

ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

EXPANDING EXISTING EFFORTS

Highlight Best Municipal Practices through Awards

As an existing Delaware River Watershed-wide organization with a broad and deep reach across the basin, the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed can regularly highlight municipalities instituting effective water resource practices, raising awareness of best practices with a wider audience, inspiring other municipalities to adopt similar efforts, and celebrating and reinforcing municipal success stories.

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Introduction

Bringing more attention to municipalities that are instituting best practices in stormwater management, land development, preservation, and other important issues directly related to water resources is an effective tool for positive accountability. First, it encourages recognized municipalities to continue managing their water resources in a responsible and sustainable manner. Second, it raises awareness of best management practices with a wider audience. Third, it can inspire other municipalities to adopt similar policies and practices when they see their counterparts and neighbors achieving success.

Proposed Delaware River Watershed-Wide Organization

The Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed unites nongovernmental organizations working in the region to raise the profile of the watershed, share information, and advocate for a healthy Delaware River Basin. It does so by coordinating communications, messages, and actions to foster accountability for success at the federal, state, and local levels. With 110 member organizations ranging from national nonprofits to regional organizations and local watershed associations, the Coalition has both a broad and deep reach throughout the river basin.

As the only watershed-wide entity made up of a diverse set of nongovernmental organizations committed to protecting and restoring the natural resources of the basin, the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed is an ideal existing entity to regularly highlight municipalities implementing best water resource management practices. The Coalition keeps in close contact with members through biweekly email newsletters, monthly state-based conference calls with members in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and annual events such as the Member Meeting and the Delaware River Watershed Forum. Additionally, the Coalition is in the process of developing a monthly newsletter for external audiences, including local, state, and federal government agencies.

Proposal

The Coalition can regularly promote best municipal practices throughout the watershed in various ways. First, the Coalition could include a section in its monthly newsletters to external (nonmember) audiences highlighting a municipality or project implemented in partnership with a local government that incorporates conservation best management practices. This information could also be included with member emails that go out biweekly, as appropriate. Second, the Coalition could work with state outreach leads to identify individuals to write blog posts highlighting municipalities' exceptional water resource management practices for the Coalition's website. Third, the Coalition could incorporate a municipal category award or recognition opportunity in its annual Delaware River Watershed Forum, which attracts an audience of over 300 people.

Anticipated Outcomes

Municipal success stories on water resource protection are more widely shared.

Success stories inspire other municipalities to action.

Municipalities become more engaged with other agencies and organizations connected with the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed and the policies it promotes.

Measuring Impact

The Coalition can measure the impact of these actions through several means. First, the Coalition can track the number of individuals who receive and open the monthly newsletters, which are sent using the platform MailChimp. Second, using Google Analytics, traffic on the Coalition's website can be monitored, and the number of visits to any blog posts concerning municipal best practices can be tracked. Third, the Coalition can keep track of the number of people who attend the annual Forum, particularly the number of people who attend the portion of the conference during which a municipality is recognized for its outstanding water resources management work. The Coalition should continue to identify other opportunities to measure impact, including surveys, as the project moves forward.

Given the limited capacity of the Coalition, which is staffed by two individuals, assistance would be needed in identifying municipalities that should be recognized on a regular basis, such as the monthly newsletters or blog posts. The Municipal Technical Assistance Advisory Panel (MTAAP), or a subcommittee made up of its members, could serve this valuable role. Additionally, recommendations from organizations representing the municipalities such as the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC), the Pennsylvania State Association of Townships (PSATs), or the New Jersey League of Municipalities, should be sought out and incorporated into this process.

The awards or recognition ceremony at the annual Delaware River Watershed Forum would require an additional process, given the significance of identifying just one municipality for outstanding work each year. The Coalition forms a planning committee each year to assist in developing the program for the Forum, including speakers, sessions, and field trips. This planning committee also develops the categories for award or recognition, which can include municipal best practices, as well as a process for soliciting nominations. Coalition staff can make the MTAAP, ANJEC, PSATs, and League of Municipalities aware of this opportunity and request nominations specifically for the municipal category. Decisions on the recipients

would be made by the planning committee and Coalition Steering Committee.