

The NC Source Water Collaborative Workshop Summary

On December 6, 2011, the NC Source Water Protection (SWP) Program sponsored a workshop to initiate a statewide SWP Collaborative. The workshop was held at the Dempsey-Benton water treatment plant near Garner, NC. Attendees represented a diverse cross-section of environmental professionals, including non-profit organizations, university programs, state agencies, professional associations, and federal programs. The underlying objective of the event was to launch the NC Source Water Collaborative, an autonomous group envisioned to outline programs and policies conducive to protecting the state's drinking water resources.

There was a series of presentations to provide orientation and basic information. Tom Reeder, Director of the NC Division of Water Resources, opened the event by describing the threats to our drinking water sources. He was followed by Jay Frick, Coordinator of the NC SWP Program, who provided details regarding the potential function and opportunities of the Collaborative. Jim Taft, Executive Director of the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators, delivered the keynote address and explained SWP from a national viewpoint. Ed Buchan, Environmental Coordinator for the City of Raleigh, described SWP challenges from the perspective of a major utility.

There were two afternoon brainstorming sessions. These were designed to: (i) define a direction and operating structure, and (ii) outline potential projects of the Collaborative. These sessions were facilitated by Chi Ho Sham, vice president of the Cadmus Group. Amy Axon of the NC SWP Program assisted with facilitation and also acted as master of ceremonies.

Overall Interpretation.

Attendees were enthusiastic and engaged during the event. The presentations were well received and generated healthy discussion. In general, attendees appeared to have a clear understanding of how to approach SWP from their individual areas of expertise.

It became apparent during the first brainstorming session that defining a vision, mission and operating structure would require more time than was allocated. However, a generalized operating structure was considered by identifying various categories of participation. These categories include the following:

1. The Collaborative, a broad group that includes all interested parties.
2. The Steering Committee, a smaller group that will set the direction of the Collaborative and handle organizational duties.
3. Work Teams, individualized teams designed to accomplish specific goals and/or to implement action items as identified by the Collaborative.

At the end of the first brainstorming session, the National SW Collaborative Mission and Commitment document was presented as an example. It was agreed that the NC SWP Program would draft a similar document for the participants to review and discuss.

In the second brainstorming session, there was no shortage of ideas to define potential SWP initiatives and projects. Concepts related to outreach and message promotion were most common. Targeting local government officials with SWP information and assistance was

also a common theme. The COGs seemed well positioned to engage local officials and offered to serve as liaisons in that process. Participants appeared willing and energized at the prospect of moving beyond the brainstorming phase and defining specific, tangible SWP target(s).

Future Progress.

Attendees agreed to continue meeting (on a quarterly basis). The NC SWP Protection Program will schedule a follow up meeting, likely in February 2012. At this meeting a vision, mission and operating structure will be better defined (a draft will be provided for consideration prior to the meeting). Also, the group will start to work on prioritizing and defining potential source water protection initiatives for 2012.