation, you might expect to spend roughly \$1,000-\$1,500 if your site is simple and \$5,000 and up for more complex sites. Adding features like database and campaign integration will carry additional costs.

### Content Updates

One way to minimize the costs of maintenance and content updates is to increase your in-house capacity. HTML classes are readily available or, if you choose a content management system site, updates can be made easily by staff with minimal training. Don't put yourself in the position of having to call your designer every time you have a small change. At \$80/hour, it's worth building the capacity in-house.

### Using a Blog to Create Your Site for Easy Maintenance

Though weblogs, or 'blogs,' were not created as a website design application, you can use one to get a basic site up quickly without any programming experience. The beauty of this simple application is that you can keep your site updated fairly easily. At [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) you can set up an account for free and see how it might work for you.

### Content Management Systems

OneNorthwest based in Seattle, notes that "content management systems can dramatically lower the barrier to publishing online. The easier online publishing is, the more likely you are to do it—and the more able you'll be to incorporate online publishing into the heart of your environmental work." Their definition says:

A content management system (CMS) can accomplish many things, but its two primary functions are to:

- Allow non-technical users to create, edit and publish content to the website without any knowledge of HTML or web editing software.
- Keep track of where different pieces of content belong on your site, and automatically display content using the right page templates, navigation elements and other "window dressing."<sup>1</sup>

Four powerful, open-source and free CMS that come highly recommended are: Mambo, Drupal, Type3 and Plone. If you are building a new site or thinking about redesigning your site, you should take the time to learn about available CMS. If you like what you see, you will need to find a good hosting company that will support the CMS you choose. Browse their websites for a list of some of the hosting companies that support them. If you're in one of these

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## Creating an Effective Website, cont.

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Northwestern states: ID, BC, MT, WA, OR and AK, you are in the OneNorthwest (www.onenw.org) service area and can take advantage of all they have to offer.

The RiverSource (NM) website was created with Mambo. Rich Schrader said it cost about \$1,200 to have someone set it up for him, but now that it's up and running it doesn't cost anything. Now he can update pages from his web browser in a word-processing type interface. "Once you have it up and going, you can have a whole team of people with very little training update the content. It doesn't require any special software on their computer. The power of being able to update things myself is huge," he said.

*"When I learned what I could get with these open-source packages, it expanded my horizons to what could be done—it was mind-blowing.*

*It's made my company and expanded my company in ways I couldn't imagine."*

*- Rich Schrader  
RiverSource*

### Integrated Packages and Application Service Providers (ASPs)

Organizations with larger budgets that want database integration and powerful functionality should take a look at some of the proprietary ASP services for building and hosting their sites. Fully integrated packages with buy-in modules that include email marketing, content management, online advocacy, online donations, community building tools, integration with your fundraising database, listservs, collaboration tools, web surveys, forms and ecards can be quite expensive, but they are robust and powerful. Some of the providers that work with nonprofits are listed in the resources section (see page 25). In addition to the design of your site, ASP solutions can run thousands of dollars per year to host and maintain. That functionality is worth it to some, especially for organizations that want to take full advantage of the newest technologies.



### Driving Traffic To Your Site

If you build it, they will come, right? No, not necessarily. Some of the things you should do include making sure to print your web address on all publications, letterhead, business cards, newsletters, etc. Put it in the signature line at the bottom of every email you send out, and refer to it when you talk with people at workshops, events and on the street.

Additionally you can drive traffic to your site through links from an eNewsletter. Anna Eleria of the Charles River Watershed Association (MA) notes that they send an eNewsletter out about their annual canoe and kayak race directing people to the website to find more information. People can register online and get race results afterward. It "makes it easy for people to get the information they need without taking staff time...and we see a huge spike in [our webpage] traffic around the canoe event," she notes.

You'll also need to develop a good title and site description so your organization comes up when people search for you on Google, MSN or Yahoo. See the resources section (page 25) for information about optimizing your site for search engines.

### Site Evaluation and Statistics

When your site is done, ask 5 people (board members, volunteers, friends) to go through a "site scavenger hunt" to search for information you ask them to find. Ask them how long it took to find things and tell you their experience. You will learn a lot about how well you did with the design and navigation scheme of your site. As a result,



you may have to change some things, but the user experience is a very important consideration to attract repeat visitors.

Another way to evaluate whether your website is through site statistics. Most web hosting companies will have a statistical package available for your site that analyzes the traffic that comes in, how many people came to your site in a given period, what words they used to find you in search engines, which pages are the most popular, and so on. Be sure to take a look at your statistics at least monthly. You will begin to see trends over time that will help you decide how to tweak your site so that it continues to meet the needs of your audience.

### Endnote

As you can see, there are many ways to create an effective website. Jenna Olsen of the Tuolumne River Trust encourages River Network Partners to “just get online. The site can be simple. You should just start and build on it little by little. There are so many resources out there to help.” And if you already have a site, you can continue to rework and build on it over time to make it work for you. And best of all, it’s not hard to have fun in the process!



*Margaret McCoy became River Network’s website manager when, with no formal training, she raised her hand and said “I want to fix the website.” She was given the go ahead five years ago and is still at it today. In addition to surfing the internet, she loves splashing around in the rivers of her home state of Vermont.*

## WHY DO YOU NEED A WEBSITE?

Do you need to convince someone (your board?) that it is important to allocate some staff time and money toward the web? Here are some convincing reasons for being online from the nine Partner watershed organizations I talked with about how the web is working for them.

### *Having a website:*

- helps us save on postage and printing costs
- saves staff time for basic questions about our organization
- helps us get volunteers
- makes our organization look credible and professional
- helps educate people about our local watershed
- provides a way for our organization to accept donations by credit card
- helps us increase our donor base
- extends our reach beyond our local area
- increases our visibility
- gives us the forum for getting to say what we want to say
- gives us a presence that can no longer be ignored
- provides a way for us to collaborate with others that are miles away
- gives funders information about us before we meet with them
- gives people a way to take action

*Thanks to these folks for speaking with me during the writing of this article:*

Michael Byrd, Prescott Creeks (AZ),  
[www.prescottcreeks.org](http://www.prescottcreeks.org)

Carol Ekarius, Coalition for the Upper South Platte  
River, (CO), [www.uppersouthplatte.net](http://www.uppersouthplatte.net)

Anna Eleria, Charles River Watershed Association,  
(MA), [www.charlesriver.org](http://www.charlesriver.org)

Nadananda, Friends of the Eel River, (CA),  
[www.eelriver.org](http://www.eelriver.org)

Jenna Olsen and Christina Newell, Tuolumne River  
Trust, (CA), [www.tuolumne.org](http://www.tuolumne.org)

Rich Schrader, RiverSource, (NM), and his site devel-  
oper, Lynnwood Brown; [www.riversource.net](http://www.riversource.net)

Deborah Sheppard, Altamaha Riverkeeper,  
(GA), [www.altamahariverkeeper.org](http://www.altamahariverkeeper.org)

Jordan Vinograd, Johnson Creek Watershed  
Council, (OR), [www.jcwc.org](http://www.jcwc.org)

Renata von Tscherner, Charles River  
Conservancy, (MA), [www.thecharles.org](http://www.thecharles.org)



**Ten years ago, many groups had no webpage or email address. And while such tools can't always replace a phone call or a face-to-face conversation, web-based strategies have become an integral component of the river conservation movement. Below are a few ways that river groups throughout the country are using the web to help fulfill their missions.**

We have found that our online database for volunteer-collected water quality data is an excellent motivator for our Hoosier Riverwatch volunteers.

**Hoosier Riverwatch (IN)**  
**[www.hoosieriverwatch.com](http://www.hoosieriverwatch.com)**

Cacapon Institute has built an e-classroom that is designed to be used as part of the curriculum in the Potomac Highland. The Potomac Highlands Watershed School was created to increase understanding of watershed issues in West Virginia's Potomac Highlands—and, by extension, much of Appalachia. Interactive games about watersheds, water pollution and land-use planning form the core of each lesson. These games can be played by themselves but are more effective when used as part of broader lessons. Regionally important issues underlie each lesson; for example, the pollution curriculum is based on West Virginia's efforts to help clean up the Chesapeake Bay. Lesson plans keyed to required WV educational content are provided to help teachers get the most from the site. Finally, the telephone in the high school classroom provides entry to moderated conversations about selected environmental issues in the Potomac Highlands.

**Cacapon Institute (WV)**  
**[www.cacaponinstitute.org](http://www.cacaponinstitute.org)**

Pacific Rivers Council's webpage provides detailed project information to our members, colleagues and the general public, including the scientific rationale behind our aquatic conservation programs. Our press releases and coverage are available, and the latest conservation news is updated regularly on our homepage. Our website is set up to accept donations and people can sign up to receive our newsletter, order publications, order posters, or become a member. You can also find out about our staff and board and the history and background of the organization. Finally, we use our website to announce upcoming workshops and job opportunities.

**Pacific Rivers Council (OR)**  
**[www.pacrivers.org](http://www.pacrivers.org)**



The Johnson Creek Watershed Council (JCWC) website tracks wildlife sightings within the watershed by using a CGI/Perl-based bulletin-board that allows watershed dwellers to document and publish their flora and fauna observations online. Similar scripting allows the upload of images by those fortunate enough to have snapped a digital photo of their quarry and also allows visitors to our website to sign up for our annual Watershed Wide Event. We keep in touch with our membership through both plain-text and HTML newsletters, distributed through eZine for tracking purposes, [www.ezinedirector.net](http://www.ezinedirector.net), and then archived on our website. The newsletter, called the "E-Bulletin," keeps our membership informed about upcoming events and allows us to take action as a group with regard to legislation and developments affecting the watershed. JCWC also uses PHPProjekt, [www.phpprojekt.com](http://www.phpprojekt.com), an open-source groupware suite written in PHP and MySQL. It runs in a web-browser, is cross-platform with Windows, Macintosh and Linux, and allows us to run a message board and share calendars, contacts, files and notes. Remote access is possible for working from home and in the field, and its price tag of "free" runs circles around licensing fees.

**Johnson Creek Watershed Council (OR)**  
**[www.jcwc.org](http://www.jcwc.org)**

We disseminate information on important policy issues via the Georgia Environmental Action Network (GEAN), of which we are a member. GEAN is a collaborative effort among environmental and conservation organizations throughout the state to educate and mobilize their memberships utilizing a state-of-the-art electronic action alert system. GEAN automatically matches members to their legislative districts, includes their contact information and delivers each letter to their elected officials—all with one mouse click.

**Georgia River Network (GA)**  
[www.garivers.org](http://www.garivers.org)

We've launched a new site for promoting our big two-day, 44-mile paddling/pledge event that we call the Mississippi River Challenge. The event netted about \$45K in its first year (2004). This year we expect 400-500 participants. The website is where most of our participants register, pledge paddlers and learn about the event.

**Mississippi River Challenge (MN)**  
[www.mississippiriverchallenge.org](http://www.mississippiriverchallenge.org)

We send out monthly updates that are HTML-based from a link in our website. In each issue, I recognize volunteers, let folks know what we are working on, what is going on that they might be able to get involved in, and educate NFRIA members about some aspect of our watershed or water conservation. This also helps me gather feedback, requiring only a quick reply. We also have water quality data available, various reports, past newsletters, numerous images of our restoration projects and links to helpful sites.

**North Fork River Improvement Association (CO)**  
[www.nfria.paonia.com](http://www.nfria.paonia.com)

At Charles River Watershed Association, we have used a basic e-newsletter (our service provider is <http://electricmembers.net/>) and our website to mobilize large groups of constituents to successfully advocate for local, state and federal goals. We regularly (often daily) update our website and always use it as an information clearinghouse. We constantly upload events, campaigns, current press and information of interest onto the site. Our members have come to rely on it for updated and interesting information. We also communicate with our volunteers through several smaller listservs.

**Charles River Watershed Association (MA)**  
[www.crwa.org](http://www.crwa.org)

One example where reaching out via email was amazingly effective was RiverSing. We had over 2000 people signing across the Charles River. This year we plan to have people receive the music by email in advance. RiverSing will happen this summer and they are now also doing it on the Pawtucket River.

**Charles River Conservancy (MA)**  
[www.charlesriverconservancy.org](http://www.charlesriverconservancy.org)

We use our web site to educate salmonid restorationists about issues affecting salmon recovery including listing of endangered stocks, restoration funding, NOAA's hatchery policy, etc. SRF also provides tools and resources regarding water quality, permitting and funding, fish-friendly road improvements and culvert replacements and water conservation strategies. We also utilize our website to promote our educational trainings like our upcoming Bioengineering field school and the 8th Annual Coho Confab: a watershed symposium to teach techniques to restore coho salmon habitat.

**Salmonid Restoration Federation (CA)**  
[www.calsalmon.org](http://www.calsalmon.org)



We've worked with Green Media Toolshed ([www.greenmediatoolshed.org](http://www.greenmediatoolshed.org)) to create listservs and password protected sites for several of our campaigns. It's been a pretty effective tool for pulling together people from around the state to work on watershed and policy issues.

**Canoochee Riverkeeper (GA)**  
[www.canoocheeriverkeeper.org](http://www.canoocheeriverkeeper.org)

We designed a “portal” using Drupal. This is an open source (i.e. “free” platform system). It can be set up with user accounts or open for the general public, or portions can be allocated to either audience. The committees can do writing/concept development together, see the organizational calendar, blog their activities, discuss ideas via newsgroups, and cache files for late night retrieval. Here in the office we can post static pieces for general updates and that link back to the main program websites.

However, as with any new project, we’ve sometimes wished that learning curves came with road maps. We are slowly getting better at solving many of these problems, but it’s taken much longer than we ever anticipated. Below are considerations for groups interested in Drupal.

**Pros:**

- 1) This is a very powerful system that is highly adaptable to meet specific communication needs. We are in the process of shifting our main website over to the Drupal site. This adds an interactive structure for our committees without losing our general public content.
- 2) The system allows multiple people to work together across the whole watershed/state. Being available around the clock, people can work when their schedule permits. This reduces windshield & direct meeting time.
- 3) We can put resource materials online for committee members to use as needed—such as work plans, maps, publicity materials, etc. This reduces the time staff members spend sending out electronic copies to people on a one by one basis. Partner time is saved because the resources are in an easily accessible format.

**Cons:**

- 1) People have to actually go to the site and actively participate in order to make it a functional tool. Many of our partners are really happy with their distribution lists. The site use would solve the problem of some people feeling left out of the planning process when distribution lists are not updated. Unfortunately, we have several committees that purposely keep their planning dialogue in a very tight circle.
- 2) Some of our government partners and participating schools have internet locks that do not allow them to get to this URL.
- 3) Planning has to happen so that the site is structured for easy comprehension. Project names have to be consistently applied and Drupal’s vocabulary has to be simplified for the average user.

## What is Drupal?

**Drupal is an open-source platform and content management system for building dynamic websites offering a broad range of features and services including user administration, publishing workflow, discussion capabilities, news aggregation, metadata functionalities using controlled vocabularies and XML publishing for content sharing purposes. Equipped with a powerful blend of features and configurability, Drupal can support a diverse range of web projects ranging from personal weblogs to large community-driven sites.**  
<http://drupal.org/>

- 4) The complexity of final product has to be kept in sync with the computer skills/comfort of the organizations user base. We have a number of different programs geared towards different age ranges, etc., so finding a good fit has been hard. Some people love it and others get confused just trying to find the site.
- 5) Your service provider has to carry the main structure of the program in order for your site to work. We have tried to switch providers but only the little guys seem interested in having this available to their clients. This means that any technical glitch on their end has repercussions for you. We have occasionally had to completely re-do lost site configurations, etc.
- 6) Open source also means there are next to no technical resources. People are very friendly about helping out, but there's a bunch of jargon to sort through and many varying levels of expertise.
- 7) The program engineers are all volunteers working at their own speed and based on their own creative spark. However, they see this as an academic challenge among the best engineers in the world.
- 8) To tailor your site (colors, etc.) you have to know HTML, be willing to figure it out or have a webpage design program that can do the coding for you.
- 9) Staffing changes mean that the know-how to keep the site useable either becomes bound to the one long-term staffer or that a training period has to be navigated (again and again...).

So, there's the straight and narrow on our big communication tool building endeavor. I am convinced this system can be a boon for our organization. Unfortunately, we haven't seen much solid partner buy-in given the communication needs consistently reported by our partners.

**Kaw Valley Heritage Alliance (KS)**  
**[www.portal.kvha.org](http://www.portal.kvha.org)**



## Monkeys and Cats and Grapes—Oh My!

# Online Surveys

by Alanna Woodward  
Partnership Program  
Coordinator  
River Network  
[www.rivernetwork.org](http://www.rivernetwork.org)

In today's technological age, information can be effectively and efficiently collected using online surveys. There are many companies that provide user friendly and adaptable interfaces to generate customized surveys or questionnaires for collecting data and demographic information. Some providers offer software that you have to load on your machine while others allow you to develop surveys from start to finish using your web browser.

There are 3 basic steps for creating online surveys:

- 1) Design/Create your Survey,
- 2) Invite Respondents/Collect Data, and
- 3) Analyze/Report your results.

When choosing an online survey service it is in your best interest to determine what you will need from your survey and what features will meet those needs. Things to consider should include your price range, the number of surveys that you plan on creating, how many responses you anticipate per survey, the number of questions and the level of detail that you require in both your questions and responses, how you want to invite people to take the survey, and how would you like to analyze and report your data.

Several of the sites mentioned below offer a free basic subscription, a free trial, templates, sample surveys or virtual tours to help you become familiar with their services. Some sites address specific needs such as advanced statistical data, language translation services or compatibility for the visually impaired. Assessing your requirements before you begin will help you determine the best service for you and keep you from paying for features that you don't need.

**Survey Monkey** is noted for its easy to use comprehensive ability to guide you through survey generation. They break online surveys down to three easy steps: design, collect and analyze. They offer more than a dozen question formats, skip logic, control of color and layout of your survey, a pop-up invitation generator, automated email generation, graphs, charts and individual data analyzing features as well as filtering to allow chosen data to be displayed and the ability to download raw data into Excel or SPSS. They offer a Basic Subscription for free which is limited to 10 questions and 100 responses per survey. They also offer a Professional Subscription that provides additional advanced survey features, an unlimited number of surveys, unlimited number of pages and questions, up to 1000 responses per month (\$.05 for additional responses). The Professional Subscription costs \$19.95 per month or if you pay for a year you can save roughly \$40 and pay \$200. Their website is easy to navigate and offers survey and result samples.

[www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

**Zoomerang** is a highly competitive survey company that offers market research and additional services. They offer a basic survey subscription which is free (limited to 30 questions and 100 responses per survey). You can create a survey using professionally designed templates or create one from scratch, choose from 15 question types, randomize your answer options, customize your survey in one of 40 language options, create email lists, generate an URL and view graphical results online. They also offer a zPro subscription with several additional features for \$599 a year or discounted subscriptions for nonprofits. Zoomerang also offers survey programming, survey translation, and survey respondent services in case you are running short on time, need your survey and responses in a language other than English or need help identifying



your target audience. Prices for additional service are based on a per project basis.

[info.zoomerang.com](http://info.zoomerang.com)

**Perseus** offers a variety of surveying options from advanced to a very inclusive and free express version. SurveySolutions Express is designed for individual survey projects. It allows you to quickly deploy complex survey instruments, choose from templates or design your own with a variety of question options, database features for easy use/setup, different delivery options including popups, management features such as time/date stamping and duplication control, and reporting features. Their surveys offer standard text, Microsoft Excel, and SPSS compatibility for analyzing data. Their website is professional, containing a significant amount of information about them, their services, their targeted results and automated demos of their software. You can register to download different trial versions. Perseus also offers other single user platforms such as SurveySolutions Standard and Professional which have enhanced features. The software itself ranges from \$495 to \$995. In addition, they won *PC Magazine's* Editors' Choice award for survey software, ranking them preferred by the technically inclined. [www.perseus.com](http://www.perseus.com)

**PollCat** offers four surveying (Lite, Pro, Workgroups, Enterprise) levels to meet the demands of any organization. Their webpage is straight forward and easy to navigate to answer questions. PollCat Lite is the easiest to learn of the four interfaces. Options include: unlimited survey length (questions or pages); unlimited length of data collected; surveys compatible with all web browsers; multi-section, multi-page questionnaires; mandatory question option; questionnaire

preview mode; HTML-based headers and footers for formatting and consistency; direct links from your web page to a survey with auto or defined return; anonymous questionnaires; custom tracking and reporting; response data downloadable in MS Access, XML, HTML and Excel formats; ability to author surveys using any web browser; publication of surveys to the web with a single click; display of tally reports to survey authors and respondents at your option; and periodic email notification (you define the interval) when respondents complete your survey. PollCat Pro offers advanced reporting functions and the ability to use branching when creating your survey. As for prices, PollCat lets you create surveys and hosts them for free, although they do charge \$9.95 to remove branding and for responses received beyond your first 250. They do charge for their more advanced service options but their prices are negotiable and they are interested in assessing your needs to make sure that you aren't paying for more than you are going to use. [www.pollcat.com](http://www.pollcat.com)



**Grapevine** takes a different approach to online surveys. It gives full access to survey creation and reporting amenities but you pay only for the number of results that you receive for your survey based on a 12 month subscription period. If you purchase a Respondent License for 100 or 250 responses, the term is only three months instead of 12. Features include mobile surveys (including Blackberry devices), unlimited number of surveys or administrators, personal branding features for your organization, pop up invitations, multi-lingual capabilities, survey library (optional templates), survey deployment

[cont. on page 20](#)

## Online Surveys, cont.

cont. from page 19 features, survey distribution, advanced graphing, query and filtering capabilities, advanced reporting functions, data export and more. Grapevine is user friendly and helpful, and gives you the full range of options from the start. [www.grapevinesurveys.com](http://www.grapevinesurveys.com)

**StatPac** has consistently proven itself over the years, particularly in areas dealing with statistics. Their web survey module has everything you need to conduct online surveys and email questionnaires. The web survey software contains an extensive set of programs to let you capture, clean, sort, join, split and serialize emails. The web survey module includes study design, data management, email list management, a bulk email program, web survey design, upload and download capabilities and the ability to export to Access or to a tab or comma delimited text file. It does not include any analysis capabilities. The module runs for \$495 however they do offer a 15% academic/nonprofit discount.

[www.statpac.com/online-surveys](http://www.statpac.com/online-surveys)



*Below are additional internet-based data collection services that you might want to look into before making your decision:*

**ACTIVE WEB SURVEY** [www.activewebsoftwares.com/activewebsurvey](http://www.activewebsoftwares.com/activewebsurvey)

**APAIN** [www.apian.net](http://www.apian.net)

**COOL SURVEYS** [www.coolsurveys.com](http://www.coolsurveys.com)

**CUSTOMER SAT** [www.customersat.com/index2.htm](http://www.customersat.com/index2.htm)

**EZSURVEY** [www.raosoft.com](http://www.raosoft.com)

**HOSTED SURVEY** [www.hostedsurvey.com](http://www.hostedsurvey.com)

**INFOPOLL** [www.infopoll.net](http://www.infopoll.net)

**INQUISITE** [www.inquisite.com](http://www.inquisite.com)

**INSITE SURVEY SYSTEMS** [www.insitesurveys.com](http://www.insitesurveys.com)

**INSTANT SURVEY** [www.netreflector.com/default.asp](http://www.netreflector.com/default.asp) (*outsourcing service*)

**LIVESURVEYS** <http://livesurveys.com> (*more of a service*)

**MERCATOR** [www.mercatorcorp.com](http://www.mercatorcorp.com)

**OBJECTPLANET** [www.objectplanet.com/Surveyor](http://www.objectplanet.com/Surveyor)

**POLLPRO** [www.pollpro.com](http://www.pollpro.com)

**STATSURVEY** [www.statsurvey.com](http://www.statsurvey.com)

**SUMQUEST** [www.sumquest.com](http://www.sumquest.com)

**SURVEY CRAFTER** [www.surveycrafter.com/interim2](http://www.surveycrafter.com/interim2)

**SURVEY GOLD** [www.surveygold.com](http://www.surveygold.com)

**SURVEY SAID** [www.surveysaid.com](http://www.surveysaid.com)

**SURVEY SYSTEM** [www.surveysystem.com](http://www.surveysystem.com)

**SURVEY VIEW** [www.surveyview.com](http://www.surveyview.com)

**SURVEYSITE** [www.surveysite.com](http://www.surveysite.com)

**SUPERSURVEY** [www.supersurvey.com](http://www.supersurvey.com)

## CASE STUDY

# The French Broad River Experience Using Online Maps

**T**he French Broad River begins in Rosman, North Carolina and flows north through 25 municipalities, eight counties and 500,000 people before entering Tennessee. Population growth rates are on average 18 percent. And, while our river's water quality has seen great improvements from point source discharges, there are still a number of streams on the 303d list. The major source of pollution is nonpoint source in nature, sediment and stormwater.

In 2002 RiverLink sought out to develop a website in order to provide citizens, developers, local governments, realtors, home buyers and science classes with a planning guide that encourages good decisions that would protect and improve the French Broad River Watershed. The following is a brief narrative of how and why it was decided to utilize a web-based map to accomplish this task.

As a geographer, maps are my central mental visual aid in every situation I think about. Going to dinner? I think of the transportation routes, its proximity to other buildings, its location on the map. Stream impaired? I begin mentally mapping it course, what streams feed it, where the stream travels, what other inputs contribute to its volume. Caught a large trout? Definitely want to know the location of that site. So, when presented with the opportunity to be project manager of an interactive web-based map for the French Broad River watershed, there was no arm twisting needed.

In 2001, I began my term as French Broad Riverkeeper with RiverLink—a community based organization in Asheville, NC. As requested by the board and director, we set forth goals and objectives for this position based on the needs of the community. The greatest need was the development of a watershed plan.

The first step in developing a watershed plan is to create an inventory of your watershed—issues, assets and so on. The development of a French Broad River watershed map was just a way of visually depicting that inventory. Making it web-based and accessible via the internet allowed for the website to be seen by all and would facilitate the post-development processes such as the community filling in the data gaps, leadership within and outside of government becoming involved in regional planning, and for everyone to begin understanding the interconnectivities of land use management and water quantity and quality.

The overall vision for the web-based map was to create a tool that would promote watershed planning. The goal for this first step was to initiate dialogue with and provide information for four key user groups that would create change:

- 1) **Homeowners** – Our watershed is contributing significant levels of nutrients to the Tennessee River which eventually feeds the Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico. People want to know about if the stream in their backyard is safe for their children.
- 2) **Developers** want to know what permits are required, proximity to community resources, stream classifications and more.
- 3) **Recreation enthusiasts** want to know where to access the river, location of parks and the amenities for each site.
- 4) **Teachers and students** – In North Carolina water is a central teaching topic in eighth grade, and competency goals are tested in this area as well as for computer technology.

A grant from E-North Carolina allowed us to fulfill this goal. Proposal development

by Phillip Gibson  
RiverLink  
[www.riverlink.org](http://www.riverlink.org)

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## Using Online Maps, cont.

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and a national search were conducted with several partners. The North Carolina Center for Geographic and Information Analysis, University of North Carolina-Asheville and the Mountain Area Information Network served as the team to review proposals and guide the entire process. Approximately 13 proposals were obtained from throughout the country.

### Agricultural Lands

#### Explanation

-  Ag Land Use Available for Development
-  Ag and Ice Not Available for Development
-  Water
-  Aquifer Recharge areas
-  Committed Open Land

GIS Analysis & Map by:  
Council of Governments of  
the Great Smoky Mountains Valley

A review committee was assembled to narrow the proposals down to the top three candidates. Those reviewing the proposals were professional GIS designers and managers. Each of the three proposals had a unique methodology for developing the website and also proposed different platforms for the website. Two involved

either strictly or a mixture of proprietary software (ARC IMS and related software) and one proposed the creation of the website using a shareware program (a LINUX based program). While the shareware presented several opportunities and appealed to the overall sense of the website's objectives, it became clear that RiverLink would not have the funding to sustain a long-term webmaster needed for maintaining a software program that had no formal technical support group. RiverLink decided, through the guidance provided by the technical review committee, to select from the two proposals that were to use proprietary software. Given that all else appeared equal between the two in terms of abilities, the Southern Appalachian Man and Biosphere's offer to

host the site free of charge in perpetuity as well as the inclusion of other story-telling elements helped the decision making process.

ESRI, the maker of ARC software, had also submitted a proposal. They were extremely excited about the use of their software in this manner and offered to assist by facilitating a process to create a "design document" that would guide the development of the overall website. This served to be a key document and one that should be created before moving forward with any website.

Components of this document include the needs for the software architecture. What does the server need? What are you expecting your customer to use for a browser? How sophisticated are you expecting the client's computer to be? Beyond this, other items to be concerned with include graphic interface, toolbars that you will construct and how understandable they will be for the general public and data requirements (how good is your metadata?).

From brainstorming to completion, the website was developed in two years. The effectiveness of a map is only relevant if it is actually used. For that reason, several programs were created to create interaction. The U.S. Forest Service Cradle of Forestry's Students as Scientists brought the website to life for teachers and students. Developers were introduced to the site through the Clear Water Contractor training. And the Asheville Board of Realtors' ECO REALTOR program is introducing their clients to the website.

The next steps are still to come! You may view this web-based map by visiting either [www.frenchbroadriverkeeper.org](http://www.frenchbroadriverkeeper.org) or [www.riverlink.org](http://www.riverlink.org).



*Phillip Gibson is the Environmental Leadership Center's Director of Research and Community Outreach located at Warren Wilson College near Asheville, NC. He served as French Broad Riverkeeper from 2001 to 2005. You may reach him via email at [praygibson@hotmail.com](mailto:praygibson@hotmail.com).*



## CASE STUDY

# The Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition Bending Technology to Our Will

**T**he Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition is a nonprofit located in western Connecticut. The Coalition began in 1999, when a drought and a proposed industrial water withdrawal helped local residents realize the need for better understanding of the ecological requirements of their river and how it interacts with their underground water supply (aquifer). Six years later, research in the Pomperaug watershed and the Coalition's management plan provide a model for water managers nationally. The internet and other technology play a key role in planning, educating and fundraising, augmenting the efforts of our staff.

### Planning

The Coalition wanted a watershed management plan that would be easy to access, update and utilize making the internet the perfect venue. Our management plan can be downloaded in full, or the user can get to a specific topic by clicking on that box in a flow chart. Staff can update the plan from our office. Technology allows us to make our management plan a living document providing best management practices as they become available.

### Mapping

Our Land Use Committee is using our geographic information system (GIS) to complete an analysis of lands in the watershed that are critical to its health. The Committee has developed criteria to target open and low intensity land uses that are adjacent to water or above the aquifer and can be converted to a more intense use in the future. The GIS maps are provided in hard copy and digitally to groups such as watershed land trusts to facilitate their acquisition efforts. Our staff has user level

GIS skills and relies on the regional planning agency for analysis and map making.

### Educating

An interesting combination of technology is used in our stormwater education program. We have access to a hand held global positioning system (GPS), which connects to a palm pilot that can capture GPS data. The hardware was acquired through Stormwater Phase II funding by our regional planning agency. Our staff was trained by the regional planning agency to capture the locations of catch basins and pipes discharging into rivers or wetlands.

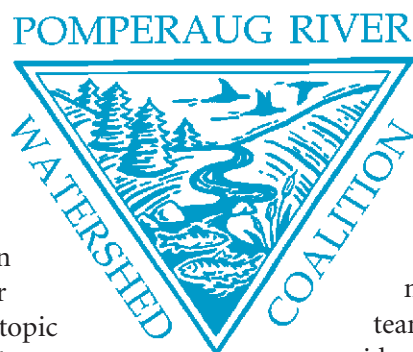
We then trained an intern to complete the mapping for one of our towns this summer. The data collected will be transferred to our GIS and maps will be made to show people how stormwater travels through their neighborhoods. Our research teams will also use the data to identify 'connected impervious' surfaces (those areas that move water directly to rivers or wetlands disrupting the hydrologic cycle) helping us assess impacts from development.

### Outreach

Our outreach efforts are also extended by using the internet. To create materials, we use typical word processing software in combination with digital photo editing software and a portable document file maker. Educational opportunities offered on our website include downloadable research results, newsletters and other publications; links to help people take action; a calendar; an interactive stream walk map and real-time stream flow information.

by Laurie Giannotti

Executive Director  
Pomperaug River  
Watershed Coalition  
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## Case Study, cont.

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### Fundraising

Utilizing donor management software (DMS) and our GIS in combination with the internet created an effective fundraising program. For example, our GIS can identify people living along rivers; when added to our DMS we can target mailings to critical groups. We also use our GIS to provide each donor with a watershed map showing the location of their home or business as a “thank-you” gift. This gift also functions as an educational piece helping the donors see their connection to our water resources. Our website offers a downloadable membership and annual appeal form which we use in combination with a credit card processor to provide appealing options for giving.



### Lessons Learned:

**Find a local webmaster** that specializes in nonprofit sites. You will save money and build a personal relationship that will facilitate design and future site development. The Coalition’s webmaster also trained our staff to make simple updates using Dreamweaver software.

Hire a consultant or utilize an experienced volunteer to help you **choose a DMS that will work for you**. Our knowledgeable consultant interviewed our staff and finance committee and then developed a matrix of software options for us. We were able to make our selection based on our needs (types of reports, tracking, analysis we might do), cost (including annual maintenance and training for our staff) and our staff’s technical abilities.



**The user is a critical part of a GIS.** With expertise in house you will be able to maintain and creatively integrate your GIS into all aspects of your mission. Carefully consider your goals for a GIS, your budget and opportunities to partner with an established user and/or hire a consultant to meet your goals before you make an investment.

**Create small workgroups** (2-3 people) to facilitate website and DMS design for your board to review.

**Shop at TechSoup and use freeware** when you can.



# Resources & References

## GENERAL RESOURCES:

**The eNonprofit: A Guide to ASPs, Internet Services, and Online Software** ([www.compasspoint.org/enonprofit](http://www.compasspoint.org/enonprofit)): a comprehensive look at application service providers for nonprofit users.

**NPower** ([www.npower.org](http://www.npower.org)): helping nonprofits use technology to better serve their communities.

**OneNorthwest** ([www.onenw.org](http://www.onenw.org)): helps groups in the Northwest use technology.

**TechFinder** ([www.techfinder.org](http://www.techfinder.org)): an online directory of technology service providers for nonprofits.

**TechSoup** ([www.techsoup.org](http://www.techsoup.org)): tools, training, analysis, message boards, technology tips, jobs, software discounts and more.

**Online Fundraising Handbook**: free to download at [www.groundspring.org/learningcenter/handbook.cfm](http://www.groundspring.org/learningcenter/handbook.cfm).

## INTERNET STRATEGIES

**Groundspring.org** ([www.groundspring.org/learningcenter](http://www.groundspring.org/learningcenter)).

**GetActive's** ([www.getactive.com/resources](http://www.getactive.com/resources)).

**Convio** ([www.convio.com](http://www.convio.com)).

**Alder Consulting** ([www.alderconsulting.com/resources.html](http://www.alderconsulting.com/resources.html)).

**Affinity Resources** ([www.affinityresources.com](http://www.affinityresources.com)).

**ePhilanthropy Foundation** ([www.ephilanthropy.org](http://www.ephilanthropy.org))

**onPhilanthropy.com** ([www.onphilanthropy.com/technology](http://www.onphilanthropy.com/technology)).

## WEBSITE BUILDING

**HTML Code Tutorial** ([www.HTMLCodeTutorial.com](http://www.HTMLCodeTutorial.com)).

**OneNorthwest Web Toolkit**

([www.onenw.org/bin/page.cfm/secid/29](http://www.onenw.org/bin/page.cfm/secid/29)): information about domain names, choosing an internet service provider, accepting credit cards on your website and many other topics.

## CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

**Altrue** ([www.altrue.com/site/altrue](http://www.altrue.com/site/altrue)).

**Civic Space** ([civicspacelabs.org/home](http://civicspacelabs.org/home)): support for the Drupal platform.

**eNonprofits.org** ([www.enonprofits.org](http://www.enonprofits.org)).

**Mambo** ([www.mamboserver.com](http://www.mamboserver.com)): open source platform.

**Drupal** ([www.drupal.org](http://www.drupal.org)): open source platform.

**Type3** ([www.typo3.com](http://www.typo3.com)): open source platform.

**Plone** ([plone.org](http://plone.org)): open source platform.

**Nonprofit Office** ([www.nonprofitoffice.org](http://www.nonprofitoffice.org)): content management/integrated system.

**MemberClicks** ([www.memberclicks.com](http://www.memberclicks.com)): content management/membership.

## INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS:

Content Management, Internet Fundraising, Advocacy, Database Integration and eMarketing solutions.

**CitySoft** ([www.citysoft.com](http://www.citysoft.com)).

**eTapestry** ([www.etapestry.com](http://www.etapestry.com)).

**GetActive** ([www.getactive.com](http://www.getactive.com)).

**iapps** ([www.iapps.com](http://www.iapps.com)).

**Kintera** ([www.kintera.com](http://www.kintera.com)).

**Convio** ([www.convio.com](http://www.convio.com)).

## ONLINE FUNDRAISING

**Charity Advantage**

([www.charityadvantage.com/index.asp](http://www.charityadvantage.com/index.asp)): websites, online donations, software and more to qualified nonprofits.

**Entango** ([www.entango.com](http://www.entango.com)): personalized and secure online fundraising solutions.

**Groundspring.org**

([www.groundspring.org](http://www.groundspring.org)):

Affordable internet fundraising, email and online advocacy for groups. You'll also find lots of great resources on online fundraising and technology for nonprofits.

**Network for Good**

([www.networkforgood.org](http://www.networkforgood.org)): Provides "Donate Now" functionality for a very reasonable price.

**PayPal** ([www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com)): Provides both a "Donate Now" and a "Buy Now" button, as well as a shopping cart functionality. One drawback of using the service is that the visitor is not returned to your site when the payment process is complete—they are only given a link to return.

Other vendors: **JustGive.org**,

**ClickandPledge.com** and

**MakeADonation.com**



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## Resources & References, cont.

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### EMAIL LISTS

**NPOGroups** ([www.npogroups.org](http://www.npogroups.org)): offers high-quality, low-cost email list hosting.

### ONLINE MAPPING

**DM Solutions Group** ([www.dmsolutions.ca/solutions](http://www.dmsolutions.ca/solutions)).

**MapServer** ([mapserver.gis.umn.edu](http://mapserver.gis.umn.edu)).

### ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS SOURCES

**Tidepool** ([www.tidepool.org](http://www.tidepool.org)): news stories collected from more than forty on-line news sources.

**Environmental News Network** ([enn.com](http://enn.com)).

**Environmental Health News**  
([www.environmentalhealthnews.org](http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org)).

### SITE EVALUATION AND STATISTICS

**WebTrends** ([www.webtrends.com](http://www.webtrends.com)).

**StatCounter** ([my.statcounter.com](http://my.statcounter.com)): free counter; upgrade for more options.

**Bobby Compliance** ([webxact.watchfire.com](http://webxact.watchfire.com)): test your site for readability for disabled users.

**Mark Up Validation Service** ([validator.w3.org](http://validator.w3.org)): checks web documents for conformance to W3C Recommendations and other standards.

### SEARCH ENGINE RANKINGS

**LinkPopularity** ([www.linkpopularity.com](http://www.linkpopularity.com)): find out who's linking to your site.

**Search Engine Watch** ([searchenginewatch.com](http://searchenginewatch.com)): tips and information about searching the web, analysis of the search engine industry and help to site owners trying to improve their ability to be found in search engines.

### COOL TOOLS

#### Blogs

**Blogger** ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)).

**Bloglines** ([www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com)).

#### Collaboration Tools

**TWiki** ([www.twiki.org](http://www.twiki.org)): brainstorm on a document and collaborate with group members.

**Organizing Your Email Inbox** ([del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us)).

#### RSS feeds

([searchenginewatch.com/sereport/article.php/2175271](http://searchenginewatch.com/sereport/article.php/2175271)): definitions and explanation of this tool for syndicating your site content.

#### Wikipedia

([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)): the free-content encyclopedia that anyone can edit.



# LET RIVER NETWORK HELP YOU KEEP YOUR HEAD ABOVE WATER.

Join the River Network Partnership and connect to the information and resources you need to stay afloat!

- **Access our River Source Information Center with the 1-800 hotline:** Let us help you research a particular issue and put you in touch with the necessary contacts and resources through one-on-one consultations.
- **Log onto our Partner-only website:** Browse the updated postings of funding sources, upcoming events and trainings, and download river clipart.
- **Receive the myriad of Partner benefits,** including subscriptions to *River Voices* and *River Fundraising Alert*, a copy of the *Directory of Funding Sources for River and Watershed Conservation Organizations*, and a copy of either *Starting Up: A Handbook for New River and Watershed Organizations* or *How to Save a River...*and more!



[www.rivernetwork.org](http://www.rivernetwork.org)

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Organizational Partner       Agency/Tribal Partner       Individual Partner

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Org/Agency \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

My check is enclosed

Please charge my credit card:  VISA

MasterCard

Card# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature/Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

**You will receive your initial set of Partner materials, including your choice of:** (check one)

*How to Save a River*

*Starting Up: A Handbook for New River and Watershed Organizations*

*River Talk!*

*Listening to Watersheds*

*Testing the Waters*

Please make your check payable to River Network and return this form to:

**River Network, 520 SW 6th Ave., Suite 1130, Ptld., OR 97204-1511 Phone: 503/241-3506**

River Network works to support you and your needs. We provide training and technical assistance to our Partner groups.

River Network does not promote legislation or represent your organization in legal matters.



# River Network

*Connecting People, Saving Rivers*

520 SW Sixth Avenue, Suite 1130  
Portland, Oregon 97204-1511

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