



**water**table

**Stakeholder Committee  
Meeting**

**April 16, 2021**

**connect with us!**

**@dvrpc** |  |  |  |  | 

# Water Table Planning Team and Steering Committee

## Water Table Team

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## Water Table Steering Committee

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# Setting the (Water) Table - the Goal

Bring nonprofit conservation organizations, the water-user community, and local governments together within the Greater Philadelphia region to build relationships and identify collaborative initiatives to better align efforts, new projects, and possibly new/sustainable sources of funding:

**Open Doors**

**Get to Know Your Neighbors**

**Ground Truth Perceptions**

# Why, and Why Now?

- Existing WPF and other collaborations are successful and beneficial.
- Most collaborations are with nonprofits and gov'ts
- Many in the water user community - water utilities, consumptive users, consultants, and the maritime community - have not been part of these efforts, despite sharing the same interests.
- More resources and collaboration are needed to address the myriad water resource challenges facing the Basin.
- We saw an opportunity . . . .

# What would happen if we brought more people to the Table?

- **Wanted to explore and ground truth sectors' perceptions of each other through in-depth interviews**
- **Facilitate multi-stakeholder conversations**
- **Create an Action Plan of shared commitments**
- **The interviews revealed both misconceptions and desires for stronger cross-sector relationships**
- **Participants saw deep benefits to a more diverse, resourceful and impactful coalition**

# Water Table Stakeholders Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome and Group Agreements
2. Meeting Purpose/Desired Outcomes
3. Interview Findings
4. Break-out Groups + “Speed Dating” Exercises
5. Next Steps

# Group Agreements

- **Keep your video on as much as possible**
- **Everyone will have a chance to speak**
- **Be curious**
- **Respect diversity of interests and perspectives**
- **No bad/wrong ideas or comments**
- **You don't have to agree with others' ideas or comments**
- **If you disagree, disagree with the idea or comment, not the person**
- **Respect confidentiality**

# Meeting Purposes and Desired Outcomes

## Meeting purposes:

- share findings
- seek to understand a range of viewpoints
- gather input
- build relationships
- NOT to reach consensus or make decisions

## Desired Outcomes:

- better understanding of different sector's perspectives
- identify commonalities and alignments
- expand networks of colleagues
- preliminary list of potential shared initiatives

# Interviewed 50+ organizations (Poll #1)

<b>Nonprofit-22</b>	<b>Government -10</b>	<b>Water User - 22</b>
<b>Policy/Community and Capacity Building/Recreation - 7</b>	<b>County/municipal - 5</b>	<b>Private utilities - 4</b>
<b>Conservation/Restoration - 4</b>		<b>Public utilities - 5</b>
<b>Academia - 5</b>	<b>Regulatory - 4</b>	<b>Energy - 2</b>
<b>Advocacy - 3</b>		<b>Maritime-1</b>
<b>Philanthropy - 3</b>		<b>Agriculture - 3</b>
	<b>Food and Beverage - 2</b>	
	<b>Financial/legal/ engineering - 4</b>	
	<b>Labor - 1</b>	
	<b>Financial-1</b>	

community connections

presidents

executive directors

equitable access to clean water

love of nature

leaders

effective messaging

coordinators

sound decision making

water as a common denominator

holistic lens

chiefs

Jacque Cousteau

# Biggest Hurdles toward Improving Water Quality

<b>Appreciation</b>	Lack of engagement, sense of urgency, representation, understanding the value
<b>Funding</b>	Aging infrastructure, stormwater management, CSOs
<b>Collaboration</b>	Polarization, silos, lack of cross-sector relationships
<b>Knowledge</b>	Climate change, emerging contaminants, staff turnover and retirements
<b>DEIJ</b>	Equitable access to the river, EJ, inclusive career opportunities, lack of compassion
<b>Regulations</b>	Ineffective, enforcement, fractured
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	Fracking, brownfields, plastics and trash, salt use for de-icing, drought, detachment to river due to perception of its pollution

# What keeps you up at night?

**People's apathy and taking clean water for granted**

**Are we making the right investments?**

**Not knowing what I don't know...**

**How are we going to be able to do what we need to do in the time we have to do it?**

# Breakout Group Exercise #1-20 min

- Click on link in chat box for breakout room materials, before being sent to room
- Introduce self by name and organization and your favorite place in the watershed
- Volunteer for roles of *timekeeper*, *recorder* (on shared google doc), and *reporter*
- Review list of biggest hurdles - any missing? What seems really important?
- Reporter offers what might be missing or what seemed extra important to the group when return to main room

# Awareness of Delaware River Initiatives?

## Cannot know it all

- Every week another initiative
- Know own sector's work, not others
- Only need to know what's most important

## Why it matters

- Disconnects = missed opportunities
- Lack of awareness leads to duplication
- No one fitting it all together
- Some water users feel deliberately left out

## Solutions

- More collaborative inclusiveness
- Increase understanding of regulatory drivers
- Compendium of where we are, where we are going, work underway, and progress toward goals

# Voices Valued and Heard?

## Nonprofits

Feel undervalued by those they don't know

Feel valued in certain spheres, worthy of larger audience

Feel image is only doing the soft work, valued less than engineering and construction

## Government

Have both authority and limitation of law

Some say it takes fostered relationships to be valued by water users

Gov'ts that prioritize relationships with constituents in turn feel heard and valued by them

## Water Users

Feel heard but not always understood

Some utilities feel under-appreciated and taken for granted, especially during pandemic

Job creation and contributions to economy undervalued

# Data Collection, Accessibility, Reactions

Collection

## Nonprofits

Citizen collected data is viewed differently

## Government

DRBC, DEPs, PWD

## Water Users

Utilities collect data regularly, consultants collect as needed

Accessibility and Use

Stroud, ANS, PDE, Academia, plus some collect citizen science data

Public agencies generally available

FOIA/OPRA option

Biological data hard to obtain

Piecing together is challenging

Homeland Security concerns limits certain data sharing abilities

# Nonprofits

## Impressions

**Champions**

**Many highly qualified staffs**

**Good at partnering**

**Compete for limited resources**

**Some say NO vs find common solutions**

**Less connected to economic realities**

## Want Others to Know

**Have expertise and capacity to help**

**Desire balance between clean, healthy environment and thriving economy**

**Are collaborative and desire even larger constituencies**

## Misconceptions

**Their funding challenges are not due to lack of financial responsibility**

**They are more than a bunch of volunteers - they are sophisticated**

**Their activities cost money and require planning - they cannot drop everything and do pro bono work**

# Government

## Impressions

Local caring, knowledgeable staff are there

Low capacity

Under-funded

Do not prioritize water issues

More focused on liability and checking a box

## Want Others to Know

Have passionate people wanting to share expertise, beyond compliance

Are constrained by funding and beholden to regs on what can and cannot do

Striving for equitable outcomes and raising previously unheard voices

## Misconceptions

Federal Gov't has bags of money to give out

When say can't be done, its based on real constraints of authority, expertise and jurisdiction

County gov't has no agenda other than conservation, protection, and wise use of resources

# Water Users

## Impressions

Do great job  
supplying clean water

Show great  
knowledge and  
concern

Purely profit driven  
Greenwash  
Stuck in mindsets  
Not innovative  
Uncollaborative  
Suspicious

## Want Others to Know

Desire to bring their  
passion and  
expertise to the table

Can bring outside  
expertise from  
across the country

May be able to offer  
in-kind support for  
projects

## Misconceptions

They are not purely  
profit driven - they  
want to invest to  
make the community  
better

They are not  
mysterious entities  
with lots of \$ - how  
they spend it PUC  
regulated

They do want to  
partner and create  
better projects

# Break Out Group Exercise #2-20 min

- Click on link in chat for breakout room materials, before being sent to room
- Same groups - new volunteers for roles of *timekeeper*, *recorder* (on shared google doc), and *reporter*
- Review list of impressions, misconceptions and what each sector wants others to know about them, and discuss
  - any surprises
  - do the findings hold true for you?
  - do you now feel more aware of other sectors' perspectives?
- Reporter offers a one to two sentence summary of the small group discussion when return to main room

# Existing cross sector collaborations and success stories (Poll #2)

Partnership for the Delaware Estuary	William Penn Foundation DRWI
Water Resources Association of Delaware River Basin	Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership PCB TMDL Coalition
Jersey Water Works	DRBC Committees
Schuylkill Action Network	The Water Fund
Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed	Sustainable Business Network Green Partners Program
Camden Collaborative Initiative	Brandywine Christina Task Force
Philadelphia Youth Network	Eastwick Friends and Neighbors Coalition
Port Security Grant Program	White Clay Creek Wild and Scenic River
Discover the Delaware	Brandywine Red Clay Alliance
Valley Creek Restoration Partners	Alliance for Watershed Education
AWRA Local Chapters	Philly and Camden Power Corp

# Why are cross-sectoral partnerships not more common?

## Time

Emphasis on efficiency leads to not wanting to develop partnerships  
Everyone not on same page and can be too time-consuming to sort out

## Funding

No one wants to pay for collaboration, only for projects, and when it is funded, long-term formalized funding for formalized collaboration is needed - a beast

## Relationships

Easier to stick to relationships one has than build new  
Learned biases, fear of getting burned, don't know who is doing what and what can bring to table, and tendency to stick to own circles due to mistrust

## Leadership

Need champions to corral and convene people  
Can require identifying feasible projects to attract others

# Activities others would like to see from each sector

## Nonprofits

An integrated watershed approach vs one off little projects

One cohesive communication piece

Foundations - more clusters beyond 8 in DRWI - many in the "cracks"

## Government

More GSI policy and on the ground projects

Manage more land and manage it better

Identify point person

## Water Users

Coordinate on growth and development and water facilities planning

Recognize and fund the work of the conservation community that is protecting water quality and quantity

Identify point person

# What are your hopes for a more inclusive collaboration?

**Progress, baby, progress!**

**Have a path to work through conflicts in water resource management based on stronger relationships**

**Strategically build on each others' strengths and expertise - lighten load for all**

**A collective agreed upon list of priorities**

hiring/target youth engagement  
strategic planning stakeholder representation

staff/board training/learning

Internal Committees

Outreach and engagement

on the ground work dedicated staff

# Opportunities to address DEIJ

## EJ Efforts

- address environmental burdens of old infrastructure and pollution
- improve access to nature and waterfronts
- provide scholarships/internships/apprenticeships to youth
- empower local leaders

## Orgs directly addressing

- Center for Aquatic Science
- Upstream Alliance
- Philly Power Corp and Power Corp Camden
- Alliance for Watershed Education,
- Pottstown (North Bay Resource Center) Education Program

## Broaden next gen of workers

- provide scholarships/internships/apprenticeships to youth from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Maritime industry was often a generational tradition and avg age of longshoreman is 54 - need next gen

# Break Out Group Exercise #3-10 min

- Click on link in the chat for breakout room materials
- Groups of 2 - “Speed dating”
- Introduce selves by name and organization, and what new habits you’ve picked up during the pandemic
- Talk about your experience with collaborations. What would enable or incentivize your organization to collaborate more, including with new partners?
- What else might your organization do to advance DEIJ, and what partnerships would support those efforts?
- Write 1-2 ideas into Chat Box when back in main room

# Desired Outcomes to Realize More Inclusive Collaborations

Get past  
preconceived notions  
of each other and  
work towards deeper  
understanding and  
respect

Establish genuine  
relationships that  
enable future  
scaled up,  
impactful projects

Have strong enough  
relationships that  
when there's  
disagreement, we can  
come together for  
tough conversations

Get everyone  
moving in the  
same direction  
based on an  
agreed upon list  
of priorities

# How Can Suggested Shared Commitments Overcome the Hurdles to Improving Water Quality?

## Appreciation

Unified identity and messaging for the Delaware River Watershed (like the Chesapeake has); the river and tributaries are more accessible, more people directly use them, value them, and support spending more money on them

## Funding

Larger, combined or jointly coordinated grant programs supported by more contributors result in greater impact; more communities enact stormwater fees and/or stormwater authorities; more informed understanding, especially among foundations, of regulatory drivers, to result in more realistic outcomes; new initiatives like a carbon trading market, similar to Water Fund, to solve upstream - downstream problems

# How Can Suggested Shared Commitments Overcome the Hurdles to Improving Water Quality?

## Collaboration

A willingness to work across sectors to effect positive change; an agreed upon list of priority water investments to quickly move forward on with an Infrastructure bill and earmark opportunities; engage with energy sector on climate change and health sector on impacts to human health

## Knowledge

Strategically build on each others' strengths and expertise - less siloing can lighten load for all; expand knowledge for addressing impacts from contamination; more tech transfer; an inventory of everything going on, what the drivers are for those activities (ie CCMP, TMDLs, MS4s), and track progress

# How Can Shared Commitments Overcome the Hurdles to Improving Water Quality?

## DEIJ

Investment in underserved communities; apprenticeships for community members; new “Climate Civilian Corps”; outreach in other languages to connect with more communities; more inclusion of residents, not just organizations, in the conversations

## Regulations

Regulators understand impact of regs on munis and make it easier for them to access \$ to comply; allow joint MS4 permits within watersheds; more staff and resources for regulatory agencies; connect with development sector in way that helps them understand that regs are good and healthy for building better communities, which attracts more investment

## Miscellaneous

Better growth management and design standards for managing runoff; farming, building and roads all moved 100' from streams' edges; more GSI at schools; every parking lot has a bioswale and rain garden

# Break Out Group Exercise #4-10 min

- Click on link in chat for breakout room materials
- New Groups of 2 - “Speed dating”
- Introduce selves by name and organization, what you’re most looking forward to when the pandemic is behind us
- Look at the list of ideas for shared commitments. Do you want to add any?
- Talk about what you are most interested in
- What should we do first?
- Write ideas in the Chat Box when back in main room

# Next Steps (Poll #3)

- Incorporate meeting feedback - *Water Table Team*
- Discuss list of potential shared commitments with colleagues/board, respond to follow up survey - *Stakeholders*
- Plan next Stakeholder Meeting to develop mini-plans for shared commitments - *Water Table Team and Steering Committee*
- Attend 2nd Stakeholder meeting to refine shared commitments - *Everyone*
- Develop an Action Plan to implement shared commitments - *Water Table Team and Steering Committee*

Thank you for participating today!



**water**table

**thank you**  
for attending



**connect with us!**

