

# Advancing Municipal Water Quality Education: A Conversation with Municipal Education Experts

Thursday, July 12, 2018, 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)  
8th Floor, ACP Building  
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## High-Level Easel Notes from Audience Q&As

### **Audience Q&A**

- Rutgers Coop Extension - offers menu of options
- Conservation Districts could serve as resource
  - Larger association of conservation districts exists
  - Conservation Districts have to be paid for services
- Champions - there is a need for champions, they are important to move ideas forward
- Ditches located along roads are an issue due to high volume of water that blows out the stream
- Incentives that work:
  - Certifications
  - Tie in to other causes - Veterans
  - Recognitions - "Master Planner" not just plaques, but shows commitment to issues
  - (No requirement in PA for electeds to get training)
- Incentives
  - Funding needed to incentivize
  - Requirements for training - should there be?
    - Could fall on deaf ears if its required, rather than truly desired
    - Electeds should be the leaders, technical assistance (TA) provides should be the content experts
  - Ambulances - have big "stickers" showing they are in compliance with rules
    - Others want recognition/sticker too to show they are in compliance
  - Individual consultations - very helpful, need to market this service
  - Discounts on training
  - Municipal Elected Officials:

- May have passion to serve
  - Do they have knowledge for decision making?
  - Need at least base level understanding
  - Owe it to constituents to know more
- Municipal prioritization of big picture items
  - Make training “cool”
  - Residents should expect knowledgeable officials
  - Developing leaders
  - Go where they are
  - Identify what resonates
  - Vets - coordinate w/ other groups/interests
  - Certification
  - \$
  - Rotating officials

### **Facilitated audience Q&A**

- StormwaterPA.org - available resource
  - Clearinghouse of sw topics/BMPs/case studies
- Jersey Water Works - NJF website
  - Fact sheets - very accessible
- Watershed Institute - NJ certification program on green infrastructure installations
- What does certification get you?
  - Awareness and marketing tool
  - Attach to Sustainable Jersey for points
- Annual conferences - content experts available to speak
- Be brief, be brilliant, be gone!
- Use visuals - public access TV, YouTube, etc.
- Free muni consultation service offered in PA?
- Connect education to regulatory requirements to get people’s attention
- Redevelopment - can combine economic development and park space for co-benefits

## Detailed Meeting Notes from Panel and Audience Q&As

### **Welcoming and introductory remarks - Patty**

- Project serving as basis for today’s work: Municipal Technical Assistance Advisory Panel (MTAAP)
  - Occurred between 2015-2017
  - Project timeline: Assemble MTAAP members → Brainstorm ideas on improving water quality at municipal level led to 500 recommendations → Synthesize top recommendations into 15 Action Items

- [“Watershed Academy,”](#) a means of providing water quality education to municipal officials, was one of the 15 Action Items
- Purpose of today’s meeting is to discuss how we could move forward with the Watershed Academy concept

**Panel introduction - Melissa**

- Kim Avant-Babb - Chief Strategy Officer, New Jersey Redevelopment Authority (NJRA)
- Michael Darcy, CAE - Executive Director, New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJSLOM)
- Edward J. Knittel - Senior Director, Education and Sustainability, The Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB)
- Cheryl Reardon - South Jersey Bayshore Project Director, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC)
- John Theilacker, AICP - Associate Director, Brandywine Conservancy
- James Wheeler - Chief Education Officer/Training Manager, Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS)

**Facilitated Panel Q&A**

- Q1: Describe your organization, and your organization provides educational resources to municipalities, other stakeholders, or the public about water quality issues
  - Kim Avant-Babb, NJRA
    - Agency created to offer loan financing and technical assistance to urban municipalities in NJ
    - Have raised funds to leverage \$1.3 billion in urban corridors
    - Have handbooks related to redevelopment of brownfields and other types of sites
    - Redevelopment Training Institute (RTI) is a classroom environment where individuals, such as attorneys, architects, planners, elected officials, developers, and non-profits, can learn about different aspects of real estate development
      - Teach classes in understanding tax evasion, tax credits, tax increment financing, gentrification, NJ housing and redevelopment law
      - Have had people from 10 states attend
      - They draw from large pool of industry experts to teach classes, such as the US Green Building Council and the American Planning Association - NJRA is not expert at all topics, so they leverage outside expertise but bring their brand
  - Michael Darcy, NJ State League of Municipalities
    - Org. is inclusive of all municipalities in NJ - mission not to tell municipalities what to do, but to provide resources that show municipalities what they can do

- Annual Conference - more than 100 classes in 3 days - formal (classroom) and informal (networking) education
  - Provide continuing education credits (including in webinars)
  - Friday newsletters to municipal officials
  - Monthly magazine - recent issue on “Uncovering Water Infrastructure Solutions” - print version, also posted to website
    - Printed material has staying power and serves as a reference point
  - Hold meetings where officials come to Trenton
- Ed Knittel, PSAB
  - Represents 956 boroughs in PA - urban *and* rural
  - Org. has been around 107 years
  - Upon creation in 1911, one of first principles was to provide education and training for elected officials
  - 60-70 webinars per year (one-third free of charge) on issues such as water quality, court cases, etc.
  - Land use training includes water quality issues
  - Water quantity issues as well: scarcity (drought) and surplus (flooding)
  - Educates elected officials, internal staff, and residents (resident education = newer approach compared with 20 years ago)
  - Monthly publications
  - Annual reports
  - Daily website updates
  - They build coalitions at the local level to help officials
  - Important to remember that elected officials were once residents - have to provide education to residents as well
  - Challenges: PA laws do not distinguish between rural and urban communities (“one size fits all” problem) - especially challenging with respect to green stormwater infrastructure (because there is less green space in urban areas and there is pushback in response to the idea of making changes to the green space that exists)
- Cheryl Reardon, ANJEC
  - Org. started 50 years ago
  - Focuses on education - municipal officials, environmental commissions
  - Quarterly report
  - Annual conference
  - Newsletter
  - Workshops throughout the year
  - Have in-person resource center
  - Resource papers available online and in hard copies
  - While working on water issues last several years in NJ, has seen that people think only coastal communities have to worry about water. But the

- reality is that there are other water-related problems, like drought and saltwater intrusion, that put all communities at risk.
- Decisions come down to the local level; it's important for municipalities to lead by example
  - ANJEC putting in green stormwater infrastructure at municipal sites, working with Rutgers University on putting rain gardens in residential communities
  - Education will happen informally, in cookouts in backyard, with someone asking "What's that?" in reference to a rain garden
  - Environmental commissions are "boots on the ground" for this work
- John Theilacker, AICP, Brandywine Conservancy
    - Org. covers watershed from northern Chester County to the south end of Wilmington
    - Three program areas:
      - Land conservation
      - Land stewardship
      - Municipal Assistance Program (MAP) (Southeastern PA and Northern DE municipalities) - stormwater management, regulatory compliance, etc.
    - Has begun educating landowners and farmers on best practices related to stormwater management and the economic benefits of maintaining BMPs
    - Focus on land use, land development plans, ordinances
    - Help municipalities pass local open space taxes
    - MAP staff works with municipalities to provide technical assistance
      - Subscriber's program - annual member fee for meetings, seminars, quarterly newsletter, conferences, etc.
      - Topics include land use, environmental management, MS4s, riparian buffer protection ordinances
    - State of Watershed conference in May 2018
  - James Wheeler, PSATS
    - PSATS formed as way to distribute state funds to farmers to build roads
    - Educational topics focus on emerging issues
    - Monthly magazine, email news blasts
    - Org. has long dealt with water issues (they've been on the Chesapeake Bay Committee since 1995)
    - In the Fall of 2018, they will be running a Great Ideas in Stormwater conference that will focus on NPDES
      - Goal to share ideas informally towards the ultimate goal of improving municipal stormwater plans
    - Challenge on educational outreach is understaffing; logistics an issue (classes are often a two-hour drive away from municipalities)

- Problem is that we have great water comparatively, so how do you get people to care - not just about flooding, but about runoff and water quality?
  - Another big issue is verifying that installed best management practices (BMPs) work as part of a municipality's municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) certification process - how can departments of environmental protection tell that a detention basin is working, and have municipalities receive the proper credits?
  - Cost of sewerage development that runs on septic is another enormous challenge
  - Money is needed - taxing capacity is low so there is not a lot of wealth to devote to these problems
  - Use of terms - municipalities are generally more resistant to a "stormwater tax" than a "stormwater fee"
- Q2: Challenges related to educating about water quality
  - John Theilacker, AICP, Brandywine Conservancy
    - They work with Chester County Water Resources Authority
    - They assemble municipalities to address MS4 permitting and determine what PADEP expects, which can be a moving target
    - Meeting overload - officials getting inundated with meetings, creating difficulties in attendance consistency - providing food helps
    - Difficulty in getting municipal engineers to attend meetings, since, as consultants, they would have to bill their municipalities
    - Hard to convince municipalities about the benefits of these meetings
    - Water quality solutions can seem expensive and insurmountable to municipalities - tendency to resort to or prefer the bare minimum (cheapest) solution
    - Difficult for downstream municipalities to want to solve upstream issues
  - Kim Avant-Babb, NJRA
    - NJRA customizes training to municipalities' specific needs or challenges; has not held class specifically/solely on water quality issues
    - Common challenges: Funding is lacking; changing administrations (elected official turnover); staff capacity
    - Customized training helps - municipal leaders don't want to come but they still need to understand the information. RTI staff sit with the main point of contact at the municipality and discuss topics they need to understand better
      - Sometimes staff will do this on a Saturday, when officials are available
    - Offer free municipal consultations in relation to a site-specific challenge
  - Ed Knittel, PSAB

- PADEP gives municipalities citation for non-compliance with MS4 regulations (significant fine) and then they spend more money in legal fees fighting the citation than it would have cost them to comply with it
  - Municipalities will sometimes create the MS4 plan but not follow through with it because it's not an important issue with the governing body
  - Townships and boroughs have different powers to comply with regulations - inconsistency results in different abilities to comply with MS4 regulations (e.g., townships can levy "flush tax" but boroughs can't)
  - Communication and cooperation between municipalities and orgs. needed to address challenges
  - Survey to 1100 municipal managers and municipal secretaries about major issues faced by those municipalities (67% response rate)
    - Top three issues included 1) Infrastructure; 2) Money; 3) Stormwater;.... Last) Human resources
- Cheryl Reardon, ANJEC
  - Elected official turnover
  - Planning Board - some educated in water quality, some not
    - Some people are on the Planning Board, not because of what they know, but who they know
    - Planning Board should have certification process
  - Need mandatory program, certification, and benefits
  - Municipalities should work with local community groups to work with residents
  - Project at Veterans Park got support from community, Legions club, veterans - received donations and discounts to put in porous parking lot
    - Takeaway - challenge is finding right projects in community that touch people's minds and hearts
- Michael Darcy, NJ State League of Municipalities
  - The League does not keep subject experts on staff and instead reaches out to partners as appropriate
    - One example is the Floodplain Managers Association
    - Another is Sustainable Jersey, an organization that awards grants to Green Teams (comprised not of elected officials, but of volunteers) to implement projects (Action Items) at local level
    - Sustainable Jersey created a Green Infrastructure Toolkit for municipal officials (secondary audience: planning boards, environmental advocates, etc.)
  - Challenge: meeting attendance
- James Wheeler, PSATS
  - More technical assistance is needed, more ways to reach out to municipal officials are needed, but we are also in an era of financial limits
  - Elected officials need to have mindset that they are leaders, and be reminded that they're leaders

- Elected official turnover - constant base level training needs to be offered
- Recent wave of elected official turnover - more interest in stormwater issues
- NJ Future has a Green Infrastructure Municipal Toolkit for municipal officials that enables them to understand the value of green stormwater infrastructure in less than 5 minutes
  - Need to tap into that kind of creativity for more solutions

### **Audience Q & A**

- Q1: What is your involvement in the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)?
  - John Theilacker, AICP, Brandywine Conservancy
    - Work with Chester County Conservation District - current project on rain garden
    - Has not partnered with larger conservation district
  - James Wheeler, PSATS
    - PA has conservation district in every county - important partners
    - Conservation districts are entrepreneurial - work on things they get paid for
    - Champions are important in dealing with issues no one else is
      - Ex. Dirt road runoff program
      - Cornell study regarding ditches - every municipality in PA has ditches
- Q2: What are some incentives for municipalities that have worked well?
  - Ed Knittel, PSAB
    - If attendee completes all four classes in a set, receives recognition as “master planner”
    - Certified Borough Officials program - certification is a good incentive, with “must-have” classes
    - PA has no requirement of elected officials to receive training - that needs to change
  - John Theilacker, AICP, Brandywine Conservancy
    - Incentive for our organization is to find funding - if you have funding, you can get participation
  - Michael Darcy, NJ State League of Municipalities
    - Sustainable Jersey has grants they can offer in order to incentivize participation
    - Does not believe in training requirement for elected officials
      - Certification should mean something, mean that you care - if required, its meaning gets diluted
  - James Wheeler, PSATS
    - People want recognition for what they do
      - Ambulances get stickers



- Stickers are a simple incentive, a simple form of recognition that can go a long way
  - Kim Avant-Babb, NJRA
    - Municipal consultation free of charge
      - Free is always an incentive
    - Discount for training
    - Concern: municipal officials charged with making decisions on issues they don't understand
- Q3: How do you translate big picture items (e.g. climate change, water quality) to municipalities in ways that they can be seen as priorities?
  - James Wheeler, PSATS
    - We need to think about how to make training cool, or how to make training expected of elected officials
    - Find "hooks" (e.g. specific embankments, bridges, etc.)

### **Facilitated audience Q&A**

- Q1: How would you get involved in addressing some of the challenges we've heard today?
  - StormwaterPA.org is a resource center that has video example of stormwater management best practices; it's an easy tool that's out there and can be disseminated
  - Jersey Water Works website has abundance of resources
    - Fact sheets
    - Why you should care about stormwater management (readability accessible to everyone from municipal officials to 3rd graders)
  - Stony Brook Watershed Association
    - There is a lack of understanding on how to install and maintain green stormwater infrastructure
    - Trouble finding people to actually do installations; creating certification programs important
  - Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Certification Program - certification and technical assistance
  - Recommendation to partner certification program idea with Sustainable Jersey grant opportunities and Actions
- Q2: What approaches can we take for municipalities to be more receptive of water quality actions?
  - "Be brief, be brilliant, be gone"
  - Visuals and video: public-access or government-access TV
  - Make it applicable to obligatory task
- Q3: What matchmaking opportunities are there in this room?
  - Free consultation that NJRA offers could be valuable for municipalities needing to meet unfunded mandates

- Redevelopment authorities can support green projects on vacant lots, such as community gardens or stormwater infrastructure
- Natural Lands - they and likely other attendees could serve as speakers at annual conferences