



Photo courtesy of www.city.kelowna.bc.ca

by **Caigan M. McKenzie**
NESCS Staff Writer

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other groups involved in watershed protection have compiled a list of 10 important watershed lessons.

To obtain a copy of the EPA fact sheet "Top 10 Watershed Lessons Learned" (EPA-840-F-97-001), call (202) 566-1155 or download a copy from the EPA Web site at www.epa.gov/owow/lessons/lessonspdfs/top10.pdf. 



The Best Plans Have Clear Visions, Goals, and Action Items

Visions must be scientifically accurate and be easily understood by the general public. They express what is to be accomplished over a specified period of time.



Good Leaders are Committed and Empower Others

Good leaders reflect the values of the community and know what will and will not work. They are good communicators, have the ability to bring about change, and are committed to making their group's vision a reality. They know how to engage, respect, and empower others and are able to find new or leverage existing resources.



A Coordinator at the Watershed Level is Desirable

Having a coordinator based within the watershed is important because it provides a focal point for the watershed effort and helps to ensure that someone is moving group activities along. The coordinator's role varies depending upon the needs of the watershed, but generally it includes maintaining contact with members of the watershed group; performing liaison with interested parties beyond the group; celebrating success; calling, facilitating, and summarizing meetings; helping to secure funding and training; and ensuring that watershed plans are developed and implemented; and achieving the desired outcomes.



Environmental, Economic, and Social Values are Compatible

Too often in the past, environmental, economic, and social issues have polarized people, making it impossible to achieve a common vision of sustainability. For the watershed approach to become a reality, there must be widespread recognition in the community that people and nature can coexist within the watershed. This can pave the way for partnerships of diverse interests to form around a sustainable vision.



Plans Only Succeed if Implemented

The greatest challenge associated with watershed planning is to ensure that the recommendations called for within a plan are implemented. A key element in implementing a plan is charging an individual or organization with the responsibility to follow through and work with key constituencies to take the actions laid out in the plan. It is also important to break things down to a manageable scale. This often involves a nested approach in which broad goals are set for large watersheds, but sub-watersheds are used to implement and achieve those goals.



Partnerships Equal Power

Essential ingredients for effective partnerships include: focusing on common interests, respecting each participant's view point, thanking each other, being willing to learn about others' needs and positions, and building trust. The important thing is to pull together a partnership that is of manageable size, creates synergy, and represents the key interests in the watershed.



Good Tools Are Available

Tools are broadly defined to include geographic information systems, how-to guides, funding sources, regulations (when appropriate), and monitoring and modeling programs. The sources of funds and technical assistance vary widely, from corporate and government to nonprofit organizations.



Measure, Communicate, and Account for Progress

Progress can be measured in many ways and communicated through meetings, brochures, Web sites, annual reports, news releases, and other ways. The important thing is to make sure that the appropriate measures of progress (often referred to as indicators) are selected and that information on these indicators is shared with relevant stakeholders.



Education and Involvement Drive Action

Public support depends upon public awareness, involvement, and education. Watershed awareness campaigns and education programs can help people who live, work, and play in a watershed understand what the problems are and how they can help remedy them.



Build on Small Successes

It is important, according to watershed practitioners, to start small and demonstrate success before working on a larger scale. For this reason, demonstration projects are often a popular choice in watershed work. In some states, small victories have been instrumental in prompting the implementation of the watershed approach statewide.