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## Developing a Targeted Stakeholder Engagement Plan September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 | 10:00 – 11:30am

### Workshop Goals:

1. Participant's will advance their knowledge around stakeholder engagement by:
2. Learning from peer experts;
3. Becoming familiar with stakeholder engagement tools; and
4. Creating a stakeholder engagement plan in real-time.
5. Participants will advance their relationships with SMP peers through interactive small-group discussions.

The worksheet used for this workshop can be found [here](#).

Stacy walked the group through the **public impact tool** and reminded us that our goals for the stakeholder group need to match the influence they will have on our SMP process.

Nicole talked about the involvement of **water management agencies**, specifically drinking water providers and water conservancy districts. Historically, these are agencies in a region that have been looked to for leadership and usually have staff members who are highly technically trained. Many typically have a large customer base and a larger water rights portfolio. **This sector is important to engage because they have money, expertise, and influence over many areas of water management.** They likely fall in the “collaborate” space on the public impact tool, as their interests aren’t always fully aligned with those of other stakeholder groups. Water management agencies should be consulted early and given a high level of involvement (e.g., advisory committee role). Their staff expertise should be leveraged, they should be consulted about projects they have in the pipeline and future monitoring they plan to conduct, and SMP leads should be aware of what tools they have and how to plug them into their process.

Nicole stressed the importance of one-on-one conversations early in the process (during goal-setting and scoping). Try to find out about future projects in their pipeline and roll those into your SMP scope so that they’re invested (e.g., Eagle, Middle CO). Leverage some of their past work if possible (e.g., Big T’s use of Northern Water’s hydrology model). **Give them a reason to be at the table.**

Gretchen discussed the involvement of **agricultural producers**, reminding the group that these folks typically need to be involved outside the 8-5 realm. For the Mancos SMP, they paid an agricultural producer as a consultant on the stakeholder group so

that this individual could have funds to hire someone else to run their operations during that time, and this strategy worked well for them and ensured that they had a solid commitment of involvement from someone in the agricultural sector. They also conducted more than 60 one-on-one interviews for the Mancos SMP with small- and large-scale producers, so they entered into their SMP process with a lot of valuable information about how agricultural producers viewed the watershed's overall hydrology, as well as the ongoing drought situation. They have been working with ag producers since 2016, underscoring the importance of building trust, engaging them, and asking their opinion early on in the process.

Gretchen acknowledged that **one-on-one conversations and interviews take a lot of time to conduct and catalog, but stressed that they are really effective.** Before covid, larger in-person events were effective as well. They use handouts now instead of in-person meetings, and allow folks to stop by their office to pick up a handout and chat in person. They use an unaffiliated technical person to answer questions and address concerns. They present monthly at a meeting that includes the water commissioner. They also put out a one-pager that gets circulated through the Mancos school district (parents are water users), and have had great results keeping stakeholders at the table and addressing new concerns as they arise.

Laurie spoke about the involvement of **recreational stakeholders**, indicating that they fall in the "collaborate" region of the public impact tool. She identified four ways that the Middle Colorado SMP engaged recreational stakeholders: (1) providing initial help to identify risks with recreational uses, (2) identifying the need for and crafting approaches for analyzing specific issues related to recreation, (3) identifying gaps and figuring out how to fill them in order to mitigate risk, and (4) acting as a spokesperson or champion of the SMP within their organization and potentially heading up implementation actions. Going through this process initially helped them identify stakeholder groups they wanted to engage. Local governments are important (e.g., county, local municipalities/chambers of commerce) - Middle Colorado had about 6 of them, all with planning going on but uncertain about the extent of their communication with each other. The SMP process helped the county to see the public's desire to increase recreation in the region. They also engaged local land trusts, non-profits, TU (fisheries), American Whitewater (boating), and State/Federal agencies such as BLM, USFS, and CPW. It was helpful to have these agencies on board because they all have some land ownership in the region, and also have experience walking through the public process - they were able to share wisdom and experiences around how the planning process should be viewed. They were not very successful in engaging outfitters and private citizens.

Laurie said that her group meets monthly and although that seems like quite often, it's appropriate. A benefit of zoom is the ability to record meetings for people who can't attend. They post materials to their website and have a bimonthly newsletter with a positive 25% read rate. At their first meeting, they identified a lack of education about how to use the river properly, so they engaged stakeholders to develop a recreational river map (a piece of implementation right at the start of their process) and create a river float trip. This helped get the recreational community very involved right from the start.

As they draft potential projects, they identify a lead agency and partners so that stakeholders get ownership right from the start. Laurie recommends being flexible about bringing people in with new ideas as staffing changes occur. **Adapt as you go and be open to an organic process.**

The following notes were taken during the workshop breakout sessions:

## Agricultural Community

- Overall takeaways:
  - Beneficial to have paid ag representation
    - As consultant, or perhaps as a committee
  - Ag producers are not a monolith
  - Really important to go to Ag (go to meetings, etc.)
  - Really important to keep representation, leadership, technical expertise as local as possible
  
- 1) Upper Arkansas (Dan Omasta):
  - On Upper Gunnison took similar approach to Mancos (hired two people to be the ag liaisons); identifying opportunities for potential projects and learning their key projects
  - South Ark = working with SWCD as point people to lead the charge
  
- 2) Mancos Watershed Group (Page Buono & Gretchen Rank):
  - Emphasis on local
    - As much locally led and local technical expertise as possible
  - Land & water managers
  - Small businesses, school representatives, town residents, town government
  - Ag producers: ag producers who can be advocates, who are interested in new approaches/techniques/opportunities; who are highly respected; who have concern for the environment and are already thinking about water quality/environmental health/forest health, and who also understand trying to make their economic bottom line
    - Important to develop a communication system for outreaching them
      - Historically engagement was on a voluntary basis, but that made it difficult
      - SMP put out an RFP for an ag consultant who doesn't speak *for* ag, but who can be a liaison to the broader group

- Ag consultant involved in all meetings of the group, and then carrying forward those ideas and inviting feedback from ag meetings during other meetings (e.g., ditch meetings)
- Additionally added a non-partial facilitator within the watershed group; offers a place for confidential concerns to be aired and addressed

### 3) Crystal River & Roaring Fork (Heather Lewin)

- Idea of volunteer is really hard on agricultural producers; compensating someone for their time makes a lot of sense
- Looking forward, would consider potentially
- On Roaring Fork:
  - Ditches that aren't necessarily agricultural
    - Beneficial for piloting projects that ag producers may not have the ability/opportunity to take the risk on
  - Historic ditches now providing water for large/trophy houses
    - Interesting group to engage; not agriculture, but people on a ditch

#### Existing efforts:

- Targeted outreach (one-on-one or small group) (Mancos)
- Regular meetings (quarterly?) (Mancos)
- Challenge to keep excitement in early stage that's primarily data collection
- During this phase I, focused on
- Robust watershed group email list + Mancos Conservation District group list to distribute information
- Considering text messages:
- **Newsletter (Crystal River)** - both emailed and printed; regular; thoughtful in timing to ensure that there was something important to share; have printed copies at meetings
- Arkansas (Dan Omasta) - there is a website, but not necessarily routinely updated and important to have meetings be worth people's time

#### Customizing outreach:

- Customized, quick surveys to existing groups/members to meet and review some of the results and talk through elements;
- Short blurbs and updates for the newspaper
- Small, outdoor meetings of targeted groups; or tours (virtual or in person)
  - Bring in specific expertise
  - Help them stay informed and knowledgeable about more technical elements of the process

- Importance of language: e.g., on the angling side of things, talk about flows and river health and the role anglers play; for ranchers or municipalities the conversation is very different (water quality, quantity, storage, etc.);
- Launch brainstorm conversations around potential projects
  - For Upper Gunnison, started running data and ideas by them to assess reaction, direction, etc.
  - Through process, already identifying and pursuing projects
- Kick off with a demonstration project
  - Ditch lining and diversion to kick off process of why it's important for stakeholders to get informed; show opportunity for funding and technical experience
- Identifying and cultivating key community advocates/leaders

1. *Who are the stakeholders that are important to your planning process?*

South Boulder Creek SMP - 9 mile stretch - water rights owners are mostly City of Boulder OSMP, rest of the 21 diversion structures owned by small ag, xcel energy, hobby farms, houses

2. *Why are they important to your planning process?*

Gross res environmental pool may provide extra water for instream flows - need to know their plans for ditches/diversions so they can come up with implementation projects related to diversion reconstruction/stream rehabilitation

3. *How will these stakeholders stay informed?*

Stakeholders have existing relationships with each other and want to continue conversations. Monthly coffee meetings at McD's are now monthly meetings outdoors at Boulder Creek bandshell between water commissioner and ditch companies - led by water commissioner, SMP leads can attend and learn. Have a general handout for riparian landowners, targeted handout to talk to ditch cos about what is an SMP and keeping the process as transparent as possible. One-on-ones have been very effective. Steering committee stays informed with monthly meetings, add'l issue-specific meetings. Have had very good luck with keeping all stakeholders fully engaged, providing input, and participating.

4. *What custom approaches would be useful to increase participation with this particular stakeholder group? Why? What additional actions need to be taken to implement this strategy?*

Hobby farms/ small ag producers are the most difficult group to reach bc not full-time ag producers, they have day jobs too!, also have inherited/ limited water rights education. Been trying to contact them through board meetings but hard to advertise, get them engaged.

## Water Management Agencies

### *1. Who are the stakeholders that are important to your planning process?*

Clear Creek IWMP - M & I (Coors), Thornton, Westy, Arvada, Golden; recreation (rafting, gold panning); quarry

St. Vrain - Longmont, Ditch Companies, USFS (landscape management), Boulder Co. (water, land, property owner), Lyons, Little T Water District, Left Hand Water District, Northern

### *2. Why are they important to your planning process?*

Clear Creek IWMP - Urban considerations unique to basin, quarry can donate materials. Flexibility to manage water releases in basin. Landowners b/c of physical improvements

St. Vrain - Solutions with water rights owners, how they manage water & future plans

### *3. What participation mechanisms/tools best fit your stakeholders? Note any stakeholder expectations that are associated with the tools selected (e.g., stakeholders would need to participate in monthly task force meetings)?*

St. Vrain - one on one meetings

Researching and knowledge of existing plans to be able to discuss past and current efforts

### *5. How will these stakeholders stay informed?*

The challenge of finding the right person in big, bureaucratic orgs is hard in and of itself. And then making sure they are talking to each other inside is also hard.

### *6. What custom approaches would be useful to increase participation with this particular stakeholder group? Why? What additional actions need to be taken to implement this strategy?*

People need to budget better/more for this stakeholder engagement. Map out the stakeholder needs/ideas before you build your budget so you have enough money to do a good job. Apply for a "pre-grant" to do the stakeholder and data scoping.

Focus the first "ask" not on river health or env flows, but just on understanding the system. What can they tell you about their operations and their needs? This may create an opening in the relationship.

Sometimes you just have to forge ahead without their involvement. What does circling back look like - how to keep them on the radar screen.

## Recreation & The Broader Community

### *Who are the stakeholders that are important to your planning process?*

- Blue River- Advisory Committee, recreation not represented very well.
  - Fishing community (a lot more input from them)
  - Rafting and kayaking
  - Lake Dillon recreators
- Clear Creek
  - Municipal
  - Recreation groups
  - Commercial entities
  - CDOT
  - Coors
- Yampa
  - Fish Groups
  - Floating groups
  - Outfitters
  - REc stores
  - Non profit followers and key participants
  - Boards
  - Parks (federal, state and local)
  - Municipal and county
  - Conservation groups

### *Why are they important to your planning process?*

- Blue River
  - Fly fishers, losing Gold Ribbon status and how to get it back
  - Floaters, to provide a better range of recreation input.
- Clear Creek
  - Fly fishing groups, know river very well and rent gear
  - Municipal and other groups in order to engage other groups for a variety of opinions
  - People that have
- Yampa in short to provide in river knowledge, to ensure communication in planning between the groups, identify issues areas and where they would like to see focus

### *Where will your stakeholders fit in the scale?*

- Blue River

- Fly fishers- engaged and empowered
- Floating recreators- working on involvement
- Clear Creek
  - Inform and Consult for the majority
- Yampa- Empower

*What participation mechanisms/tools best fit your stakeholders? Note any stakeholder expectations that are associated with the tools selected (e.g., stakeholders would need to participate in monthly task force meetings)?*

- Who has the money and political clout and then TU will back them.
- Find areas of common interests: ex. Coors and Recreation both care about water quality
- Most groups have vested interest in wildfire mitigation
- Go where they are, find drivers within each group.
- For recreator groups: educate, ensure engagement, and then ask the necessary questions.
- After covid, provide a draw to get people to meet (food)

*How will these stakeholders stay informed?*

- Preclude questions with educational session.
- Online landing page that people can visit to understand what is going on.
- Use the organizations to help spread information and news.
- Use licensing agencies to help with outreach efforts including get questions on the surveys they are using.
- Monthly meetings with Advisory committee and then focus group meetings.
- Use your emails during COVID and stay connected.

*What custom approaches would be useful to increase participation with this particular stakeholder group? Why? What additional actions need to be taken to implement this strategy?*

- Surveys online, ask if they would like to be contacted for follow-up
- Put up a tent and talk to passers by and have them fill out surveys
- Partner with local outfitters to give out surveys to customers
- Zoom has allowed people to meet more and build a comfort level with providing feedback and engagement.