

### ***VACWQ Planning Session***

The VACWQ Planning Session (an afternoon breakout session) was essentially a brainstorming session which focused on how the VACWQ could help the individual watershed groups address the issues and needs cited in the morning session (see above). Due to the limited amount of time, and in an effort to streamline the discussion, the moderator suggested that the group focus on four over-arching needs that came up consistently/repeatedly in the morning session. These four over-arching needs (in no particular order) were:

- Funding
- More monitors
- Better communication
- Training

The above issues were addressed one at a time, beginning with Funding. The group was told to consider how the VACWQ – as a newly-minted, official organization with a Board of Directors and bylaws – might help its members address these issues. Despite this guidance, some of the ideas suggested were more appropriately executed on a watershed basis (this report includes all suggested ideas – not just those relevant to the CWQ).

Although most of the ideas offered were specific to the issue being addressed, there were some ideas consistent across all four issues. The idea of a sharing success stories so other members might benefit, for example was mentioned several times. Whether the stories addressed funding, recruiting, communications or training, everyone agreed that there should be some repository (CWQ's website?) for these successes so that members could learn from each other what has worked elsewhere.

Another idea that seemed to be thrown out in all four discussions was the idea of "templates." A grant application template was suggested in the Funding discussion. A letter-to-the-editor template was suggested in the Communication discussion. These templates serve several functions – they minimize having to "re-invent the wheel," they serve as an education toll for those unfamiliar with a certain process (e.g., applying for a grant) and they serve to standardize efforts among the members.

The following is a complete listing of the ideas generated for each issue:

## Funding

- A database of successful funding ideas and resources. The database could exist on the CWQ website and be contributed to (i.e., content) by individual members.
- A database of grant sources and their criteria
- *Look at/post EPA's database of the same*
- Look to family foundations as a possible funding resource
- Review DEQ's funding criteria and distribute this criteria to members
- CWQ could lobby (or coordinate a lobbying effort of) state government and its agencies for more funding to support volunteer monitoring efforts
- Lobby state officials to include the option to contribute \$1 to benefit water-related organizations on state income tax return (Colorado has successfully implemented this program)
- Hold a grant-writing workshop for members
- Provide a grant application template on CWQ's website
- Host a "Fundings' Forum" in which potential funders are invited to learn more about the VACWQ and its efforts

## More Monitors

### ***Keeping the ones you've got and bringing new ones in***

- A database of successful recruiting/retaining ideas. The database could exist on the CWQ website and be contributed to (i.e., content) by individual members.
- Communicate the lack of (geographic) coverage to the community
- Communicate the water quality to the community
- Always have a "to-do" for those who call – never turn someone away for lack of organization
- Create and distribute a newsletter with the group's latest efforts; provide contact info and distribute to entire memberships (donors, etc.)

- Use other organizations to populate your water monitoring group (e.g., Lion's Club, Rotary, etc.)
- Tap in to the (new) Virginia Master Naturalist Program for potential volunteer monitors
- Host a "stream walk" and invite local community leaders to participate

### **Communication**

- A database of successful education and outreach ideas. The database could exist on the CWQ website and be contributed to (i.e., content) by individual members.
- A full and complete membership list for CWQ with contact info
- Press release tutorial
- Press release template
- Monitor local press coverage of water-related issues and correct any misrepresentation of data with a letter to the editor
- Letter-to-the-editor template
- Use CWQ's list-serve to generate volume of mail to press
- A "how-to" on having a booth at an event (fairs, festivals, etc.)
- *How to use the booth as an outreach and education tool*
- *How to use the booth as a recruitment tool*
- Encourage use of CWQ's web site for up-to-date information and ideas
- *Provide links to local sites and member sites*
- *Provide a template for members to create their own web site (see Alliance of Virginia Watersheds)*
- Use traditional media vehicles whenever possible and as budget allows to generate awareness and understanding of watershed issues; try to implement as a Public Service Announcement to minimize costs

- *Newspaper*
- *Outdoor*
- *Television*
- *Radio*
- Create/distribute a “state-of-the-stream” report template that members can use to create an annual report of their streams’ health and provide a summary of the groups’ efforts for the year. Strategically distribute the report to those who have an influence over the watershed’s management (local government, etc.). Have both an executive summary version and a “full” version with data, tables, etc.
- Implement (re-implement?) an “Adopt-a-River” program; discuss/explore with VDOT

### **Training**

- More consistent training (time and place)
- Better communicate the existing training opportunities
- Use the EPA’s list serve to communicate training opportunities
- Expand/implement a “train-the-trainer” program
- Encourage current monitors to become trainers
- Provide a description and checklist for each type of monitoring method on the CWQ’s website
- Have an “internal” discussion among members and partners (DEQ, etc.) to uncover gaps in methodology and training; work to fill those gaps. Also, use forum to discuss what new monitoring methods are available
- Better define the various *levels* of training and methodology and how the data for each is used
- Raise funds so that each watershed would have its own watershed coordinator that would be responsible for training, administrative duties,

outreach and education, etc. *Keep in mind that people volunteer with the idea that they will be in their community's streams – not performing administrative tasks*