
The Five W's of Watershed Planning

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Tri-County Regional Planning Commission represents Woodford, Tazewell and Peoria Counties in Central Illinois. The Commission is considered the steward of the regional vision for economic growth, community development, and environmental sustainability. TCRPC is heavily involved in watershed planning to protect the Peoria Lakes, a wide section of the Illinois River that flows through the heart of the community.

Watershed plans completed by TCRPC include:

- Farm Creek: 39,000 acres of rural and urban land use
- Ackerman Creek: a tributary to Farm Creek that is mostly urban
- Partridge Creek: 18,000 acres of mostly rural land use
- Tenmile Creek: 12,000 acres of residential/commercial development on forested bluffs as well as row crop agriculture to the east
- Mossville Bluffs: forested bluffs with residential and commercial land use

This session was conducted in the form of a facilitated discussion. This proceedings paper will include audience reactions to various topics. Discussion included the five W's of watershed planning:

- Why – Identifying the need
- What and Where – Projects and locations
- When – Developing a time frame
- Who – Planning committees take action

Why do we undergo watershed planning? Developing goals and objectives is a crucial step in directing the watershed planning process.

- Question: Has any group decided a plan was not necessary?
- Audience: Yes, we received funding for specific watershed projects and already knew where projects should be located; however, in retrospect, a plan would have created greater justification for projects.
- Question: Has any group changed goals/objectives after data collection?
- Audience: Yes, we found that water contamination from sanitary sewer plants and urban areas was just as important as erosion and had to slightly change our focus.
- Speaker: It is important to remain flexible during the watershed planning process to include all the issues; however, a large change in direction when you are over halfway through the planning process can set the group back and even delay the planning process indefinitely.

What projects should be placed in the watershed and **Where** should they be located? It is important to identify projects based on community input as well as scientific investigation.

- Question: What was your method for project selection?

- Audience: We collected input from stakeholders who knew problem areas. It was helpful to set criteria for project prioritization *before* projects were listed to help eliminate conflicts of interest.
- Speaker: Tours for planning and technical committees were extremely important in our project selection process. This helped landowners recognize watershed issues beyond their property boundaries. Geographic Information Systems mapping was also a useful tool in selecting project locations utilizing such information as: highly erodible soils, large-acre land owners, migrating stream channels, contiguous natural areas, etc.
- Question: How did you convey these projects to your audience?
- Audience: We placed projects on maps in the plan. We also performed live skits to community groups explaining the plan.
- Speaker: Not all action items or projects can be placed on a map. Our action items associated with education included the project, the targeted audience, potential implementers, and costs associated with executing the task. Sometimes these specifics can further empower community members to get to work.

When should the plan be implemented? Developing a timeline can help prioritize projects and keep the planning committee on task with implementation.

- We created a 20 year timeline mapping the various categories of projects (i.e. streambank stabilization, ordinance development, etc.). One audience member thought 20 years was too long and risked losing the interest of the planning committee.
- Our timeline also included goals based on scientific studies. These studies included aquatic invertebrate diversity, sediment loading, and fish diversity within the watershed. We are fortunate to have baseline data to gauge future success.

Who is implementing the plan? It is important to designate responsibilities associated with implementation to various planning committee members. TCRPC holds annual meetings with the watershed committees to gauge progress of implementation and set an action plan for the next year. Every committee member leaves this meeting with some responsibility for action.
