

Successful Stakeholder-Led Watershed Planning



Successful watershed planning is essential to protection of water quality and aquatic ecosystems, but it is also essential to achieve planned growth that meets the economic and quality of life goals of a community. Development of a watershed plan that is likely to be adopted by a community and its local governments is a daunting task. The approach taken by the Bonne Femme Watershed Project appears, so far, to be successful. Development in the watershed, located near the rapidly growing City of Columbia, MO, threatens cave and karst resources including two endemic cave-adapted aquatic species that reside in Devil's Icebox Cave. *The project placed the task of watershed planning squarely in the hands of Stakeholders who represented the diverse interests of businesses, environmentalists, and landowners.* Stakeholders were supported by a Steering Committee that provided technical expertise and a Policy Committee that provided legal and policy advice. Years of educational outreach and scientific

research laid a solid foundation for this planning effort. Keys to successful watershed planning included: the organizational structure of the project; representation of diverse Stakeholder interests; willingness to employ respectful engagement in dealing with contentious issues; dedication to reaching compromise; Policy Committee selection of the Stakeholders; interested local governments and politicians; giving full control of the planning process to the Stakeholders; providing an outline to serve as a "road map"; providing progress reports; adherence to deadlines; fostering trust and respect; building relationships; patience; and dedication. The Stakeholder-led watershed planning process and its keys to success can be implemented in any watershed. This process will benefit communities by improving or maintaining environmental quality, and therefore quality of life, as well as protecting the watershed's aquatic resources.

Frueh, W.T., Campbell, R., and Lerch, R.N. Successful Watershed Planning by Stakeholders, Boone County, Missouri. Proceedings of the 18th National Cave and Karst Management Symposium. St. Louis, MO. P. 144-153. 2008.

Lerch, R.N., Frueh, W.T., and Campbell, R. Successful Stakeholder-Led Watershed Planning. NSS News Annual Cave Conservation Issue. National Speleological Society, Inc. Huntsville, AL. 2008.

Download the Bonne Femme Watershed plan at: <http://www.cavewatershed.org/plan.asp>.

Contact the author: Bob Lerch, bob.lerch@ars.usda.gov, 573-882-1114x312