



water

4/16/21 Stakeholder Meeting Highlights

The virtual meeting was attended by 42 people.

Poll 1 Results - What sector do you represent?

Nonprofit - 47%

Government - 28%

Water User - 25%

Breakout Room # 1 Highlights: Review List of Biggest Hurdles presented on Slide 11 and copied below for reference. What hurdles are missing? Which are most important?

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

Missing:

Appreciation

- Sense of ownership and responsibility (who owns the problem?)
- Lack of care and maintenance, some communities do not have the resources
- Lack of access precludes appreciation
- Tributaries are important too and often provide better access;
- Too many people are still not aware of where their water comes from, how much it cost, what regulations are in place to protect it... so much education needed everywhere... daunting!

Funding:

- Need to fund research and knowledge development

- There are tremendous conservation opportunities that do not get funded
- More source water protection needed
- Many big funding sources focus on big ag and corporate ag, but DE Basin farmers tend to be smaller, and therefore do not get sufficient attention
- Linkage between economic development and environmental efforts - silos that don't talk to each other... people don't realize the funds that can be brought in if you can meld
- May be less expensive to go forward today with a loan, than wait for future loan
- Need dedicated funding from state and federal government
- Match requirements for funding are a problem for many
- Funding is rarely available upfront for project implementation, and many entities cannot front the costs to be reimbursed later
- Short turn around for RFPs and eligibility requirements is difficult

Collaboration

- Lack of consensus on priorities
- Lack of cohesive strategy/fractured efforts/lot of different efforts (maybe too many to keep track of)
- Lack of shared prioritization so partners can work toward same goals
- Politics (hard to remain non-partisan, or at least appear that way)
- Need regional water strategy - aimed to reach shared goals - widely shared by various decision-makers.
- Desperate need for open lines of communication and trust

Knowledge:

- Make very scientific information digestible
- Need more regarding flooding and drought
- Lack of knowledge/awareness of regulations that are protective of water quality (including drinking water); and lack of knowledge overall
- Lack of strategy and policy in addressing resilience and representation of what priorities are wrt to resilience and climate change

DEIJ:

- Need for multilingual communication
- Missing awareness about issue of diversity in the basin
- No inclusion, no diversity... may want all these things, but really need decision makers that represent everyone... part of it is the working Delaware Estuary where people and diversity of people are, that's where resources are needed... obvious lack of POC in leadership
- Lack of DEI with decision makers in the water field
- Lack of representation of impacted communities in water resource conversations

Regulations:

- May be inhibiting and setting obstacles

Miscellaneous:

- A focus on optimal project sites instead of "low-hanging fruit" opportunities- get work done where you can!

- Sharp edges of politics are a hurdle
- Missing opportunities to restructure brownfield sites... have river access, often when turn over still remain in private access, should try to include public access along with redevelopment opportunities... also wonderful opportunities for alternative energy, wind, solar, etc... need to keep this in mind, especially with new money coming through in upcoming years... with green infrastructure underneath
- We're too closed minded about region's other needs: housing, economy - integrate into thinking and need for regional planning, cross sector coordination and apply positive incentives
- Floating solar panels on reservoirs - water keeps panels cool - need to look into opportunities like that. We are fighting over priorities of the Delaware River and need to look at what's needed for the region... housing, crime, jobs, how to leverage Delaware funding with other things that we need to accomplish... integrated resource management... look at challenges as opportunities, especially for connecting to people

Most important hurdles to overcome

- Absence of shared mission and shared responsibility
- Funding for research and building knowledge base
- Might suffer from waiting for the perfect thing to do . . perhaps we need to get started and be adaptable to changing course or adding missing pieces
- Long standing historical pollution, especially in urban centers
- Biggest hurdles are long term maintenance.
- One water, integrated water management and regional, cross-sector collaboration planning - for which incentivizing is important
- Collaboration - at the end of the day if individual actors lack synergy with others, the outcomes will not be as good as possible.
- Any collaboration must be clear on roles; need for deeper trust and communication.
- Competition for funding and competing priorities
- Seeking projects that have multi-benefits
- Integrated planning (water, wastewater, education, etc.)
- Internal capacity to apply for funds and administer grants (organizations need capacity to access and manage projects with start up and planning and funding. Reimbursement approach, required matches, admin of grants and turnaround times are challenging for many.

Break out # 2 notes. 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?

Nonprofits



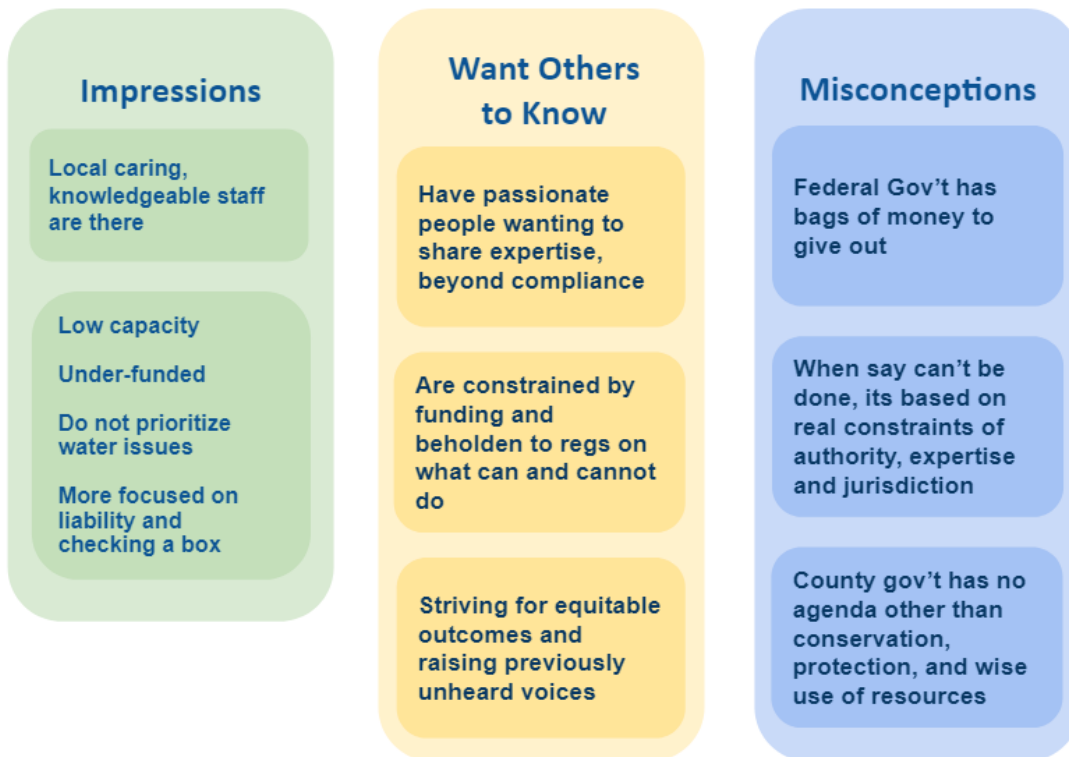
Nonprofits

Are you surprised by anything stated above? Do the findings hold true for you? Do you now feel more aware of nonprofit sector perspectives?

- Not surprised, findings generally hold true
- Cuts across all - not a one size fits all analysis within each category- may not be fair to generalize within these categories
- Funding constraints are not limited to non-profits
- Nonprofits may have difficulty saying "no" to projects when a donor is funding it, or it's an opportunity to advance goals of membership
- Misconceptions: Non profits have resources aligned to priorities and staff are generally running flat out to get the existing work done, being called last minutes to participate is often difficult. Time is our most critical resource
- We get asked to do a lot of things that aren't necessarily funded or value added or help us get to our goal
- NGOs that are good at raising money still might not be getting funding for overhead costs
- In addition to competing for limited resources there is also a lack of collaborative communications

- If someone is the lead, let them lead. Avoid duplication of efforts. Communicate more collaboratively, support, and amplify, instead of compete. Raise others up.
- Don't see misconceptions from funding perceptions; although most are not interested in loan money; they are interested in grants and may need to gather a patchwork to move projects forward
- There is a wide spectrum of non-profits with a wide-range of skills. They shouldn't be painted with a broad brush
- It is difficult for non-profits to find compromise and also represent their constituency

Government



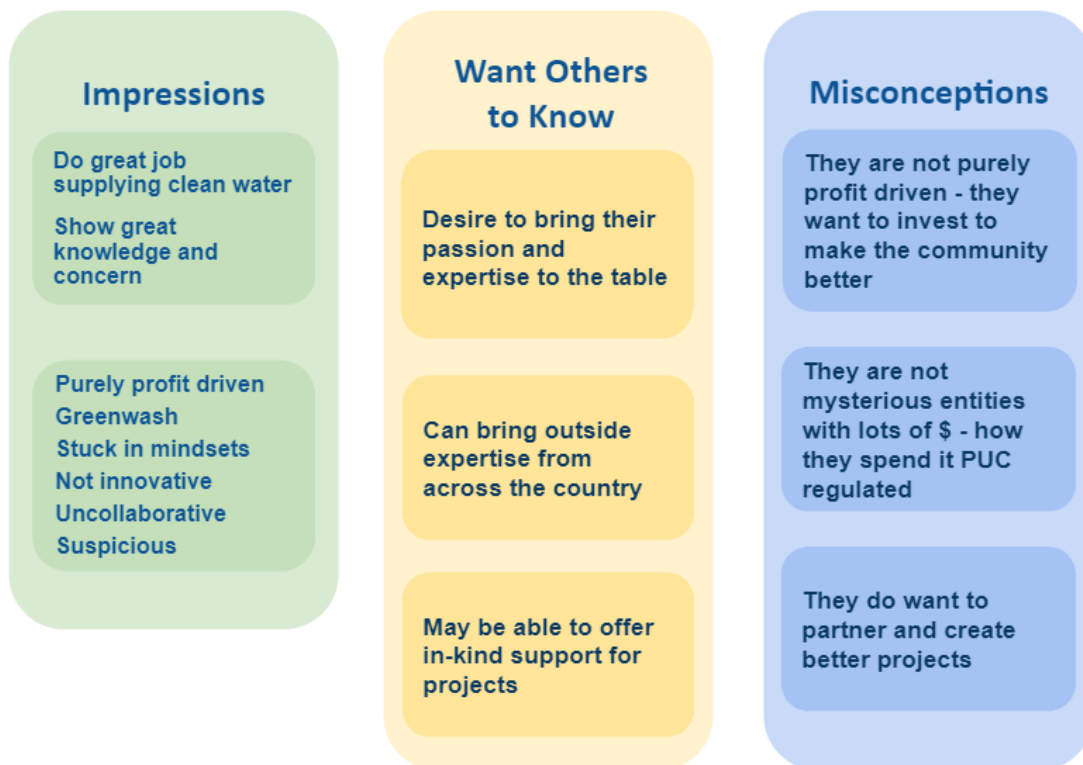
Governments

Are you surprised by anything stated above? Do the findings hold true for you? Do you now feel more aware of government sector perspectives?

- Learned from these descriptions - a sense of frustration - lot of pressures from many different directions (perhaps amplified by polarization of our socio political environment)
- Staff have feeling that they can make a difference in the governmental role
- Silos and communication are a challenge - and can this project help facilitate that
- Silos are also found among agencies and internally within agencies, such as EPA, DEP, DOT
- Get people out, in person, to have conversations. Face to face meetings facilitate better outcomes
- Not surprising, holds true
- Stress awareness of limitations of government

- There is a disconnect between regulators and legislators. Takes a lot of coordinated action for change
- More robust planning structure would help, allow more flexibility
- So much variety across agencies, states, levels - hard to put in one bucket
- Consider cross state financing to benefit larger goals - considering in the Bay...
- Reliable, consistent source of funding that anyone could go to access for water quality projects... more of a watershed approach
- Governments may influence even if they can't regulate or require
- Administration changes can cause delay in implementation
- Surprised by low capacity comment
- Government sector has more ways to push boundaries for innovation, they are not as constrained as described in the slides

Water Users



Water Users

Are you surprised by anything stated above? Do the findings hold true for you? Do you now feel more aware of water user perspectives?

- What kind of in kind support can the water sector offer?
- Water users surprised by negative impressions
- Public have impression that tap water is not clean, safe
- Nonprofits sometimes pitted against water suppliers and other utilities, when the utilities would want to partner. There is a false narrative of what utilities care about. DISINFORMATION

- Regulated utilities plan to do replacements, municipal systems might not... difference between regulated and non regulated
- Not sure what the invitation is to engage - what's available
- Missing things we can do upstream to improve water quality downstream - doesn't really prove out unless there is a particular contaminant (ex crypto)
- In-kind activity resonated - can provide people for volunteering, land, etc.
- Organization always tries to do well by doing good for communities they serve
- It's important to emphasize national basis/reach of water purveyors
- Surprised that innovation is listed; critical to running a successful business
- Lack of understanding by general public regarding how agriculture uses water
- There is an under-appreciation of both the ag and water user sector
- Discussed working for utilities/water users. Things that would help us collaborate would be less restriction on rate-payer spending from PUC, more requirements for source water protection work, and a realization by nonprofits that we are a source for technical expertise to help with projects. We are doing what we can within the constraints put on us, and we are willing to listen to community ideas.

Overall: Participants felt as though the slides well-represented what occurs in the real world, but that there is a variety among organizations and it is often hard to generalize all organizations by sector.

Poll #2 How many cross-sectoral collaborations are you engaged with?

0: 0%

1-2: 15%

3-4: 24%

5+: 55%

Not sure: 6%

Highlighted Chat Comments:

"I'm hearing a lot about the need for a widely shared strategy and true collaboration in decision-making. NJ has found that the Jersey Water Works collaborative has built trust and shared goals among many water stakeholders along with better data sharing on progress. We haven't tackled formal change in decision-making processes/roles though. Under discussion now is a proposal from UTCA for a statewide five-year State Water Investment Strategy, which is one step in that direction."

"Jersey Water Works is an AMAZING resource/network for those of you who aren't familiar:
<https://www.jerseywaterworks.org/>"