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River Voices

Performance Management Systems

Are We Making a Difference?

by Diana Toledo River Network www.rivernetwork.org

"Did you save a river today?" This vexing question was posed by a Board member every time he came into the office of the river advocacy organization I worked for some years ago. Each time it was directed at me I would smile and mumble something to the effect of "We're trying!" But his recurring question prompted a silent dialogue in my head that led to more pointed questions: "Will our recent and painstaking review of all the designated uses on a particular stream do anything to protect it?"; "Was last week's 10-hour round trip to attend a coalition meeting the best use of the organization's resources as we tried to protect a high quality trout stream from a local developer's most recent shenanigans?"

These may not be the questions that keep us up at night—those revolve around funding and reporting deadlines!—but they nag us nonetheless and emerge reluctantly from the back of our minds when we allow ourselves a moment of existential contemplation. "Is our work making a difference?"

Without a doubt, measuring progress toward our organizations' missions is challenging when our missions are as ambitious as those of most watershed groups. Furthermore, implementing a full-fledged system to "manage to outcomes"[1] requires a significant investment of time and resources that many organizations lack. And yet as daunting as this may seem, the benefits of taking even small steps in this direction are significant and allow us to answer fundamental questions such as:

- Are we making progress toward our mission and goals?
- What should we measure to gauge our progress given our limited capacity to collect, store and analyze data?
- How can we make best use of the information we collect to support an organizational culture of learning and to improve our programs?
- How can we best communicate with stakeholders and funders our impact in the community?

Before You Get Started

Creating and implementing such a "performance management system," as it is known in the field of evaluation, may raise some challenging questions for your organization to address. What if that well-loved program isn't doing enough to move you closer to your mission to warrant the resources it requires? Is your organization willing to adopt entirely new strategies if you identify key gaps in your current approach? Before an organization is ready to shift toward "managing-to-outcomes," it must have certain things in place that include:

- A clear and shared understanding of your organization's mission and vision;
- An organizational willingness to evaluate your organization's work and consider new approaches;
- A shared commitment to collecting and using data to help guide your work; and
- Full support among your leaders—the Board and the Executive Director—to dedicate the necessary resources to institute a performance management system and other organizational best practices.

The Logic Model as a Starting Point

Developing a logic model for your organization is an important first step in making the cultural shift toward managing-to-outcomes and evaluating your work. There are many variations of logic models (sometimes called Impact Maps, Outcomes Maps or Theories of Change) that we won't delve into here.

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River Network

Connecting People, Saving Rivers

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River Network is a national, nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower and unite people and communities to protect and restore rivers and other waters that sustain the health of our country.

FROM THE CHAIR

Photo Credit: Suzi Wilkins Berl

What does success look like for you? We hope this simple question will help launch a much deeper discussion within your organization about the changes you're working to effect and about how your programs are contributing toward that vision.

We who work for clean water and healthy watersheds have ambitious missions. We already know there are numerous paths we can take to pursue those missions…and then we come home from River Rally armed with ten new projects we could launch! When all these activities do *some* good, our challenge is determining which ones do *the most good*. Indeed, making the right choices about how to allocate our limited resources of dollars, staff time and volunteer energy is nothing short of critical to our long-term success.

Over the past two years, River Network's IMPACT Program has worked with nearly 20 organizations across five states with support from the Corporation for National Community Service. Alongside our training partners Alabama Rivers Alliance and Freshwater Future, we have helped these watershed organizations evaluate their programs, make critical resource decisions, and maneuver delicate organizational transitions. As part of that effort, we:

- Worked with **Atchafalaya Basinkeeper** (LA) staff and **Sturgeon for Tomorrow-Black Lake, Michigan Chapter** volunteers to evaluate their education and outreach efforts;
- Helped **Anacostia Watershed Society** (DC-MD) staff develop work plans to focus staff and funding resources in support of their new Strategic Plan;
- Developed Strategic Plans, logic models and other planning tools with the **Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve** (MI), the **Dog River Clearwater Revival** (AL), **Friends of the Detroit River** (MI) and the **Alliance for Watershed and Resource Education** (OH).

This winter, we encourage your Board and staff to set aside some time to evaluate your work. Are your programs the best way to create the outcomes that you want for your watershed and your community? If you're not certain that they are, or if you're not even sure how to answer the question, River Network staff is here to help.

Suzi Wilkins Berl

Suzi Wilkins Berl
River Network Board Chair

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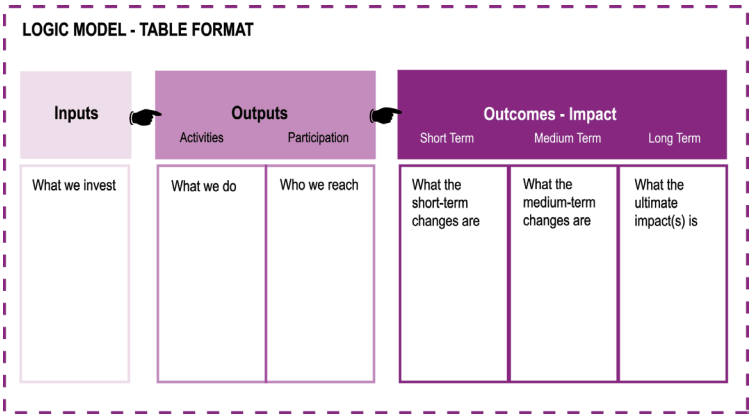
In essence, logic models graphically depict a program or an organization to show the intended relationships between your investment and the results you may expect in return.

Figure 1 shows a simple logic model that portrays a series of "If-then" linkages. If you invest certain resources, then you will be able to deliver services or conduct activities for the defined audience. If you reach and engage those individuals or groups, then you will attain certain short-term benefits. If those short-term benefits are achieved, then you will attain the defined medium-term benefits (and so on). [2]

Figure 1: **A Simple Logic Model**



Developing a Logic Model: Teaching and Training Guide. Ellen Taylor-Powell and Ellen Henert. University of Wisconsin-Extension

By explicitly articulating these relationships, you'll be able to identify gaps in your logic, question your assumptions and assess how your investments lead to your desired end results. This can strengthen your programs by raising some important questions, including:

- Do you have adequate resources to support the activities you've planned?
- Are the activities appropriate for the audience you aim to reach?
- Do your activities lead to the short-term impacts you have defined?
- Do these short-term impacts lead to meaningful, long-term impacts?

Because logic models are most useful when they help create a shared understanding of an organization's work—within the Board, among the staff, and with important stakeholders—creating a logic model is most valuable as a group exercise. The most common approach is to work backwards.[2]

- First define your long-term desired outcomes (i.e., what do you want to increase, decrease or remain the same?), then
- Define the intermediate and short-term outcomes that will lead you to your desired end result, then
- Define the audiences you need to engage in order to achieve those outcomes, then
- Define the activities best suited to engage the particular audience, then
- Identify the resources needed to carry out those activities.

Starting out with the end in mind helps avoid the common mistake of "justifying" existing programs that do not clearly contribute to the desired outcomes you have agreed on. It can also help identify gaps in your activities. So you might decide that your organization's youth outing program isn't doing enough to address the immediate impacts of riverfront development in your community. Or your Board might realize that river cleanups alone cannot alleviate the trash problem in your river, but that you should organize a coalition to implement a "plastic bag fee" to decrease the number of plastic bags littering the riverbanks (as a number of organizations on DC's Anacostia River did).

What to Measure

Now that you've created your logic model and have programs in place, what are you

going to measure in order to evaluate your organization's effectiveness? There is a vast world of data that is either available or collectable, so it's important to be practical. Select only the most important indicators you'll need to determine if you are on track and consider if there are easier ways to make that assessment. Indicators fall into three general categories[3,4]:

1. **Capacity Indicators** reflect an organization's internal capacity to carry out its mission. They include the number of staff and volunteers, level of Board engagement, percentage of budgeted expenses raised by a given date, number of months of cash available and diversity of funding sources.

2. **Activity Indicators** measure the volume of an organization's work. Watershed organizations focus most attention here, tracking things like the number of people reached, of raingardens installed, of river access points created, of volunteer water quality monitors trained, of signatures collected or pounds of garbage removed. But while these metrics tell a powerful story about our organizations' reach, they still don't answer the "So what?" question.

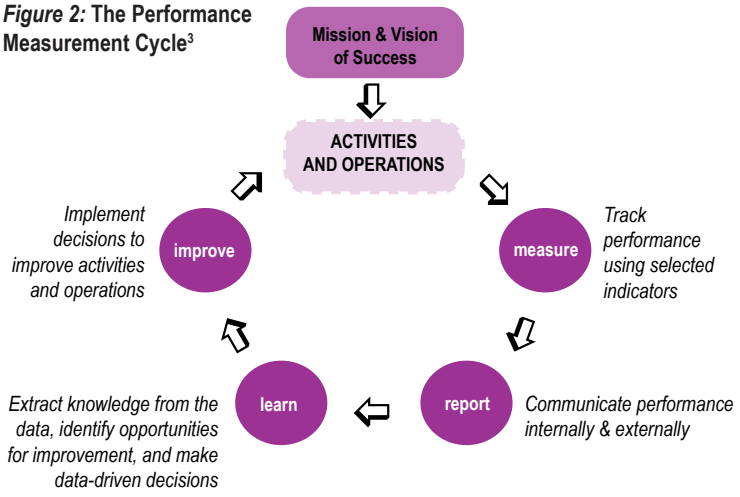
3. **Impact Indicators** are the key to assessing your progress toward reaching meaningful outcomes that align with your mission. What percentage of the participants in your outreach programs changed a certain behavior? Is there an increase in fisheries' diversity as a result of your restoration efforts? Is your state agency issuing more stop-work orders as a result of your advocacy? Is the water quality improved? How many of the pollution permits you comment on are significantly strengthened? Did your restoration activities help generate new economic activity?

When our missions are very ambitious, we can focus our effort on tracking success toward our shorter-term outcomes that, if achieved, can imply success at the larger scale. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) offers a good example. Founded in the 1960s with the goal of restoring the health of Chesapeake Bay, CBF refocused its goals in the 1990s, developing a set of nine indicator benchmarks for restoration of the Bay and outlining 10-20 year goals for improving them. Indicators include water clarity, dissolved oxygen and migratory fish species among others. This shift in focus so significantly influenced CBF that the indicators are referenced in the very mission statement of this highly successful organization—to "Save the Bay,™ and keep it saved, as defined by reaching a 70 on CBF's Health Index." That's holding yourself accountable!

Putting It Into a System

Once you've narrowed down the indicators to the essentials, the next step is determining how you will collect, store, communicate and act on the information. All these pieces fit together into a holistic performance measurement cycle as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: **The Performance Measurement Cycle[3]**



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Data collection methods will vary—sometimes the data is readily available through government resource agencies, while other times organizations have to create their own surveys, establish internal tracking systems, or collect water quality or watershed data using other methods. Plan to collect baseline data so you have an established reference point, determine how frequently you will collect it and assign one or more people to the task.

Similarly, **data storage** offers a myriad of options ranging from a simple spreadsheet to a sophisticated customized database. See page 20 for a summary of the August 2013 Idealware report, *Understanding Software for Program Evaluation*.

Data reporting tools help analyze and interpret data to make it truly useful. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation releases an annual "*State of the Bay Report*" that summarizes progress on each of its indicator benchmarks for restoration and assigns the Bay a Health Index score based on them[5]. Other tools that may be used internally or with an external audience include dashboards, annual reports and newsletters . See Figures #3 and #4 for examples of organizational dashboards[6].

Act!
Watch!
Celebrate!

Board of Directors			
	Target	6 months ago	Now
Attendance at board meetings	75%	75%	**85%**
Executive Director performance evaluation completed on time	By Feb. 15	Not applicable	**Done by Feb. 13**
New board members	4 new board members by Sept. 30	2 new board members by June 30	**Aug. 15 still the same 2**

Figure 3: **An organizational management dashboard showing Board leadership indicators.** (*Blue Avocado*, July 2009)

Finance			
	Target	6 months ago	Now
Days of unrestricted cash on hand	45 days	**65 days**	**18 days**
Net surplus or deficit YTD compared with YTD budget	Within 25K or better	**$42,500 worse than budget**	$28,000 worse than budget-to-date
Government funding year-to-date (52% of budget)	Within 3%	**$39,000 worse than budget**	$3,200 worse than budget, 24 days
Days from end of month to financial statements	24 days	**87 days**	48 days

Figure 4: **An organizational management dashboard showing financial management indicators.** (*Blue Avocado*, July 2009)

Using the information to identify what is working and to improve what is not is in many ways the entire goal of a performance management system. Identify who will review the information and how frequently. Does the Board conduct regular organizational or program evaluations as part of their annual Board responsibilities? Are program staff held accountable to results through the staff performance evaluation process? Can staff modify programs in response to this new information?

Conclusion

Implementing a system to assess and improve our organization's performance is no small task—it requires an organizational commitment to evaluation, transparency and accountability that may take time to develop. Furthermore, it requires staff and financial resources at a time when watershed organizations are lacking on both fronts. But even the smallest all-volunteer organization can take some steps outlined here to help them answer the question "Are we making a difference?" If we don't measure the results of our work, we can neither learn from our successes nor fix our mistakes. We need to do both in order to be honest to our missions, bring value to our communities and compete effectively for scarce philanthropic dollars.

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[1]*Leap of Reason: Managing to Outcomes in an Era of Scarcity, Mario Molino. Venture* Philanthropy Partners (2011).

[2]*Developing a Logic Model: Teaching and Training Guide.* Ellen Taylor-Powell and Ellen Henert. University of Wisconsin-Extension (2008)

[3]*Building a Performance Measurement System: Using Data to Accelerate Social Impact.* Andrew Wolk, Anand Dholakia and Kelley Kritz. Root Cause (2009).

[4]*Measuring What Matters in Nonprofits.* John Sawhill and David Williamson. McKinsey Quarterly (2001).

[5]Chesapeake Bay Foundation (www.cbf.org)

[6]*A Nonprofit Dashboard and Signal Light for Boards*. Jeanne Bell and Jan Masaoka, Blue Avocado (2009).

Where Do You Start and How Do You Measure?

Intentional Outcomes for Watershed Outreach and Technical Assistance

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How do you know that your efforts to reach key watershed actors are working and are directed to the right places? Knowing the outcomes associated with your actions is increasingly important in an era of tight resources and difficult funding decisions. Funding organizations, community partners, and stakeholders are demanding accountability and evidence that watershed activities are making progress towards broader water resource goals.

As with the restoration activities or advocacy campaigns discussed in this volume, setting and measuring outcomes related to outreach, education, and technical assistance begins with clear goals and objectives, linked to desired environmental results. For many environmental problems, demonstrating results will likely be complicated by a "lag" time between actions on the land and a response in environmental condition, adding even more importance to using some level of intermediate measurement. Regardless of the conservation issues addressed, a few fundamental questions can help ensure effective efforts:

- What is the water resources problem you are trying to address? (e.g., sediments, nutrients, bacteria, water quantity, habitat)
- Spatially, what areas or places are most important for addressing these sources? (e.g., riparian corridors, stream banks, upland slopes)
- Who makes decisions about what happens in those areas? (e.g., agricultural landowners, suburban homeowners, public works directors)
- What decision(s) and action(s) do you need those decision-makers to take? (e.g., devote land to conservation practices, plant cover crops, change nutrient application practices)
- Are your efforts focused on those important decisions/actions by the key decision-makers for the areas contributing to your water resource problems? And are you collecting the information needed to evaluate your results?

Answering these questions generally requires coordinating with conservation partners to compile and analyze physical and social data for a watershed. There are many resources available to help with those processes, including reports and guidance from federal, state, and local agencies. For example, USEPA guidance for developing watershed plans (USEPA 2008) includes detailed information regarding watershed assessment and modeling approaches necessary for a formal "9-element" plan. USDA-NRCS Rapid Watershed Assessment reports (see citations) include helpful data compilations for many mid-to-large (HUC 8) sized watersheds across the country. Gaining a clear understanding of the important watershed-specific issues, and the actions you need people to take, establishes the foundation for focused outreach, education and technical assistance efforts.

A Model for Targeting Outreach and Education Efforts

Although leaders of river and watershed conservation organizations tackle a wide variety of water resource issues, an example related to controlling nonpoint source (NPS) pollution provides a model for focusing and evaluating outreach, education, and technical assistance efforts. In the model presented in Figure 1, the long-term intended outcome is to reduce stresses on the environment

and improve and protect the condition of the natural resource. Getting there requires "short-term" outcomes such as raising awareness, changing attitudes, and reducing constraints to action, as well as "intermediate" outcomes of people using good land management practices in places that make a difference.

In addition, SIPES provides a survey questionnaire and protocol for collecting that information from targeted audiences, along with a system for entering, analyzing and reporting that data (See page 11).

The SIPES framework in Table 1 includes four goals focused on changes related to

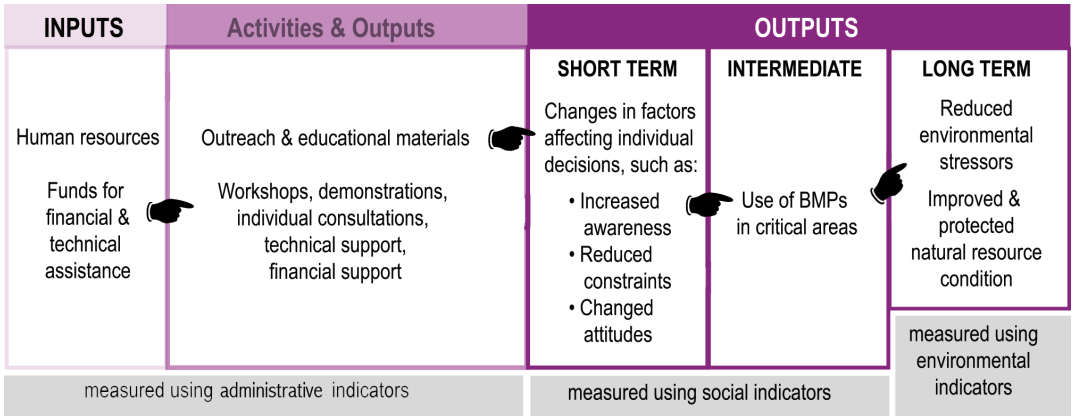

Figure 3: **A Logic Model for connecting resources, activities and conservation outcomes.**

The SIPES (Social Indicators for Planning and Evaluation System) model was developed through cooperation among USEPA Region 5 and the state water quality agencies, land-grant universities, and local partners in the six-state region (MN, WI, MI, IL, IN, OH) (Genskow and Prokopy 2011). SIPES was designed in part to provide a consistent and systematic approach for watershed restoration and protection initiatives across the Great Lakes region.

SIPES developed around the general concept that many "NPS program activities" (especially those focused on outreach, education, and technical assistance) are ultimately attempting to improve and protect water quality by influencing individual behaviors and decision-making. The model establishes a number of "social indicators" to help practitioners gauge their progress in reaching their short-term outcomes or goals of increasing awareness, changing attitudes, etc. (see Table 1, page 10)

individuals—increased awareness, change in attitude, reduced constraints, and increased practice adoption. Each goal includes specific intended outcomes and related indicators that help focus efforts and demonstrate accomplishments. For example, in a situation where watershed planning has identified high levels of Phosphorus from livestock operations as a contributing cause of degraded water quality, and awareness about that is low among livestock operators, it may be effective to focus efforts on increasing awareness. If awareness is already high, but those livestock operators are facing some unique set of constraints such as X, then a more effective approach would be to skip the awareness building and focus on reducing those specific constraints. In either case, measuring the indicators before a "project" takes action and again after its completion can help watershed managers understand the local conditions, craft an appropriate response, and check to see if their actions made a difference.

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The SIPES Handbook guides watershed managers through a cycle of reviewing environmental data, establishing intended social outcomes related to environmental goals, identifying outreach and assistance approaches appropriate for those social outcomes, and measuring results along the way. Although some projects focused on reducing NPS may find the entire system helpful (See information about SIDMA on page 11), the concepts, goals, outcomes, and indicators in Table 1 are relevant across a range of watershed issues. As a set they outline a starting point and process for focusing your actions and measuring change.

Table 1: **Goals, Intended Outcomes, and Social Indicators from SIPES (from Genskow and Prokopy 2011, p.3)**

GOAL 1: *INCREASE TARGET AUDIENCE AWARENESS*	
Awareness Outcome 1:	Increase awareness of relevant technical issues and/or recommended practices in critical areas
Awareness Indicator 1:	Awareness of consequences of pollutants to water quality
Awareness Indicator 2:	Awareness of pollutant types impairing water quality
Awareness Indicator 3:	Awareness of pollutant sources impairing water quality
Awareness Indicator 4:	Awareness of appropriate practices to improve water quality
GOAL 2: *CHANGE TARGET AUDIENCE ATTITUDES*	
Attitudes Outcome 1:	Change attitudes to facilitate desired behavior change in critical area
Attitudes Indicator 1:	General water-quality-related attitudes
Attitudes Indicator 2:	Willingness to take action to improve water quality
GOAL 3: *REDUCE TARGET AUDIENCE CONSTRAINTS*	
Constraints Outcome 1:	Reduce constraints to behaviour change
Constraints Indicator 1:	Constraints to behavior change
GOAL 4: *INCREASE TARGET AUDIENCE ADOPTION OF NPS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES*	
Behavior Outcome 1:	Increase adoption of practices to maintain or improve water quality in critical areas
Behavior Indicator 1:	Percentage of critical area receiving treatment
Behavior Indicator 2:	Percentage of target audience implementing practices in critical areas

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Social Indicators Data Analysis and Management Tool (SIDMA)

The team behind the SIPES system highlighted in this article also developed a free online tool to help local watershed partners develop and conduct surveys directed at key audiences. SIDMA and all of its features is accessible to anyone who sends a request for login. SIDMA provides a set of questions that local groups can modify to develop a customized questionnaire to measure the awareness, attitudes, constraints, and use of key practices and behaviors. It also includes: instructions on using the questionnaire to collect information through mailed, online, or in-person delivery; a data entry system linked to the questionnaire; and a process for viewing, interpreting and understanding results. Visit the SIDMA website to learn more, download a copy of the SIPES Handbook (Genskow and Prokopy 2011), view instructional videos, and/or request an account to begin using the system.

The Social Indicator Data Management and Analysis (SIDMA) online tool for nonpoint source projects.
www.iwr.msu.edu/sidma

A Sample Question from SIDMA

Consequences of Poor Water Quality

Poor water quality can lead to a variety of consequences for communities. In your opinion, how much of a problem are the following issues in your area?

	Not a Problem	Slight Problem	Moderate Problem	Severe Problem	Don't Know
1. Contaminated drinking water	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
2. Beach closures	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
3. Polluted swimming areas	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
4. Contaminated fish	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
5. High drinking water treatment costs	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
6. Loss of desireable fish species	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
7. Reduced quality of water recreation activities	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
8. Fish kills	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Using Science-based Methods to Document Successes

Restoration Beyond Belief

by Beth Wentzel

Inter-Fluve

www.interfluve.com

Ahhh. After years of planning, prioritizing, fundraising, designing, permitting and constructing, your restoration project is *finally* complete. It is time to celebrate your team's success at bringing your community's river a bit closer to its full potential as a healthy, diverse microcosm of beauty and wonder. Your colleagues are jumping for joy, congratulating one another, and marveling that they never thought they would see this day. You, too, are delighted with the project, but you are the cautious, critical-minded type. You want to declare success, but there is a little voice in your head that is nagging you. Are you sure this project is going to work? Did you really take any meaningful steps toward restoring your stream?

What is more exciting than removing a dam? Watching the river recover during your post-project monitoring!

The only way to be certain that your project provides the anticipated benefits is monitoring, an effort that is critical for several reasons. Monitoring allows you to identify short term maintenance needs. For example, if some of the plants in your new stream buffer are damaged during a heavy storm, you want to know this immediately so you can plant replacements promptly to avoid erosion. Monitoring also allows you to adjust your long term plans based on changes that you observe within the river and/or watershed through a process known as adaptive management. For example, if your project entailed removing a dam on a shoestring budget without excavating impounded sediment from the channel and floodplain, you may find through monitoring that the stream develops a stable channel and floodplain on its own within a reasonable timeframe, or you may find that you need to do additional grading within the area to ensure that the river is connected to a floodplain sooner. Finally, monitoring allows you to determine the extent to which your project is achieving the objectives the project team set out to achieve and allows us to learn what we might need to do differently on similar projects.

Planning to Monitor your Restoration Project

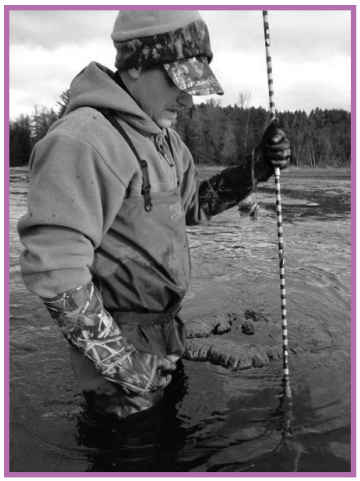
Your post-project monitoring will be most relevant if it is tied directly back to the original objectives that guided the design of the project. When you sit down to design the project effectiveness monitoring plan, pull out your early planning documents and engineering design report, and review the objectives the project team developed. The more specific you were in stating all of your objectives, the easier it will be to document the extent to which they are met over time. For example, if your objective was to reduce instream water temperatures by establishing riparian buffers with maximum canopy over the stream for shading, your post project monitoring plan will practically write itself. If, however, your objective was to simply make the stream better, you might have to mentally time travel to get inside your pre-project head and remember why you chose the project you did.

Your effectiveness monitoring will also be more conclusive if you plan in advance and collect information about your stream and watershed prior to construction of your project. It is helpful to have pre-project measurements of the same parameters that you measure after the project is in the ground so you can compare the two conditions. If your project is already complete and you skipped this step, don't worry. You can also compare your results to conditions upstream of your project and/or in adjacent watersheds if they are very similar. However, because streams and watersheds are complex systems, there may be differences between your "control" stream and the stream with your project that make comparing monitoring results difficult, and you will need to be careful in interpreting your results. If your initial monitoring results are not encouraging, consider what other factors may be limiting the success of your project or limiting your ability to measure the success.

Examples

While monitoring the effectiveness of restoration projects has generally been under-funded and results have not been widely reported, there are a few examples of monitoring projects that will help you get your wheels turning in the right direction as you develop your monitoring program. The Bureau of Environmental Services with the City of Portland, Oregon developed and implemented a comprehensive monitoring plan to assess the effectiveness of projects throughout the Johnson Creek watershed at achieving objectives associated with flooding, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat. The Bureau's recent report (City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, 2012), describes pre-project baseline monitoring starting in 1997, the restoration projects implemented, and post-project monitoring activities through 2010. Monitoring activities included visual inspections, photo documentation, physical habitat measures, floodplain connectivity and storage assessments, measurement of stream bed material changes, survey of changes to the stream geometry, and assessment of a variety of water quality parameters. The report also contains a summary of the lessons learned through the process and is well worth reviewing.

Another example of an intensive effectiveness study based on specific program goals is the study designed and implemented by the Ozaukee County (WI) Fish Passage Program. The County developed a program to assess and address fish passage barriers within its watersheds. In conjunction with removal of the barriers, the County staff and volunteers have been sampling, tagging and releasing fish and resampling upstream and downstream of barrier removal projects to determine the extent to which fish are now moving through formerly blocked reaches. The County has also been sampling larval fish to assess the extent to which fish formerly unable to access spawning areas are now successfully spawning in those areas. Given the complexities associated with the timing of fish movement, the study has presented several challenges and lessons but has yielded encouraging results nonetheless. A report of the study and findings is expected on the County's website within the next few months.



A sturdy rod marked with measured increments is a simple, useful tool for monitoring sediment depths.

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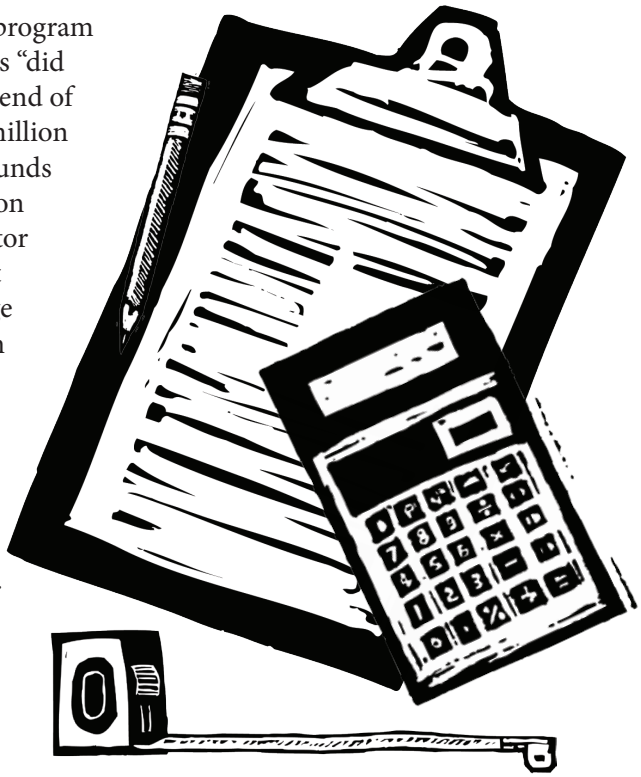
Simple Effectiveness Monitoring Metrics

Objective	Project Type	Success Indicators	Effectiveness Measurement
Reduce flow flashiness	Watershed stormwater management (incl raingardens)	Peak flows are reduced; base flow is increased	• Review USGS gauge data if available • Measure water elevations during and after rain events • Measure water elevation during low flows
	Floodplain reconnected to increase flood storage	Peak flows are reduced	• Review USGS gauge data if available • Measure water elevations during and after rain events
Reduce sediment delivery to stream	Watershed stormwater management (incl raingardens)	Sediment is not building up in stream	• Use yardstick or a rod to measure sediment depths in many areas of the stream including pools and riffle areas
	Stream buffer restoration	Sediment is not building up in stream; stream buffers are well vegetated	• Measure sediment depths in the stream • Observe and photograph vegetation density and structure in the buffer
	Bank stabilization	Sediment is not building up in stream; banks are not eroding at high rate (see below)	• Measure sediment depths in the stream • Observe and photograph bank at project site to ensure it remains stable
Reduce temperature	Watershed stormwater management (incl raingardens)	Water temperature in the stream is reduced	• Use a thermometer to measure temperature
	Stream buffer restoration with canopy to shade stream	Water temperature in the stream is reduced; canopy is shading the stream	• Use a thermometer to measure temperature • Estimate the canopy cover shading the stream at different times of the day
Reduce bank erosion	Bank stabilization	Banks are not eroding at a high rate	• Observe and photograph bank at project site to ensure it remains stable • Place stakes at the top of the bank and offset from the stream; periodically measure distance from the stakes to the top of the bank to determine extent to which bank is eroding • Survey cross sections periodically
Eliminate barriers to fish and wildlife passage	Dam removal	Fish and wildlife movement is possible; fish are moving through the former blocked area	• Measure water depths/velocities at various flows to ensure target conditions are met • Observe fish moving through project area
	Culvert replacement		
Improve habitat/ increase cover	Large wood installation	Created features remain in place and provide cover; fish and wildlife are observed using cover	• Observe and photograph installed features to ensure they remain in place • Measure uncut bank area with rod • Conduct fish and wildlife surveys to determine occupied habitats and increased diversity and abundance
	Undercut bank cover enhancement (e.g., through remeandering and/or undercut bank construction)		
Improve habitat/ provide high flow refugia	Floodplain reconnection	Floods occupy floodplain	• During seasonal high flows, determine if floods spread into the floodplain
Improve habitat/ restore and connect to spawning and/or rearing habitat	Species specific spawning and rearing habitat creation	Target species are spawning and young are thriving	• Conduct fish/wildlife surveys to determine the extent to which target species are becoming more abundant
	Adjacent wetland restoration and connection	Adjacent wetlands provide targeted depth and duration of water and are connected to stream during high flows	• Visually assess extent to which adjacent wetlands provide the targeted habitat during the targeted time • Conduct fish/wildlife surveys to determine the extent to which habitats are occupied and diversity and abundance is increasing



The challenge with a robust monitoring program is that while the million dollar question is "did your project achieve its purpose?" at the end of your project you probably won't have a million dollars left to try to answer it. If raising funds to plan, design, and construct a restoration project is difficult, raising funds to monitor the effects of the project long term might seem impossible. Don't let this discourage you. Project effectiveness monitoring can take on a range of effort levels—from simple periodic field observations and photo documentation to long term quantitative measurements of changes to the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the stream. The table (See page 15) summarizes a few ideas for low to mid-range cost monitoring for a variety of project types and objectives. A thermometer, a makeshift sediment probe, a tape measure, a camera, a fishing rod and a notebook in the hands of few trained, enthusiastic volunteers can yield important information about a project and make for a good time on the river, too.

Setting out to honestly determine if your large investment of time and money achieved its purpose can be intimidating. However, it can also be really exciting and rewarding. Putting a stream on a trajectory toward better health and watching natural processes take over the healing process may restore your community's hope for the future of your watershed. Sharing the important lessons you learn about restoration projects and monitoring their effectiveness with other River Network partners and the world at large is valuable beyond measure.

For more information and ideas:

City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services. 2012. *Johnson Creek Restoration Projects Effectiveness Monitoring, Reporting on data collected from 1997 through 2010*. http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/article/428010

Collins, M., K. Lucey, B. Lambert, J. Kachmar, J. Turek, E. Hutchins, T. Purinton, and D. Neils. 2007. *Stream barrier removal monitoring guide.* Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment. www.gulfofmaine.org/streambarrierremoval .

Palmer, M. and Wainger, L. 2011. *Promoting Successful Restoration through Effective Monitoring in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.* Chesapeake Biological Laboratory. http://www.palmerlab.umd.edu/docs/Palmer_NFWF_Streams.pdf

University of California Cooperative Extension. 2007. *Quantitative Effectiveness Monitoring of Bank Stabilization and Riparian Vegetation Restoration: A Field Evaluation of Protocols*. http://cesonoma.ucdavis.edu/files/27283.pdf

River Network. 2013. *Creative Partnerships in Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring: A What Works Snapshot*. http://www.rivernetwork.org/sites/default/files/finalvolunteermonitoringreport.pdf

Ozaukee Fish Passage Program. http://www.co.ozaukee.wi.us/planningparks/PlanningParks_Fish_Passage.htm

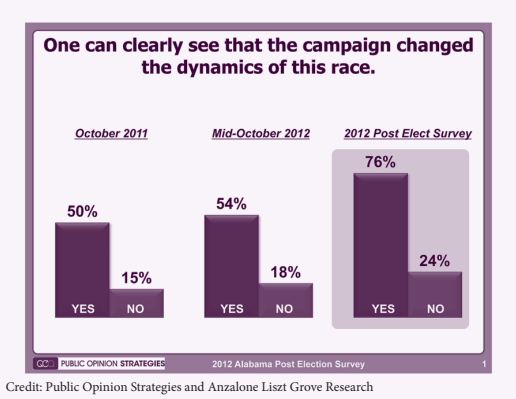
Alabama Style:

Advocacy for Conservation of Natural Lands & Waters

An interview with
Kathy Stiles Freeland

Retired Field Coordinator of Conservation Alabama

On November 6, 2012, Alabama voters overwhelmingly approved a statewide referendum to re-authorize the Forever Wild Land Trust with 73 percent of the voters supporting the measure. Forever Wild is a program that uses interest income earned from the sale of offshore natural gas in Alabama to support outdoor recreation and natural area land conservation in that state. Initially created in 1992 by Constitutional amendment through the efforts of a strong coalition of conservation, environmental and business organizations, the program was set to expire (sunset) in late 2012 after 20 years in effect.



Credit: Public Opinion Strategies and Anzalone Liszt Grove Research

The advocacy campaign to reauthorize Forever Wild was a resounding success and helped proponents overcome a number of important challenges, including the public's limited familiarity with the program, unclear ballot language and a widespread misunderstanding of its tax implications during an economic recession. But informed by extensive polling and grassroots outreach, the campaign was able to identify important target audiences, develop key messages and gauge changing public attitudes over the course of the campaign, ultimately helping create the broad support that led to the reauthorization of Forever Wild. This campaign provides an excellent example of how defining the short- and mid-term changes you want to see, and collecting the information to help you gauge your progress along the way can make all the difference in an advocacy context. While this campaign had a broader scope (statewide) and larger budget than most local watershed groups' advocacy efforts do, we can draw some important lessons for how advocacy efforts can be structured to be most effective.

Kathy Stiles Freeland has been there all along, dedicating more than 40 years to advocating for the protection of Alabama's unique conservation lands and waters. Kathy founded the 1,000-acre Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve in Birmingham, she founded the Alabama Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and served as its first Executive Director, has been Field Coordinator for Conservation Alabama and has served on numerous statewide committees and workgroups related to conservation. In this interview, Kathy tells us more about last year's successful campaign to reauthorize Forever Wild, in which she served as Field Coordinator of the grassroots campaign targeted to women, African Americans and other minorities in the state.

Q Alabama Forever Wild originally passed in 1992 with an overwhelming 83% of the public vote. As you approached the program's sunset in 2012, did you take for granted that you'd be able to get the program reauthorized?

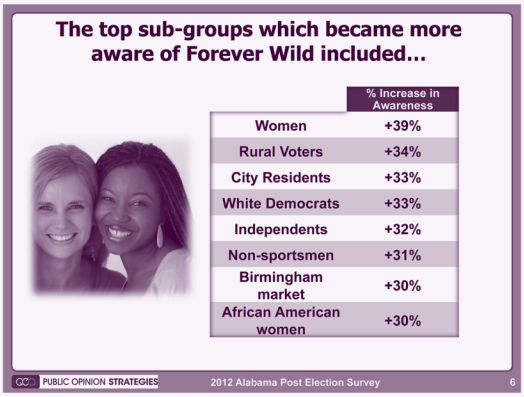
A *Absolutely not. There was a bad economic climate hitting Alabama very hard; there was a very vocal group against renewing the program, saying enough land had been acquired; and there was the erroneous idea that Forever Wild funding could easily converted to other state needs which was not true. Several of the original team that worked to establish Forever Wild reconvened two years before (it) was to sunset to map out strategy for the renewal effort.*

Q The ultimate goal of your campaign was to reauthorize the Forever Wild Program. What challenges did you face?

A *The original legislation actually allowed renewal by a simple majority vote of the legislature rather than go through another Constitutional Amendment for its renewal. However, using that vehicle would mean an annual fight in the legislature for the funding. The Constitutional Amendment route would again set the funding level for the next 20 years, but it required getting 3/4s of the legislature to vote for it and then a majority of the voters to say yes. That required the expense of a public campaign as well. Some in our coalition preferred the legislative route but thankfully going for an Amendment finally won out. There was also a bit of a power struggle among some of the leadership organizations. However, Conservation Alabama, an environmental lobbying organization, was a new player and was able to help resolve some of those differences. Another challenge was the unclear ballot language… if [voters] didn't have other information to explain what Forever Wild was, their inclination was to vote "no."*

Q As you considered those challenges, did you define some benchmarks of success as the campaign played out?

A *Securing high level support for the measure was key. The Governor's support for renewal was acquired first. Legislative leadership was also critical, so the Senate Pro Tempore was recruited to be the Senate sponsor of the bill and a well-respected House member became the House sponsor of the bill. The Senate leader is considered the most conservative Republican in the Senate, so that helped quell a lot of conservative fears about the bill.*



Credit: Public Opinion Strategies and Anzalone Liszt Grove Research

Q Did you collect information—formally or anecdotally, that helped guide your efforts as you approached voting day?

A *Early polling conducted by the group gave us important data that guided the campaign. The previous attempts in the 1980s to pass legislation, although not successful, also provided a foundation for the effort in 1991-92. Polling found that the prior efforts had raised the public's awareness of the need and increased their support of such a program. It also showed that the primary environmental concern of Alabama voters was protection of rivers, streams and drinking water. In addition, protection of private property rights was a critical concern. But the polling we did in 2011 indicated Forever Wild was virtually unknown to women and African Americans and other minorities in the state. We knew that lack of knowledge would translate to no votes if not addressed, especially during the recession.* [Editor's note: Four separate polls were conducted over the course of the campaign—a 2009 baseline poll, two polls over the course of the campaign, and a post-election poll]

We also held a Town hall meeting about 6 weeks prior to the vote, in which over 3,000 voters participated over the phone and asked questions about [Forever Wild]. Although the media had changed since the early 90's—daily papers disappeared or became weeklies—the editorial support we

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cont. from page 17

received was 100% for renewal. A Forever Wild Facebook Page also received a lot of attention, as did the Dept of Conservation Forever Wild website.

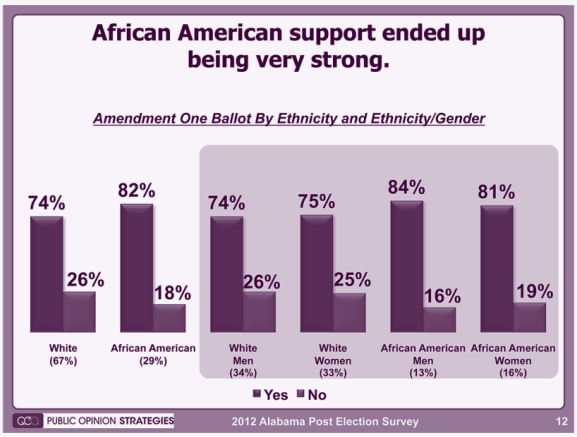
We also monitored talk radio shows to hear how [Forever Wild] was being presented and had volunteers on hand to call in and address the misinformation that was being spread.

Q

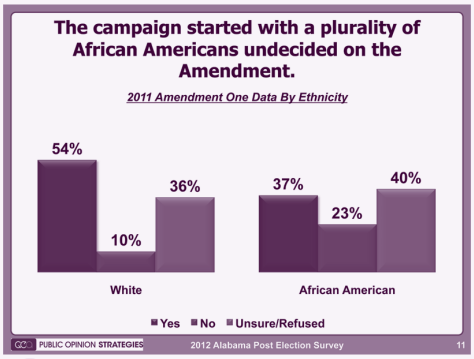
What messages did you use in your communications and outreach?

A

That Forever Wild did not require any tax support. We had commissioners from counties with large Forever Wild land tracts vouch that the rise in tourism income and sales tax made up for the loss of property taxes. The visual images we used in TV spots and printed materials showed children and adults outdoors, lots of rivers/streams, and minority families enjoying the outdoors, whereas the first campaign in the 90s had focused on hunters and fishermen. We also had materials translated into Spanish and distributed it at a large Hispanic festival in Birmingham. We also highlighted that the fund was capped at $15 million per year, an amount large enough to affect some good land purchases, but not so large it appeared "greedy" in a very economically depressed state.



Credit: Public Opinion Strategies and Anzalone Liszt Grove Research



Credit: Public Opinion Strategies and Anzalone Liszt Grove Research

Q

Did you adjust your campaign based on what you learned?

A

Yes, we decided to run a six-month grassroots campaign directed specifically to female, African American and other minority audiences. That campaign was guided by two African American women working with me and two interns from The Nature Conservancy, one of which was African American. We focused on outreach to minority universities and the many social and religious groups that represented those audiences in the state of Alabama. We engaged African American church leaders and the NAACP—we didn't really have to sell them on it, they just got it… the issue had been a lack of awareness.

What was your campaign budget?

The two-year grassroots campaign in '91-'92 cost approximately $300,000 and two paid staff worked on it with hundreds of volunteers. The budget for the 2011 PR campaign cost almost $1,000,000, primarily spent on public relations and media experts, on TV time for ads and a full time campaign manager. It also included the separate grassroots campaign that cost approximately $175,000 and included two staff, travel costs and costs of the town hall meeting. Again, hundreds of volunteers were also critical.

Q What's your advice to groups that don't have that kind of budget?

A *Polling is critical—if you have to choose where to spend your dollars, spend them on polling. If you don't know the messages that will resonate with voters, you won't win. Our polling data clearly said the most important issue to voters was clean water, so we showed lots of pictures of water in our materials.*

You can also do this kind of campaign for much less if you hire local marketing firms —they come at a lower cost and know the local terrain best. We were also able to use a local polling firm that was less expensive than previous polling work we did.

Partners from the business world and national conservation organizations, who can bring votes, expertise and funding to the table, are also critical.

For more information: www.alabamaforeverwild.com

Credit: The Chadderdon Group

Polling data revealing that clean water was the most important issue among voters was reflected in the campaign ads.

Understanding Software for Program Evaluation

by Laura Quinn
Idealware
Idealware.org

In our increasingly data-driven world, it's more important than ever for nonprofits to be able to measure and monitor the effectiveness of their programs. It's difficult to improve program services or reach without first measuring effectiveness, and measurable numbers—how many meals served at a soup kitchen, how many students in a mentoring program graduate high school, what percent of the target population does not have access to affordable housing—are more important than ever to help organizations identify where they can improve their programs.

Strategies for program evaluation have been the subject of countless books and seminars, but a gap remains in the area of practical resources about the software for collecting, tracking, and reporting on program data. Like many big-data issues, the sector looks to technology for an answer to these questions. We have donor management databases, constituent management systems, and case management systems, but where are the program evaluation systems?

Unfortunately, there is no such thing. All-in-one program evaluation software doesn't exist, because program evaluation is really a strategy, not a tool.

We've identified the five parts of a technology-based program evaluation strategy in the chart included on page 21. When all the steps are combined, they enable your organization to accurately and confidently collect, measure, and monitor the outcomes and effectiveness of your programs.

In our free guide, *Understanding Software for Program Evaluation*, we provide overviews of the types of software that can assist with each of these five steps. But software is not a requirement for a successful strategy, merely a way to make your process easier—and many organizations complete them with little to no technology to assist them. That's entirely up to you.

The Five Parts of a Technology-Based Program Evaluation Strategy

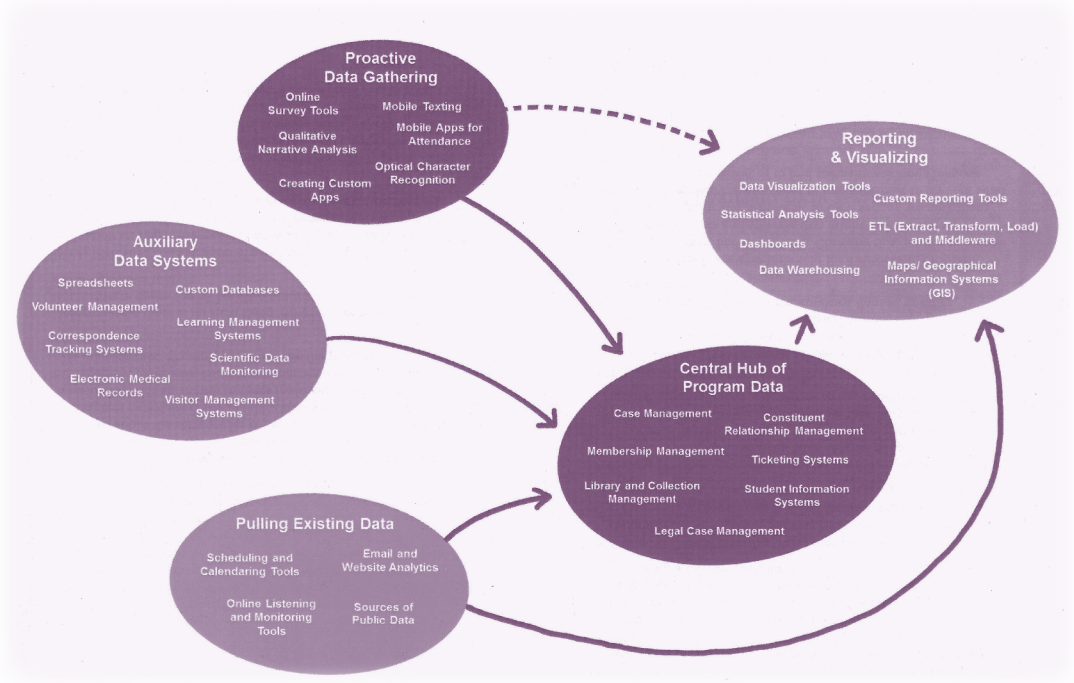
1. *Central Hub of Program Data*. The foundation for your evaluation strategy is the central hub for your program data—this is where the information from all the data you've collected or sourced and the findings you've analyzed from that data can be tracked and reported on in one place.

2. *Auxiliary Data Systems.* While it's almost always preferable to store all your program data together, there are certain instances where data is too complicated or too distinct to store in your Central Hub. In those instances, it may make more sense to use a specialized tool, like a Learning Management System or Scientific Data Monitoring System, or to build your own solution using a Custom Database.

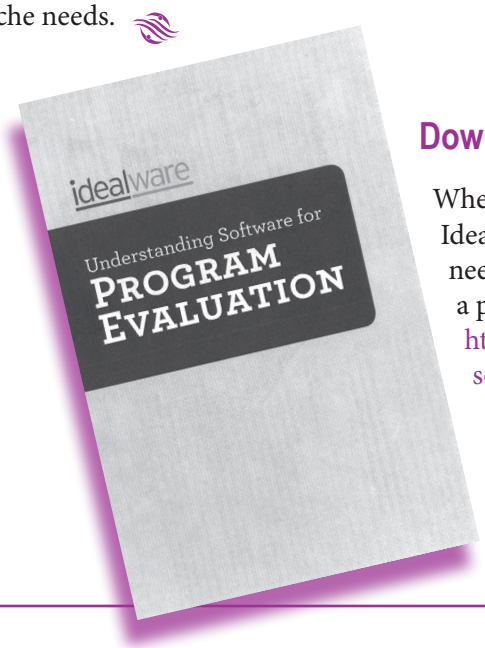
3. *Proactive Data Gathering.* This piece includes all the program data you need to actively collect, like survey results, text messages from constituents, or handwritten notes from your staff.

4. *Pulling Existing Data.* This includes the information that can be collected from public sources, such as what people are saying about your organization or services on social media, as well as public data from government agencies that can provide background information to add context to what you've already learned.

5 *Reporting and Visualizing.* Once you have all your data, you need to make sense of it—this piece involves using Custom Reporting Tools and Statistical Analysis Systems to help you identify trends about your programs, and Data Visualization to present your findings to grantmakers, donors, or other stakeholders.



None of these tools are a requirement for a successful program evaluation strategy, but all can help. If you are interested in learning more, download the guide as a reference for the types of tools and systems that might make sense for your organization's particular programs. In each section, tools are ranked from 'most commonly used' to 'least' to make it easier to find out what other nonprofits are using, or to find specialty solutions for your niche needs.



Download the guide!

Whether you're a veteran or just getting started, Idealware's free handbook provides all you need to understand how to make technology a part of your program evaluation strategy. http://idealware.org/reports/understanding-software-program-evaluation

Using Readability Scores to Improve Your Outreach:

How Do You "Measure" a Message?

by Eric Eckl

Water Words That Work, LLC

www.waterwordsthatwork.com

Pop Quiz: How many American adults have a college degree or more advanced education?

If you guessed "about one in four," you're right. So now take a look around your office. How many of them have a college degree or more advanced education?

Assuming you answered "all of them," then you have just put your finger on the fundamental reason that most environmental outreach messages don't get the response we hoped for out there:

> *We consistently put college-level reading materials in front of a high school-educated public, and then wonder why they don't respond. In fact, the words we use to communicate our achievements to a scientific panel should be different than those used to talk with the general public or policy-makers.*

Review Readability

Here's a simple tool you can use to break that habit: The final step in our Environmental Message Method is "Review Readability." That means using a computerized tool to measure the overall writing level to see if is suitable for the people you wrote it for.

There are three basic principles that this tool uses to measure how easy a passage of text is to read:

1. Longer sentences are harder to read than shorter sentences.
2. Longer words are harder to read than shorter words.
3. Sentences in the passive voice are harder to read than sentences in the active voice.

Do you need a quick refresher on what passive voice means? Here are a few examples:

Passive Voice: A voluntary land protection agreement was signed for the farm.

ACTIVE VOICE: The farmer signed a voluntary land agreement for her farm.

Passive Voice: The wetland petition was signed by more than 800 citizens.

ACTIVE VOICE: More than 800 residents signed the petition in support of protecting the wetland.

Passive Voice: $3500 was raised for the new boardwalk along the marsh.

ACTIVE VOICE: More than 30 donors contributed a total of $3500 to build the boardwalk along the marsh.

We write in passive voice to focus on concepts and ideas. That's why scientists and government writers use it a lot—A LOT. We test some pieces for clients that contain as many as 60% passive voice sentences. But passive voice sentences are hard to read. When you rewrite passages from the passive to the active voice, you will immediately notice the difference.

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Environmental Message Method

Step #1: Begin with Behavior

Start by telling them how they can get involved and make a difference.

Step #2: Find Foolproof Photos

Monkey see, monkey do! And faces, please.

Step #3: Swap the Shoptalk

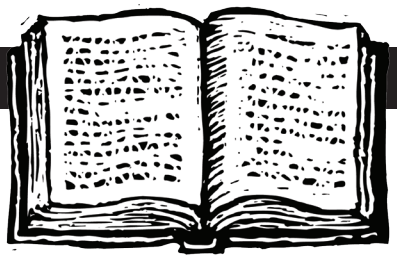
Because our jargon bores and confuses most people.

Step #4: Insert the Words that Work

Choose the words that motivate and encourage your audience.

Step #5: Tempting Testimonials

Share stories of others who have done it already.



Step #6: Review Readability

Before you message goes out the door, pause to check your Flesch Reading Ease score.

For more information, please visit waterwordsthatwork.com/our-methods/message-method.

How Do You Measure a Message?, cont.

cont. from page 22

Back to "Review Readability." The magical electronic writing tool that we recommend that you use to score your piece is called...drumroll please...*Microsoft Word*. All you have to do is go into the Help menu and search for "Readability," and follow the instructions to turn on the feature.

Now, every time you run the spell-check routine, you'll get a score on your piece between 0 and 100. Here's what those scores mean:

FLESCH READING EASE SCORE	COMPARE TO:
90-100	Children's Books, Road Signs
60-90	Supermarket Tabloids
45-60	Newspapers & Magazines
30-45	Academic Journals
0-30	Insurance Contracts, Privacy Policies, other legal mumbo jumbo

Now, think for a moment about who you are preparing your message for. Here are the scores you should be achieving:

Your Target Audience	Recommended Reading Ease Score
Your peers in the environmental world	45 to 50
Professionals and college educated people outside the environmental world	50 to 60
"The General Public," lay audiences, those with high school educations	60 to 75
"Underserved audiences," recent immigrants, small children	75 and higher

Most of the time, you'll find that your piece scores too low. Conservation professionals naturally tend to write in the high 30s and low 40s. So take a pass through your piece and start editing:

- Break up long sentences into two or more short sentences
- Replace long words with shorter substitutes
- Rewrite passive sentences into the active voice
- Check your score again
- Repeat until you achieve your optimal Flesch Reading Ease score

I like to call this process "opening up your message." It makes your work accessible to those with average and below-average reading skills. With just a little practice, you can write at appropriate levels without relying on the electronic crutch, but it's still always a good idea to check your piece anyway. ***Good luck out there!***

CASE STUDY

Evaluating River Restoration through the Lens of Dam Removal

by Amy Soli, PhD & Eric Stretz

Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association

www.thewatershed.org

The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association (SBMWA) in New Jersey was founded in 1949 to protect water resources and the environment. One of the tools we use to achieve this goal is habitat restoration. SBMWA has undertaken numerous restoration projects over the years and is currently engaged in our most ambitious restoration project to date: the removal of two dams from the Millstone River to restore migratory fish passage and free-flowing river habitat. While successful completion of this project promises to be personally and professionally satisfying to SBMWA staff, it is also rife with frustrations, hiccups, and "teachable" moments.

The Millstone River dams, like many low-head weirs, were built in the mid-1700s to power mills on the river, which in turn became the focal points for communities that developed around them. Yet such dams are often only relic structures from these historical periods as the mills have long since been abandoned or destroyed by fire, floods, or other natural disasters. The dams remain in the rivers and are typically in disrepair and serve only as dangerous structures or obstacles to those using the river. Furthermore, they are significant impediments to migratory fish and too often present a total blockage to fish passage. The recognition of these dams as contributing to the decline of fisheries as well as their associated hazards initiated the current movement toward dam removal. As a result, dam removal has become a highly valuable tool in the restoration of rivers and adjoining riparian lands and wetlands.

Indicators of Success

Successful dam removal incorporates a number of anticipated outputs and outcomes from the scientific to the more holistic, as well as a process to evaluate our progress. A sampling of SBMWA's project objectives and measures of effectiveness are outlined in the table below. Of utmost importance to SBMWA is the restoration of migratory fish passage in the Millstone River and the return of these fish to their ancestral spawning grounds. Furthermore, an ancillary goal is the restoration of a free-flowing river. These are easily identified measures by which the success of our dam removals can be evaluated through planned pre- and post-removal monitoring. Interestingly, for dam removal projects in general, while funding is available for feasibility and historical studies, engineering design, permitting, and removal, monitoring is rarely funded, leaving scientific analysis of the benefits of dam removal bereft. We were lucky to obtain funding to evaluate the effects of removing these dams and to have data to share with others involved in similar projects.

Blackwells Mills Dam, with remnants of the mill.

SBMWA developed a water quality monitoring program in conjunction with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) incorporating

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A Few Examples of SBMWA's Measurement Tools

Objective	Indicator	Effectiveness Measurement
Improved Fish Passage & Habitat	14 stream miles of habitat made available to migratory fish.	Visual fish counts above/below former dam site.
	Stream habiat is appropriate for migratory/target fish.	Dissolved oxygen meter, thermometer (water temp), turbidity meter, streamflow meter (i.e., to target flow for migration).
	Project design should meet the appropriate fish passage criteria.	Measure to ensure the post-removal conditions are appropriate for passage of the target species (e.g. channel width, channel gradient, maximum jump height).
Improved Fisheries/ Enhanced Target Fish Populations	Number & diversity of migratory fish in the river. Presence & absence of target species.	Review/collect baseline (pre-removal) data through surveys, and repeat with post-removal surveys to determine the number and diversity of fish species.
Community Participation & Enhancement	Projected number of volunteer hours for the project.	Actual number of volunteers & participation hours
	Community project associated with the project (e.g. stream clean-up at or near restoration site).	Successful completion of community project based on number of participants, pounds of trash removed, etc.

Collecting Benthic Macroinvertebrates

assessments of habitat, biological communities (benthic macroinvertebrates, plankton, and fish), and chemical parameters (including dissolved oxygen and conductivity), to be performed upstream and downstream of each dam.

For this project we chose to partner with several entities to improve the amount and quality of data obtained and to answer questions being addressed by individual partners. For instance, our protocol incorporated additional tests that could provide data that NOAA was particularly interested in, like collecting plankton samples to evaluate food resources available to juvenile shad and herring. Additionally, we have partnered with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and Rutgers University to complete studies of fish populations adjacent to the dams. Achieving the restoration of migratory fish passage and natural stream habitats following removal of the dams, and having data to document both, would be celebrated by SBMWA as having completed a highly successful restoration of a river.

Step By Step

To initiate the different phases of the project, we sought to secure funding in multiple stages. We found that it is sometimes easier to find a grant for $30,000 to fund specific project components rather than seeking $200,000 for the entire project. First, feasibility and historic studies were completed to assess the implications of the dam removal and evaluate other options. If dam removal is recommended in the feasibility study, as it was in our case, the next step is to design and engineer the actual plans. For our organization, this process from start to finish for one of the dams took about two and a half years. Yet, the successful completion of these studies is exciting and has allowed the project to move forward.

Dam removal, as with most restoration projects, typically requires several permits which can be frustrating and time-consuming. Permits are often required at the state and local level to remove a regulated dam, travel through wetland areas for demolition, move sediments, block roads with construction vehicles, and more. Knowing exactly which permits you will need, generally outlined by your consultant but confirmed by your organization, will prevent unnecessary delays. SBMWA has received almost all of our required permits and we are thrilled every time one arrives in the mail as another milestone has been reached.

Community support is almost essential to the success of any restoration project, including dam removal. As was mentioned, many dams have historical significance; for instance, one of our dams is at the site of an American Revolutionary War battle. Historical importance must not only be acknowledged but also commemorated, especially if approval by historical committees or agencies is required. However, other groups and/or individuals can be vocal opponents or strong advocates. Therefore, even one person saying, "Now I know what you're doing and why," is a win. Better yet, having a group, like a historical association with a stake in dam preservation, say, "I don't necessarily like what you're planning on doing, but I can see why you're doing it," is a victory. Furthermore, understanding the concerns of affected communities and reaching out to them is essential. The communities along the Millstone River in the areas surrounding the dams are faced with severe flooding from large storms. Understanding and demonstrating empathy toward their real concerns, and being able to answer questions such as "Will this project make flooding worse?" can alleviate confrontation and push-back. This is all achieved through diligent public education and outreach; reaching out to local communities, organizations, and others to educate them about the project and its benefits makes this project possible and more fulfilling.

Data collection at Island Farm Weir

Finally, as SBMWA works toward the removal of these dams, we truly appreciate the importance of strong partnerships, education, and outreach in bringing projects to fruition. Projects can be made a lot easier, and more enjoyable, by engaging partners early on. Additionally, it can also help avoid project delays that can result from lack of understanding between involved parties. Collaboration among state and local governments, local entities, and the public is almost essential for successful restoration projects. And, incorporating indicators of success from the onset of this project—be it for outreach and education or on-the-ground results—can help guide and prioritize our work.

So What?

Planning to Achieve Your Desired Impact

by Lindsay Telfer
Canadian Freshwater Alliance
www.freshwateralliance.ca

How do we know we are making a difference and being effective? Aside from that 'gut-instinct' or nods of encouragement from our peers—what tangible results can we point to and say "We did that." There are numerous ways to utilize variations of the Logic Model; Canadian Freshwater Alliance developed a 4-step process to assist groups in answering that question *before* work on a project begins. In fact, working towards measurable results is—or should be—the first step in any project development.

It's so easy in our world to just keep working. There is, after-all, so much work to be done. But is that work meaningfully contributing to the impact we want to have in the world—or the change we want to see? A solid evaluation and analytics framework will give you the cues and the answers to ensure that you are spending your valuable time on the items that will be *most likely* to drive you towards your desired impact. They also tell us when our assumptions have been completely wrong—which we can all admit, right? Seriously though, knowing and being honest with ourselves when programs haven't had their desired impact can be an important and valuable learning experience. Measuring and evaluating our projects effectively can tell us how and why a program didn't work. Or, better yet, if we are measuring/evaluating concurrent with implementation—when we need to change course!

4-Step Process

It doesn't really matter how many people come to an event, or sign up for our list if the change we are trying to impact doesn't move. How will these numbers actually lead to the change we are seeking? That is to say: *So What?* That is the important question and that's what we need to start tracking to truly measure our performance. Coupled with this, having a clear Theory of Change allows you to develop your measurements to truly assess if your work is helping you achieve that desired end result.

Step 1: Develop a solid Theory of Change both organizationally and programmatically. This Theory of Change provides you with a blue print for the impact you want to have, how each of your program focuses builds towards that impact and specifically what short-term impact you expect to have achieved by the end of the year.

Theory of Change

1. What is the change you want to see?
2. How do you believe this change occurs?
3. What impact is your program having in achieving this change?

Step 2: Ask the right evaluation questions! Ensure the questions you are asking will get the answers you need to measure whether programs are having the desired impact. They need to answer the question SO WHAT? The worksheet (*see page 29*) can help guide this discussion.

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to."

"I don't much care where –"

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go."

~ Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

Step 3: Determine your appropriate indicators. Your indicators will be what you use to measure your progress. But you can't stop at establishing indicators, you also need to measure, collect and interpret them.

- Determine the right measures and how they will be collected (and by whom).
- Establish a process for 'ongoing evaluation'. We believe that we need to measure our programmatic success while we progress so we can make course changes if needed! Though even if you are measuring at mid and end points, establishing the systems to collect data on an ongoing basis can make your evaluation processes *so much easier.* No more of that hunting for data and numbers when a project has wrapped up.
- Establish your baseline. Do a pre-program or pre-annual baseline of where you are at currently to allow for easy comparison on the effect of your current programs on reaching your desired impact.

Step 4: Integrate in staff workplans. Yes, someone will have to do something. It's important to set your expectations in staff workplans on who needs to do what and by when to ensure you are evaluating your projects effectively. Don't make it an after-thought, it's just as important as project implementation.

And remember, honesty opens up vulnerability and can allow us with the truest glimpses into our work. Allow yourself to be honest and transarent in evaluating your work and we will all learn and become stronger from it—not to mention more effective. We aren't all successful all the time. Let's start sharing our failure stories as much as we do our success stories.

Evaluation Worksheet Example

FRESHWATER ALLIANCE D'EAU DOUCE

WORKSHEEET: **Establishing evaluation indicators to truly measure your programs impact!**

Program Area:			
Program Outcome – what is the change you are aiming to achieve through this program?			
What does someone need to do to collect info on these indicators?	What are the indicators/metrics needed to answer your "so what" questions?	Do these questions answer the question SO WHAT?	What 3 questions do you need to ask to truly know when you have achieved the desired change?

A FUNDERS' PERSPECTIVE

CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION

I feel that foundations are at their best when they help seed great ideas, provide organizational support, fund ongoing project implementation, and share success stories with the broader world. I also believe that none of this can happen unless grantees help us define "success." Once we are all in agreement about the end goal, metrics and measures help the funding community know when we are heading towards the finish line (rather than veering off-course). The better each grantee is at assessing its own programs, the better we can understand—and communicate—the cumulative impact of our grantmaking. In addition, program officers are more successful in their grant recommendations when we can show that the grant-seeking organization has solid evaluation measures in place.

~ **Jumana Vasi**
Associate Program Officer

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

At the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham we believe a focus on outcomes is essential. This ensures that we are making the most effective use of donor funds and bringing the greatest benefit to the people and places we serve. We have developed a Results Framework, which centers on four key results and 11 related strategies, and which guides us in everything we do. By prioritizing the results that are important to our community, we can concentrate on working with partners to drive meaningful, measurable and lasting change. For every grant we make within our Results Framework, we work with applicants to identify and short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes as well as a thorough evaluation plan for their project. Grantees submit baseline data and report progress toward their outcomes over the course of a project. For grants focused on local watersheds (within our "improve the natural environment" strategy), grantees have tracked outcomes such as pollution violations along our waterways and successful permit modifications to remedy problems; increase in river access points that meet design guidelines for environmental protection; and even progress toward a statewide water management plan. Grantees tell us that our approach to evaluation has helped focus their plans and position them more favorably with other funders. We are able to report back to donors about the concrete progress our grantee partners are making, which helps build their buy-in and continued support.

~ **Gus Heard-Hughes**
Director of Initiatives

THE KEITH CAMPBELL FOUNDATION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The Campbell Foundation focuses on projects of policy, advocacy and enforcement. While the end objective may be a "win" on a particular policy, we have to strategically evaluate our annual grants to incorporate multiple definitions of success. Evaluating policy work is not black and white as calculating the number of trees planted or pounds of trash removed. We ask grantees to demonstrate in their reports how progress was made on their advocacy work. We look for interim goals and achievements. Movement on policy can take time, and we as grantmakers appreciate that. We look for development towards the end goal, which sometimes may be an admission that a certain strategy didn't work and reflections on lessons learned. Ultimately as part of the evaluation process, we evaluate the advocates themselves, their strategic capacity and the increasing influence of the organization itself.

~ **Julie Hester**
Program Officer

River Network Partnership

A Co-op of River & Watershed Organizations

www.rivernetwork.org/programs/partnership-program

Increase Your Visability

- Advertise Jobs & Events
- Promote Blogs & e-Newsletters
- Sell Products through our Marketplace

Find Funding

- Grant Opportunity Alerts
- *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*
- NOZA Database of Charitable Funding

Save Money

- CC Payroll
- Global Water Monitoring Equipment
- Insurance
- Online Mapping
- Orion Magazine
- ProMotive.com
- Watergrass Database Design
- Wish Lists

Learn More & Gather Info

- Toll-free Partner Hotline
- *eStream*
- One-on-One Assistance
- Publications
- Resource Library
- River Rally Conference

Build Community

- Quarterly Webinars
- Listserv
- River Network Partner Logo
- Share Success Stories

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Partnership Benefit Highlight

WATERSHED WEDNESDAYS

Share some inspiration, get some inspiration!

We focus on one Partner group's activity, success, milestone event or just plain cool idea and promote it the best that we can nationally. We tweet about it, blog on it, feature it on our website and do whatever other social network bragging that we can about your excellent work.

Send us your story using this page: **www.rivernetwork.org/forms/watershed-wednesdays**

2014 Annual River Network Partner Dues

Nonprofit Organizations & Local, State & Tribal Government Partners

Annual Budget	*Annual Partner Dues*
<$25,000	*$150*
$25,000 - $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	
<$999,999	*$500*
>$1,000,000	*$1,000*

To join or renew as a River Network Partner, please mail this form with your check to River Network (209 SW Oak #300, Portland, Oregon 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): _____

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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 above. River Network will contact the organization on your behalf with information on how to access all the great benefits described in the Partner brochure. Thank You!

River Network
Connecting People, Saving Rivers
209 SW Oak Street, Suite 300
Portland, OR 97204

Get ready to Rally!

River Rally™ 2014

A joint production of **River Network** and **WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE**

May 30 - June 2
Pittsburgh, PA

Mark your calendars! River Rally 2014 is headed to Pennsylvania. Over 750 advocates for healthy rivers and watersheds will gather at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. With educational workshops, inspiring speakers, a celebratory River Heroes banquet, field tours and unsurpassed networking, River Rally is your best opportunity of the year for professional development!

IMPORTANT DEADLINES:

Registration Opens - **January 2014**
T-Shirt Design Contest - **January 23rd**
River Hero Nominations - **February 13th**
Scholarship Requests - **March 13th**

learn more:
www.riverrally.org