

Lot 11 and Area Watershed Management Group Report for 2008-2009

To: Ross Bernard

From: Mark Bishop, Chairman

Date: April 2009

General:

You are now receiving reports from watershed groups in our district detailing activities and accomplishments for the 2008-2009 contract year. As you know, we are a new group that formally organized just this past October and we were not funded by the WMF. However, I thought it appropriate that I provide a brief report of our activities and progress as we anticipate funding this coming year and as we are active members of the watershed management community in our district. So far, our efforts have focused on three primary areas:

- ⇒ organization
- ⇒ strategic planning
- ⇒ education/preparedness

Organization:

In our formative meeting we elected a board of directors and we appointed group officers. Later, after our group's decision to commit to community-based planning, we sought the services of an experienced community planner. With these core group members we have substantial resources with experience in community service, community-based planning, environmental stewardship and environmental science. The make-up of this core group is provided below.

Board Members: Alfred Bridges, Peter Bulger, Karen Kelly
Secretary: Myra Kelly
Treasurer: Judy Bryan
Planning Administrator: Karen Rank
Chairperson, General Coordinator: Mark Bishop

I was asked by the board to secure funding for the Group and to investigate the methods, procedures, regulatory framework, and process logistics for watershed management groups here in PEI. It became apparent early on that, to be successful, a start-up group needed to develop a clearly defined mission and explicit guiding principles.

Our Mission:

To evaluate, preserve and enhance our watersheds so they may continue to provide for the needs of our community and our environment.

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Our Guiding Principles:

- ⇒ To function in a manner consistent with democratic principles.
- ⇒ To use direct community input in determining goals and actions.
- ⇒ To solicit technical input and consent for our actions from the Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry.
- ⇒ To obtain owner consent prior to accessing, monitoring or enhancing private lands.
- ⇒ To respect each landowner's right to enjoy and derive their living from the use of their property.
- ⇒ To communicate our plans and actions to the community in a timely, accurate fashion.
- ⇒ To review our effectiveness and the applicability of our actions through active community performance evaluations, and to modify our objectives and methods in accordance with community needs.
- ⇒ To develop specific work plans that clearly state the needs and benefits of our actions and that detail the methods and resources for accomplishing our goals.

We resolved to have periodic meetings of the core group members for strategic planning. I have been providing the group with detailed progress reports at these meetings. We are now ready to begin having open community meetings and we plan our first meeting this month.

Fundamental to organization and our effectiveness in pursuing our mission is funding. We believe our plans and objectives are sound and well developed in our applications and we are optimistic about financial support.

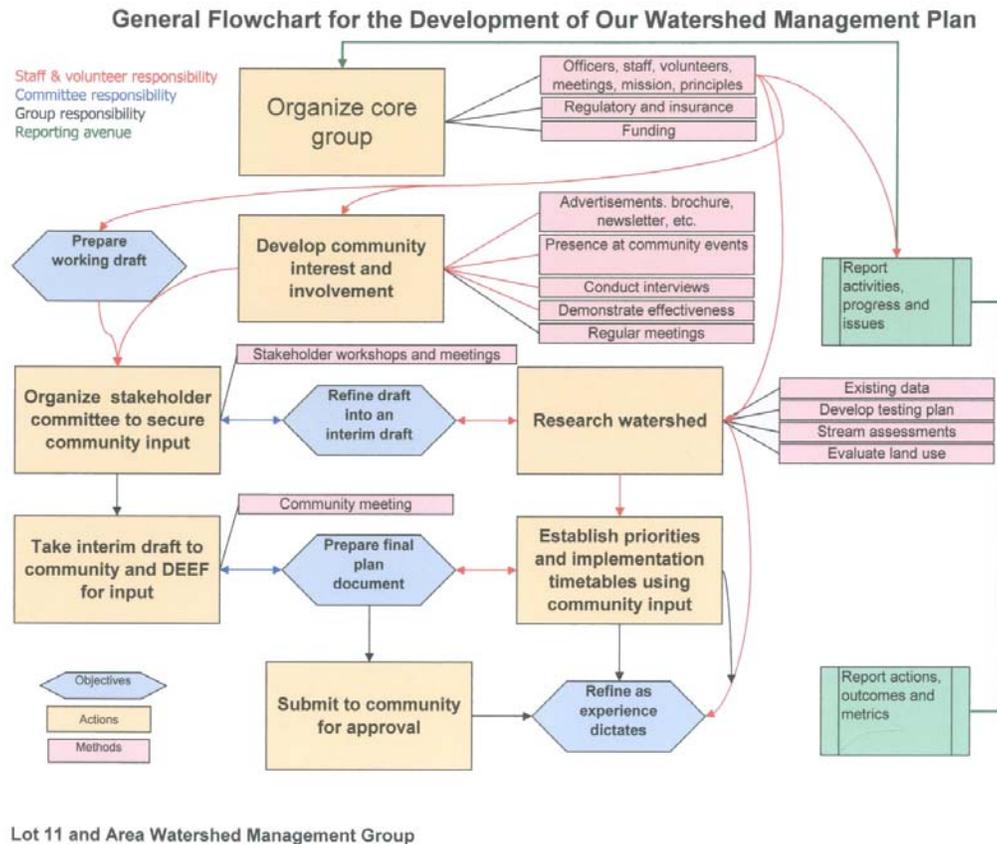
Strategic Planning

Through input from the DEEF, interchange with other groups, and careful consideration of our mission we resolved that three primary strategic goals should be the focus of our first and second year:

1. We consider **community-based planning** to be of critical importance in accomplishing our mission. Working without a formal plan is a recipe for failure and working from a plan without community buy-in is a recipe for mistrust, contention and division. Although traditionally this phase of management has followed isolated enhancement work, we believe we have a unique opportunity to base enhancement activities on community consensus and priorities.
2. We will **evaluate the current condition** of our aquatic habitats and groundwater resources. Before effective community-based planning and enhancement activities can be achieved, the community must have a clear understanding of problems that need attention and systems that need protection. We believe that enhancement activities without appropriate assessment and evaluation can lead to misdirected resources and can, in some cases, cause more harm than good. We need to prioritize our efforts to achieve maximal benefit for the community and the environment.
3. We need to accomplish tangible, beneficial **enhancement projects** and begin our primary task. Community planning and assessment are fundamental, but the objective is to make things better.

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Our group has a formal strategy for community-based planning. We have enlisted a professional planner and we have drawn up initial plans for the process. Below is our general flow chart for this activity:



We have a general document outline for a preliminary draft of our community plan document. I will be assembling this working draft prior to Karen's community planning effort, which we hope to begin immediately after funding is available.

We also have a plan for conducting watershed assessments. This plan draws on the experience of the PEI Soil and Crop Association-Riparian Health Assessments Group's experience. We will be documenting needs for beaver management, bank stabilization, tree planting, sediment control/remediation, etc. We will also be researching available monitoring data and we will be augmenting this knowledge base with our own analytical results. We will be conducting land use surveys and collecting historical information from our area's established residents. Finally, we will be surveying community interests and concerns relative to our water resources. Although this assessment work has begun, most of these efforts will be accelerated in May.

A crucial part of the assessment process is documentation and reporting. All of our findings will be presented to our board in a series of technical reports for their review and input prior to public release.

After the assessment process has yielded clear enhancement opportunities we plan to pursue demonstrable achievements. We will be working with your office and experienced groups in work-plan development, permit application and enhancement logistics. Complete assessment of all of our watersheds is not necessary for this start.

Education/Preparedness

Part of my directive from our board of directors was to investigate the methods, procedures, regulatory framework, and process logistics for watershed management groups here in PEI. This preliminary knowledge is crucial to effective execution of our responsibilities. Because we are a new group and because I am a newcomer to the watershed group coordinator role, I have spent considerable time learning the specifics of PEI's watershed management practices. I have attended many district watershed coordinator meetings and I have learned a substantial amount from yourself, the other coordinators, and the guest speakers at these meetings. I also attended the island-wide group meeting last Fall and I will continue to be attending these meetings and learning from the new alliance.

I have also been attending other relevant meetings in my effort to understand the resources and issues. Specifically I have attended forestry events/info-sessions, the PEISCA Riparian Health Assessment meeting, and the Buffer Zone info-session. I have used the meetings, the materials made available at the meetings, and the contacts I acquired there to strengthen my readiness for the coming year.

Because beavers are an expressed local concern I have completed the advanced trapper training and I am qualified to obtain my trapping license. I will be working in cooperation with other area trappers to achieve the trapper's expressed ethical responsibility to assist the community. I plan to get hands-on field experience by accompanying experienced trappers on their trap lines. Incidentally, and perhaps loosely related to watershed management, many area stakeholders are concerned with the coyotes exceeding their cultural carrying capacity and perhaps I can help out there as well.

Not to be diminished is the substantial knowledge of regulations, permitting requirements, employer responsibilities, and other government bureau logistics that must be understood for watershed group operations. Government servants like yourself, Sean as well as the coordinators of other groups have provided substantial guidance here. Although I have learned a considerable amount about the requirements and their associated red tape I hope I can continue to rely on your watchful eye.

I will be continuing this indoctrination in the coming year. I hope to work with the PEISCA group in performing assessments. I plan to visit ongoing enhancement projects being performed at other groups. There are also some other courses I plan to attend such as the chainsaw safety class. Finally, I plan to continue using the coordinator meetings to further learn the process of watershed management and its potential pitfalls.

In conclusion, we have made a very sound beginning. Our organization has a well thought out charter and membership. We have identified the three focal efforts for our first year: community-based planning, watershed assessment, and demonstrative enhancement. We have specific plans for conducting those efforts. We have substantially educated ourselves on watershed management issues, practices, special skills and related operations logistics. We are informed, functioning members of the watershed management community.

Finally we are indebted to you for your knowledgeable guidance and support. We hope to continue to learn from you and the other group coordinators and benefit from your services as our DEEF facilitator. We look forward to working with you in the coming year.