A Primer for Developing a Successful Watershed Management Program

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Findings from the NYSFOLA – NYSDEC Pilot Watershed Management Program

by the

NYSFOLA Oversight Committee

A Joint Effort between the
New York State Federation of Lake Associations
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1. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
2. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
3. Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board
4. Cayuga County Water Management Agency
5. Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There has been a rebirth in the last ten years of using "watersheds" as the basis for making environmental management decisions with stronger local public involvement. In 1996 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) began testing a program model that would allow watershed management programs to be developed quickly with limited funds using New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA) lake associations as the core organizing groups.

Four lakes ultimately became NYSFOLA cooperative test projects with NYSDEC funding. Two other lakes received separate NYSDEC and/or other agency funding and independently used the NYSDEC program model.

Even allowing for the differing sizes of the lakes and for the differing kinds of lake and town interaction, the NYSFOLA Oversight Committee is reporting relatively good success for the Pilot Program. The initial two-year management plan development program was extended to five years. Five of the six lakes have State of the Lake Reports completed. Three have Management Plans in place and two more Plans are imminent. A final survey from the Committee identified several issues critical to success as well as several challenges and problems in the projects.

The NYSFOLA Pilot Watershed Management Program Oversight Committee has realized that "completing the State of the Lake Report and Watershed Management Plan" is not the only and final goal. Instead, an equally important outcome is the dialogue created among all the watershed stakeholders. Other critical elements include the importance of a strong leader and active interaction with agencies and town governments. A key weakness in the original model was the failure to provide for follow-up at the end of the pilot study. Watershed members need to feel that their efforts will lead to successfully addressing at least one of the problems identified in their Watershed Management Plan. To get to this step, they need to get grants and government support. However, many of the Lake Associations do not know how to use their Watershed Management Plan as the basis for applying for grants. They are naturally turning to NYSFOLA and to NYSDEC to help them in this next step. We do not have any current mechanism to assist them other than materials such as the source lists in Appendices C and D. One recommendation to set up an Information Clearinghouse with NYSFOLA and the NYSFOLA Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) is an attempt to remedy this deficiency.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Why the Focus on "Watershed Management"?

There has been a shift in the last ten years from using towns, counties, or other political units to using "watersheds" as the basis for making environmental management decisions and particularly for addressing local water quality issues. State and federal funding is increasingly being allocated to those regions that have developed watershed management plans outlining the needs and goals for the target watershed. The development of watershed programs, however, is unequal across the state. In 1993 Lee Neville reported in *New York State Collaborative Watershed Management Survey (MPS thesis, Cornell)* that there were approximately 65 watershed programs around New York State, but the size and resources of these programs varied considerably. New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) recognized the need for increasing the development of watershed programs statewide.

What is the Pilot Watershed Management Program?

In 1996, NYSDEC decided to test the feasibility of using a program model that would allow watershed management programs to be initiated and developed fairly quickly using a limited amount of resources. Part of NYSDEC's model was the use of New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA) individual associations as core organizing groups to develop the Pilot Watershed Management Plan projects. NYSFOLA had already demonstrated a successful long-term collaboration with NYSDEC through the Citizen's Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) that has provided volunteer monitoring on selected New York lakes for more than ten years. The two agencies also collaborated in 1990 to publish *Diet for a Small Lake: A New Yorker's Guide to Lake Management*. In 1996, NYSFOLA agreed to carry out a pilot project to test the NYSDEC model for development of watershed management plans.

The Model

The NYSDEC model included three components:

1. A Lake Association and its members, acting within a selected watershed, as the core group to lead the development of the watershed program.
2. A core team, consisting of a Lake Manager, a Scientist, and a Mentor providing leadership for the lake association volunteers.
3. NYSDEC providing $8,000 - $10,000 per lake as an operating budget.

The team was to identify and work with relevant groups or persons in the watershed with inherent interest in protecting water resources. These were the stakeholders in the watershed who would work together to develop two specific products.

The stated goal for each Lake Association-based Watershed Management Plan project was to complete a "State of the Lake Report" by the end of Year 1. This Report was to summarize the health of the lake and its associated watershed, and identify problems that needed to be addressed. Lakes in the Citizen's Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) were selected because they already had several years of water testing data. The second product was a "Watershed Management Plan" to be produced by the end of Year 2 which outlined actions needed to remedy each problem identified.

NYSFOLA Goals

NYSFOLA had several reasons for participating in this cooperative effort. In the short term, it was hoped that the participating Lake Associations would each produce a Watershed Management Plan that would outline activities needed to maintain or improve the health of their lake and the people's enjoyment of the lake. It was also hoped that having an actual written Plan, complete with current statistical data, would provide leverage with which to access sources of government funding to tackle such problems identified in the Plan. Over the longer term, it was hoped that the Pilot Program, if successful, would provide a template strategy. The template would serve as an incentive to action and as a useful tool for other lake associations to build similar watershed management plans.

Role of the Oversight Committee

The NYSFOLA Watershed Program Oversight Committee was set up to provide oversight to the project and to ensure that the interests of the participating lakes were being addressed. Given the pilot nature of the project, it was not known what problems might arise. Since volunteers, frequently non-professionals, were conducting most of the effort, NYSFOLA felt it particularly important that these people feel supported by the Association that had involved them in the work.

Profile of the Pilot Lakes

Seven Lake Associations were initially chosen to test the model. They were dispersed throughout New York State and ranged in size from the small 150-acre Findley Lake in the southwest corner to the 6863.5-acre Owasco Lake in the Finger Lakes region. There were also differences in the degree of agency involvement in each project.

One lake dropped out almost immediately because the relationships between the Lake Association and the town governments were considered too strained for a successful

collaboration to occur. Of the remaining six lakes, four ultimately became NYSFOLA cooperative test projects with NYSDEC funding – Findley, Chateaugay, Oscawana, and Queechy. The other two lakes received separate NYSDEC funding. They are included in this assessment since they were independently using the same NYSDEC model. Funding for Cossayuna Lake went through the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board. The manager was an appointed, agency-related person. Owasco Lake received separate funding through the Cayuga County Water Management Agency and also worked with agency appointees. The remaining lakes were funded through the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board (CNYRPDB)

Only four of the six watersheds were completely encompassed within just one county – Findley, Cossayuna, Oscawana, and Queechy. The largest watershed, Owasco Lake, extends into three counties. The next largest watershed, Chateaugay Lake, extends into two counties.

Three of the six lakes reported that 75 – 100 percent of the shoreline was developed. Two lakes reported less than 50 percent development. Public ownership was less than 10 percent on most of the lakes. Two lakes reported no public ownership. Three lakes reported that up to 25 percent of their shoreline was owned by organizations such as clubs, youth camps, and educational institutions. All reported at least some such ownership. There was zero to less than 10 percent shoreline ownership by non-governmental groups such as land trusts or the Nature Conservancy.

The age of the six Lake Associations in the project ranged from 16 to 83 years. Lake level control and aquatic weeds were cited as the principal concerns since the formation of the Association.

Estimated Lake Association membership ranged from 93 to 300. However, in only two of the lakes was association membership reported to include as much as 75% of the lakeshore property owners. Two reported that less than 50 percent of the lakeshore owners belonged to the Lake Association.

The principle reason the respondents gave, described in several ways and with a variety of terms, for participating in this pilot program was to produce a Watershed Management Plan. A second and/or alternative reason given was to be able to reap the benefits of having the data collected and a Management Plan in place.

Final Status of the Program

The Watershed Program Oversight Committee can report relatively good success five years after the start of the experimental program. Five of the six lakes have State of the Lake Reports completed. Three have Watershed Management Plans in place. Management Plans for two more lakes are imminent. The sixth lake is still a work in progress, but they report pending completion of many projects. None of the lakes were able to meet the original,

probably unrealistic two-year timeline for completion of both the State of the Lake Report and the Watershed Management Plan.

To assess the Pilot Program accomplishments and problems, a written survey was sent to members of the core group committees. The importance of justifying their conclusions was stressed and follow-up calls were made where necessary. There were 12 written respondents. The findings from their survey responses are summarized in the remainder of this document.

One question on the Survey was "Where will your Lake Association go from here?" Survey respondents indicated that this was a weak link. Qualifying terms used in responding to this question included: "Hopefully" to get plan implemented on a "timely basis"; "Hope" to become a major force in seeing plan updated annually; "Working to agree on the exact strategy that we will implement with the towns"; or "Get it adopted by the town."

Other respondents were not so hopeful. One suggested they would just "continue our monitoring practices" - i.e., apparently not much change in what they were doing before they developed the Management Plan. Another simply said "unknown"; and one pessimist postulated that the management plans "will probably smolder along for a few years and then die out".

The key issue now appears to be implementation. Many associations were unclear about how to parlay their Watershed Management Plan into the next step of locating and accessing funding. Appendices C and D include suggestions for the next step.

The Oversight Committee has recognized the importance of getting grant money and taking the Watershed Management Plans forward. The Plan is too often seen as endpoint in itself instead of as a major step in a long-term process. The Plan is useful only if it is an active tool to improve the quality of water and life in the whole watershed.

Profile of Survey Respondents

Over half of the respondents were long-term residents of their watersheds. Seven of the 12 respondents were property owners in the watershed; four of them owned property on the lakeshore and had lived there from 10 to 42 years. None of the respondents were engaged in a business enterprise in the watershed, although one had previously done so. The survey respondents were current or former professionally employed people, including two project managers who responded that they were employed by NYSDEC. They included a planner, engineers, a CPA, a teacher, college professor, dentist, insurance person, and a marketing manager. All had played roles in their watershed projects, such as chairing committees or providing professional assistance. Most had previously engaged in activities to preserve their lake and its watershed such as water sampling, nonpoint source projects, and serving on task forces as well as holding office within their Lake Association.

LESSONS FOR BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

This Pilot Program has accomplished its primary purpose by highlighting those issues critical for the successful development of a Watershed Management program, including actual implementation. These issues have been listed below as a series of lessons or suggestions for future groups to follow.

The Organizational Framework

The real goal is to build a sense of community in the watershed.

It has become apparent that the key goal of the project is not the written products. Useful as the written products are, the important goal is the dialogue created among the residents of the watershed, and particularly among the various stakeholders who have different interests or influences on the lake. Lakeshore owners are an appropriate focus group because they have a major influence on water quality and have direct interest in lake health. However they cannot, and should not be developing a watershed management plan by themselves. Improved water quality requires that all of the relevant groups be involved and committed. It does not matter whether they are lakeshore owners with septic systems, the local highway department with runoff problems, farmers in the surrounding watershed, or whomever. In addition, getting the involvement of the local governments and business communities is crucial to the ultimate success of projects to ameliorate the problems identified in the Plan.

It takes 3 to 6 years to build a watershed program.

Monitoring the progress of the pilot lakes has indicated that the two-year deadline originally proposed is unrealistically short. The NYSFOLA Oversight Committee initially played a key role by talking with NYSDEC personnel to extend the deadlines in order to allay concerns and stress on the part of the volunteer lake members. Participants learned quickly that it takes a considerable amount of time and patience to identify stakeholder groups, establish a communication network, and get stakeholder involvement. It also takes much time and effort to accumulate and document the scientific information, beyond the existing CSLAP data, which is needed for the State of the Lake Report. Conversations with other Watershed Associations around New York State confirm this finding and advocate a minimum time of 3 to 6 years to truly get stakeholder involvement and ownership of the project.

This longer time frame has important implications for Lake Association involvement. A project lasting that many years requires considerable commitment and persistence. Mechanisms are needed to maintain continuity as turnover occurs in the team leadership of the group, as it inevitably does. A strong core team becomes very important to the success of the project.

The NYSDEC Model is useful as catalyst and organizing framework

The respondents reported that the so-called NYSDEC management model (manager/scientist/mentor) worked very well in a broad sense. The manner of its actual application, however, varied considerably among the watershed projects. Only the project leaders seemed to be generally aware that there was such a model to be tested. The principal contribution of the model was to "act as a catalyst". It provided an initial framework for getting started, helped avoid confusion by spelling out specific tasks, and focused the thinking of the people involved and of the Lake Association.

The greatest success reported by respondents was that they "produced a lake management plan at all"! This sense of "wonderment" that they somehow got through the process provides a good indication of the complexities involved in producing a locally supported lake management plan.

Respondents also mentioned the usefulness of learning to work together. Gathering data for their State of the Lake Report, which was integral to the development of a management plan, was also useful. It helped them to gain an understanding of how their lake and watershed functions, and to identify how to control nutrient sources and other factors which ultimately affect water quality in the lake and watershed.

The pivotal role is that of the Project Leader

The survey results unequivocally show that the success of a lake management plan project hinges upon the role played by the Project Leader. It requires a dedicated leader with good leadership skills. The team leader needs to have the skills necessary to identify who the relevant stakeholder groups are, to define the key issues, and to diplomatically bring these factors into the discussions. Results were best when the leader is locally recognized and accepted. The personality of this team leader is vital.

A major factor in core team success was available time. This project takes a considerable amount of management time. Respondents indicated it often required ten hours or more a week throughout the year to make phone calls, organize meetings, and help organize information. Such a commitment places a heavy burden on volunteers who are also juggling full time jobs and families. The project becomes a stress instead of a satisfying challenge.

Projects seem to proceed most smoothly when the leadership roles can be included as part of a person's job duties within a relevant agency. Agency affiliation provides a continuity that is lacking with citizen leaders, who are not necessarily engaged in the process for long-term follow-up. It also provides linkages and a professional interest in the outcome on the part of the Project Leader as part of long-term job responsibilities. Agency people also have ready knowledge to help identify relevant groups and stakeholders.

Selection of the right people and agency is, however, not a minor issue. Many citizens feel any "agency" has a "biased agenda" or is a "regulatory threat". This reduces their effectiveness for getting stakeholder involvement. The historical relationship of a particular agency with the particular community is very important.

A committed core team depends on citizen participation

The Project Leaders who responded to the Survey overwhelmingly agreed that the participation of a core group of dedicated citizen volunteers, whether members of the lake association or not, were critical to the successful development of a Watershed Management Plan. They repeatedly pointed out that producing a consensus for developing and supporting a lake management plan "could not be done" without such involvement.

Several respondents who were members of their lake watershed volunteer core group did not appear to have as good a grasp of the larger setting of their project as the Leaders did. The volunteers' perspectives tended to be more narrowly focused. This is especially true in regard to the role of NYSFOLA, its Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), and the overall purposes of the both NYSFOLA and NYSDEC in providing funding for the projects. Nor did the volunteers seem to grasp that they were also participating in an experimental effort to identify workable, locally supported ways of developing Lake Watershed Management Plans that could be used to guide other Lake Associations in developing similar management plans.

The Scientist role provides critical support

Scientists who worked with the projects received strong support for the work they performed. This was seen as another critical aspect of a Lake Watershed Management project. The scientist's role did not cease with completion of the State of the Lake Report. It was identified as necessary to continuation into the management plan phase as well. There were complaints that the budgets that scientists had to work with were too limited. Two of the projects were faced with disruption of the scientific work at midstream. One was due to the death of the original scientist, and the other had conflict with the scientist's employer.

The ability of the scientist to accurately evaluate the lake health is an obvious critical factor. Data are often inadequate to determine causes of problems such as weed growth. The limited budget may not allow for water chemistry or other important data to be collected. It is important, however, that the scientist be able to identify these limitations so they can be highlighted as recommendations in the final plan.

Successful Communication with Stakeholders

Communication with the diverse groups of stakeholders throughout the watersheds was critical to obtaining their perspectives on watershed issues and to building their sense of ownership and involvement. Successful communication needs to increase stakeholder awareness of the project and to get feedback as the critical step of getting the total community to buy into the project and future implementation needs. Communication methods could be divided into two types: those methods conducted to get actual feedback from stakeholders, and those methods largely used to inform stakeholders.

Public Opinion Surveys

All groups but one conducted public opinion surveys. The respondents indicated clearly that heavy reliance was placed upon opinion surveys, to the exclusion of other means of communication. They were used to identify watershed issues and to generate public interest in what should be done about them. Respondents were nearly unanimous in their feeling that public opinion surveys in their lake watersheds were one of the most successful activities conducted in terms of communicating with stakeholders.

A successful survey requires considerable effort. The questions have to be thoughtfully worded, the survey needs to be sent out at least twice to get adequate feedback, and follow-up telephoning may be needed. If conducted carefully, however, a survey not only provides critical information but also is a critical tool for integrating the watershed community and getting stakeholder cooperation.

As might be expected, with the benefit of hindsight, survey respondents stated various ways they could have improved responses to their public opinion surveys. One respondent reported the "residents feared" completing the survey because it was not sent to all town residents and was not coordinated with the town Planning Board. Another respondent felt that their public opinion survey was "too little, too late" and that responses may have been skewed by the way questions were asked. A third respondent felt that better results might have been obtained if the survey was identified as a state project rather than from the lake association. That obviously identified a problem of "stakeholder perceptions" which needs to be addressed as part of the future implementation of that Management Plan.

The usual procedural problems of obtaining an accurate mailing list for the public opinion survey, getting responses from particular stakeholder groups in the watershed (e.g., farmers) and customizing survey questions to lake concerns were mentioned in some watersheds. Such procedural problems, of course, consume tremendous amounts of time and energy by both project leaders and volunteers.

Public Meetings

Workshops and/or public discussion meetings were held as part of the process in all of the lake watershed projects except one. It is critical to include the results of the Public Opinion Survey in the later Public Meetings. Most groups held from 10 to 20 public meetings. Two of the groups who held less than 10 public meetings were lakes where state or local agencies took a predominant lead in the State of the Lake Report and development of the Watershed Management Plan. Typical attendance at the public meetings of participants ranged from 10 to 35 or more people.

Newsletters and Information Flyers

Newsletters and information flyers were a nearly universal activity as part of the process. Some used this method of communicating with the public much more extensively than others. Without information on the size of the potential audience in the watershed, it is difficult for the NYSFOLA Oversight Committee to evaluate how thoroughly these printed items were disseminated to stakeholders.

Mailing Lists, News Media, Web Sites, Exhibits

All but two of the six groups maintained mailing lists for dissemination of information and announcements of public meetings and other public events. Those groups that held more numerous workshops and public discussion meetings also appeared to maintain the larger mailing lists. Respondents reported very limited use of the various news media in getting information out to the public or to generate interest. Those that did use this method confined their activity almost entirely to limited newspaper articles. None reported having an Internet web site, but almost all groups reported that exhibits or talks on the project were given at community events.

Generally speaking, one can conclude from these reports that there was a strong orientation towards more direct personal forms of communication versus the use of news media or web sites to generate interest in and discussion of lake watershed issues. Other methods, including exhibits, workshops and newsletters, were also identified as being successful when used in conjunction with a public survey.

Involvement of Outside Organizations

Linkages

Survey respondents made it emphatically clear that a State of the Lake Report and Watershed Management Plan cannot be undertaken by a Lake Association in isolation. If they

do not already exist, it is vital to develop linkages to county and state agencies that can provide technical assistance, advice and expertise. This is true not only for developing the various aspects of such a project, but has strong implications for ties that will be needed in the future if the Management Plan is to be implemented.

Town Involvement

It was recognized that the support, or least the tacit cooperation of the towns in the watershed was another critical element in the development and implementation of a Watershed Management Plan. Local politics, including relationships with the Lake Association and perceptions about the importance of the lake to the town, are the key to getting town involvement in lake management projects. These relationships are extremely variable from one watershed to another, and each must be dealt with according to the perceptions and past relationships between town residents and the lake association. The respondents reported a variety of experiences in attempts to bring towns into the project ranging from enthusiastic support to grudging recognition that the town needed to be informed if not actively involved.

Three of the six lake watersheds in the NYSFOLA survey were entirely or almost entirely in only one town. Two involved two or three towns. The largest involved eleven towns, two incorporated villages, and had the only city. The city was near the lake outlet and drew its drinking water from the lake.

As reported by survey respondents, involvement of the towns was spotty. Two projects reported little or no involvement by their respective towns. Respondents from two other projects reported disinterest or spotty attendance from their town representatives. One town only participated after the local paper denounced their decision to allow the lake people to vote on a special district. At the other end of the scale, some respondents reported that their town representatives were active participants in the watershed project. Some town representatives provided "great assistance with all aspects of the project," and one went even further by providing funding.

Agency Involvement

Reliance on county agencies was integral to the success of most of the projects. Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) were key players in providing county-level support. County health and planning departments also provided critical support in several watershed projects. Respondents' comments on county agency assistance were strongly positive. Comments included: "total cooperation"; "provided enormous support"; "provided good professional advice"; "steady committed effort"; and "active and consistent".

Problems involving county agencies were largely confined to two watershed projects. One involved territorial perceptions of the county SWCD, involving their strong focus on agriculture to the exclusion of other county issues. Conflicting interests between the county SWCD and

NYSDEC also became a factor hindering cooperation. In the Adirondack Park, this included relationships between the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and these agencies as well. In contrast, another SWCD was cited as instrumental in getting cooperation of farmers in the watershed. In yet another watershed, the county agencies were working on the watershed project through a county coordinating agency. In this instance, frequent changing of roles among the participating county agencies was cited as a problem.

Not surprisingly, NYSDEC was cited as the principal state agency involved, for providing funding and other support. "Other support" turns out to be the fact that the project leaders in two watersheds were also employees of NYSDEC. Survey respondents generally cited NYSDEC support more favorably if they were closer to Albany. Respondents from two more distant lake watersheds were explicit in commenting on the lack of continued support from NYSDEC.

Institutional Involvement

"Institutional involvement" primarily refers to assistance and involvement from faculty and staff at local colleges and universities. Respondents reported that this assistance was another important link in the chain of support that needs to be established for a successful watershed management project. Only one watershed project did not report receiving such assistance. Even they began with a linkage to the local community college. It terminated due to factors beyond their control that had little to do with the watershed project.

Colleges and universities that did provide assistance through the involvement of faculty and staff include Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, SUNY Fredonia, Cornell, Jamestown Community College, SUNY Plattsburgh, Adirondack Community College, Union College and Westchester Community College.

Few problems were reported with colleges and universities. One dissident note was sounded because the professor involved "submitted old reports and failed to provide any new information or material". The principal complaint otherwise was lack of sufficient funding to conduct the work. Respondents' comments on institutional assistance included: " Great assistance with modeling and historical data"; "Spirit of cooperation"; "Extremely helpful in analyzing old reports and data"; "Help with land use planning"; and "Carried out two water quality projects at less than cost".

Challenges and Problems

Weaknesses of the NYSDEC Model

Problems with the model focused on specific aspects rather than on the model itself. Problems cited included lack of expected support from NYSDEC, unrealistic timelines, and lack of direction and specifics about applying the model process. One respondent suggested that better linkages with regional NYSDEC offices might help resolve the question of lack of needed support. One project downplayed any overt connections to NYSDEC regarding such a model due to animosity towards NYSDEC that had arisen from prior bad experiences.

None of the respondents identified a better watershed model. One respondent remarked, "Identifying facts and developing consensus is a tried and true method." It is a key component for success regardless of what model may be used.

The Mentor role

Survey responses indicate that the Mentor role was not well defined. Comments from some respondents indicated they had no idea what the Mentor role was expected to be. Respondents confused it with the role of the Project Leader, with interactions with other agencies, with the volunteers, or with the Project Scientist. Those who did understand the Mentor role complained that it had little meaning due to distance from Albany, or that Mentor support from NYSDEC "disappeared". One respondent indicated that they received the equivalent of a Mentor's input from local college staff and other agencies. In this case, the Mentor's role was combined with the role of the Project Leader. Half of the respondents thought the Mentor's role should be continued, but their comments indicated confusion with the Project Leader's role. The NYSFOLA Oversight Committee conclusion from these comments is that the Mentor's role should be combined with the Project Leader's duties. That is, in fact, what transpired in several of the projects.

Timelines

Several respondents reported having a major problem with the original, unrealistic timelines given for completing their Watershed Management Plans.

Problems

A number of perceived problems were cited. Lack of a clearly perceived path to implementation of their Management Plan was stated in various ways. Problems cited included: lack of interest by town governments; how to get their lake association to follow through on actions to be taken; and perceived inability to attract needed involvement from agencies to implement the Management Plan. Some respondents were still dissatisfied that more lake users were not involved, or felt that the flow of information to key persons in the lake association and local governments during the project was inadequate. Funding limitations may have had something to do with the latter perception. Other failures noted included initiation of the management planning phase before the State of the Lake Report was completed, time lost gathering and analyzing needed data, and turnover or loss of scientists working on their project.

Limited funds

Limited funds may be the problem preventing completion of the watershed program at some of the larger lakes. Several of the lakes currently in the later stages of the program are running out of money. Unexpected costs associated with these programs include: operation costs for a longer than two-year program; communication costs to get stakeholder involvement; survey costs; salary expenses for scientists; and getting Geographic Information System (GIS) data or water chemistry data needed for the State of the Lake reports.

The Role of NYSFOLA

Provide an Information Clearinghouse

NYSFOLA's role should be to serve as a clearinghouse and forum for information on conducting lake management projects. NYSFOLA should not get involved in actually conducting the projects. As one respondent pointed out, this would expend too much NYSFOLA energy on just a few lakes.

Information flowing through a clearinghouse should include examples of other lake management projects; possible solutions to water quality concerns and threats; and continued encouragement for educational programs by NYSFOLA and others.

The clearinghouse, perhaps through the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), should also provide directions to current information on grants that may be available, sources of grant writing assistance, and lists of qualified consultants and technical support people.

Scientific Advisory Board (SAB)

The SAB needs a more prominent profile. Several respondents indicated a lack of knowledge about the SAB or what assistance it could provide, and consequently did not think of it as a source of advice. Those who were aware of the SAB were not consistent in what they thought it should do or what assistance they had obtained from it. Instances where SAB assistance was recognized were strongly tied to a particular individual on the SAB rather than to the SAB as a distinct entity with various types of expertise available.

Future Lake Planning Projects

The Pilot Program Oversight Committee recommends several steps for NYSFOLA and NYSDEC that would improve the approach and methods for future lake associations interested in developing a Watershed Management Plan.

Assume it will take 3 to 6 years for development and completion of the State of the Lake Report and Watershed Management Plan. This also has impact on grant funding cycles relative to the overall Watershed Management Pilot Program, since funds had to be available for several fiscal years.

Replace the title "Mentor" with "Facilitator" and possibly combine this role with that of the Project Leader. The role of this person is to provide ongoing assistance.

Provide information that outlines in detail the steps needed to develop the State of the Lake Report and the Watershed Management Plan. This information should include the findings of this committee and could be used to train new Project Leaders.

Provide semi-annual update sessions for core teams and training for new personnel on existing teams. These sessions would review current status of projects and deal with problems before they become unmanageable.

Emphasize to core groups the importance of getting wide stakeholder involvement and the local town supervisors on their Watershed Management Project Oversight Board. Stress the value of conducting a stakeholder evaluation survey and incorporating the results of the survey back into the public meeting/media processes.

Stress the importance of not overloading volunteers. Volunteer efforts should be focused through the use of subcommittees with revolving memberships. Stress the equal importance of having continuity in the roles of at least the Project Leader/Facilitator and the Scientist. Continuity is equally important, if possible, in the involvement of town/local government representatives.

Help the Project Leaders/Facilitators understand, and convey to their stakeholders, that few dramatic conclusions are likely to emerge from the lake management planning process. The Management Plan will instead contain a prioritized list of initial needs such as better stormwater drains.

It is critical that at least the leaders of the groups understand that the importance of the Watershed Management Plan is in the process. The long-term value comes from having the data collected, periodically updating it, and having the stakeholders working together on common problems.

SAMPLE CASE STUDY

Findley Lake has been a success story from the onset of the Pilot Project, and the leadership team discovered and directly addressed many of the factors listed in this report. They chose to create separate committees for recreational, developmental and environmental

concerns. This helped partition the workload and to focus individual efforts. They also worked with Cornell Cooperative Extension to conduct a Home-A-Syst program to raise environmental consciousness among stakeholders. They held frequent meetings and always featured a speaker or some other activity that served as a "hook" to draw people in and keep them interested. The Findley Lake experience, in particular, identified some major pitfalls to avoid. These included the mistake of overloading of volunteers which caused many to drop out; the importance of focusing on small steps instead of long-term, grandiose plans; and the mistake of not allowing sufficient time for participating stakeholders to digest and understand the information presented.

APPENDIX A

PILOT WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

PARTICIPANTS SURVEY FORM

The following pages, 20A-20S, contain a copy of the survey instrument the Committee used with participating lake leaders. In order to preserve anonymity, specific answers to specific questions are not included. Summary answers are in the report above.

APPENDIX B

Pilot Project Results

State of the Lake Reports

and

Watershed Management Plans

Copies of reports and plans may be borrowed from the New York State Federation Of Lake Associations office at 2701 Shadyside Drive, P. O. Box 342, Findley Lake NY 14736. The web site is www.nysfola.org.

Findley Lake Watershed Management Plan, including State of the Lake report.
Available after July 16, 2001

The State of Chateaugay Lakes
Chateaugay Lakes Watershed Management Plan

State of Queechy Lake, June 2000
Queechy Lake Management Plan – Keeping involved in Preservation

The Cossayuna Lake Watershed Management Plan

The Owasco Lake Watershed Management Plan is now in draft form and going to public meetings in July 2001. Copies are available at www.co.cayuga.ny.us/wqma.
Contact may also be made to Michele Wunderlich, Senior Planner, Cayuga County Department of Planning and Development, County Office Building 5th Floor, 160 Genesee Street, Auburn NY 13021

APPENDIX C

NEW YORK STATE FEDERATION OF LAKE ASSOCIATIONS
WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLANNING
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The attached Guidelines for Grant Writing manual is a work in progress. Lake Associations should periodically check the NYSFOLA web page, listed below, to see updates added by this committee or others.

This publication represents ideas and thoughts from many sources. The committee particularly thanks Kathleen McLaughlin for her research from the librarian's perspective, and the many lake association members who shared ideas with us at meetings. An additional resource is: Principles of Grantsmanship: A manual on Organizing a Competitive Grant Proposal, by David MacKenzie and J. Scott Angle. It is available from the University of Maryland, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, College Park MD 20742.

If you have ideas, or have had success with other suggestions, please send them to us for inclusion in later editions.

NYSFOLA

Don Keppel
2701 Shadyside Road
Findley Lake NY 14736
Phone: 716-769-7231
Fax: 1-800-796-3652
WEB: www.nysfola.org

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Nancy Mueller

Revised July 17, 2000

NEW YORK STATE FEDERATION OF LAKE ASSOCIATONS

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLANNING
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

GUIDELINES FOR GRANT WRITING
OR
HOW TO GET MONEY TO SOLVE LAKE PROBLEMS
DON'T THINK SMALL - THINK CREATIVELY!

One of the main questions for many lake associations is how to get funding in order to correct a lake-related problem. The good news is the existence of a diversity of state, federal and private agencies willing to fund environmentally related projects. The problems arise in knowing where and how to obtain funding and having the determination and patience to access it. This guide provides a brief, step-by-step approach to finding funds and some useful tips for getting started on the process. It has been compiled from the experience of numerous people involved in different forms of grantsmanship.

CLEARLY IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM OR ISSUE THAT NEEDS FUNDING.

Problem identification may arise during the development of a watershed management plan for your lake. Alternatively, it may result from an immediate crisis facing the lake.

STRATEGIZE THE BEST SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.

It is important to place the issue in a fundable context. Focus on individual projects rather than just stating, "we need money to save the lake". Small projects are more easily funded. Alternatively, consider coordinating with other members of the watershed (e.g. DEC, Soil & Water, etc.) to see if your project can fit into a larger area activity.

Use creative thinking about potential solutions. How can solving your problem be useful or "valuable" to other parties or areas? Brainstorm ideas. For example, erosion and sedimentation may be causing water quality problems in a headwater lake, but you should also consider the outflow of the lake and its destination. Lake association members could try to partner with downstream towns concerned about quality of their drinking water or flood control problems. The combined group may be able to access state water quality funds or federal flood control funds. Another example is farm runoff into the lake. Farmers may also be concerned about waste storage problems. Combining forces may provide easier access to state or federal pollution control funding.

PARTNER WITH APPROPRIATE GROUPS OR AGENCIES

Grantors often want their funds to be shared with additional entities for more benefits. If you feel your lake may be perceived as too small consider joining with one or two other lakes within your township. Consider partnering with a school or college for equipment use on your lake and for student volunteers or interns. This may open the door to some educational grants, as the school or college may need a site for research purposes. Several FOLA member lakes are already partnering with colleges for data collection or analysis. Consider contacting nearby youth correctional facilities. They can often provide people for branch cutting/clean-up, gabion construction or other heavy labor work.

It is critical that you partner with, and gain support from your local municipal government agencies. Most state and federal agencies will require that funds be directed through such local governments. More importantly, these local contacts are already tapped into the network of fund sources and are aware of resources. Attend local town meetings in a cooperative spirit! Make your elected officials aware of your

presence and dedication to lake preservation for the benefit of the area as a whole. If they recognize a commitment on the part of your organization and its members, you may more easily establish a dialogue and an ongoing working relationship.

CASE STUDY: One New York lake group combined three lake watersheds into one grant because 2/3 of the town roads were in those watersheds. Working with the highway superintendent, they were able to fund a road sweeper for the town to clean up sediments and de-icing salts from the roads, thereby reducing runoff pollution. The grant also funded the construction of catch basins where none had previously existed. The grant had an educational requirement which was met by having a volunteer lake advisory committee produce a nonpoint source stormwater education brochure and a lake website featuring nonpoint source information links.

DRAFT A CLEAR SCOPE OF THE WORK AND A REALISTIC BUDGET

Both the scope and budget will be critical components of any grant application and will also help obtain support from local officials. It is also important to consider the motive of the external grantor from whom funds are being sought. Is their mission focused on philanthropic work, media attention, good will, government action, public interest, or public health and safety? Knowing this will help to focus the request appropriately.

Know that most grants require matching funds. Some grants will allow the matching portion of the grant to be partially or fully fulfilled with in-kind services from volunteers or local municipalities. The value of the time expended by volunteers should not be underestimated, but a careful budget and realistic price for their time and equipment must be established.

START SMALL AND BUILD ON SUCCESSES

Success in obtaining small grants is important for momentum and for establishing a good track record in order to get later, larger grants considered. A grant written for less than $5000 has a good chance of getting funded. One or two knowledgeable volunteers can often write such small grants. Grants asking for larger sums, or for periods longer than one-year time frames, take more effort and usually require involvement of professionals in the development and writing of the grant.

IDENTIFY SOURCES OF FUNDING

Try several of suggested strategies, but expect bottlenecks and many rejections. Realize that there are very different issues and they may require very different resources. There is no simple answer and certainly no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

1. Grant News. This is a newsletter from NYS Assemblyman Sheldon Silver. It is available in print or online (www.assembly.state.ny.us) under Announcements. It lists sources of grants and deadlines. About one year is archived online. It also lists courses in grant writing.

2. Foundation Directory. Grant subjects are listed, followed by foundations that give funds for that purpose. Each foundation listed has a number. Locate that number to find full foundation information.

3. Foundation Grants Index. This lists grants previously given; by subject, then by state and foundation, listing grant amounts awarded and description of the purpose of the grant.

4. Online (www.fdncenter.org) from the Foundation Center is an extensive site for grants. It lists public, corporate and charitable organizations that provide grant monies. It also lists courses in grant writing. In select libraries, often the central reference section of a public library system, Foundation Center is available on CD-ROM. This version allows you to limit your

search geographically and by purpose of the grant, which helps to fine-tune your search to meet your needs. Online has to be used at their discretion. These funds can be given for large and small community projects in their districts. Consider photo opportunities in the context of your proposal. Consider a catchy title for your project so it will look good in the press. The official is usually interested in media coverage so constituents become aware of his/her good deed.

5. Other sources for grants and ideas for proposals.

    a. Lake association newsletters. The address for lakes similar in size to yours can be found through the NYSFOLA office. Copies can often be viewed at the annual NYSFOLA conference

    b. Lake Watch. This is the newsletter of the Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association. The Winter/Early Spring 1999 issue includes an article about grants that helped support the Seneca Lake Watershed Project. Contact: Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association, Inc. 435 Exchange Street, Suite 20, P.O. Box 247, Geneva, NY 14456-0247. 315-789-3052. slpwa@eznet.net

    c. Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Fund. An example of a fund which supports citizen efforts to protect wetlands, lakes, streams and other aquatic habitats across a specific drainage basin or watershed. Look for a similar fund in your area.

    d. Open Space Institutes' Rural New York Landscapes Program. They supported research on industry in the Seneca Lake Watershed and production of some FOLA videos. Could be a source of funding.

    e. Nonpoint Source News Notes, published by EPA and available free in print or online (www.epa.gov/OWOW). Contains stories about successful programs and how they were funded, research and educational resources, and related websites. Be aware – EPA money is usually channeled through states and is not always granted directly to groups.

    f. Volunteer Monitor. This national newsletter of volunteer water quality monitoring contains reports about volunteer projects. It could be used for grant ideas and also lists some educational resources. It is available online (www.epa.gov/OWOW/volunteer/vmm_index.html) or in print.

    g. Do a fundraiser and gain support of local people. $10,000 is not an unreasonable goal and donations are deductible to donors if you are a non-profit group. A lake association showing work of value to the area as a whole can also be a good entry into erasing any "town folk vs lake folk" problems. Whether the donations can be used as matching funds for a grant depends on the agency and local municipal law.

    h. Community "free" money.

        i. Corporate in-kind donations are often made for publicity and community good will. For instance, check out the Bell Atlantic website for instructions and application process for equipment donations to non-profit tax-exempt organizations. Bell Atlantic also has a retiree's organization called the Pioneers. Their members often use their phone company skills/experience to do community work. Other companies, such as Corning, Kodak, etc, are also good community neighbors, as are many others local to your area of the state.

ii. Local community stores and corporations can be helpful sources for supplies for your lake events. Be sure to give them GOOD press coverage for their generosity. For example, one such donation was a pontoon boat borrowed from a local storeowner. The owner took people for tours around the lake during Lake Mohegan's Community Day. Of course, the store's name was prominently displayed on the "tour boat".

Don't forget Member Items! Elected officials, both state and federal, often have access to money for local projects. They are always interested in good work for the local region or community. Do not forget to include media and photo coverage of the project.

6. Prepare a basic template about your lake and its watershed. Consider it a resume for your lake that you can adjust for each grant application. You can highlight things required for each application, but the basic statistical work is done. A sample "Table of Contents" is attached. Copies of full "State of the Lake" and "Lake Management Plans" may be borrowed from NYSFOLA (www.nysfola.org)

GRANT PREPARATION

Fill out several application forms to various sources. Key words ("buzz words") are important. One lake representative said that their town did not like the words "Lake Manager", i.e. the municipality manages, not a citizen. The lake association changed the wording in the proposal to emphasize watershed conservation. Simple wording changes that emphasized the most current data made the proposal acceptable to the town. Remember that print publishing takes times so remain prepared.

a. Grant applications usually have a limited window of opportunity. By gathering pertinent information about the lake and its watershed, and keeping it up-to-date, grant applications are considerably simplified. Basic information should include statistics about size and current conditions in the lake and watershed, USGS maps, vital statistics, number of homes, number of residents, and number of non-resident users. It should also include information on environmental projects already accomplished and data on unsolved problems.

b. Get letters of support from local officials, relevant agencies, and high-level directors of appropriate organizations. Update them as new problems are identified, or at least have the officials primed to write letters on short notice.

GET THE WORD OUT

Use the media to your advantage! Write brief but informative press releases to local newspapers, radio and television stations. Don't forget the local "weeklies". They are often hungry for local public interest stories. Invite media personalities for a tour of the watershed and/or a visit to our lake. Who can resist a boat ride on a sunny day! An informative visit could produce a full-page article in the local section of the area newspaper.

SUMMARY:

1. Clearly identify the problem or issue that needs funding.

2. Strategize the best solution to the problem.
    a. Focus on individual projects.
    b. Use creative thinking.

3. Partner with appropriate groups or agencies.
    a. Partnering can produce volunteers, equipment and/or data analysis.
    b. It works to convince local authorities and townspeople of your interest in the area as a whole, not just the lake.

4. Draft a clear scope of the work and a realistic budget.

5. Start small and build on successes.

6. Identify sources of funding.

7. Grant preparation
    a. Prepare a basic data template about the lake and watershed.
    b. Keep it up-to-date
    c. Get letters of support from local authorities.

8. Get the word out – use the media to your advantage.

Sample

STATE OF THE LAKE REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDIX D

Sample Watershed Planning Tools and Sources

Organizations

Many organizations are available for information on developing watershed management plans and sources of information for designing solutions to watershed pollution problems. This is only a partial list. Many of the publications include lists of other books and sources.

New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA)
2701 Shadyside Drive, P.O. Box 342, Findley Lake NY 14736
PH: 1-800-796-3652. Web site: www.nysfola.org.
Annual conference each May. Publications: Waterworks: a quarterly newsletter ; Diet for a Small Lake (joint publication of NYSFOLA and NYSDEC).
Individual as well as Lake Association memberships

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Albany NY and regional offices. Web site: www.dec.state.ny
Sample Publications: Funding Sources and Tips on Grant Applications for Watershed Protection and Restoration. ; Watershed Planning Tools: A New Yorker's Guide for Gathering and Using Data. ; What is a watershed. ; WET: Water Education for Teachers and annual Water Week programs.

North American Lake Management Society (NALMS)
413 Vernon Blvd., Suite 100, Madison WI 53705-5443
Web site: www.nalms.org. Listing of publications and links to lake-related resources in the states and provinces
Annual conference. Publications: Lakeline ; Lake & Reservoir Management
Publication: Catalog of Technical Publications. A State-by-state list of lakes and governmental organization publications concerning watershed management.
Individual as well as Lake Association memberships

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Catalog of Federal Funding Sources for Watershed Protection
National Service Center for Environmental Publications
PH: 513-489-8190 or 800-490-9198. Web: www.epa.gov/OWOW/watershed/academy

Center for Watershed Protection
8391 Main Street, Ellicott City MD 21043
PH: 410-461-8323. Web site: www.csp.org (and) www.stormwatercenter.net
"Helping others to protect and restore our nation's streams, lakes rivers and estuaries"

Publications catalog

Watershed Management Planning Tools

Rapid Watershed Planning Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for Managing Urbanizing Watersheds. Available from Center for Watershed Protection (address above)
Center for Watershed Protection staff for U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
Practical manual provides a guide to creating an effective watershed plan quickly and cheaply. Chapter 3, in particular, takes the watershed manager through the process of preparing a watershed plan in the real world.

Diet for a Small Lake. Available from NYSFOLA (address above)
Joint publication of NYSFOLA and NYSDEC with detailed instructions for preparing a Management Plan, complete descriptions of Lake Restoration and Watershed Management Techniques.

Sustainable Lakes Planning Workbook: A Lake Management Model.. By Minnesota Lakes Association (www.mnlakesassn.org) in cooperation with the University of Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs. PH: 1-800-515-5253

Developing a Lake Management Plan. Prepared by the Minnesota Interagency Lakes Coordinating Committee with the Minnesota Lakes Association. (www.mnlakesassn.org)

The Lake Pocket Book. Terrene Institute in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Available from Terrene Institute 4 Herbert St., Alexandria VA 22305. PH: 800-726-4853. Web site: www.terrene.org
In addition to answering questions concerning lake watersheds, chemistry and biology, this book contains information on developing watershed management plans and forming lake associations.

Grant Writing Tools

Principles of Grantsmanship: a manual on Organizing a Competitive Grant Proposal by David MacKenzie and J. Scott Angle. Available from the University of Maryland, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, College Park MD 20740. This is a thorough explanation for writing grant proposals. The appendix is "An Example of an Excellent Grant Proposal"

See the section Identify Sources of Funding in Appendix C (above) of this report.

Check your local library or bookstore. There are many books on this topic.

Survey Writing Tools

Writing a good survey requires considerable effort and is not a task to be undertaken lightly. The questions must be thoughtfully worded, the survey needs to be sent out at least twice to get adequate feedback, and follow-up telephoning may be needed. The following books are by one of the leading authorities in the field of survey design. This older one remains a useful basic document and is available through library systems.

Dillman, Don A. Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978. 325 p.

The newer edition refines and updates the "Total Design Method". It then adds a new Part II entitled "Tailoring to the Survey Situation" which discusses alternatives to the traditional written survey instrument.

Dillman, Don A. Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Tailored Design Method. 2d ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000. 464 p.

Local Educational Institutions

Many colleges, universities and/or extension services can help locate people or organizations that could help a lake association to collect data, find and write grants, contact appropriate officials, and write Watershed Management Plans. Cornell University in Ithaca New York has a Local Government Program that could also be of help.

Miscellaneous Titles

Managing Lakes Through Community Participation. Available from NYSFOLA www.nysfola.org. Video. Why Associations are formed, how to get started, case study, forging ties between local government and the lake community.

Through the Looking Glass: A field Guide to Aquatic Plants. A Wisconsin Lakes Partnership publication containing information on nearly all aquatic plants. Contact NYSFOLA (www.nysfola.org) for source information.

Lakescaping for Wildlife and Water Quality by Carrol Henderson. Includes techniques to stabilize shorelines, prevent erosion, encourage and restore wildlife habitat, wildflowers and clean water. Available from Minnesota's Bookstore, 117 University Avenue, St. Paul NM 55155. PH: 1-800-657-3757.

Vermont Better Backroads Manual: Clean Water you can afford. Vermont Agency of Natural Resources funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Clean Water Act.

Sampling of "Lake Books"

Many Lake Associations, Planning Boards, Environmental organizations and Cooperative Extension Bureaus have cooperated to produce books designed to help the lake homeowner understand ways to protect their property's environment and the watershed. Several states are also producing booklets concerning pollution prevention and control. This is a very minimal sampling. Contact your local agencies to find publications concerning your own watershed. Another good source is the publication catalogs from organizations such as NALMS, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, etc. listed above.

Our Lake Book. Lake George Association., P. O. Box 408, Lake George NY 12845. A loose-leaf notebook that can easily be added to or updated.

The Oneida Lake Book. Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board through a grant from NYS Department of Environmental Conservation using funding from the Federal Clean Water Act. CNYRPDB. PH: 315-422-8276. Web: www.cnyrpdb.org

The Montana Lake Book: Actions you can take to protect your lake. Flathead Conservation District and Montana Fish, Wildlife & parks through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

Nonpoint Source Control Plan for the Lake Mendota Priority Watershed Project: Project Summary. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency partial funding through the Water Quality Act. Available from Department of Natural Resources, Nonpoint Source and Land Management Section, P.O. Box 7921, WT/2, Madison WI 53707