

# Part III

## Staying Started or Next Steps

In most cases, the hardest work a watershed council will do is get started. The decisions that must be made, the contacts and networking that must be done, the relationship-building, and all the rest, can be exhausting.

Once you've gotten through these preliminary stages, the desire is very strong to get out there on the ground and DO SOMETHING. But to be most effective, your new watershed council still has a few more planning and administrative steps to take before undertaking too many specific projects.

Primary among these is completing a watershed assessment, as discussed in Chapter 8. Without an assessment, you won't really know where to begin. You probably have a good idea of some of the problem areas in your watershed, but you may not know the root causes of the problems. Without a full assessment of the situation, including in-stream conditions, streamside or upland conditions, and even the social, cultural and economic conditions in your watershed, you will likely find yourselves wasting time and money on ineffectual projects.

It is best to put your first efforts into finding funding and technical support to conduct an assessment so you can use the results to map out the best plan for managing and restoring your watershed to a healthy condition.

In addition, now is the time to look at your organization and determine what it will cost to keep it operational over the next few years and how you plan to raise the needed funding. You may have been surviving during the start-up phase on lots of volunteer time, small donations from member organizations, loaned staffing from one of your agency members, or even a small start-up loan or grant. But you will need to get a handle on the ongoing operational costs, such as phone, fax, computer equipment, office space, staffing, copying, printing, and other day-to-day expenses, that allow you to keep your doors open. These are separate from the cost of individual projects.

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Once you have an estimate of your expenses, you need to look at potential sources of income, whether through membership dues, grants from foundations, corporations or government programs, special events, or other opportunities. You will be lucky if your expenses match your expected income. If they don't, which is the case for most young groups, you will need to do some research and find additional resources for supporting your group's efforts. Chapter 9 gives some helpful hints for where to look for information.

Chapter 10 addresses characteristics of successful partnerships as well as signals that warn of potential trouble among collaborative groups. Hopefully by keeping these in mind, and perhaps reviewing them periodically with your council members, you can focus on strategies for success and avoid the pitfalls that have plagued other groups.

