

NC Watershed Stewardship Network Strategic Plan



NCWSN is administered by
NC Water Resources Research Institute
UNC Institute for the Environment
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Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
NC Watershed Stewardship Network Overview.....	4
Needs Assessment Results.....	4
NCWSN Logic model	5
Action Plans.....	10
Online networking/skill building action plan (web tools subcommittee).....	10
In-person network building action plan:.....	10
Education/Outreach action plan.....	11
Building financial support action plan	11
Accomplishments (June 2013-December 2014)	12
Appendix A: NCWSN Steering Committee (February 1, 2015)	13

Executive Summary

The NCWSN was formed after a workshop in May 2013 to share and discuss watershed professional and volunteer needs assessment results. A Steering Committee began meeting in 2013 and coined the NCWSN mission: *Empower more effective watershed stewardship because water is critical to economic, environmental, and community health*. The network will identify, include, link, and serve watershed stakeholders working locally on their waters across North Carolina. NCWSN steering committee members crafted a logic model for NCWSN that defines the long term goals for the NCWSN:

- More people are leading and working on watershed projects.
- People begin and sustain local watershed efforts in all areas across NC, including those areas that have not experienced watershed management due to lack of resources.
- Local watershed efforts are sustained by diverse and balanced sources of funds and resources.
- Stewards collaborate broadly for greater success protecting waters.
- People make decisions that protect water resources while improving community health and economic development.

NCWSN outcomes are organized by three tracks: 1) Building a network; 2) Building skills and inspiring engagement; and 3) Building financial support. Building a network will result in people from multiple sectors in watersheds increasing communication, mutual understanding, and relationships; partnerships forming between local watershed stewards, skilled people, and diverse organizations; and a cohort of watershed stewards accessing each other's expertise and support.

Building skills and inspiring engagement seeks to increase the number of people who have the skills and motivation to effectively work on watershed efforts, including business, local government, and community leaders. Increased technical and process skills among watershed professionals and volunteers will help increase effectiveness of efforts, and an increased number of people will feel connected to the land and water around them.

Finally, building financial support will result in members and grants supporting the NCWSN to expand its activities and provide mini-grants to foster new local watershed efforts, and local watershed efforts acquiring self-sufficiency in sustaining their own efforts.

To achieve these goals, in 2015-2016 the NCWSN will:

- develop, test, and release an online interactive mapping tool for identifying and networking with local watershed efforts;
- develop and host regional workshops/networking opportunities on topics identified in the needs assessment;
- work to increase the network participation and diversity of the steering committee to reflect our target audiences across North Carolina;

- explore and apply for various funding options for supporting the network, including funding for market research to craft messages and identify delivery routes for increasing interest in one's local water resources.

NC Watershed Stewardship Network Overview

The NC Watershed Stewardship Network (NCWSN) is a community of watershed stakeholders across North Carolina connected by our shared work to increase communication and collaboration for healthy streams and clean water. The need for the network is explained in *An Assessment of Capacity and Resource Needs of NC Watershed Programs*, and *An Assessment of Capacity and Resource Needs of North Carolina Watershed Volunteers*, published in 2013 by the UNC Institute for the Environment (UNC-IE) in partnership with NC Water Resources Research Institute (WRRRI), Watershed Education for Communities and Officials (WECO), Division of Water Resources of NCDENR, and Triangle J Council Of Governments. After these needs assessment results were rolled out to stakeholders in a May 2013 workshop, interested representatives of state and local governments, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations established the NCWSN in October 2013.

The mission of the NCWSN is to ***empower more effective watershed stewardship because water is critical to economic, environmental, and community health.***

Needs Assessment Results

A core group of watershed professionals conducted a three phased state-wide needs assessment from 2011-2013. The needs assessment included:

1. Online survey to assess capacities, needs and resources of NC watershed programs
2. Focus group meetings of NC watershed volunteers
3. Online survey to assess capacities, needs and resources of NC watershed volunteers.

Some key results include:

- Many opportunities exist for partnering and cross training among watershed professionals
- Watershed volunteers are likely to get engaged because they feel connected to their water resources
- Respondents would likely participate in regional one day workshops
- Statewide networking is welcomed by most respondents
- Online interactive networking tools are welcomed by most
- Volunteers need help reaching out to various audiences
- Several training, technical assistance, and informational needs were identified among both watershed professionals and volunteers

- Significant professional and volunteer capacity to address watershed issues across the state currently exists, but there is no common platform for these groups to coordinate and collaborate with each other and share resources

The two needs assessment reports are posted on the NCWSN website at:

www.ncwatershednetwork.org

NCWSN Logic model

A logic model is a planning tool to clarify and graphically display what a program intends to do and what it hopes to accomplish and impact. The NCWSN logic model serves as a map to clarify and communicate what the NCWSN intends to do and its presumed impacts. The logic model includes goals for the NCWSN, desired short, medium, and long-term outcomes of the NCWSN's work, more immediate targeted outputs (evidence of progress), as well as the specific activities and resources needed to produce the outputs. The logic model was compiled by a strategic planning subcommittee and NCWSN program coordinators by reviewing the needs assessments, May 2013 workshop results and summary, and steering committee meeting summaries from Oct. 2013- July 2014, and revised by the steering committee members in meetings and electronically between meetings.

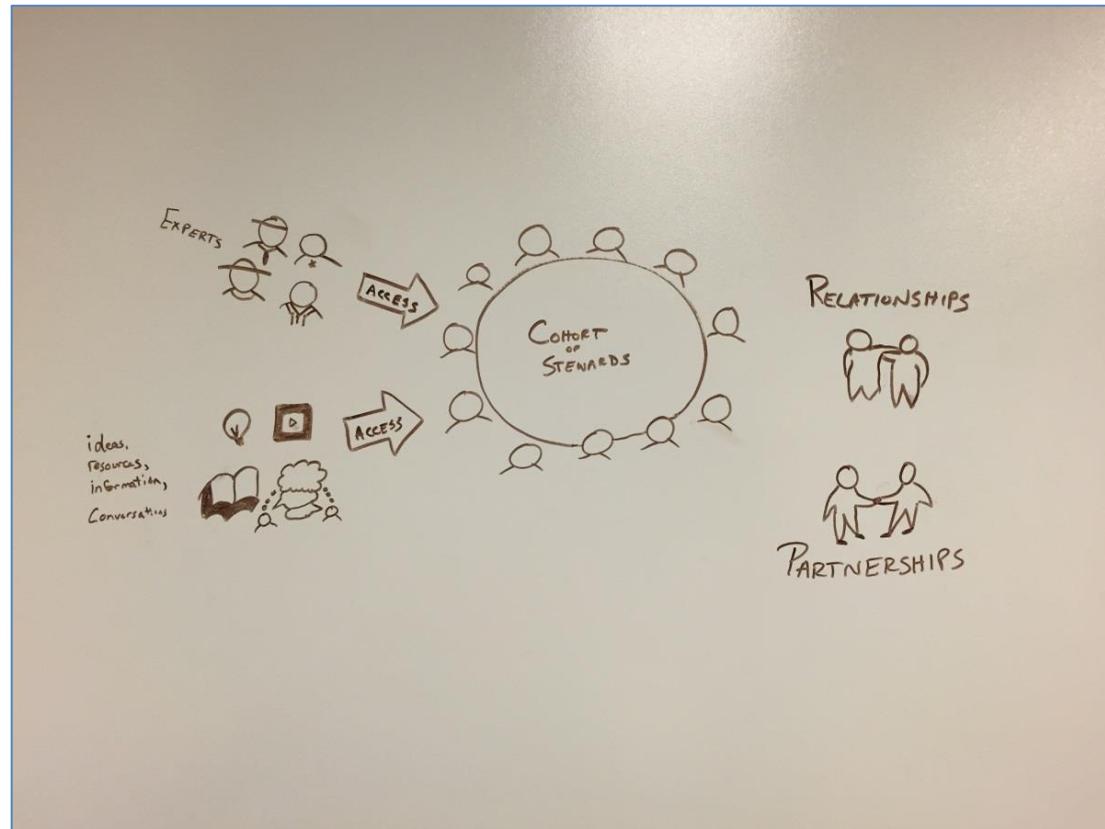
This strategic plan is a dynamic, living document that will need to be updated on a two year cycle. Including targeted outputs in the logic model provides the NCWSN with a means for evaluating progress at that time, and adjusting course based on results and new information.

Building a Network track				Outcomes	
Inputs (resources and people)	Activities	Outputs (Evidence of progress)	Short Term (2-3 years)	Medium term- 3-5 years	Long term (5+ years)
Co-coordinators funded by WRRRI and UNC-IE Steering Committee members Sub-committee participants Partnering organizations Existing NC organizations that represent diverse audiences	Plan a session on engaging underserved communities for first 2015 steering committee meeting Plan a session on engaging businesses for a 2015 steering committee meeting Plan a statewide conference Build and launch web-based watershed info sharing application Develop a mentorship program for local stewards	Target: 2015 NCWSN meeting on engaging underserved audiences provides guidance Target: NCWSN Steering Committee represents diverse interests (2015) Target: Statewide conference attended by local stewards and their supporters (2016) Target: Mentorship program pairs new stewards with seasoned professionals Target: Map-based info-sharing web application has been beta tested and is online (2015)	NCWSN conference attendees increase the number of connections they have with other watershed stewards and professionals WSN website serves as a hub for sharing resources and connections among local watershed stewards and professionals. (75% of known watershed programs have registered on the site.) NCWSN online community is comprised of participants from organizations diverse in size and type from across NC by 2016. NCWSN includes sponsors and partners who support local watershed groups' work	Local watershed stewards partner with skilled people and organizations who can support them, including diverse community, local government, and business leaders Increased communication, mutual understanding and relationships among people from multiple sectors is built A cohort of watershed stewards have relationships and access each other's expertise	More people are leading and working on watershed projects People begin and sustain local watershed efforts in all areas across NC, including historically underserved communities. Stewards collaborate broadly for greater success protecting waters People make decisions that protect water resources while improving community health and economic development Local watershed efforts are sustained by diverse and balanced sources of funds and resources.

Building skills and inspiring engagement track			Outcomes		
Inputs (resources and people)	Activities	Outputs (Evidence of progress)	Short Term (2-3 years)	Medium term- 3-5 years	Long term (5+ years)
<p>Summary of case studies from 2014 Water Ed Summit session</p> <p>Partner locations to host workshops.</p> <p>Skilled staff from government agencies and watershed groups to draw upon for workshop development</p>	<p>Develop guide and curriculum with case studies from Water Ed Summit for engaging people in watershed efforts</p> <p>Develop workshops on topic identified in needs assessment</p> <p>Conduct market research by NC region and develop NCWSN messaging and outreach materials</p> <p>Develop best structure format for training delivery based on needs assessment data</p>	<p>Target: Hold 2-3 regional workshops/year for local stewards on priority topics.</p> <p>Target: Provide workshop or presentation at 2-3 professional gatherings/year</p> <p>Target: Host 2 webinars</p> <p>Target: Educational resources produced for regional use in NC (ready to use messages, images, publications)</p>	<p>Local stewards have increased ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage and collaborate with diverse audiences (underserved, business, local government) Fundraise and leverage resources Develop & support their organizations Recruit and coordinate volunteers Create and undertake effective outreach Assess, plan, and improve watershed conditions <p>Potential watershed stewards learn how to find water events in their community and contact organizers for more information.</p> <p>WSN workshop & webinar participants learn and practice effective networking skills.</p>	<p>Increased number of people have skills and motivation necessary to effectively work on watershed efforts</p> <p>Business, community leaders, local governments are actively involved in watershed efforts</p> <p>Increased number of people feel connected to land and water</p> <p>Increased understanding by watershed stakeholders of water quality impacts, stormwater management, watershed protection benefits, how to get involved.</p> <p>Increased technical and process skills among watershed professionals and volunteers</p>	<p>More people are leading and working on watershed projects</p> <p>People begin and sustain local watershed efforts in all areas across NC, including historically underserved communities.</p> <p>Stewards collaborate broadly for greater success protecting waters</p> <p>People make decisions that protect water resources while improving community health and economic development</p> <p>Local watershed efforts are sustained by diverse and balanced sources of funds and resources.</p>

Building Financial Support track			Outcomes		
Inputs (resources and people)	Activities	Outputs (Evidence of progress)	Short Term (2-3 years)	Medium term- 3-5 years	
<p>Staff and Committee members seeking funding opportunities through grants and sponsorships</p> <p>Partnerships to leverage funding</p> <p>Current member base</p>	<p>Research potential membership and sponsorship structure</p> <p>Acquire funding for supporting steward conference attendees</p> <p>Apply for funding to support training, market research on messaging and materials</p> <p>Identify partners and develop fundraising curriculum</p> <p>Develop list of funding priorities</p>	<p>Target: NCWSN has a membership and sponsorship structure</p> <p>Target: Hold training on fundraising and leveraging resources</p> <p>Target: At least 2 grant proposals submitted in 2015</p>	<p>At least 3 sponsors support NCWSN</p> <p>Grants are acquired to support NCWSN</p> <p>40% of NCWSN listserv members join as paying NCWSN members</p> <p>Workshop/webinar participant have increased ability to fundraise and leverage resources.</p> <p>NCWSN provides scholarships to watershed stewards to attend regional trainings and statewide conferences</p>	<p>6 sponsors support NCWSN</p> <p>A mini-grant fund is developed to support new local watershed efforts</p> <p>NCWSN staff are almost entirely funded by grants, sponsorships, membership fees</p> <p>NCWSN hires an additional full time staff person to meet growing needs of the network</p>	<p>More people are leading and working on watershed projects</p> <p>People begin and sustain local watershed efforts in all areas across NC, including historically underserved communities.</p> <p>Stewards collaborate broadly for greater success protecting waters</p> <p>People make decisions that protect water resources while improving community health and economic development</p> <p>Local watershed efforts are sustained by diverse and balanced sources of funds and resources.</p>

The strategic planning committee created graphics to illustrate NCWSN goals during their planning session at TJCOG (illustration courtesy of Mike Schlegel).



Action Plans

This section outlines more specific actions needed to achieve the outputs within the logic model in 2015-2016.

Online networking/skill building action plan (web tools subcommittee)

Phase 1: The Phase 1 product is a database-driven application embedded in the WSN website. The app will feature a searchable map of North Carolina with data keyed by 12-digit Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUCs). Background content will include watershed descriptions, populated with data provided by NCDENR Division of Water Resources and other agencies. The unique data feature collects information online from watershed groups and individuals about their watershed projects, events, activities, volunteer needs, etc., and will make this information available and searchable by other users.

Target Outputs for 2015-2016

1. Finalize database type, software, hardware
2. Database built and “talking” with front end interface
3. Map content populated and data input through forms set up
4. Beta testing at regional meetings
5. Updates made based on input from users
6. Phase 1 launched on ncwatershednetwork.org

Phase 2:

The Phase 2 product will be a database driven website where the collected data will be displayed in a variety of visually pleasing ways (including an events board or a forum for matching expertise with local needs).

In-person network building action plan:

- Seek partners and new steering committee members from sectors and audiences that the NCWSN seeks to serve and engage, including agricultural, faith-based, business, and diverse communities who have not been effectively involved in watershed management.
- Ensure that every workshop and activity of the NCWSN includes a component of facilitated networking that promotes interaction and sharing among participants.

- Form a conference subcommittee to determine conference objectives, and plan a 2016 conference

Education/Outreach action plan

Target Outputs for 2015-2016:

- Develop case studies and lessons from the 2014 Water Education Summit (held in Asheville, NC) for engaging people in watershed efforts
- Hold a session on engaging all audiences at steering committee meeting
- Introduce people to the NCWSN at conferences and meetings
- Literature search for lessons on engaging people in watershed efforts
- Develop curriculum for regional workshops on watershed assessment and planning (will include guide for engaging people in watershed efforts)
- Determine partners, locations for regional workshops
- Schedule, market, and implement regional workshops

Further educational opportunities will focus on topics identified in the needs assessment, based on partner needs and opportunities. These include:

- Learning how to identify what technical resources are available
- Fundraising, including developing grant proposals and administering grants, leveraging resources
- Conducting/reporting on water quality monitoring
- Conducting education and outreach (including social marketing- planning for effective education)
- Connecting with diverse audiences
- Recruiting, training, and empowering volunteers
- Social media
- Influencing policy and permit decisions
- Developing and/or implementing an organizational strategic plan
- Watershed science

Building financial support action plan

- Develop list of funding priorities to serve as basis for grant applications
- Document potential sources of grant funds for NCWSN activities and update as proposals are submitted
- Develop a plan for marketing research and educational campaign and seek funding in 2015
- Develop proposal for funding a conference, identify potential funders
- Research and develop potential membership structure/fees for NCWSN in 2015

Initial Accomplishments (June 2013-December 2014)

Between the May 2013 introductory workshop and the publication of the first Strategic Plan in December 2014, the following objectives were accomplished:

- Listservs enable communication between a growing general NC network and among a Steering Committee.
- A Steering Committee representing 20+ organizations across NC convened to guide the activities of the NCWSN.
- UNC Institute for the Environment and the Water Resources Research Institute of the UNC System provide funds for co-coordinators to lead the NCWSN.
- Subcommittees formed to create webtools, the strategic plan, education and training opportunities, and outreach.
- A beta website launched and is online at www.ncwatershednetwork.org.
- UNC-IE receives funds from the UNC Water Theme for web tools development.
- UNC-IE receives funds from Wallace Genetic Foundation to conduct watershed planning workshops.
- An interactive session developed and hosted by the NCWSN called *Recruiting Partners in Watershed Projects* engaged 30 participants at the Water Education Summit in September 2014. Stories shared by participants provide case studies for future training materials and the website.
- NCWSN started Tweeting @NCWSN.

Appendix A: NCWSN Steering Committee (April 1, 2015)

Kevin Boyer	City of Raleigh
Shari Bryant	NC Wildlife Resources Commission
Caitlin Burke	Conservation Trust for North Carolina
Paul Clark	NC Division of Water Resources, Use Restoration Program
Bill Crowell	Abermarle Pamlico National Estuary Partnership
Nancy Daly	Ecosystem Enhancement Program
Michele Drostin	UNC Institute for the Environment (NCWSN Coordinator)
Joy Fields	Piedmont Triad Regional Council (alternate)
Wendi Hartup	NC Cooperative Extension (alternate)
Joey Hester	NCDA&CS Division of Soil & Water Conservation
Betty Huskins	NC Regional Councils
George Matthis	River Guardian Foundation
Holly Miller	Town of Wake Forest
Christy Perrin	Water Resources Research Institute (NCWSN Coordinator)
Gloria Putnam	NC Sea Grant
Eric Romaniszyn	Haywood Waterways Association
Rebecca Sadosky	NC Division of Water Resources, Drinking Water Protection Program
Mike Schlegel	Triangle J Council of Governments
Cy Stober	Piedmont Triad Regional Council
Stuart Taylor	Elkin Presbyterian Church
Ron Townley	Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments
Jason Wager	Centralina Council of Governments
Nicole Wilkinson	Water Resources Research Institute
Melanie Williams	NC Division of Water Resources
Mitch Woodward	NC Cooperative Extension

Open seats: business/industry, agriculture