



River Voices

Getting Bigger, Better, Stronger What Is Organizational Success?

By Wendy Wilson, River Network, www.rivernetwork.org

River Network helps river and watershed conservation organizations become stronger and more successful. Over the last seven years, we've tracked the progress of 210 groups in 17 states as they worked closely with our trainers. After countless workshops, potlucks, meetings and river festivals, we are happy to report that the program worked. Many groups become more effective stewards and respected advocates while enjoying increased funding and public support.

Helping create that type of success is what capacity-building groups like River Network try to do. It isn't always pretty. It may not always work. But we've seen it work regularly enough to share three important lessons that can make your organization stronger. In the end, stronger groups correlate to greater success at the watershed level.

The Watershed Support Network

Since 2003, River Network has collected annual reports from many of the local groups we assist and support. In 2008, we started a new effort to quantify trends and figure out more precisely what we could do to help groups succeed. With partial funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)¹, we formed



the Watershed Support Network to coordinate training programs with key allies. River Network and ten state-wide and regional conservation groups² led comparable trainings, offered consulting support to river and watershed groups and tracked their results over time.

Our goal was to show that good capacity-building programs can strengthen organizations and help protect rivers and water quality. With only two years of funding to prove our theory, we immediately started to survey groups, train our trainers and coordinate ten very different training programs. The trainers worked for organizations such as River Alliance of Wisconsin and Ohio Environmental Council. In all, River Network staff and participating trainers conducted 66 workshops and provided ten or more hours of direct consulting, facilitation and training time to each group. It was a two-year blizzard focused on helping the staff and

cont. on page 4

“Capacity building” refers to intentional, coordinated and mission-driven efforts aimed at strengthening the management and governance of nonprofits to improve their performance and impact. This occurs through organization development activities, such as grant making, leadership development, strategic planning, program design and evaluation, board development, financial planning and management and other types of training and support.



River Network

Connecting People, Saving Rivers

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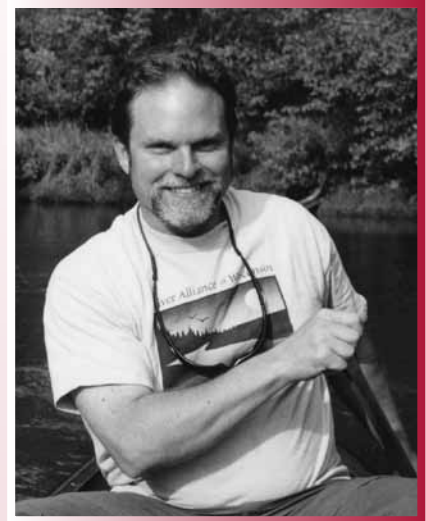
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

The growth of the watershed protection movement is one of the greatest untold stories of modern-day conservation: more than 2,000 state, local and regional nonprofits now have freshwater protection as their primary mission. And yet, nearly 80% of those groups didn't even exist when River Network began our "capacity building" work in 1988.



River Network Photo Collection

Today, many of those organizations are doing incredible work, from coast to coast, and we've done the research (detailed in this issue of *River Voices*) to show that groups that have a stronger internal structure have greater capacity to protect and restore their home waters.

At River Network, we like to say that what we do fundamentally is help river and watershed groups to do their work better. But over the years some people have justifiably asked, "So, when you do all this work with a group, does it really make a difference and how do you know?"

Now we have the clear answer to that question. Does capacity building help? You bet it does!

In this issue, you can read in-depth about the success of the Watershed Support Network (WSN), a River Network project that helped coordinate and fund the capacity-building efforts of a number of our Partners." Now, we're building on that success to launch new capacity building work in communities that need it most: low-income communities throughout America as well as in urban areas desperate for new and stronger voices to help restore local waterways. You can learn more at our website, www.rivernet.org.

Yours in river conservation,

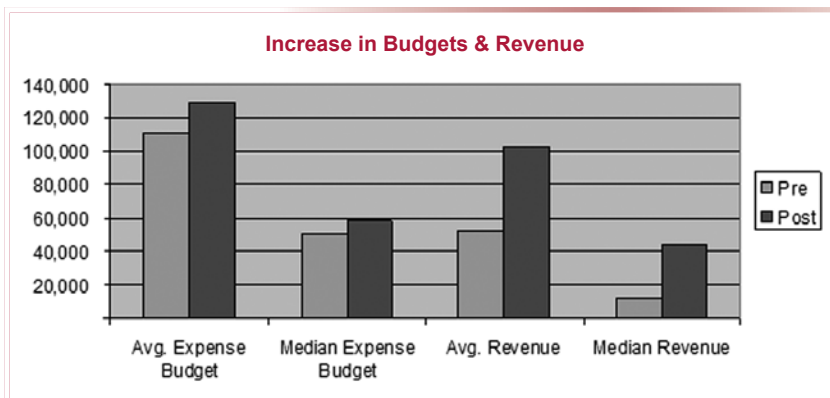
Todd Ambs, President
River Network

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boards of watershed groups tackle strategic planning, develop fundraising plans and resolve crucial organizational issues.

Our Results

The program clearly worked, the average group raised \$19,000 more than they had the year earlier³. Taken together, the groups raised \$1.8 million more than the year before⁴. Additionally, participating groups ended up with more volunteers and more donors. The watershed community is bigger, better and stronger because of the Watershed Support Network.



Our Evaluation

In 2010, we conducted an in-depth evaluation of the program. We performed extensive interviews to sort out contradictions in the data. We added case studies to look at longer time frames for ten groups. And we found out that—as they say on TV— individual results may vary. So given a few caveats (i.e., time frame wasn't long enough to measure long-term stability, we relied on self-reported information and our sample size was small), we were able to quantify significant growth and development for the groups with whom we worked most extensively. Even better, we found out why

the Watershed Support Network approach worked, and found statistical relationships between organizational growth and “best management practices” of groups.

LESSON

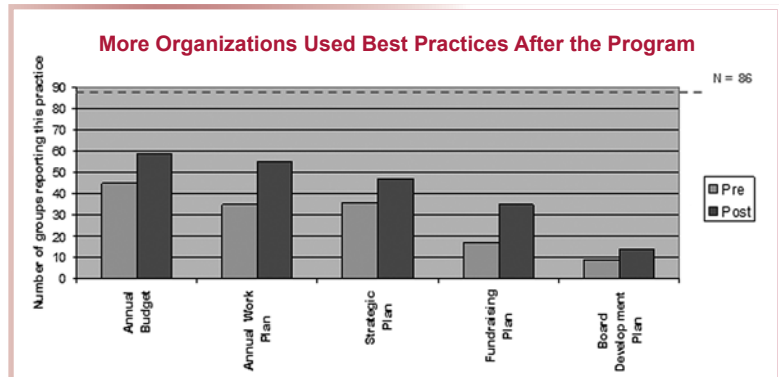
1 Best Practices Correlate to Stronger Organizations

The Watershed Support Network trainers used locally-developed training programs (many of which were well established before this effort) that emphasized four tangible “best practices” commonly used by nonprofits:

1. annual work planning,
2. budgeting,
3. fundraising planning and
4. strategic planning.

Afterwards, we tested whether or not these best practices correlated to other organizational parameters and how each changed after the training program⁵. These correlations show which best practices—if any—actually matter to the success of an organization⁶; the statistical analysis showed that all four were significant to the success and growth of groups.

Developing an annual work plan helps groups become stronger. In general, groups that had an annual work plan had larger expense budgets, more staff and more donors when compared to those that started without an annual work plan. Top tip: Take the time—as a group—to commit your annual work plan to paper.



Adopting a budget is the first step towards financial success. In general, groups that began the program with an annual budget ended up with more money, more staff, more donors and more volunteers. The correlation was especially strong for budget size, staff size and the number of donors. Next top tip: Even if your budget is currently zero, create a budget for what you want to do, or what is in your work plan.

Strategic planning builds more successful organizations. Groups that began the program with a strategic plan, in general, ended it with a larger budget, more staff and more donors compared to those without a strategic plan. An important observation: There is no magical strategic planning process; find one that works for you and give it the time it deserves.

Fundraising planning leads to raising more money. Groups that began the program with a written fundraising plan, in general, ended up with a larger budget, more staff, volunteers and especially with more donors than those who started without a fundraising plan. Bottom line: Wishing for money isn't enough. Assess your fundraising preparedness and make a written plan before you expect money to flow.

LESSON

2 It Helps to Get Help

As groups used the Watershed Support Network capacity-building support programs across the country, they were more likely to implement more best management practices. The change was particularly noticeable in the number of groups who received assistance to develop a fundraising plan, leading to revenue diversification.

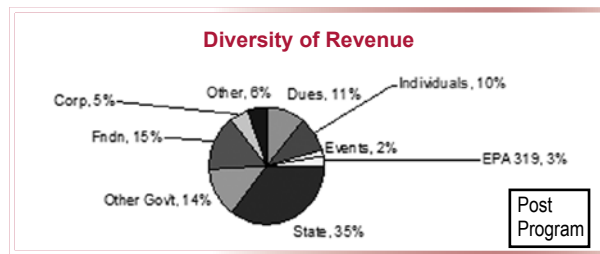
Budgets and Revenue experienced measureable growth. The average organizational budget of groups in this program grew by \$19,000. On average, the groups we worked with increased their expense budgets from \$110,136 to \$129,303. Revenue budgets increased as well. The large jump in revenue may be partially attributed to better record-keeping over the course of the project. How this happens is explained in the case studies included in this issue of *River Voices*.

Not every group increased their budget, but more saw their budgets grow than shrink, even with the country in challenging economic times (2008-2010).

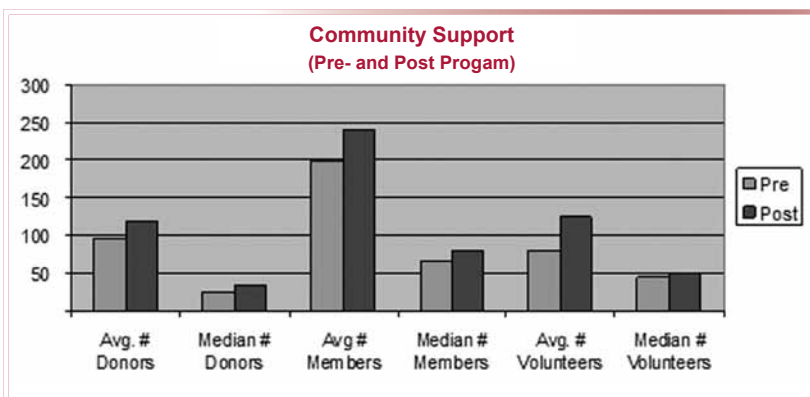
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Revenue Diversity is key for long-term sustainability. Many groups are overly dependent on government and foundation money. The four best practices discussed on page 4 can help diversify income. At the beginning of the Watershed Support Network program, the groups were receiving 62% of their revenue from EPA, state and other government sources. At the end of the program, they had more money and were less reliant on government sources (down to 52%, which is still a lot). Meanwhile, member dues and corporate funding more than doubled.



Community Support should be tracked and measured. By the end of this project, the groups we assisted had 25% more donors, and the average amount of funds they received from individual donors grew by 21%. We found that many groups didn't keep very good records on supporters, donor or volunteers. *Tip:* Much of your value



for funders lies in your ability to mobilize people. So track your numbers. It will help convince larger donors and foundations that you're worth supporting.

Volunteer leaders are worth their weight in gold. During 2008-2010, volunteerism in the United States increased, and river and watershed groups benefitted. More people attended events and monitored more miles of river. However, many groups are burning through their volunteer leaders—people who serve as board members, committee chairs and organizers for those important events. It is a bad sign that some groups reported having fewer lead volunteers than ever.

It really does help to get assistance. So come to River Rally, find training *and* talk with your peers on the boards and staff of other like organizations. Isolation leads to stagnation. Stay fresh.

LESSON

3 Stronger Organizations Have More Environmental Impact

In general, groups that are stronger reported they had more impact afterwards. For example, those that had larger budgets at the program's beginning were much more likely to report that they had achieved safer water for drinking and swimming, or had carried out restoration projects by the end. And those that had more volunteers at the beginning were more likely to have carried out restoration projects or river cleanups. Longevity mattered too: groups that had

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River Network's Lead Training Partners

September 2011

Where to Get Help

Watershed groups across the country are encouraged to reach out to River Network staff for organizational development and capacity building assistance. You can contact our staff through the River Leaders Program page at www.rivernetwork.org/forms/request-river-network-assistance, or reach out to any of the professional capacity builders listed below.

Alabama Rivers Alliance

Elizabeth Brooke
ebrooke@alabamarivers.org
(205) 322-6395

Cumberland River Compact

(Tennessee)
Laura (Alex) Ganus
lauraa@cumberlandrivercompact.org
(615) 469-5962

Appalachian Energy & Environment Partnership

(West Virginia & neighboring states)
Dvon Duncan
director@easterncoal.org
(304) 294-1005

Freshwater Future

(Michigan & Great Lakes)
Ann Baughman
ann@freshwaterfuture.org
(231) 348-8200

Georgia River Network

Jesslyn Shields
jesslyn@garivers.org
(706) 549-4508

Kentucky Waterways Alliance

Tessa Edelen
tessa@KWAlliance.org
(502) 589-8008

Network of Oregon Watershed Councils

(541) 682-8421

Ohio Environmental Council

Trish Lanahan
Trish@theOEC.org
(614) 487-7506

Prairie Rivers Network

(Illinois)
Glynnis Collins
gcollins@prairierivers.org
(217) 344-2371

Shenandoah Valley Network

(Virginia)
Kate Wofford
kwofford@svnva.org
(540) 987-8155

Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association

(New Jersey)
Alyse Greenberg
agreenberg@thewatershed.org
(609) 737-3735

River Alliance of Wisconsin

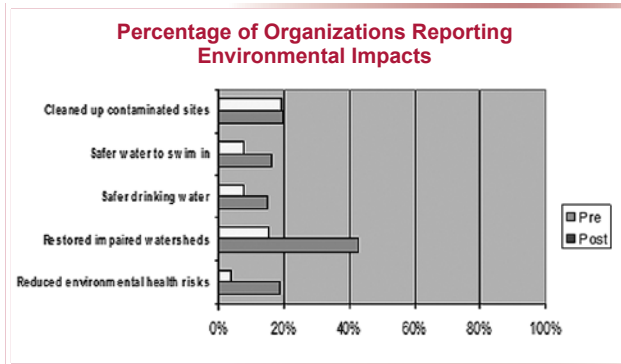
Allison Werner
awerner@wisconsinrivers.org
(608) 257-2424

Montana Watershed Coordination Council

Alicia Vanderheiden
info.mwcc@gmail.com
(406) 465-8813

West Virginia Rivers Coalition

Shanda Minney
sminney@wvivers.org
(304) 637-7201



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been in existence longer were also the ones most likely to have protected drinking water.

Conclusions

First off, our rivers—and our watershed and river organizations—benefit from having a focused support effort. So if your state or region has a lead trainer, take advantage of it! Regarding our study, we hypothesized that groups would become more and more sustainable if they implemented several important management strategies. In just two years, we were able to show statistically-significant connections between these strategies, organizational growth and effectiveness. Most important, we learned that capacity building works—that modest but well-crafted programs that provide groups with access to workshops, facilitation, training and consulting services actually do help groups become stronger and more effective.

Of course being successful shouldn't always be measured by larger budgets and more staff. Our work suggests that capacity-builders should also help groups expand their community support and plan to recruit and renew their volunteer leadership. Sustainability as an organization, and the ability to be a long-term watershed steward, is more important than size.

Next Steps

River Network has updated our assessment protocol since the Watershed Support Network project. Our new online assessment will be available in early 2012. If you are looking for organizational help, please contact River Network's "River Leaders" Program or any of the trainers listed on page 7. 

End Notes

¹Office of Water, Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds, Targeted-Watersheds Capacity Building Initiative. This was our second major grant to support the Watershed Support Network.

²Lead-training partners in the Watershed Support Network were: Alabama Rivers Alliance, Amigos Bravos (New Mexico), Cumberland River Compact (Tennessee and Kentucky), Georgia River Network, Kentucky Waterways Alliance, Ohio Environmental Council, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, Trees, Water and People (in the first grant for Colorado and Montana) and Freshwater Future (Michigan, Indiana and Pennsylvania).

³The program cost an average of \$3,800 per group assisted.

⁴Groups that provided complete and comparable budget information both pre and post program.

⁵A correlation of 1 is said to be "complete" and a correlation of 0 indicates no linkage at all. In complex systems like this one, a correlation above .2 is usually considered significant. Results described in this article all fall above the minimum .2 statistical correlation.

⁶In this case I am using the word "success" to mean growth in measured indicators of organizational strength.

For More Information: our full technical report to U.S. EPA is available for download at www.rivernetwork.org/news/wsn-final-report.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Baird Straughan for his tireless work from start to finish of this project and countless extra hours collecting and analyzing data. His ongoing efforts with database development through Leadgreen.org is helping groups every day; Thanks also to our lead-training partners who matched every dollar they received to do this work three times over. And, thanks to those who supported the program financially: C. S. Mott Foundation; Park Foundation; U.S. EPA OW OWOW; Chesapeake Bay Trust and Chesapeake Bay Funders Network.

Fundraising Plan Development



By Michele Wheeler
Bad River Watershed
Association

www.badriverwatershed.org

A Small Step at a Time

The Bad River watershed is a large sparsely populated and beautifully forested area in northern Wisconsin that drains over 1,000 square miles to Lake Superior. Forests have returned to much of our watershed following the extensive logging of the early 1900s. Some agriculture and mild residential development occur in the middle portion of the basin. The reservation of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians (the Tribe) lies across the lower one-third of the watershed.

The Kakagon Slough/Bad River Slough, located at the mouth of the watershed on Lake Superior, is the largest and possibly most pristine freshwater estuary remaining on Lake Superior. Its harvests of wild rice provide the Tribe with sustenance and spiritual strength. The watershed also contains one of the most diverse assemblages of fish in the Lake Superior Basin.

Although the watershed is generally considered to be in good condition, local rivers may no longer be termed “pristine.” Threats to water quality in our region come from small amounts of pollution that combine to have a significant cumulative impact on watershed health. These non-point sources include sedimentation and/or pollution from road networks, peak streamflows, failing septic systems and/or overland runoff from agricultural fields. As a result, the Bad River watershed is the greatest contributor of sediment to Lake Superior.

The invasive sea lamprey thrives in the sandy stream bottoms because of this sedimentation. Therefore, the Bad River

watershed is also the largest contributor of sea lamprey into Lake Superior.

Local people appreciate both the environmental concerns and the unique beauty of the watershed. The Bad River Watershed Association (BRWA) was founded in 2002 at the urging of the Bad River Tribe, with the overall goal to get local people involved in learning about and taking care of the watershed. BRWA’s mission is to promote a healthy relationship between the people and natural communities of the Bad River watershed by involving all citizens in assessing, maintaining and improving watershed integrity for future generations. “We recognize that the future condition of the watershed depends on the individual decisions of all who live here,” says Darienne McNamara, board president. “Since our founding, we’ve been strategic and intentional about casting a wide net,

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Sediment plume entering Lake Superior from the Bad River during a storm event.

Courtesy of the Bad River Watershed Association

“We consolidated all of our volunteer, donor and grant contributions into our WaterGrass database to strengthen and nurture our relationships with donors and find ways for them to be more integrally involved in the work of BRWA.”

and engaging people in BRWA with different views, but with a shared interest in taking care of our rivers.”

It started with a great idea, and a band of committed volunteers. BRWA began to implement their mission with a water quality monitoring program—both implemented and managed by volunteers—in 2002. They acquired technical expertise from local agencies on program design, and a few small grants from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Environmental Education Board and Freshwater Future, a regional nonprofit for program supplies.

With a taste of how their efforts were leading to action (and okay perhaps a little burnout from volunteers running the growing programs), BRWA leaders decided to build a strong foundation for their organization. Translation: they decided to get serious about raising money, because they realized they couldn’t sustain their work without it. They have proven resourceful and have tapped many different sources for capacity-building assistance, increasing the size of the small staff beyond what other rural groups have been able to sustain.

The Small Steps

Local Community Giving

With the encouragement of the River Alliance of Wisconsin staff (who were funded in-part by the EPA through River Network), BRWA began to plan for future growth in 2003. At the time, in order to reach out to all citizens in their economically depressed area, BRWA had a non-dues paying membership. In 2005, BRWA

developed a fundraising plan with the help of the River Alliance of Wisconsin, using an approach and materials developed through the Watershed Support Network. They focused on raising local dollars through two main activities: an annual appeal and a spring dinner/auction fundraiser.

A Growing Team

By 2006, donations began to flow, even though the organization still depended upon governmental grants for much of its budget. All new board members signed an affirmation that included individual commitments to make an annual contribution and support the financial stability of BRWA. They worked to create a team.

Building the Story Why People Give

BRWA acquired a reputation for solid technical work, and the demand for its services grew. In 2007, the EPA provided BRWA with a multi-year grant that allowed BRWA to hire an executive director, with part of her time to focus on organizational development. BRWA made use of resources from River Network and River Alliance of Wisconsin, both coordinated through the Watershed Support Network (WSN), as they hired their first executive director and began to install professional systems.

As the executive director, Michele Wheeler managed all the programs, and was in her own words—overwhelmed. “Our fundraising strategy at that time was pretty much running around rallying funds from everywhere we could think of,” says Wheeler. “I knew it wasn’t a good plan—but didn’t know what else to do. So I attended River Rally in 2007 with an eye out for how to

The screenshot shows the WaterGrass database interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation tabs for Home, Accounts, Contacts, Contributions, Campaign Activities, Master Campaigns, Documents, Reports, Leads, and Cases. The main content area displays the account details for 'Flip's Canoes'. The account name is 'Flip's Canoes' with a 'View Hierarchy' link. The account record type is 'Business'. The phone number is '(360) 757-8124'. The account membership expires on 6/1/2011. The contribution information shows the account is a major donor, with a max gift of \$500.00 and lifetime donations of \$835.00. The address information shows the billing and shipping addresses as 123 Water Street, Bellingham, WA 98226. The donation policies section is also visible.

Account Detail	
Account Name	Flip's Canoes View Hierarchy
Account Record Type	Business Change
Newsletter for Account	Email
Account Membership Expires	6/1/2011
Phone	(360) 757-8124
Fax	
Newsletter for Account Cutoff	6/1/2011
Active	Active
Contribution Information	
Major Donor Now	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Max Gift Last 2 Yrs	\$500.00
Last Contrib Date	6/2/2010
Lifetime donations	\$835.00
Address Information	
Addressee	Flip Wilson
Billing Address	123 Water Street Bellingham, WA 98226
Shipping Address	123 Water Street Bellingham, WA 98226
Watershed	
Subwatershed	
Donation Policies	

Courtesy of LeadGreen

make it better. I left with two main actions, which we paid for from a connection I made at Rally.”

Using funds from the Environmental Support Center based in Washington, D.C., BRWA created their first Strategic Plan in 2008 and Financial Management Plan in 2009. With these two items, they were better able to communicate to funders where the organization was headed, and assure donors that they were ready to responsibly handle bigger contributions. The staff grew to include a citizen involvement coordinator (the “people person”) and watershed action director (the “data person”). With these extra positions came improved program delivery, more local recognition of BRWA’s work and a bigger annual fundraising target.

A Functional, Flexible Database

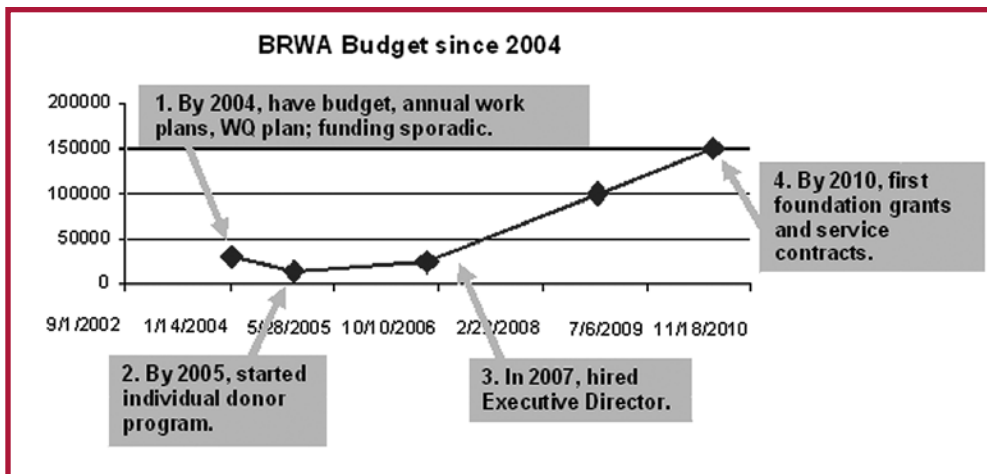
By 2009, it was clear that BRWA wouldn’t be able to grow if they couldn’t accurately track their work and their contributors. They decided that they needed a strong member database to strategize, track and evaluate

their fundraising efforts. The River Alliance of Wisconsin suggested the WaterGrass database. Thanks to grants from Wisconsin DNR and River Network, they contracted with consultants from LeadGreen, and in a couple months they were up and running. “We had been working from about 10 different lists of previous donors and couldn’t look at their giving over time to better plan our asks,” says Wheeler. “We consolidated all of our volunteer, donor and grant contributions into our WaterGrass database to strengthen and nurture our relationships with donors and find ways for them to be more integrally involved in the work of BRWA.”

Major Donors, Foundations, Expanded Community Giving

By 2010, BRWA was ready for the next step in fundraising. Database at the ready, BRWA then worked with a local professional fundraiser (pro bono) to develop a diverse fundraising plan and used the database to track progress. They went from 2 major activities to raise funds, to 17 targeted

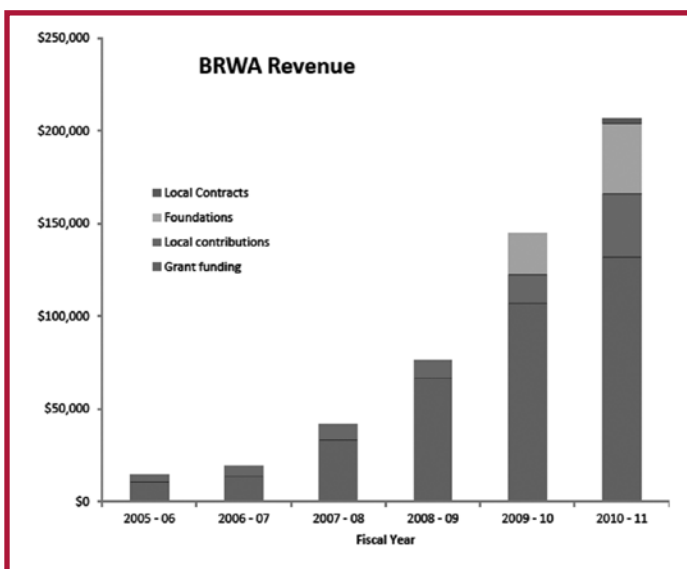
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sending thank yous or setting up major donor lunches. By working together and investing in their own fundraising, they were able to raise \$25,000 from the local community in about 3 months.

Lessons Learned

With some success from last year’s fundraising effort, BRWA is following the same general approach to developing and implementing their fundraising plan. The board approved a budget of secured funds, authorizing spending by line item. Then they compared those numbers with what they wanted to do over the next year: how many staff, how much printing, travel, etc. The difference between what they had and what they wanted equaled the budget shortfall; BRWA used that to establish our fundraising target. “We have two targets to shoot for,” says BRWA Fundraising Committee Chair Kevin Brewster. “One that will allow us to continue operating at our existing program level, and another that will allow us to expand our services. So in our fundraising plan, we know what we’re fundraising for.”



fundraising asks from different segments of the community. Present and past board members contributed substantial individual gifts to fund the director’s time in implementing the plan.

The investment in internal capacity netted the first grants from private foundations and contracts for services from local governments. They implemented a major donor program to increase local contributions. All board members contributed in some way, either by giving,

From the BRWA director, “I guess if I had to describe some lessons learned; it would be to not be afraid to ask people for money. I used to be an apologetic asker. But the first time someone wrote me a \$3,000 check and thanked me for the opportunity to donate, I kinda got it. People donate for the same reason I work here. Because they believe in what we’re doing, and it’s rewarding to be a part of it.”

Strategic Planning



By Elaine Eisenbraun
North Fork John Day
Watershed Council
www.nfjdw.org

At the North Fork John Day Watershed Council, we view our Strategic Plan as the channel which guides our active stream of activities. Like a natural stream bed in the field, it provides the foundation, the depth and the substance which allows us to deliver a crystal clear product. Sometimes, our enthusiasm may overflow the banks, and other times we may desire a higher rate of flow, but always we can maintain our direction and progress.

The beauty of a strategic plan is its adaptability to vision and action. When we are exuberant, it brings focus. When we feel uncertain, it provides direction. And, for the steady, consistent days, it encourages creativity. In developing a strategic plan, our organization needed a framework that would be stout enough to withstand major events, robust enough to encourage activity and sinuous enough to connect with all of our diverse undertakings.

The broad landscape of planning needs was met when River Network and the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils—a partner in the Watershed Support Network—generously offered their joint expertise to lead us. Meetings were held; stakeholders were invited, interviews were conducted. A good, hard look was taken at the council's vision, assets, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Soon, ideas led to concepts, and before long, a lot of hard work transformed into a workable plan defining goals, objectives, opportunities and action plans.

It is the vision and strategy of any organization that carries it unfaltering

through change, transition or experimental actions. For the North Fork John Day Watershed Council, the structural integrity defined by our 2010 Strategic Plan became a roadmap for a smooth transition when the directorship recently changed hands. Having a carefully orchestrated plan in place, allowed the organization to maintain primary focus on its inherent vision. It helped to maintain an attentive course that continues to deliver the compelling products that serve our region.

A first step of the new management team was to engage in a staff retreat. Much of that conference was spent reviewing the strategic plan and evaluating our position within its defined course. We reviewed the document in its entirety, penned notes across its pages and drew large stars in the margins of critical benchmarks. Reviewing the plan at its six month waypoint was valuable as a reminder



Commitment to Community: The first Long Creek Farmer's Market on the grounds of the watershed council.



Courtesy of the North Fork John Day Watershed Council

Stream channels are assessed for restoration.

of our path and also as a prompt to keep the document alive and to live within its direction.

The North Fork John Day Watershed Council is a nonprofit organization serving the needs of people, lands and wildlife in eastern Oregon. Our primary focus is within the 1.7 million acres of our watershed boundaries. There, we restore habitat, enhance fish passage, assure clean water, monitor environmental change, address encroaching weeds, educate our neighbors and generally take every opportunity to protect and enhance our environment. In an area where there are 1,400 acres for every person, the connection of the resources and residents is critical. The strategic plan helps us to respond to that perennial connection. We review the plan monthly and refocus our actions around that association.

Successes

A primary focus of the strategic plan is, “community.” It came about, not only as an appropriate measure for any organization,

but derived from a distinct passion. The North Fork John Day Watershed Council is based in a region of undeniable socio-economic need. Our daily connection with the people and processes in this remote area drive our rejuvenated desire to commit to projects that offer a dual benefit to the resources and to the residents.

One example of this dedication is our juniper eradication project. Upon being granted funds to release lands from juniper encroachment, we realized an opportunity to divide and extend the benefit to some of the small land holdings thereby offering landscape enhancement to the whole community.

In developing new initiatives for the next season, we determined that it would best fit our strategic plan (and therefore our true mission) to continue to focus projects on community-wide benefits. We chose to again enhance the local landscape through aspen restoration. On dozens of local landholdings, we will help to re-establish a native and declining habitat. In doing so, we offer an economic benefit to the entire community through enhanced aesthetics and economic attraction.

The North Fork John Day Watershed Council Strategic Plan identifies five distinct goals:

1. Restoration Program
2. Weed Program
3. Monitoring Program
4. Education & Outreach
5. Internal/Organizational Goals

Restoration Program

The restoration goal focuses on the condition of the physical watershed. Many would identify this as our defining goal, but the strategic plan reminds us that it is equally weighted with the other socio-economic and ecological foci of our organization. An example of the role of the strategic plan in restoration is our Fox Creek Assessment. Fox Creek, with its primary steelhead spawning habitat, is a major tributary to the North Fork of the John Day. Having completed a whole stream assessment, the strategic plan reminded us to stay on track with the implementation of the recommendations in that assessment. This summer we are initiating the many identified projects by working toward the removal of a man-made channel and subsequent recharge of the historic channel.

Weed Program

Weeds are an endless challenge in eastern Oregon. Our strategic plan reminds us to



Weeds on public lands

remain equally strategic about the weed situation. In the instance of our effort to create and maintain an up-to-date weed survey of the entire watershed, we realized that our current staffing was unable to meet the goalposts we had set for ourselves. That was where the tactical piece came in. While the strategic plan directed us to extensive surveys, it became necessary to determine if we should juggle personnel, hire some contract help or re-assess our strategy and justify a change. We recognize that a change in strategy is acceptable as long as it is made with appropriate reporting and justification.

Monitoring Program

Monitoring is the evaluative piece of resource restoration work. Many of our grant funders require monitoring for up to several years after project completion. The strategic plan has led us to develop a procedural check list for all our projects to assure that long-term monitoring and other critical milestones aren't neglected. Our Monitoring goal also directed that we should successfully coordinate the Intensively Managed Watershed Collaborative. This proposal, led us to take a comprehensive look at our coordination efforts to date. We immediately saw that we could improve our output with some changes and by adding a strong outreach component. The outreach would, in turn, tie directly to Goal #4.

Education & Outreach

This goal had been poised to expand and blossom into a greater program well before the strategic plan had been prepared. The plan provided the impetus to move ahead. The major step in education was the creation of our new, Stream Smart program for

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Courtesy of the North Fork John Day Watershed Council

Everyone is a student on the river!

schools. In outreach, we took one of the “Year 1 Benchmarks” directing us to offer a community event and let it develop into something much greater than it started out to be. This is illustrative of the flood stage of the stream channel metaphor. While working within the confines of the strategic plan, we are able to allow our passion to drive an activity to become something larger with more meaning and passion than it originally engaged.


Internal/Organizational Goals

Everyone is a student on the river! Our strategic plan called for board development and additional fundraising. In this case, we have found that our strategic plan might have been a little conservative. Many of the activities and benchmarks are purely good business practices. It is exciting to have them stated and be able to achieve an even higher level of accomplishment. The attachment of this goal to all the other goals is the hub of the strategic plan. It becomes the critical element over the long run and serves the other needs of the organization.

For other organizations seeking to complete a strategic plan, we would heartily endorse the product and the process. It is always wise to consider the use of an outside consultant in strategic planning. Because tangential interviews often take place in private to allow for free will in expressing individual visions for an organization, it is wise

to allow a neutral third party to conduct those interviews. That is where the greatest liberty to achieve a full expression of the quintessential opportunities arrives.

Strategic planning is time consuming, requiring multiple meetings over many months. It requires collaboration, brainstorming and honest listening. An organization should clearly recognize its level of preparation prior to engaging in the process.

It is true that management without comprehension of an entity’s bounds is fruitless. Effective management requires a perennial focus on those structural boundaries, some of which are internal and some of which are external. The North Fork John Day Watershed Council sincerely thanks River Network and the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils for helping us to retain a well-focused structure, which in turn provides on-the-ground results every day. 

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper (Louisiana)

Individual & Business Donations



By Cara Leverett
Atchafalaya Basinkeeper
www.basinkeeper.org

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper has always gotten a lot done, but we were spending so much time protecting our watershed that very little went into securing our budget from one year to the next. We relied almost entirely on grants, and we were neglecting our members and not getting the support that we needed to continue, let alone expand our work. Coming into the organization as the staff scientist, I was ill-prepared for the role that I would play as chief fundraiser. Training provided by River Network's Diana Toledo, using materials developed through the Watershed Support Network, led us down the path to increasing our individual and business donations from a mere \$3500 (about 3.3% of our annual budget) in 2009 to about \$35,000 (about 33% of our budget) in 2010.

Diana worked with us from late summer through November of 2009 to develop our fundraising plan. On our weekly phone calls, she asked questions and gave me homework assignments that involved gathering information from our donor database, which at that time was an Excel spreadsheet. I was the main person from our organization that worked on the plan, but when it came time to make major decisions, I conferred with our executive director. Seemingly by magic, Diana organized all of the information she had compiled into a complicated-looking Excel spreadsheet that held the key to our fundraising success.



Microsoft

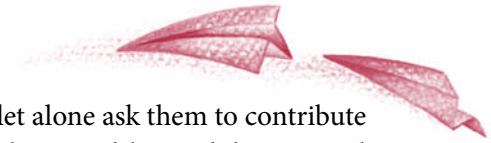
The spreadsheet was actually pretty simple—it had seven sections, each a different component of our fundraising plan. The seven pieces of our plan were major donors, member dues, board giving, events, private foundations, business donors and other NGOs. Using the data that I had garnered from our existing database, Diana helped me to set target amounts for each category. For some sections of the plan, such as major donors, member dues and private foundations, we were very specific with sources and amounts. In other sections, such as events and business donors, we left things vague or set low estimates since we did not have as much data on which to base the figures. By early December, we had a draft fundraising plan to present to our Board of Directors.

As ridiculous as it sounds, when Diana began working with Basinkeeper, we had never sent one single reminder for our members to renew their commitment,

Training provided by River Network's Diana Toledo, using materials developed through the Watershed Support Network, led us down the path to increasing our individual and business donations from a mere \$3500 ... in 2009 to about \$35,000 ... in 2010.

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Excerpt from Atchafalaya Baykeeper Fundraising Plan 2010											Sub-Total by Source
Funding Source	Strategy	# of People Asked	Anticipated Effectiveness of Request	Average Donation	Estimated Income	Costs	Net Income	Timing	Board/Trustees Role	Staff Role	Sub-Total by Source
1. Individual Donors (above dues)											\$9,385
Current Donors- Special Appeals	Dec.appeal (end-of-year)	180	10%	\$40	\$720	\$135	\$585	November	If timing allows, include notes on outgoing letters to folks they know.	Pull out donors of previous 4-6 weeks. Share donor info with Board.	
Major Donors	Major Donor #1 Ongoing cultivation by designated Board member/ Trustee				\$500		\$500	Ongoing	Designated Board/Trustee will steward the donor to keep them informed and engaged in ABK. Work with staff to make personal request for a renewed donation in 2010 and thank them personally when they do.	Provide Board with support in cultivation. Have meetings with donor w/ Board or Trustee to make ask. Process gift, thank, maintain records.	
	Major Donor #2 Ongoing cultivation		\$2,000		\$2,000		\$2,000	Ongoing	Same as above.	Thank!	
	Major Donor #3				TBD			Ongoing	Designated Board/Trustee will make 4-6 "non-ask" contacts/year to keep donor engaged and informed. Work with staff to determine if a higher "ask" is appropriate and to make the personal appeal for ongoing support. Help set up meeting and attend, if at all possible.	Same as above for top prospects. Other prospects are handled as "regular" donors.	
2. Member Dues											\$14,665
Renewals	Bi-annual renewals. They get 3 reminder letters + 1 call (or 2 letters, if the 3rd isn't effective in the first round). Six weeks between reminders.	174	75%	\$40	\$5,220	\$131	\$5,090	See notes below	Circulate names among Board/Trustees of lapsed members who are about to be called.	Create coded mailings with reply cards and envelopes.	
New Members	Mailing to Acadian Paddle Club members (Did presentation in 2009)	100	5%	\$50	\$250	\$75	\$175	TBD	If timing allows, include notes on outgoing letters to folks they know.	Draft and finalize letter, perhaps cowritten with Paddle Club Chair.	
	Mailing to Louisiana Crawfish Producers Assn. (West) members	400	10%	\$30	\$1,200	\$300	\$900	TBD	If timing allows, include notes on outgoing letters to folks they know	Draft and finalize letter, perhaps cowritten or including a quote from LCPA representative	
	Each Board of Directors member recruits 10 members/year	70	100%	\$50	\$3,500	-	\$3,500	all year	Personal pitches and recruitment in their networks		
	Presentations to 6 civic groups/year	400	3%	\$40	\$480	-	\$480	Ongoing	Identify Board/Trustees willing to make a total of 2-3 presentations to civic groups/year. All should suggest and work to secure invitations for ABK to present.	Provide Board members/Trustees with brochures, membership forms/envelopes and other materials.	
3. Board Giving											\$1,500
	Strategy	Board/ Trustee Size	Percentage	Average Donation	Estimated Income	Costs	Net Income	Timing	Board Role	Staff Role	
	Board members will fill out pledge cards with their financial commitment to ABK	15	100%		\$1,500		\$1,500	Pledges made Jan/ Feb, fulfilled over the year	Make and honor pledge for significant donation. Board Chair/ Vice-Chair-lead effort to fulfill pledges.	Track donations	
4. Events											\$0
	Event	# of Attendees	Percentage	Ticket Price or Avg. Gift	Estimated Income	Costs	Net Income	Timing	Board Role	Staff Role	
	Two benefit concerts						TBD	TBD	Personal invitations to your assigned prospects and networks, assist with marketing or other tasks as needed	Work with Drew to plan ahead of time, market to members, set up booth at the event	
	Dinner party/swamp tour							Fall 2010 (not close to holidays)	Cultivate major donor prospects before inviting them to attend. Goal is small, select group (10-20), make ABK presentation and pitch for a major gift.	Help as needed.	



5. Private Foundations	Request To:	Request For:	Amount Requested	Probability of Funding	Estimated Income	Costs	Net Income	Timing	Board Role	Staff Role	\$108,000
	Foundation #1	Monitoring & Enforcement Program	\$8,000	100%	\$8,000		\$8,000				
	Foundation #2	General Operating	\$40,000	100%	\$40,000		\$40,000				
6. Business Donors	Strategy	# Businesses Approached	Anticipated Effectiveness of Request	Average Donation	Estimated Income	Costs	Net Income	Timing	Board Role	Staff Role	\$8,250
	Business Donor #1				\$8,000		\$8,000	Jan. album release... donation by June?			
	Business Donor #2	TBD		150			\$250		Lynn will help make a personal pitch and determine best approach (phone, mailing following a presentation, pitch at a meeting, etc.). Other Board members should use their own personal contacts among LTPA members.	Staff will work with Lynn to find best way to reach out to them	
7. Other NGOs	Request To:	Request For:	Amount Requested	Probability of Funding	Estimated Income	Costs	Net Income	Timing	Board Role	Staff Role	\$500
	Louisiana Crawfish Producers Assn. (West)		\$500		\$500		\$500				
8. Other	Strategy				Estimated Income	Costs	Net Income	Timing	Board Role	Staff Role	\$0
	Interest										
	Fee for Service										
	Sales										
Totals					Estimated Income	Costs	Net Income	Timing	Board Role	Staff Role	Total

Note: The above is an excerpt of Alchafalaya Baykeeper's (ABK) fundraising plan. Due to space limitations, not all sections show the full list of strategies; thus, the "funding source" totals shown may differ from the "net income" totals shown.

let alone ask them to contribute above-and-beyond their annual membership dues. This was the aspect that needed the most work, but had the most untapped potential. Diana helped us to determine the number of times per year to send renewal requests, and helped us pin down the timing and logistics of sending a request. She also introduced me to the River Network's *River Fundraising Alert*. One article included a breakdown on crafting an effective renewal request letter. Since it was the first renewal request I had ever written, I followed the advice in the article, and Diana reviewed the letter for us before we mailed it out. We must have done something right, because it was hugely successful. Surprisingly, members that had not renewed since joining in 2004 renewed in 2010.

We also added a "Christmas Ask" to our fundraising plan. I thought that asking members for a donation above-and-beyond their annual membership dues was an imposition, but with Diana's encouragement, we sent out a letter in mid-November, asking members to consider donating before the end of the year. The Christmas Ask accounted for 20% of the money raised from individuals and businesses in 2010.

We also addressed the other areas of our fundraising plan, but focused on cultivating the membership component in 2010. This year (2011), with the membership plan in place, we were able to dedicate time to creating a solid strategy for our major donor program.

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Thanks to River Network, we have been able to raise the extra money needed to keep our organization afloat during a time when grant writing has been less productive.

Tips for success

- Maximize your membership program by upgrading to a database that is more functional than an Excel spreadsheet or a list. Such a database is a great help because you can automatically create mailing lists, mailing labels, letters and emails for exactly those members you wish to target at a given time.
- Consider offering membership or renewal premiums to folks donating at a certain level or higher. Premiums are good incentives for members to donate at a higher level.

- Always remember to thank your donors, no matter how great or small the contribution.

Lessons Learned

- The pay-off of a good fundraising plan is well worth the time and effort that goes into developing it.
- Individual donations are more reliable than foundation grants, if you can keep your members and sponsors engaged.
- Securing unrestricted funding is critical to success. Many foundations will not fund general expenses or certain aspects of your work.
- People want to give, you just have to ask!



Filled with Capacity



The Nanticoke River—the healthiest of all the major tributaries of the Chesapeake Watershed, an iconic body of water surrounded by marshes teeming with waterfowl and wading birds. These waters are healthy enough to create a hospitable place for the estuarine and freshwater creatures of the Chesapeake—perhaps even the ancient sturgeon still works its way up the muddy river bottom, or so the fable goes and so I choose to believe when I look out over the unspoiled landscape on a hazy spring morning. The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance is one of the organizations that looks after this magnificent resource, and we are privileged to be her caretakers. The larger watershed, our stomping grounds, covers 725,000 acres of marsh, forest, farm, dotted with small river communities. It overlaps two states, Maryland and Delaware, and five counties within those states. The largest town is Seaford, our industrial center. There are still places on this river where for miles you can see no sign of human alteration—much like it was in the early 1600s when Captain John Smith poked his way up the river.

The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance is a watershed organization, but one with a slightly different construction than most. We are made up of other organizations—they serve on our board, partner with us in our activities and support our work to conserve this Great River. We have 44 Partners in Conservation who all look at the river differently, have different ideas about how conservation is best applied, but who all share the same vision that this resource is invaluable and must be protected. This diverse partnership includes local and regional nonprofits, local businesses,



Nanticoke Watershed Alliance Staff

Courtesy of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance

By EB James
Nanticoke Watershed Alliance
nanticokeriver.org

industry, academic institutions and government agencies.

For most of its early existence, the Alliance was focused on the interactions of these partners, providing a venue for them to work together and to overcome their differences. In 2005, we had a staff of one and borrowed office space. The board decided that the organization could do more, and thus began our journey in capacity building. This journey has allowed us to continue to serve as the round table for organizations, but has also propelled us into critical mission work focused on conserving the natural, cultural and recreational resources of the Nanticoke River. Over the past 5 years, we developed one of the most comprehensive volunteer water monitoring programs in the region, and the first in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to receive EPA approval of our methodology. We have developed a comprehensive watershed management

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We live in our Quick Books and keep our accounting in-house. That's not as exciting as it sounds, but it has allowed us to know where each program stands and effectively manage our efforts.

plan that addresses both states and all five counties of the watershed, created on a foundation of Green Infrastructure and broad community involvement.

We became a National Park Service partner on the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, serving as the River Manager for the Maryland portion of the Nanticoke River Trail. We have engaged with our farming community to pilot a flexible buffer program to try to balance the needs of farm production and water quality. In this program we achieved almost total coverage of a sub-watershed of the Nanticoke River in our first year, planting over 15 miles of buffers over the course of one perfect fall week last year. We grew from that one person organization with a borrowed desk into a four full-time staff with our own building overlooking our stunning river. Our ability to aggressively pursue our mission with these programs is only possible because of the work done behind the scenes on building capacity.

As an organization, we committed ourselves to the work involved with designing, learning and implementing the systems that have allowed our small organization to achieve the ambitious goals the Partners in Conservation have set forth. There were five components of our success to date:

1. strategic planning and plan implementation,
2. financial systems,
3. policy development,
4. database implementation and
5. aggressive program tracking.

Each step lead to the next, each task (and each program) strategically linked. We took advantage of the trainings and opportunities we came across to further develop and enhance our work.

Our strategic plan was well designed and implemented and included a fundraising strategy. For the past five years, we have



Courtesy of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance

Paddling towards sustainability on the Nanticoke.



Working with farmers

stayed on that plan, adjusting it as necessary, but maintaining a clear and cohesive direction. We stayed on mission. We live in our Quick Books and keep our accounting in-house. That's not as exciting as it sounds, but it has allowed us to know where each program stands and effectively manage our efforts, using our resources in a most efficient and transparent fashion that gives our funders confidence in our ability to complete our projects, or (inevitably at times) to comprehend why and where we fell short. We developed comprehensive policies regarding every aspect of the business, removing the unknowns for staff, board and supporters about how we will respond in any given situation and what can be expected from us.

We jumped on the opportunity to work with WaterGrass, the developing database built on the Salesforce platform, with Leadgreen. This is an incredibly powerful (and sometimes challenging) tool, but it has given us the ability to track, well, everything—partners,

donors, volunteers, foundations, press, web visitors and contacts. With the associated Vertical Response, we leapt into the world of mass emails. Pair that with cloud computing, an integrated word press website that all of our staff is qualified to update, and a Facebook site, and our connectivity and efficiency has exploded. And all of it, from a baseline anyway, is just about free to maintain and worth the upfront training and information migration costs.

We also track programs and staff, giving us the ability to refine staff effort, create robust program reports that captures all of the important efforts staff give to the projects. Taken as a whole, we now miss very little when it comes to the effort that goes into our work, our ability to gauge what we can accomplish with our resources, and our estimations about what we will need to continue accomplishing our mission.

All of these efforts were critical for us. If, however, there was one single thing that I could recommend from all of this, one of these tools that I think no conservation organization should be without, it would be the database. I hear the groans, I thought so too. But oh, the power!

It sounds like a lot of work. It was. However, now that they are established, the overall efficiency of the organization has reached new heights. This means the staff are spending more time effectively working on the programs that are directly conserving our river. My thrill as the Executive Director is a little vicarious. I don't spend as much time with mud between my toes as I used to—so that the staff can—and the reward is that the time they are in the field is powerfully spent. It's a pretty good tradeoff.



Funding Capacity Building

Investing in the Future of River & Watershed Groups

By Jamie Baxter
Chesapeake Bay Trust
www.cbtrust.org

If you ask three foundations why they fund capacity building, it's very likely you'll hear three very different answers and at least one of them may be some version of: "We don't fund that." Direct support for organizational capacity building is a difficult proposition for many foundations, particularly those who are feeling the pinch of the sluggish economy and whom may be responding to the urgency of new threats or unprecedented opportunities that warrant immediate, thoughtful and comprehensive action. Capacity building of grantee organizations can be seen as too long-term and not strategically focused on the most pressing issues impacting our rivers. Ironically, as a funder who supports capacity building, we definitely can relate to these and other perceptions of capacity building. However, we choose to support capacity building because, after exploring the rationale behind our perceptions, we concluded that grantee capacity building is an essential complement to any grant program or strategy focused on immediate or near term results. So, in a way, we fund capacity building for the same reasons many think they shouldn't.

Since 2007, the Chesapeake Bay Trust and the Chesapeake Bay Funder's Network have invested nearly \$2.5 million to build the capacity of river and watershed groups in the Chesapeake Region. We have worked with River Network and other capacity builders to design a program that engages grantees as partners and attempts to provide capacity building support to ensure long-term organizational viability by helping our recipients increase their near term effectiveness and impact. In fact, the urgency of an unprecedented shift in the restoration framework for the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers has heightened the importance of our capacity building work. The role of community-based, nonprofit, river and watershed organizations has become increasingly more important in restoration, protection, policy and watershed science in the region. As the focus of the Chesapeake Bay restoration and protection effort continues to shift to the local level, and with the adoption of the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) that requires the development of Watershed Implementation Plans by state and local governments, watershed groups are poised



Capacity Building Initiative

River organizations play a critical role in bringing change to their local watersheds and sustaining that change indefinitely. The Chesapeake Bay Funders Network launched the Capacity Building Initiative for watershed groups and Waterkeepers in 2007, drawing on the strengths of national capacity building models and blending them with the flavor and culture of our regional grassroots movement. The comprehensive, three-year program directly funds capacity building work; provides training, networking, and peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities; and employs specialized consultants to enhance the collective impact of organizations across the bay region.


to play an even greater role in protection and restoration of streams, rivers and the Bay.

These organizations typically approach the Trust and other members of the Funders Network for programs that build the base of stakeholder support; shape and promote local policy and financing solutions; ensure that regulations are enforced; expand outreach to farmers, homeowners and businesses to increase adoption of best management practices; and initiate and actively managing on-the-ground implementation projects. Our capacity building support helps organizations maximize the impact of all of these efforts. By providing grantees with space (in both available time and through diversified revenue streams), they can think beyond the next grant and develop programmatic strategies that build on themselves and focus on the specific issues their organization can

“We believe that the initiative has truly helped us grow and think strategically, work through operational issues and set the right priorities around growing unrestricted income, board development and strategic planning. This type of support has impacted us positively in areas of program development and advocacy as well, allowing staff to learn via conferences and workshops, network and build connections with each other (which has strengthened existing coalitions) and build overall technical capacity in all of these important areas (organizational development, program execution and advocacy).”

~ Grant Recipient

and to be more agile, to address their most pressing needs in a thoughtful and timely manner and to challenge them to think critically and more holistically about their work. The impacts can be dramatic and are likely to continue well beyond the term of the “grant.”

So, you ask, why do we support capacity building? We can't afford not to. 

influence. In the words of a grantee, “You can't boil the ocean. We have to direct our efforts toward programs that make the most difference to the river. Doing that makes for a strong Chester River Association, one that will be here delivering those programs for the long haul.”

There are lots of definitions of capacity building and lots of reasons it is important. Bottom line is that it is about providing assistance to help organizations get stronger

Capacity Building Partners include: Chesapeake Bay Trust, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment, Town Creek Foundation, Rauch Foundation, Prince Charitable Trust, Marpat Foundation, Baltimore Community Foundation. For additional information on the Chesapeake Bay Funder's Network Capacity Building Initiative see www.cbtrust.org/site/c.miJPKXPCJnH/b.5457505/k.A038/Capacity_Building.htm

We asked our River Network Partners from across the country how a focus on their organization's health (e.g., board development, fundraising plans, strategic plans, budgets, etc.) has resulted in success in general. Here is what we learned.

Board Diversity



Nine Mile Creek Conservation Council (NMCCC), located just outside of Syracuse, New York, serves Nine

Mile Creek river and watershed corridor conservation issues from Otisco Lake to Onondaga Lake. It is an all-volunteer organization founded in 1993 and incorporated in 1997.



NMCCC is a grassroots organization addressing a wide variety of river and watershed conservation issues. The river corridor includes a wide variety of transitional zones:

rural farming areas, semi-suburban to suburban zones, industrial zones, town and state parks and preserves, land trusts and private holdings, among others.

Having a diverse board encompassing individuals with deep technical skills to

non-technical individuals with management skills provides a broad spectrum of experience and input. It is our board who directly engages issues and solutions. The NMCCC is fortunate we have a skilled set of individuals. Thus our learning curve is quick to lead to solutions. However, some grassroots organizations lack experience, but have individuals with passion and drive to become directly involved with river conservation issues. From an organizational management perspective such groups can greatly benefit from grants offering these boards the opportunity to receive professional guidance during their formative stages. The result can create the basis from which the group grows and becomes a long lasting organization contributing to local river conservation. The formative years can be challenging for new organizations. Grant funds and other resources applied to a well-trained, functional board and to overall organizational development can result in planting the seed for another sustainable grassroots river conservation organization.

Nine Mile Creek Conservation Council (NY)
www.ninemilecreekconservationcouncil.org

Staff Training



Sometime in 1998, the decision was made that the network I was coordinating would incorporate and become a separate 501(c)(3) organization.

I soon found that this transition meant a lot more in terms of my duties for the organization than simply filing some legal papers and continuing my coordination duties. It meant that I was becoming an executive director.

I had gotten my job because of my experience as an policy analyst and organizer, not because my great administrative, financial or fundraising skills. In fact, I had none of those last three skills, I hadn't ever even developed a personal budget, and I had never raised a cent in donations. Luckily, a woman who was helping me set up a bookkeeping system suggested that I go to the Institute for Conservation Leadership website and see what kind of trainings they had. I was in luck—they were launching the Executive Director training, and I was in one of the first classes.



Cyn Sarthou,
Executive Director,
Gulf Restoration Network

Courtesy of Gulf Restoration Network

What I learned during that training has formed the basis of my 15 year tenure as Executive Director of the Gulf Restoration Network. Without it, I truly believe the GRN would not have lasted 5 years.

Gulf Restoration Network (LA)
www.healthygulf.org

Strategic Planning



Over the last few years, the Superior Watershed Partnership has made a concerted effort to make strategic planning more streamlined and more realistic for both staff and board members. This has resulted in real world targets that can be measured on a quarterly basis and helps everyone track progress on field projects, community projects and office projects. Improved planning has also resulted in dramatically increased funding. Obviously not a coincidence.

Superior Watershed Partnership & Land Trust (MI)
www.superiorwatersheds.org

Transition



Over the last 30 years, North Jersey RC&D has been supported by the Natural Resources

Conservation Service, via federal funding. Through this support, we were lucky enough to receive office space and guidance through a federal employee known as the coordinator. The nonprofit Council is made up of representatives from the counties we serve. Since we had the coordinator that managed the day to day operations of the organization, the Council and structure of the organization did not have to be like a more typical nonprofit. We lacked internal structure. However this did not hold us back. We have been one of the more successful RC&D councils in the state and nation.

Now that the federal funding has been eliminated, the Council has to seriously review and design an internal structure that is appropriate for the size of our organization, and in turn we need to be able to keep up with our grant and foundation obligations for our projects. Faced with a new challenge, the Council and staff need to create a business plan and strategic plan that will move the organization into the future. We fully recognize the benefits of having sound internal structures.

North Jersey RC&D (NJ)
www.northjerseyrcd.org

Board Recruitment



After attending a Board of Directors workshop by Marc Smiley at River

Rally, our organization put together a structured board recruitment strategy that in two years resulted in a long overdue revitalization for the board of directors. The "new" board helped guide the organization in growth in programs, staff and budget. Programs went from site-specific restoration and education efforts to include watershed-wide community-based planning. Staff grew from one FTE to six FTEs. Annual budget for the organization increased from approximately \$80,000 to approximately \$450,000. With this growth came the capacity and expertise to also improve administrative systems essential to supporting on-the-ground resource conservation work.

Prescott Creeks (AZ)
www.PrescottCreeks.org

Collaboration & Capacity



The Ipswich River was named one of the most endangered rivers in North America in 2003, due to its severe low-

flow problems. We are making progress in restoring the river, working with towns like Reading, MA, which stopped using its wells that had pumped the river dry for decades, and helping the region save our rivers by saving water, energy (and money). We collaborated with federal, state and local partners on LID and water conservation demonstration projects throughout the watershed, and we're now working to remove several dams and replace culverts that obstruct fish movement and worsen flooding. Progress is slow but steady toward a healthier future for the Ipswich River.

We're also building a stronger organization. After bouncing around for decades from farmhouse attics to business park basements, the Ipswich River Watershed

Association received the gift of a house and 15 acres on the Ipswich River in 2006. Wow! We launched an organizational capacity building project to make the most of this dream come true and to build local support for protecting the river. That project helped us build a stronger Board and retool our communications. As a result, we now have a Facebook page (and over 170 friends), an interactive blog, our first professionally designed Annual Report and clearer communications. Executive Director, Kerry Mackin, was tremendously grateful to receive a River Hero award from River Network in 2007. We also won an Environment Merit Award from the EPA and received a \$150,000 gift (the largest cash gift in the organization's 34 year history), allowing us to convene a group of partners to work together to protect the rivers and Great Marsh of northeastern Massachusetts. We've just gotten started!

Ipswich River Watershed Association (MA)
www.ipswichriver.org



Resources & References

Blue Avocado is an online magazine providing practical, provocative and fun food-for-thought for nonprofits.
www.blueavocado.org

BoardSource is dedicated to advancing the public good by building exceptional nonprofit boards and inspiring board service. BoardSource provides knowledge, resources, trainings, assessment tools, consultations, publications and more.
www.boardsource.org

The Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training (GIFT) is a multiracial organization that promotes the connection between fundraising, social justice and movement-building. GIFT provides training, resources and analysis to thousands of groups each year; GIFT also produces the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*; River Network

Partners can receive a subscription discount.
www.grassrootsfundraising.org

Nonprofit Marketing Guide.Com provides tips and training to do-it-yourself nonprofit marketers and communications departments of one. They offer a weekly webinar series, a blog on nonprofit communications with posts Monday - Friday, a weekly e-newsletter, free downloads and more, all to help nonprofits make a big impression with smart, savvy marketing, communications and fundraising.
www.nonprofitmarketingguide.com/resources

River Network's Online Resource Library is packed with resources and tools to assist your organization. Resources you can find include:

- Fundraising Plan templates
- Board Fundraising Commitment form
- Board member self-evaluation form
- *River Fundraising Alerts*

- Board leadership succession plan
- And much more!

Visit www.rivernetwork.org/resource-library and enter the name of a specific resource, or a key word(s), to conduct a search of the library.

The Sustainable Nonprofit (TSN) examines critical issues related to nonprofit sustainability through the eyes of nonprofit leaders, practitioners and consultants.
foundationcenter.org/pnd/tsn

Water Words that Work LLC helps nature protection and pollution control organizations professionalize and modernize their communications. The Water Words That Work message method is a four-step process that conservation community leaders like you can use to translate scientific studies, government reports, raw data and other professional materials into communications that are meaningful and compelling for everyday citizens.
<http://waterwordsthatwork.com>

Coming Soon!

Organizational Assessment Tool

During the past year, River Network has been revising its current organizational assessment tool. The new version, which will be available online early in 2012, is a two-part survey for river and watershed groups across the country. It is designed to:

- assist organizations in the identification of priority organizational development needs;
- assess organizations' technical capacity to effectively engage and support the implementation of on-the-ground projects; and
- assess the progress over time of the growth in organizational capacities.

The online survey is divided into two sections, both which need to be completed by the organization. Section One, called the Status Report, seeks quantitative data about the organization's programs



and operational structures (#, %, \$) and is completed only by ONE person from the organization. Section Two, called the Internal Assessment, captures perceptions and opinions from several people within the organization (Board, staff, volunteers, etc.), thus compiling a picture about the organization's priorities and efficiencies. (If requested by the responder, the source of all perceptions and opinions will be kept confidential.)

Once everyone from the organization has responded to the survey, the organization will receive by email a composite report. This report will aid in determining its capacity building needs and its future organizational priorities.

The organization will be able to interpret the data (with the help of a capacity building professional) to decide which best management practices it may need to install and/or improve for the health and sustainability of its organization.

River Network has used data collected from its current assessment tool over the years to affirm the value of organizational capacity building. Data from 210 local and watershed-level nonprofit groups throughout the U.S. revealed that those that were provided Organizational Development training have more staff, more donors and more volunteers. Most importantly, the results also indicated that stronger, healthier organizations were more effective in protecting rivers and watersheds—they have more "on-the-ground" activities and in-stream outcomes including site clean ups, safer water to swim in and to drink, and improved watershed ecosystems.

River Network is revamping the navigation menu on our website as this publication goes to print. Look for the new organizational assessment in early 2012 under the River Leaders section of www.rivernetwork.org.



River Network Partnership

A Co-op of River & Watershed Organizations

www.rivernetwork.org/programs/partnership-program

Partnership Benefits

Organizational Strength

- One-on-One Assistance or Training
- Board of Directors & New Staff Resources
- Assistance Locating Experts
- River Network Grant Opportunities
- National River Rally

Electronic Resources

- Partner-only Webpages & Listserv
- Advertise Jobs & Events
- Post Your Wish List
- Webinars
- NOZA Database of Charitable Funding

Publications

- Printed/Bound Publications on Watershed Topics
- *River Voices & River Fundraising Alert* Journals

Product Discounts

- Insurance Discounts
- Global Water Monitoring Equipment
- Watergrass Database Design
- Grassroots Funding
- Promotive.com
- Orion
- Interactive Online Mapping Services

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Partnership Benefit Highlight



WaterGrass is a web-based database for managing members, donors, volunteers and campaigns. It simplifies Salesforce's many complex features, while allowing groups to integrate database, website and email, and to automate workflow.

River Network Partners Receive:

- ★ Free database consultation (no hard sell), with a range of database options for small and mid-size groups.
- ★ Free End-of-Year Mailing Webinar
- ★ Free Annual Results Webinar
- ★ A \$350 savings (Partners pay only \$2,650)

2011 Annual River Network Partner Dues

Nonprofit Organizations & Local, State & Tribal Government Partners

Annual Budget	Annual Partner Dues
<\$25,000	\$150
\$25,001-\$100,000	\$200
\$100,001-\$250,000	\$275
\$250,001-\$500,000	\$375
\$500,001-\$1,000,000	\$500
\$1,000,001-\$2,000,000	\$675
>\$2,000,000	\$900

Business & Consultant Partners	
Annual Gross Revenue	Annual Partner Dues
<\$500,000	\$500
>\$1,000,000	\$1,000

To renew, upgrade or join as a River Network Partner, please mail this form with your check to River Network (520 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1130, Portland, OR 97204) or pay by credit card at www.rivernetwork.org/marketplace.

Contact Person _____
 Org/Gov't/Business Name _____
 Street Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Phone (with area code) _____
 Email (required) _____
 Website (if applicable) _____

Be a Sponsor

Sponsor a Partnership for a local group: if you know of an organization that needs financial assistance to become a River Network Partner, please complete this form and mail your check with the appropriate dues listed at left. River Network will contact the organization on your behalf with information on how to access all the great benefits described in this brochure—thank you!



River Network

Connecting People, Saving Rivers

520 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1130

Portland, OR 97204-1511

River Rally 2012

Education, Inspiration, Celebration



Portland, Oregon May 4-7



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Join in, get your creative juices flowing and bring your imagination to the drawing board.

Design the winning 2012 conference **t-shirt** and win a **\$500 scholarship** to **River Rally 2012!**



T-shirt designs due January 16, 2012.

More information: www.rivernetwork.org/rally/t-shirts