How to

Record & Report on Watershed Progress,

a report from

sweet water

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with input from

the Sweet Water Science and Policy Advisory Committees

For successful collaborative watershed project implementation to occur, there needs to be recording and reporting of successes and shortcomings, and the steps taken to get there. Without these components, progress on plan implementation can stagnate due to the absence of growing support or the development of examples to follow.

The processes of recording and reporting are distinct but mutually dependent. Effective reporting cannot occur unless detailed records are kept throughout project implementation, including planning and actions done after implementation. Concomitantly, metrics recorded are only useful so far as they are reported to stakeholders in a way that they can be analyzed and acted upon. A plan for effective reporting must be formulated at the start to guide what metrics are the most important to record and how the records should be kept.

In addition to being a guide for implementing projects, the Watershed Playbook will be a log for tracking metrics. Below is a sample of what a simplified, early chapter of the Playbook could look like. After identifying a step to take toward project implementation, the playbook would provide spaces to record outcomes and tasks done to complete the step.

3) Create a 9KE Implementation Committee

A) Identify Committee Members

a) [Committee Member 1]
b) [Committee Member 2]
c) [Committee Member 3]

} *Refer to Appendix A for a list of all priority stakeholders to include on committee*

B) Identify Member Roles

a) [Committee Member 1 Role]
b) [Committee Member 2 Role]
c) [Committee Member 3 Role]

} *Refer to Appendix B for a list of needed roles*

C) Recruit Committee Members

a) [Date Member 1 Recruited]
b) [Date Member 2 Recruited]
c) [Date Member 3 Recruited]

Not only does this provide a mechanism for recording metrics required by Nine Key Element plans for assessing progress on the plan, but it also supplies a place for recording metrics required and achieved by other projects, plans, and programs related to 9KE work. For example, take another simplified section of the Watershed Playbook for steps to take after a BMP has been selected for a particular property. By identifying additional goals that a project can achieve, committee members can also be recruited to support that project while also ensuring that their priorities are met.

X) Install BMPs

A) Secure support from appropriate committee members for installation tasks

a) Choose location on site

Habitat expert consulted to achieve habitat/SLCI Goals

b) Approve final design

TMDL expert consulted to make progress on TMDL Reductions

c) Educate landowner on BMP Maintenance

Education expert consulted to comply with MS4 Permit Education Requirements

While all committee members involved in project implementation will be involved in recording of their actions and the project outcomes, reporting will likely fall mostly on one or a subset of the members. The following pages contain ideas on how to do efficient, effective reporting.

Who should be responsible for reporting 9KE progress?

Planning Commissions
County Representatives
Watershed-Wide Entities
9KE Plan Authors

Possible 9KE Implementation Committee Members

What would stakeholders use a watershed project progress report for?

Tracking
- current water quality conditions
- monitoring efforts
- new opportunities to collaborate

Assessing & Demonstrating
- permit compliance
- progress on 9KE milestones & goals in other plans
- progress on TMDLs & other water quality goals

Developing
- lessons learned and examples of practices
- public education based on real examples
- funding/grant reports
- 9KE Plan updates

What metrics demonstrate progress on 9KE plan implementation?

Causal Data

- BMP Implementation
  - Steps
  - Performance
- MS4 Compliance Data
- Updates to the 303(d) Impaired Waters List
- Updates to County Land and Water Plans
- Education & Outreach Efforts

Response Data

- Water Quality Data
  - Riverkeeper Watershed Report Card Data: Temperature, Dissolved Oxygen, pH, Turbidity, Phosphorus, Chloride, Specific Conductivity, Bacteria, Macroinvertebrate Biotic Index
- Biodiversity Data
  - Fish Data
    - MMSD Fish Passage Project Data
    - WDNR Fishery Data
- USGS Streamflow Data
- Progress on Milwaukee Estuary AOC Goals

How often should reporting happen?

Annual reporting is probably sufficient in most cases, especially on causal data. Because response data takes longer to become apparent, it might need to be reported on at a different frequency.

Some metrics could be reported continuously on the web. An online reporting map could be assessed quarterly for accuracy, and reports could be generated quartery or twice annually to be sent out electronically.

What are characteristics of an effective reporting mechanism ?

Visual Data Representation
- Pie or bar graphs gauging progress towards targets
- Dashboards
- Project-area or watershed map where users can drop a pin and enter info

Quality Control Mechanisms

Simplicity
- Includes matrices with goals and standards/metrics, and achievements
- Allows stakeholders to quickly, regularly, and easily enter information

Centralized Access Point
- Hosted on a website that also links to plans and their action lists & other pre-existing tools
- Includes ability to data mine other tools and be a one stop location

Convertible
- Allows stakeholders / MS4 managers / municipalities within the 9KE implementation watershed to generate printed reports of necessary information