

# Part II

## Getting Started

Because the advent of collaborative, multi-stakeholder watershed groups is relatively new, as is the funding for such work, the Sierra does not have many established watershed councils. So, chances are you will be looking at how to start a new watershed council in your area.

Before you start, there are a few things to consider, including who should be involved, what kind of organizational structure your watershed council should employ, how decisions will be made, etc. Unfortunately, most councils do not spring fully formed from the head of one person or one organization. They take a lot of work to organize and launch. But the work done on the front end by a coordinating committee of some sort really pays off later in terms of positioning the group to take effective action with the concurrence of the key decision-makers and community and agency leaders in the watershed.

The Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) identifies the following steps for creating successful partnerships in its *Building Local Partnerships* publication:

**Identify, involve the “right” people** - including all those with a stake in the watershed;

**Develop leadership from within** - once members have been brought together, choose leadership from among the members of the partnership, rather than from the outside;

**Build a common purpose** - get individual “buy-in” by working with input from everyone involved in the group to develop a clear sense of the group’s purpose;

**Establish attainable goals** - set short- and long-term goals and strategies to achieve the mission, including clear and measurable outcomes and a definite timeframe for achievement;

**Make best use of talents** - build the partnership around members’ interests and strengths to keep interest and momentum;

**Encourage communication and participation** - honesty and clear and open communication are critical to the start-up and long-term success of any partnership;

**Set up a flexible organization** - choose an organizational structure that fits the needs and goals of your group.

*Building Local Partnerships* also provides an entertaining description of the various phases, or “stages,” partnership groups go through:

### **HOW PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOP**

Successful partnerships take time to develop. Expect some highs and lows. There are four main stages. These stages can be compared to how we learn to swim. Each involves specific feelings and actions. If you understand and prepare for these different stages, you will find it easier to move through the difficult stages to reach success at the end.

#### ***The Forming Stage***

When a partnership is forming, people cautiously explore each other. Members are like hesitant swimmers. They stand by the side of the pool and stick their toes in the water. Feelings at this stage include excitement and optimism mixed with skepticism and anxiety.

Activities include:

- \* Defining the job at hand and discussing how to accomplish it
- \* Deciding what information needs to be gathered
- \* Discussing concepts and issues
- \* Identifying all the barriers to getting the job done.

#### ***The Storming Stage***

This is often the most difficult stage. Partners become impatient and begin arguing. They are like new swimmers. After they jump in the water, they are afraid they might drown and begin thrashing around. Feelings include resistance to change and negative attitudes about the success of the partnership.

Signs include:

- \* Arguing about less important issues
- \* Becoming defensive or competitive (choosing sides)
- \* Developing unrealistic goals
- \* Increasing tension and jealousy.

### ***The Normalizing Stage***

People accept their role in the team, as well as ground rules (or norms). Conflicts are reduced and competitors become more cooperative. Like experienced swimmers, people realize they aren't going to drown and they help keep each other afloat. Feelings include acceptance of team membership and relief that things seem to be working out. Some activities are:

- \* Achieving harmony by avoiding conflict
- \* More friendliness and sharing of problems
- \* A sense of team cohesion and common goals.

### ***The Performing Stage***

By this stage, the partnership has become an effective and close-knit unit. People begin to really work together. Like a winning relay team, the partnership works together well. Feelings include new insights about the partnership and each member's roles as well as satisfaction with the partnership's progress. Some activities are:

- \* Constructive change
- \* Ability to work through problems
- \* Closer attachment to the partnership.

Let's take a look at one specific watershed council, the McKenzie Watershed Council in Oregon, to start getting a sense for the various steps needed to proceed from the idea or "forming" stage to the point where a watershed council exists and is ready to take action – the "performing" stage. Later, we'll look at other watershed councils to see how they compare/contrast with the McKenzie group.

The McKenzie Watershed Council had its first formal meeting in June 1993, two years after county government and a local utility board first mentioned the need for better cooperative management of the watershed resources.

The McKenzie River flows from the crest of the Cascade Range in Oregon, westward to its confluence with the Willamette River near the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area. With its

headwaters in three wilderness areas, the McKenzie contains some of the clearest water in the U.S.

Like many of the rivers in our own Sierra Nevada, the McKenzie provides a multitude of benefits, including drinking water, outstanding wildlife and fisheries habitat, hydroelectric generation, recreational and open space opportunities, aggregate deposits, and productive timber and agricultural lands. And, like Sierra rivers, it is owned or managed by a variety of agencies and jurisdictions, including the Forest Service, BLM, private landowners, utilities, the Army Corps of Engineers, and state agencies.

The McKenzie Watershed Council came together at the urging of the County commissioners of Lane County and the governing board of the local utility, the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB). The Council describes its formative stages as: 1.) a basic “scoping phase,” which identified the need for a watershed council, 2.) a “start-up phase,” which set the structure in place, and 3.) a “work program phase,” where the watershed council developed and reached consensus on objectives and a work program.

The scoping phase, which was jointly funded by Lane County and the Eugene Water and Electric Board in 1991-92, included a study conducted by the Lane Council of Governments to take a broad look at the feasibility of developing an integrated watershed management program for the McKenzie River Basin. Extensive interviews with representatives of government agencies and private interests affected by water resource issues, as well as a review of existing plans and reports about conditions in the watershed, led to the development of a participatory watershed management body, which became the watershed council.

Based on the study findings, the Lane County commissioners and the EWEB identified various project objectives, such as:

- creating a problem-solving/decision-making framework
- providing landowners with a better understanding of their relationship to various governmental programs and regulations
- developing an integrated data base for use in decision-making on significant watershed issues, and

- developing a process to coordinate among jurisdictions and their respective interests, among others.

Next, the Lane County and EWEB commissioners worked out a potential watershed council membership and organizational structure based on Oregon's Strategic Water Management Group's Watershed Management Strategy, a program established through the Oregon state legislature to establish and fund watershed councils throughout the state. From there an interim project team, with staff borrowed from several agencies, began meeting to work on start-up tasks, such as development of proposed decision-making structures and procedures, preparing background materials and organizing the first council meeting.

At the first meeting, which was held in 1993, the council appointed an ad hoc Process Subcommittee, responsible for drafting a charter document and ground rules. The charter included the group's purpose, mission, and goals, as well as specifying the membership composition of the council and the general procedural guidelines. The ground rules outlined the decision-making process (consensus) used by the council and other specifics regarding procedural, behavioral and logistical guidelines. At this point, the McKenzie Watershed Council was off and running. The group then turned its attention to developing a workplan outlining specific program and process tasks and actions to begin working toward fulfilling its mission.

The McKenzie is just one example of how different interests can come together and create a cooperative organization or partnership to accomplish common goals in a watershed. No single format or process will work for everyone. Each watershed will have to go through the process of developing its own membership, organizational structure, decision-making format, workplan, and other elements. But this model, and others that will be presented in the following chapters, can at least give you some ideas and a place to start as you embark on the process of establishing a watershed council or making an existing partnership group more effective.

## **PART II - KEY CONTACTS/REFERENCES/RESOURCES**

***Building Local Partnerships: A Guide for Watershed Partnerships.*** Published as part of Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) “Know Your Watershed” campaign. Contact: Know Your Watershed, 1220 Potter Drive, Room 170, W. Lafayette, IN 47906. Ph: 317-494-9555. Fax: 317-494-5969.

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