Citizen Outreach in Loudoun County, Virginia

Source Water Protection Webcast Communication, Regulatory, and Non-Regulatory Tools

March 22, 2006

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Overview

- **Background**
  - **Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy (LWC)**
  - **Loudoun Watershed Watch (LWW)**
  - **Catoctin Watershed Project (CWP)**
- **Key Steps in Developing an Effective Outreach Strategy and Examples of Accomplishments**
- **Challenges to an Effective Outreach Strategy**

Loudoun County, Virginia

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

- **Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy (LWC) is an all-volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the preservation and proliferation of healthy wildlife habitats throughout Loudoun County, Virginia**

- **Formed in 1995**
  - **Started stream monitoring in 1996**
  - **In 2000 helped build the coalition of organizations which became Loudoun Watershed Watch (LWW)**
  - **Partner in the Catoctin Watershed Project (CWP)**

Loudoun Watershed Watch

- **Loudoun Watershed Watch (LWW) -- formed in 2001 as an alliance of citizen groups and county authorities concerned about stream quality**
  - Goal #1 – Provide a forum for collaboration among citizen and county stakeholders
  - Goal #2 – Compile water quality and stream health data and make it available to the public
  - Goal #3 – Provide stream quality educational materials and stream stewardship projects

Catoctin Watershed Project

- **Organized to Support the Catoctin TMDL Implementation Plan.**
- **Accomplishments include:**
  - Catoctin Riparian Buffer Restoration Projects in 2005 and 2006
  - Catoctin Creek Canoe Clean-up with Boy Scouts in 2005 and 2006
  - Bacteriological monitoring every two weeks since June 2005 to present

Key Steps in Developing an Effective Outreach Program

1. **Get Organized – How can citizens get things started?**

2. **Inventory Existing Data/Activities – What is already being done and what data exists?**

3. **Analyze Gaps and Assess Needs – What can a citizen's group do that is not being addressed by local, regional, and state authorities?**

Outreach Program – Continued

4. **Focus on Stewardship and Education – What are stewardship and education projects that many people can support?**

5. **Seek Out Partners – Who else do we need to have an effective initiative or program?**

6. **Go with the Flow – What doors are being opened or closed by the current state initiatives and the local political climate?**

1. Getting Organized

Start by forming a core group of individuals and partners that share a common vision and commitment.

Starting – Easy Activities

Start with easy activities that get people into the field and learning new things.

Starting - Play to Strengths

Plan projects that draw upon the existing strengths of the partner groups.

2. Inventory Existing Activities

Where to Look:

– **State Government**
– **Soil and Water Conservation District**
– **Local Government**
– **Water Authority**
– **Regional Watershed Groups**
– **Citizen Groups**

Inventory - Sources of Nonpoint Pollution

The Soil and Water Conservation District has data showing that fecal pollution from livestock with access to streams is a major problem.

Inventory –Stormwater Management Systems

County Government is inventorying the stormwater structures throughout the County. They are also identifying areas where high volume stormwater flows in urban areas are eroding stream banks.
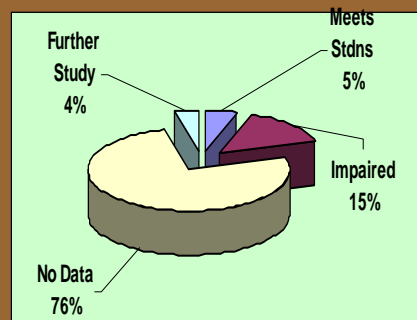
3. Analyze Gaps and Assessing Needs

- **What can a citizen's group do that is not being addressed by local, regional, and state authorities?**
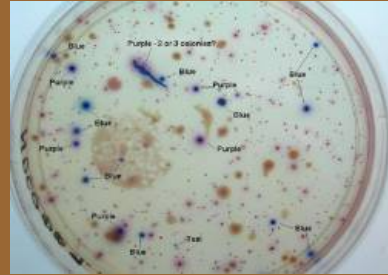- **What is needed to be an effective player in watershed management?**

Gaps – Water Quality Data

- **The state has monitored only 25% of the streams**

- **There are little bacteria data to pinpoint stream segments impacted by nonpoint pollution.**

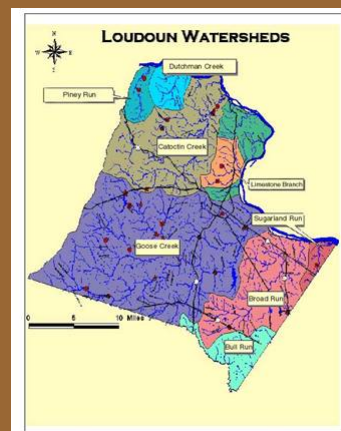Further Study 4%

Meets Stdns 5%

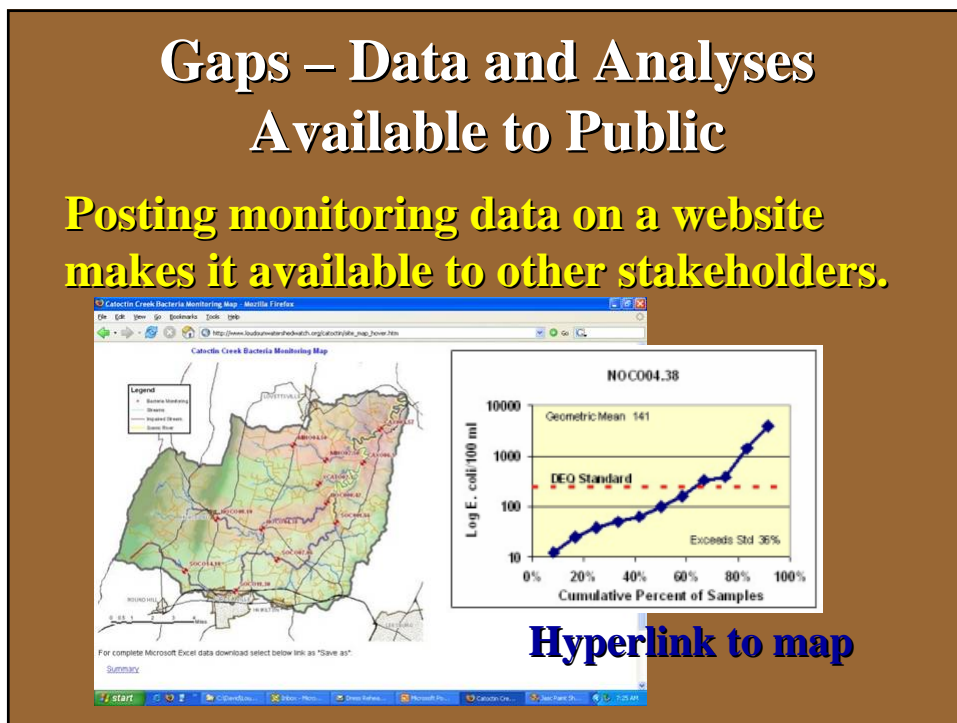Impaired 15%

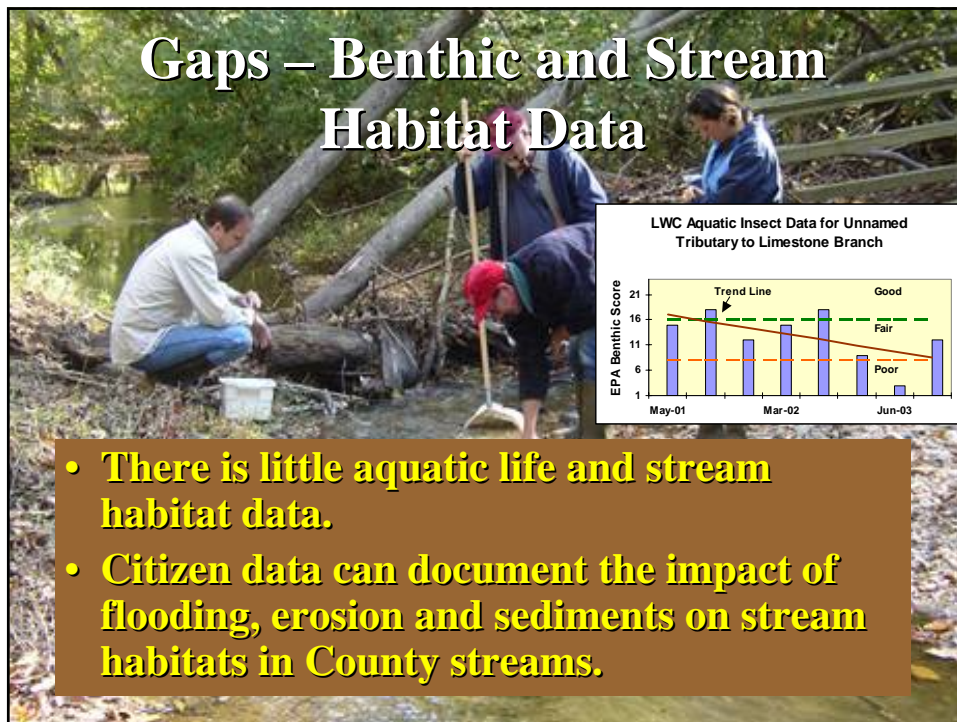No Data 76%

Gaps – Bacteria Monitoring

- **Citizen can help monitor the streams not monitored by the State.**
- **The Coliscan Easygel method is easy, inexpensive, and accurate.**

Gaps – Identify Impaired Waters

- **Citizen data can help direct the state to new stream segments to monitor.**

- **Citizen data can be used in the TMDL assessment.**

- **Citizen data can be used to develop educational brochures targeting stewardship needs in local communities.**

Gaps – Benthic and Stream Habitat Data

LWC Aquatic Insect Data for Unnamed Tributary to Limestone Branch

- **There is little aquatic life and stream habitat data.**
- **Citizen data can document the impact of flooding, erosion and sediments on stream habitats in County streams.**

Gaps – Data and Analyses Available to Public

Posting monitoring data on a website makes it available to other stakeholders.

Hyperlink to map

Gaps – Watershed Management Tools

- **Current BMPs do not adequately protect against downstream erosion.**
- **Septic tank controls are outdated.**
- **Inadequate penalties for violations of codes.**
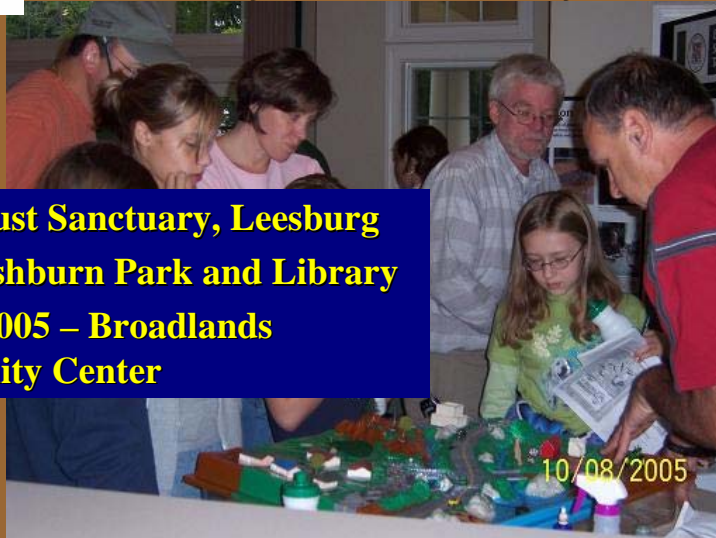
4. Focus on Stewardship and Education

Good stewardship and education are politically neutral concepts that encompasses attitudes and values, as well as behaviors.
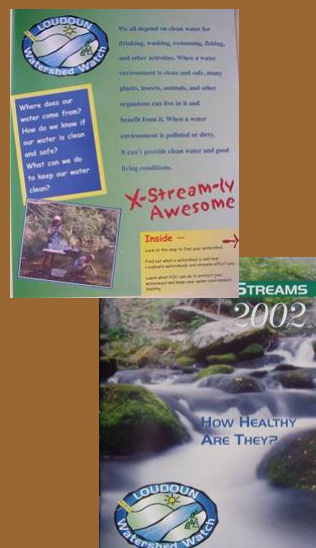
Stewardship - Loudoun Family Stream Day

- 2002 – Rust Sanctuary, Leesburg
- 2003 – Ashburn Park and Library
- 2004 & 2005 – Broadlands Community Center

Education - Examples

- Developed a Loudoun watershed map and activity guide for Loudoun's 37,000 public school students.

- Prepared a summary report on stream health in Loudoun County

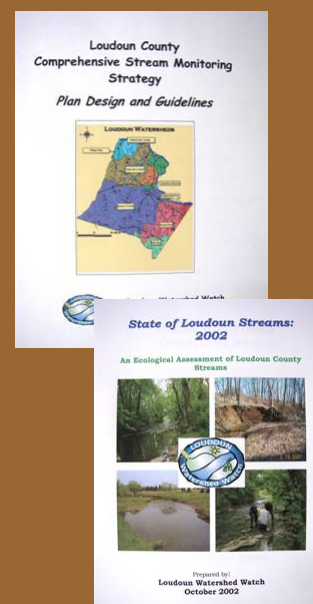- Organized the Catoctin Watershed Project to support TMDL implementation

Education - State of Streams: 2002 and 2005

- **LWW prepared water quality assessments of Loudoun County streams in 2002 and 2005.**
- **Measures impacts on streams from land uses.**
- **Characteristics assesses:**
  - **Physical and biological water quality parameters**
  - **Aquatic biota, stream habitat, and riparian buffers**

State of Loudoun Streams

An Ecological Assessment of Loudoun County Streams

Education - Examples

- **Compiled county-wide stream monitoring data and published, *State of Loudoun Streams: 2002 and 2005 Reports.***

- **Prepared *"Comprehensive Stream Monitoring Strategy for Loudoun County".***

- **Maintain a website with stream monitoring data and educational materials.**

Loudoun County Comprehensive Stream Monitoring Strategy

Plan Design and Guidelines

State of Loudoun Streams: 2002

An Ecological Assessment of Loudoun County Streams

Prepared by:
Loudoun Watershed Watch
October 2002

5. Seek Out Partners

Examples of Our Partners:

- **Virginia Dept of Environmental Quality and Dept of Conservation and Recreation**

- **Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District and Health Department**

- **Loudoun County Dept of Building and Development, Planning, and General Services, Public Works**

- **Loudoun County Sanitation Authority**

- **Regional Organizations such as Audubon Naturalist Society and Piedmont Environmental Council**

Partnerships - Government and citizens working together can solve problems like these ...

. . . and to help educate riparian property owners.

6. Go with the Flow

What doors are being opened or closed by the current state initiatives and the local political climate?

Challenges to an Effective Outreach Strategy

1. **Grant funds**
2. **Paid staff**
3. **Maintaining volunteer leadership**

Grant Funds

Seek grant funds to support activities.

Paid Staff

Grant funds do not cover salary of paid staff.

Maintaining high quality volunteer leadership for a prolonged period is challenging.

Where to Find Information About Watershed Stewardship Activities in Loudoun County

Websites:

- **www.LoudounWatershedWatch.org**
- **www.LoudounWildlife.org**
- **www.AudubonNaturalist.org**

Sites Include:

- **Educational Materials**
- **Water Quality Data**
- **State of Loudoun Streams Reports**
- **Catoctin Watershed Project Activities**

QUESTIONS?