

# INCREASING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - Thursday & Friday

**NOTE: All topics, descriptions and objectives are draft and subject to change.**

## Topic 1: Sustainable Communities Nurture Sustainable Watersheds

Issue description: Building relationships with community members who will work side-by-side with you as an ongoing partner in all of your activities will create an army of support for your mission. The result will make the community a better place to live.

Objectives: Participants will:

- Feel inspired by the successful projects and stories of others.
- Use the principles illustrated in the stories to reach out to at least one new audience, which will result in an increase in attendance, volunteers, or other participation by that audience.

## Topic 2: Engaging Students

Issue Description: Kids today lack a sense of place. They can identify exotic animals such as lions, tigers and elephants, but they are unaware of the wildlife and natural history of their local communities. Links have been made between decreased time spent outdoors and the rising rates of childhood obesity, attention disorders and depression in today's youth. Watershed councils and natural resource agencies can fill this need, providing opportunities for youth and their parents to reinvigorate their interest in outdoor recreation, while simultaneously helping them become more aware of watershed issues, and creating the next generation of engaged watershed stewards.

Objectives: Participants will:

- Evaluate the suitability of developing student programs modeled on examples of successful youth engagement programs—occurring both in-school, and during out-of-school time.
- Obtain tools to engage underserved student populations in local watershed activities; such as student monitoring, riparian restoration, and stormwater management.
- Be introduced to regional networks of informal and formal natural resource educators.

## Topic 3: Engaging Landowners

Issue description: Encouraging and rewarding good stewardship to promote species recovery can be challenging. Overcoming landowner resistance or distrust through well-planned outreach and education programs has clearly become critical in local and regional efforts to regain ecosystem resilience.

Objectives: Participants will:

- Learn several outreach methods for reaching landowners, particularly those who have resisted involvement in past local restoration projects.

- Learn the pros and cons of each outreach method.
- Identify which specific tools would be most useful and effective to employ in their area.

#### **Topic 4: Engaging Policy Makers**

**Issue Description:** How do you influence policy makers to value the role of healthy, resilient watersheds; especially in a changing climate? Challenges are significant: sidelining happens; misperceptions about an organization's roles and responsibilities may make elected officials less receptive. The technical language used in restoration work and community presentations may not match that of the community leaders or their constituents.

**Objectives:** Participants will:

- Be able to describe some of the essential elements of getting a foot in the door with community leaders.
- Be able to describe a strong council/district - policy maker relationship and use those characteristics to start out on their own or to further develop current efforts.

#### **Topic 5: Including the Public in Your Work - The Value of Volunteers**

**Issue description:** Whether you're a governmental agency or a non-profit, a dedicated corps of volunteers is vital to achieving your mission. But sometimes, it seems the effort to recruit, train and retain volunteers outweighs the benefit.

**Objectives:** Participants will:

- Be able to describe the benefits of utilizing volunteers.
- Be able to describe common pitfalls or concerns of volunteer management and how to overcome them.
- Be able to draft five different volunteer descriptions for their organization.
- Be able to brainstorm a variety of ways to recognize the accomplishments of their volunteers.
- Be inspired to explore new ways of incorporating volunteers into their projects.

#### **Topic 6: Engaging Board Members - Recruitment, Job Descriptions, and Orientation**

**Issue description:** For boards to perform effectively, they must possess collective knowledge as well as the skill to implement improvements. Organization managers need to know how to recruit members and guide them to work together even though their personal agendas may be competing. Managers must help boards find the appropriate working relationship with staff. Managers need to overcome a board's reluctance to raise money for the organization.

**Objectives:** Participants will:

- Draft volunteer board member job descriptions for their organization.
- Be able to list the responsibilities of a board member.
- Be able to recognize when a potential board member is not a good fit.
- Take back to their agencies specific tips for guiding their board to greater accomplishments.

## Topic 7: WRAP UP

Objectives: Participants and selected panel members (speakers from prior workshops in this track of topics) will engage in two-way communication to:

- Discuss issues needing clarification or not covered in individual workshops during this track.
- Answer questions not addressed in individual workshops during this track.