

Strategic Steps for the Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers (DRAFT)

Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers
130 Locust Street, Suite 200
Harrisburg, PA 17101
www.pawatersheds.org
717.230.8044

Introduction and background

A new agreement between PEC and POWR in 2008 has stimulated an effort to reinvigorate POWR and more specifically identify a path forward to greater impact on the environment. Part of this was driven by a strategic planning consultant, Andy Robinson, from the Institute for Conservation Leadership who helped lay out the alternatives to POWR's board of directors. His advice included merging POWR with another organization. PEC was selected and an agreement signed in early 2008. Moving forward PEC is undergoing a rapid assessment and deployment of strategies to fully execute this merger. In particular, PEC is seeking to select which programs to continue, which programs to emphasize and grow, and which ones to retire. In the process, the effort will also focus on engaging the board of directors of POWR, as well as the membership with meetings, interviews, and regional events.

Current working environment

With the economic fallout of severe market losses in late summer and early fall 2008, the economic situation for most nonprofit organizations has been negatively affected, especially through lower donations, grants, and financial support. These trends will likely last for at least 12 to 18 months, though the impacts will probably be felt for several years longer. Consequently, nonprofits must be even more judicious about which programs to support with precious funding, and how to demonstrate real social impact so as to maintain supporters, volunteers, and public trust. In Pennsylvania, the impacts have been just as great, with housing declines, and sizable losses in 401k programs decreasing the ability of all people to donate to nonprofits. The watershed associations, which are more typically led by volunteers, maintained with small budgets, and precariously positioned for long-term sustainability, these times are likely frightening. POWR has chosen to merge with PEC for reasons not unrelated to these economic trends and will hopefully benefit from the relationship.

Further, in Pennsylvania, environmental trends continue to demand engagement from citizens' groups, particularly watershed associations. With increased emphasis on finding and extracting energy sources, Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale and the natural gas deposits within have proved to be very attractive to energy companies. Unfortunately, the impact on water quality is at best uncertain, and at worst, harbors a grave impact. Tens of thousands of stream miles in PA are impaired. Sediment, acid mine drainage, sewage and other pollution continue to depress the water quality in the state with the second highest number of streams and rivers next to Alaska. Land trusts and other conservation organizations have long been involved in watershed work, and continue to partner with many local watershed associations. While land trusts have focused on protection of upland areas, watershed associations have often focused on monitoring and stream bank restoration. POWR must evaluate and determine the best allocation of organizational resources for the

short term – monitoring, technical information, and support for similar activities, or broader watershed advocacy on water quality statewide, leveraging its grassroots network.

With the continuing need for nonprofit advocacy, education, and conservation projects, nonprofits are not going anywhere soon. However, given the financial situation, they are being called upon to trim budgets, depend on less funding, and find new sources of funding wherever possible. Those groups with diversified revenue sources will weather the storm better, but everyone will have to tighten their belts. POWR’s funding sources are somewhat diversified, with the stable insurance program and modest membership dues.

Foundations make grants based on the size of their endowments, most typically funding just with the interest income from growth in stocks, bonds, and other elements of their investment portfolio. This enables them to maintain a solid base of capital that will persist for a long time. Unfortunately, global stock markets have declined as high as 40% just in the last year. In 2006 and 2007, declines were smaller but important. As a result, most foundations are not confronted with a choice: reduce the total number or the average size of the grants they offer. Governments at all levels, including Pennsylvania’s state and county governments are all hurting as well. Many are leaving vacant positions vacant in order to close budget shortfalls. Others are taking more drastic steps to close facilities and eliminate programs. In Philadelphia for example, the shortfall is so great that many libraries are slated to be closed for 2009. Some public grant programs will be affected particularly those that use general tax revenue to support the grantmaking. Others, which are dependent upon bonded revenues may survive, but will certainly be scrutinized closely. POWR and its member organizations depend significantly upon public grants. Assisting watershed associations through this difficult time will be a valuable service that POWR can provide.

Competitive Environment

From the perspective of the citizenry of Pennsylvania, the Commonwealth is blessed with a plethora of conservation and community organizations focused on quality of life and environmental issues. Unfortunately, from an individual organization’s perspective, this plethora becomes a crowded field of competitors and partners – often one and the same. Indeed, a 2007 survey found that members and partners were unclear about POWR’s niche within the conservation community. Organizations compete for a finite pool of funding from a limited number of foundations and grantmakers, donors, and volunteers. In addition, there is competition for media and public awareness of who is “leading” on any particular issue. This is less an issue at the state level, as there are fewer statewide organizations with directly overlapping program and issue focus. The few organizations with strong conservation focus, significant activities, and impact at the state level include:

Organization / Agency	Technical Information	Advocacy	Membership services	Education	Events	Other issues
Pennsylvania Environmental Council		**	*	***	**	Strong focus on innovative programs (e.g., EACs)
POWR	***		*		*	Insurance program for watershed associations
PennFuture		*** (including legal work)	**	***	**	Energy, water, air, mining, health
PennEnvironment		***				Energy, water, air, global warming
PA Campaign for Clean Water		***				Partnerships, buffers 100 campaign
Clean Water Fund / Clean Water Action		***	**	*		
PA Land Trust Alliance		***	***	**	*	Annual conference

Chesapeake Bay Foundation		**	**	**	*	
PA Trout Unlimited			**	***	***	
PA DEP	***					Regulatory body
PA Fish and Boat Commission				*	*	Law enforcement and regulations
PA DCNR	*			*	*	Grants and programs; park and forest management
PA TOPGEO	***					GIS clearinghouse
US EPA Region III	***			**		Grants and educational programs

* Current activity or program

**Strong emphasis area for organization


***Top priority for activities and programs

Other regional organizations with strong leadership include:

- Land Trusts with strong watershed focus (Western PA Conservancy, Natural Lands Trust, Wildlands Conservancy, and Heritage Conservancy)
- Western PA Watersheds Protection Program
- Delaware Riverkeeper
- Susquehanna Greenway Partnership

POWR Program Analysis

The following table identifies specific POWR programs, both current and proposed, and measures them broadly against two variables: financial viability and mission impact. This analysis is designed to gauge program effectiveness while accounting for the ability of the organization to support it financially. Those that fall in the “high viability, high impact” are sure winners, while those that fall in the “low viability, low impact” should be scheduled to cease. Those in the remaining two sectors need to be evaluated further to determine if there are possible changes that will “move” the program into a more effective arena.

	Low to High Financial Viability 	
Low to High mission impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Watersheds Data System* • Watershed Weekly newsletter • Watershed directory of watersheds and associations • Municipal outreach on storm water/sewers** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Sojourns • Stream Maps • Water quality advocacy ** • State bond support (GGIII and water/sewer infrastructure)** • Education programs**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization development tools • Job postings for members * • Creating webpages for members* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Liability insurance to members
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* indicates program proposed for elimination or transfer to other organization

** indicates new proposed program

Organizational Structure

With the agreement between PEC and POWR, POWR has become a 509(a)3 supporting organization of PEC, with PEC the sole member of POWR, and therefore holding control over selection of the board of directors. Watershed associations are “associate members” and do not vote. This relationship is not an unfamiliar one for PEC, which has held and continues to maintain this relationship with several other conservation organizations. For POWR, the board remains intact, though it will no longer have any dedicated staff. Staff of PEC provide administrative support as well as act as Executive Director of POWR. Strategically, the PEC-POWR relationship should be used to achieve statewide water resource protection aims by leveraging the joint grassroots organizing efforts of both organizations.

Membership

POWR is at its heart a grassroots membership-driven organization. It aims to leverage this membership into a powerful base of local organizations focused on protection of streams and rivers of the Commonwealth. Members are not limited by number, issue focus, or any other factor. Of the several hundred current members, POWR draws from a range of organizational size, geography, and focus. The current benefits of membership, which costs \$30, including the following:

- General liability insurance for watershed organizations at the cost of about \$300 per year. This enables the many smaller organizations to provide recreational events on their targeted waters without worry of liability. The reduced rates are the result of the umbrella effect of POWR and are a powerful incentive for participation. This is a valuable program, one that provides a steady stream of income to POWR and should likely be continued.
- Members are supposed to have access to job postings, but it is unclear how they access the postings or what the added value is to members. Presumably these postings can be found on other conservation or environmentally-focused job boards. This is not much of a service to members at this point and should probably be dropped from the membership benefits claim.
- Similarly, POWR’s website claims to provide the means to develop webpages for membership. This seems like a good idea, but it is unclear how members can access this tool, or even if any have done so. Many members have websites already, and so few would likely need new websites. This was probably a good benefit as watershed associations were forming, but probably is less of a value currently.
- Organization development tools are another member benefit, but the tools provided on the website appear to be simply a publication that we charge for anyway, and which can be downloaded for free from the website. If there were additional mentoring, development or consulting services we could provide that would add real value to member organizations, I would encourage it.

Current Programs

POWR has just a couple of major program areas including the sojourns, its insurance program, and the PA Watersheds Data System. In addition, POWR had been producing a weekly newsletter (last produced in fall 2007), maintaining a database of watersheds and watershed associations, and selling stream maps (for \$26-\$47 each) through its website.

Sojourns

The sojourns are the flagship program for POWR and have now been occurring for a decade in some areas. With about a dozen statewide each year, the sojourns provide a high profile water-focused recreation and education event. These events, led by local organizations with POWR's central leadership and grant funding from DNCR, are well-established and nearly sustainable in most cases. The events involve several days of river paddling and education events with at least one overnight. POWR develops and prints a poster highlighting the River of the Year and distributing it statewide. The general consensus for the future direction of the sojourn program is to aim for self-sufficiency at the local level by 2010. This is to say that we will aim to empower the current local leading organizations to seek and develop their own funding in order to administer the program. POWR could still play a central role in advocating for sojourns to take place, and perhaps to produce the poster, but it would reduce its administrative role in seeking grants and executing the program.

Insurance

The second major program area of POWR's is its insurance program. As mentioned above, membership in POWR enables the organization access to reduced rates for general liability insurance. This is an important program for small, often volunteer only watershed associations with limited budgets. If not for the GL insurance, these groups would find it increasingly difficult to host recreational events with participants on their rivers and streams. The insurance program is good financially for POWR and should continue so long as there are no important problems with the program itself and participation remains high. There are very few other membership or statewide conservation organizations that provide a similar service. This could be a growth area for POWR if it was interested in doing so, it might find additional participants in the broader conservation community.

PA Watersheds Data System

Finally, the third major program area is the PA Watersheds Data System. This technical information clearinghouse on water quality and pollution draws from monitoring stations and volunteer collectors across the states. Members submit information to POWR which helps collect and organize the information into a single database system on water quality. The incredibly complex online system is a powerful idea, but is a time consuming venture with questionable value. Without an emphasis on advocacy, either at the local or state level, monitoring programs are complex volunteer activities and have little power to address problems in water quality once identified. It is important to note that *water quality monitoring is essential to a fully functioning statewide water resource program*. However, POWR's best strategy is to help transfer coordination of this program to an organization or entity with large resources and technical know-how, such as Penn State or another university, or even Stroud Water Resources Center.

New Efforts

There are some new programs, which could significantly expand the positive impact of POWR across the state. And while all would by nature involve creating a new program to augment existing programs, most would be natural evolutions of existing core capacities.

Member services

One very important area for growth and improvement is member services. These services have largely been provided through the POWR website via a members-only access point. It is recommended here that that

restriction is removed until the membership is revived considerably. It is not likely that we will lose significant membership revenue from “free riders.” In the past, a weekly newsletter was a core part of member services, but has not been published in more than 18 months. A previous survey of members indicated that it faced stiff competition among many other organization’s newsletters. Renewing a newsletter in some form could be a positive addition to member services if the information provided was important, timely, and available nowhere else. A monthly or quarterly electronic newsletter would be a useful method for engaging and retaining members, as well as educating them about current issues. Previously, member services included offering a website. This should be dropped as very few organizations took advantage of the opportunity, and as a highly technical service, it would be difficult to provide given current staffing at POWR. Finally, member services also ostensibly included access to job listings and organizational development materials. Both of these remain useful benefits that POWR could provide to its members. However, listing jobs on the website requires constant updating and becomes staff intensive. Consequently, we should simply provide a listing of useful websites and sources for job sources. The organizational development materials currently provided on the website are still quite relevant and should continue to be offered to members. These materials could be greatly expanded upon by posting articles and publications, as well as other resources, organizations, events, etc. that our members might like to take advantage of.

Water quality advocacy

One of the most important avenues for program growth is in advocacy at the state level. To date, POWR has focused primarily on grassroots organizing, efforts that have been greatly successful in establishing watershed groups across the state. Now, POWR is poised to take advantage of this network to advocate for positive legislation and policy at the state level that will protect and enhance water resources across the state. By building upon PEC’s extensive relationship within the land trust community, POWR could add sustainable agriculture, acid mine drainage advocates and others to create a tremendous force for change. For instance, a coalition was recently formed called Buffers 100, which is advocating for a statewide law protecting PA’s streams with a 100 foot buffer. The initiative to pass this legislation was launched in 2007 by the Pennsylvania Campaign for Clean Water. POWR should work to take a leadership role in this effort to expand protection of Pennsylvania’s streams and waterways and could do so either through efforts like Buffers 100 or its own initiatives.

Education

One recommended expansion would target the highly successful Sojourns by adding statewide educational programming, as well as encouraging local organizations to expand their own year round educational programs directly associated with their Sojourns. In the next five years, the Sojourns themselves will need to become financially self-sufficient as DCNR funding support will end with the 2009 Sojourn season. These programs could target specific environmental issues in each watershed, as well as an “issue of the year” that would be used to tie together watershed problems statewide. For example, acid mine drainage would likely be an important topic in one watershed, while restoration of riparian buffers would get the most attention in another. Statewide, POWR could focus on one issue of importance, raising awareness through collateral materials, press releases, events, media and news.

Statewide funding

In 2008, Commonwealth voters passed a \$400 million bond initiative focused on repairing ailing water and sewer infrastructure across the state. With overwhelming support, the measure passed, and the state’s Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has been working on implementation since November 2008. POWR is well-placed to provide authoritative advice to DEP and other implementing agencies such as PennVest on how and where best to spend the bond funding. This program would be a centrally driven, while leveraging the grassroots nature of the POWR network. It would also offer a natural partnership between PEC and POWR to tap their respective grassroots members. In addition, existing open space funding will be exhausted in the coming year or so. While the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association and other land trusts are already gearing up for another bond referendum – the so-called Growing Greener III –

POWR could play an important role in advocating for continued open space funding by focusing on the links between land conservation and watershed protection.

Strategic choices

POWR, like any organization nonprofit or otherwise would benefit from a conscious strategic choice about the business model it adopts. This model can change over time, but it should always be part of any strategic planning process to either affirm, reject, or evolve the current business model. Right now, POWR is functioning as a membership organization of watershed associations, with minimal central programming and a focus on a limited set of services for its members. As a “trade association” for watershed groups, POWR could be better at providing services to those members, and renewed effort to understand member needs is essential for long term productive relationship between POWR and its members.

Still, a membership association that does not leverage the power of its base fails to utilize its one great asset. In POWR’s case, expanded advocacy on behalf of its members, and using those members to fight for needed policy, would be a good strategic choice going forward. This is not to say that POWR should transform into a traditional “advocacy group” in the mold of Greenpeace or Sierra Club. Rather, without a central effort on behalf of members, a membership organization will lack the vitality and strength to gain new, sustained funding and support, let alone members themselves.

In the past, POWR has served a lead role in accumulating and coordinating the collection of technical information on water quality in Pennsylvania’s streams and waters. This highly specialized effort has been productive, but is also very time and resource-intensive. Consequently, it would be in the best interest of POWR to shift the leadership role for this effort to Penn State or another technically capable entity. Finally, with financial problems hitting many organizations, POWR could play a lead organizing role in the merging of watershed groups with land trusts. This effort would help consolidate the landscape of conservation organizations in Pennsylvania, simplifying for funders and the public who does what, where. The 2007 survey indicated that 47% of all respondents – and 52% of local watershed associations – already work with local land trusts with more than 40% helping to monitor properties. The watershed groups and land trusts may not be merging formally, though they are clearly working together. POWR’s role in facilitating that could be a powerful and useful one. Some other comments from the survey offer important insight into the overall strategic direction POWR could take.

- *“They don’t have an identity or mission that’s distinct from their constituents. I’m not sure what POWR is these days.”*
- *“Are they a trade association? I’d like to see them move beyond services to advocacy; they’re still trying to figure out their niche.”*
- *“They could be a powerful entity on legislative work.”*
- *“They’ve had a tough time branding themselves. POWR could be the lead organization on a water policy agenda. They missed an opportunity to take on an advocacy role with the state, but I don’t know if their members would let them [do that].”*
- *“I’d like to see a broader program to engage the grassroots: implementing river plans, training, a clearinghouse for information.”*
- *“They are a potential ‘convener with gravitas’ for the watershed movement...Focus on water policy change, not just a clearinghouse function.”*

Performance Metrics

Management gurus for years have said that “you can’t manage what you can’t measure.” Unfortunately, many nonprofits fail to heed the wisdom of private sector, for profit experts. Most nonprofits claim that they cannot quantify success, or measure the impact of their programs. For some time now, funders in particular have not accepted that as a useful answer to the question, “how are you doing?”

Performance measures are therefore a crucial element of any strategic document, providing transparency to funders and supporters, as well as providing internal guideposts for staff to track their performance against. POWR’s performance as a watershed membership organization and advocacy group could be measured by some of the metrics listed below.

Program

- Ratio of stream miles restored to impaired stream miles
- Number of recreation and education events
- Number of participants at those events
- % of PA’s waters “covered” by our members

Organization

- Number of new members each year
- Membership satisfaction with POWR (as measured by short survey)

Development

- Public media hits (newspaper, radio, television, blogs)
- Funding spent on programs (or % spent on overhead)

Conclusions

POWR has seen some difficulty over the past few years maintaining the enthusiasm of its membership beyond its flagship program, the Sojourns. Now, with a fresh new partnership with the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, it is poised to reinvigorate its programs, develop new ones, and increase its impact on Pennsylvania’s waters. It will do this through the following:

- Improvement and expansion of members services
- New participation in advocacy at the state and grassroots level for water resource protection
- Leveraging POWR and PEC’s grassroots network to support state conservation funding
- Shifting burdensome programs to other organization better suited to the task
- Building the brand image of POWR through updated website and other materials

Action Steps

Action Item	Who's Responsible	Due Date
A. Programs:		
Create advocacy agenda		In process
Transfer monitoring program to partner organization		
Meet with Buffers 100 leadership		
Meet with DEP/DCNR leadership on bond funding		Attended briefings 4/14/09
Develop Sojourn financial sustainability plan		
Investigate expansion of insurance program		Complete 4/25/09
Update brochure on insurance program		In process
B. Membership and Board:		
Hold board meeting(s) as necessary		
Survey current members and partner organizations		
Develop and promote enhanced membership services		Complete 4/17/09
Consolidate contact information into master database and update information, especially email		Complete 4/15/09 (ongoing effort)
C. Technology:		
Revise and publish updated website		Complete 3/25/09
Create blog, Flickr, MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube accounts		Complete 3/25/09
Accept donations online		Complete 4/05/09
Develop and implement improved email contact lists for board and membership		Complete 4/15/09 (ongoing effort)
D. Marketing:		
Write joint marketing and communications plan with PEC		In process
Evaluate use of POWR name and explore alternatives		In process
Investigate electronic newsletter alternatives (e.g., Constant Contact)		Complete 4/12/09
Develop tagline and reexamine logo		In process
Revitalize use of www.greenmediatoolshed.com for using media contacts		Complete 4/21/09
E. Development:		
Review funding opportunities with PEC staff		
Write three year financial strategy / business plan		
Meet with funders		
Write grant applications		DCNR completed 4/22/09

Next Steps for Pennsylvania's Sojourn Program

Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers
130 Locust Street, Suite 200
Harrisburg, PA 17101
www.pawatersheds.org
717.230.8044

With nine years and over \$ 950,000 in DCNR grant-supported Sojourns completed, this report outlines a brief summary of the program, identifies key successes, and makes recommendations for improvements. While often not recognized as such, this program is nationally unique, a set of paddling trips on major rivers across the state facilitated by local organizations that engages thousands of individuals and hundreds of for profit and nonprofit organizations. No other state has as many paddling trips organized in a similar fashion. With almost 20 years of Sojourn history in Pennsylvania, these paddling trips have proven to be an enduring conservation, recreation and education program and due care must be exercised to help determine its future. As with any successful program, it cannot remain static, but must adapt to new circumstances.

Each year, between 12 and 17 paddling events are supported through the program managed by DCNR and POWR, encompassing over 500 river miles, 50+ on-the-water days, and engaging over 4,000 people. Since 2006, 53 Sojourns have taken place on 2,343 river miles, and reaching over 20,000 participants. POWR has distributed nearly \$280,000 in DCNR grant funding in the last four years alone, and leveraged over \$1,000,000 in other revenue and in-kind services in the same time. Some events actually return close to four or five fold, while others return just one to one. Some Sojourns have been able to secure small grants and contributions from businesses to help defray costs. However these grants and contributions do not make up a large portion of the total funding support (16% total in 2008). Registration fees (37% in 2008) are the primary source of additional funding for Sojourns. These fees, which range up to \$80 per river-day have been increased over the years as costs rise for Sojourn logistics and organization. Our recent post-Sojourn survey has indicated that while cost was indeed a factor in their Sojourn planning, current registration fees are in the acceptable range.

We have also enjoyed millions of web hits, dozens of news articles, and a wealth of blog posts and photos posted online, all highlighting the Sojourns in just the past few years. With the consistency of local organizers and their relationships with outfitters and media, there is an incredibly strong base of support for the events. We also typically have a range of dignitaries including Mayor Nutter from Philadelphia, DCNR Secretary Quigley, state legislators, and others attending and speaking at Sojourn opening and closing ceremonies. All this speaks to the very strong network of local and state leaders that the events draw upon.

Sojourn Recommendations

The sojourns are a flagship program for the local organizers as well as POWR and DCNR, and they provide high profile water-focused recreation and education events. In order to continue to enjoy the benefits of this program, we would like to make the following recommendations for the future:

- **Funding.** Continue grant funding at \$900 per water day; limited to 12 Sojourn events per year in order to provide adequate funding, and assuming flat funding from DCNR grant support. Additional funding would be disbursed as \$500 grants to encourage single-day events on smaller rivers with reduced educational programming demands.
- **Theme.** Develop annual statewide theme for Sojourn education and communications. Ask organizers to commit to specific conservation goals and outcomes of Sojourn events related to this theme. We propose to focus on the 40th anniversary of Earth Day for the 2010 Sojourns.
- **Education.** Improve year-round tie-in to Sojourn educational activities by requiring local organizers to provide a 12-month agenda of at least four (4) river-connected events/activities/programming. These would not have to be new activities, but organizers could “connect the dots” to the central message and themes of the Sojourns through existing activities.

- **Registration.** Create centralized registration and grant application system to reduce administrative time requirements and errors, as well as improve communications and tracking of participants. There will be a real cost to this, but it should fit within the administrative portion of POWR's grant and will ultimately save money.
- **Marketing.** Make better use of cross promotional efforts through social networking to raise the profile of Sojourns and build of a community of participants and conservationists. New database of participants (~3,000 email contacts) will be leveraged to reach people about events long before registration occurs. Continue to produce small tri-fold brochure about Sojourns for broad distribution. Promote annual theme through these marketing outlets.
- **Insurance.** Continue to provide ACA insurance program to local organizers who desire it. Continue to required insurance for all Sojourn events.

River of the Year Recommendations

- **Selection.** Create a public process for nominating and selecting the ROY using online or email voting. This could help build support for a particular river as well as encourage statewide participation and develop "ownership" of the ROY. The designated River of the Year should potentially include smaller rivers like the Yellow Breeches or Pennypack, especially since there isn't currently a strong connection between ROY and Sojourns. Selection should be done during the summer of the previous year, after the Sojourn season in July or August). The lead organization should be officially designated by DCNR to coordinate ROY events and activities through an application process that would include a proposal for 12 months of activities. It should be structured like an traditional grant process for the additional \$10,000. This would give grantees 4 months to develop events before announcement of the ROY in Jan/Feb.
- **ROY Guide.** DCNR and POWR should develop a simple ROY activity guide (3-7 pages), which would be given to the organization identified as chiefly responsible for implementing the activities. The guide would outline a list of possible events, educational programming, and means for raising awareness about the river.
- **Poster Coordination.** POWR should continue to coordinate the ROY poster production process, in conjunction with DCNR and the local organizer. Make "green" printing the standard approach for all future ROY posters. Require ROY organization to provide 5-10 selected images for use in the poster.
- **Poster Review.** Reduce the time required to review poster designs by providing two (2) proof reviews by DCNR and partner organizations (1st proof and final proof). ROY organizer will provide proposed images for use in the poster through their application process. Ultimately, the artistic design process is one best left to professional vendors and contractors, and review should focus on content, not colors, fonts, etc.
- **Distribution.** Provide bulk copies to DCNR and local organizers in April. Provide single copies through on-demand printer with all costs covered by \$5,000 ROY poster grant. Scan older posters at high resolution and make them available online for free with printed versions offered at cost (printing plus shipping and handling).

Moving Forward

An important aspect of the Sojourn program is its ability to reach people, educate them and inspire them to take action in their own watershed, both privately and publicly. For instance, many – though not all- of the people who attend Sojourns are not "environmental novices," but rather have a solid basic knowledge of conservation. That means we can provide a second (and slightly higher) level of educational programming that more directly spurs them into action. In other words, we are not simply exposing people to conservation issues. Instead, we are helping provide conservationists and activists with the information and tools to help guide positive conservation steps within their community, watershed association, EAC, school, or volunteer group. Ultimately, we are building lasting watershed conservationists through aquatic recreation; an extraordinarily important strategy and the Sojourns are an effective way for us to achieve statewide conservation.

Developing an Online Watershed Learning Center

PA Organization for Watersheds and Rivers
130 Locust Street, Suite 200
Harrisburg, PA 17101
www.pawatersheds.org
learn.pawatersheds.org

Background

In recent years, online education at all levels has exploded as technology improvements have made it easier to manage and distribute materials online. At the same time, people have grown more confident in distance learning and the public has become more appreciative as the quality of instruction has risen. Many other top tier schools have added online coursework, moderated and led by professors, but guided through the steps by webhosted software applications like Blackboard.

In the conservation community, training and continuing education is traditionally done through conferences or in-person courses. These can be highly effective, occasionally expensive, and almost always logistically difficult. Training by nature means staff must put projects on hold and leave their offices to learn about issues or strategies.

There are a lot of good resources for learning online if you take the time to find them. EPA and others have good documents posted on their websites for watershed learning. However, there are two primary problems with the information local watershed organizations can find to inform their work. First, the information is typically static, out of date, and there is no interactivity to stimulate thinking, discussion or engagement. Most conservation organizations offer publications on their websites or at least by email if requested. But for a watershed association it can be confusing to look for information in multiple places. At best they are typically a few years out of date. At worst, they can be incorrect.

Second, these sites typically focus only on conservation or ecology, and do not provide any information on management, planning, or organizational development. Organizations need support in this area as much as in the science of conservation. The information is available on some foundation sites, as well as at a few good nonprofits like Bridgespan and others focused on assisting nonprofits.

Ultimately though, none of this information is well-organized into a “learning” environment. For instance, lots of documents, brochures, and flyers offer information about riparian buffers, but nothing exists for a watershed association board member to take a one hour course on understanding buffers and what an association could do to protect them, where they can engage their peers, get connected with other information and be challenged to retain what they’ve learned. The current structure of the information means that there is no logical progression from topic to topic, nor is there an ability to track results. Further, there is no interaction among students, unless a public forum, event, or class is offered, which of course, costs much more money than a free, online, self-guided course.

Our role

We’ve discovered a free, shareware version of these software applications that is highly-regarded and extremely adaptable for our purposes called Moodle. It has been installed, tested, and example courses uploaded into the system at <http://learn.pawatersheds.org>. The online learning environments allow for exceptional customization. A single course might include a dozen pages of topical information, several quizzes of varying lengths, opportunities to upload student documents or papers, links to other websites, PowerPoint slides, and PDF documents. Within the community, students can “chat” with each other, view a shared calendar, track their progress on various courses and exams, and blog about their experiences.

POWR has led efforts among the water conservation community in Pennsylvania over the decades to train and educate leaders on both organizational issues, as well as programmatic and resource-based issues. Over the years, we have implemented leadership training programs and developed a highly popular Organizational Development Handbook for watershed associations. We aim to continue this effort, and elevate our impact through the *Creation*

and Development of an Online Watershed Learning Center (WLC). We believe we can add significant value to our members and the water conservation community by serving as a central resource for learning about issues, threats, and organizational development. Further, we believe we can do this with greater impact for very little investment of funding and time, using our existing capacities and leveraging our extensive partnerships. We also plan on implementing this WLC in stages, adding courses whenever possible, and focusing in the first year on course content, while leaving heightened moderation and teaching for out-years. In other words, initially, our efforts will be driven by gathering and translating existing information into proper coursework materials.

Proposed Scope of Work

This project entails creating an online learning center specifically for POWR members to educate themselves about watersheds, protection and monitoring efforts, and organizational development and management. Our Center would draw information from widely available sources and compress that information to make it more appropriate to our member audiences (and potential students).

In addition to developing course content themselves, POWR staff will recruit “teachers” from the conservation community who have already developed materials and present regularly to audiences around the state. See attached listing of courses. These individuals would include teachers and lawyers at PEC, as well as leaders and consultants within the conservation community. Nearly all of their content is freely available currently, and we would only ask permission for use, or request their involvement in developing the online content. For the latter, we will offer \$5,000 stipends for their time to convert their materials and become engaged in the online community for a minimum number of hours.

Project Deliverables

1. Online Watershed Learning Center (located at <http://learn.pawatersheds.org>), accessible only to dues-paying members
2. Over 3 dozen self-guided, comprehensive 1 to 2 hour courses, with more that could be added at any time

Project Outcomes

1. Single center for watershed education
2. Increased organizational capacity for positive conservation action
3. Stepwise improvements to organizational lifecycle
4. More educated watershed association members and leadership
5. Interactivity among associations and members

Future Opportunities and Growth

If this project is successful over the next two years, we would consider expanding it to include specific modules for municipal officials, as well as for high school, middle school and elementary school students. Again, there are good resources available for these audiences, but are too often difficult to find, and not properly structured to facilitate consistent and progressive learning.

Budget

This budget is focused on Year 1 expenses, largely start up costs. Financial sustainability would be achieved through membership fees (200 members at \$100 each would yield \$20,000 annually for teacher stipends).

Expenses	Amount	Revenues	Amount
POWR staff salaries	15,000	WREN	5,000
Contracted teachers		US EPA	15,000
\$5,000 per teacher X 20 courses	100,000	Claniel Foundation	10,000
Office supplies	250	PA DEP	15,000
Publicity & communications	750	Tremaine Foundation	25,000
		Lattner Foundation	30,000
		Wallace Foundation	15,000

Watershed Learning Center Project Proposal

Total	\$116,000	Total	\$116,000

Partners

- PA Organization for Watersheds and Rivers
- Pennsylvania Environmental Council
- Water Resources Education Network
- Non-point source education for municipal officials
- Foundation for PA Watersheds
- PA Sea Grant
- Western PA Conservancy
- Alliance for Chesapeake Bay
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- EPA
- PA DEP
- PA DCNR

Watershed Learning Center Project Proposal

Category	Subcategory	Course title	Teacher/course author
Organizational Development	<i>Fundraising</i>	Grantwriting	Anna Yelk, consultant
		Event coordination	
		Implementing an annual appeal	
	<i>Planning</i>	Cultivating major donors	Bob Wallis, Audubon
		Business planning	Jon Meade
		Strategic planning	Jon Meade
		Financial planning	
		Communications planning	
	<i>Communications</i>	Marketing fundamentals	Jon Meade
		Writing an annual report	
		Publishing a newsletter	Jessica Anderson
	<i>Management</i>	Fundamentals of a campaign	Marty Kearns, GMT
		Web 2.0 and social media	
		Creating project plans	
		Volunteer management	Jon Meade
<i>Leadership</i>	Program budget development	Jon Meade	
	Forming a nonprofit		
	Board development	Jon Meade	
	Creating and maintaining effective partnerships	Jon Meade	
	Staff management		
Watershed Ecology	Flooding	Kate Brandes, Nature Nurture	
	Riparian buffers	Julie McMonagle	
	Watershed ecology basics	Julie McMonagle	
	Pennsylvania waters	Julie McMonagle	
	Stream structure		
	Non-point source pollution		
	Acid Mine Drainage	Scott Van De Mark	
	Stormwater	Barry Lewis, GreenTorks	
	Climate change impacts on watersheds	Richard Whiteford or Andy Pitz, NLT	
Watershed Planning	River Conservation Planning		
	Wildlife management		
	Exotic and invasive species		
	Public outreach		
	Mapping and GIS		
Regulations and legal framework	PA state regulations	John Walliser	
	Federal water regulations	Don Welsh	
	Working with municipal officials	Mike Frank, consultant	
	Drinking water	Julie Kollar	
	Model ordinances		
Protection, management, and restoration	Restoration basics		
	Tools for protection		
	Forestry BMPs		
	Agricultural BMPs		
	Low Impact Development		
	NEMO	Sue Myerov	
	Green Infrastructure overview		
	Urban retrofit and restoration		
	Monitoring		
	Ecological risk assessment		
River Trails	Hannah Hardy		

POWR Membership Form



Mission

POWR advocates for the protection, restoration and enjoyment of our common wealth of water resources, and conducts programs that foster stewardship, communication, leadership and action

POWR Member Benefits

- Insurance Coverage
- Directory of Legal Services
- Web Page Development
- Organizational Development Information
- Exclusive access to Environmental Job Postings

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

_____ \$30 1-yr membership

_____ \$60 2-yr membership

POWR is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible in accordance with law. A copy of the official registration and financial information for Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, at 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Please mail membership application and your check made payable to POWR, Inc. to:

Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers

610 North Third Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Telephone: (717) 234-7910

Fax: (717) 234-7929

www.pawatersheds.org

2009-2010 General Liability Insurance Application

Please submit completed application and payment to:

POWR
130 Locust St., Suite 200
Harrisburg, PA 17101

(Please allow two weeks for processing or call 717-230-8044 if need is urgent)

Contact name _____

Title _____

Organization _____

Organization Address _____

Organization Phone _____

Email (work / personal) _____

Website _____

Does this organization have 501(c)3 status? ___Yes ___No

Is the organization a party in any litigation involving liability insurance? ___Yes ___No

2009-2010 Fee Schedule

Base rate per organization (up to 200 members) _____ \$325

Additional members (_____ x \$0.52 = _____) + _____

Current POWR member discount (subtract \$30) _____ - _____

Total = _____

Organization	Address	City	ST	zip	Phone	Email	Website
Aquashicola-Pohopaco Watershed Conservancy	PO Box 360	Kregsville	PA	18333	610-681-4873	info@apwc-pa.org	http://apwc-pa.org/
Aquetong Watershed Association	PO Box 504	New Hope	PA	18938	917-940-1900	searing7pa@msn.com	
Bennett Branch Watershed Association	PO Box 99	Benezette	PA	15821	814-787-8787	elkcounty@alltel.net	
Black Hole Creek Watershed Association	35 South Main Street	Montgomery	PA	17752	570-547-1671	beckyatriverside@aol.com	http://www.montgomeryborough.org/blackhole.htm
Brodhead Watershed Association	PO Box 339	Henryville	PA	18332		brodheadwatershed@verizon.net	http://www.brodheadwatershed.org
Brokenstraw Watershed Council	1350 National Forge Road	Irvine	PA	16329	814-664-4050	otter@brokenstraw.org	http://www.brokenstraw.org/
Bushkill Stream Conservancy	1343 Ridge Trail	Easton	PA	18040-1135	610-253-7916		http://www.bushkill.org
Clearfield Creek Watershed Association	216 Beldin Road	Ashville	PA	16613	814 944-2383	rose@ems.psu.edu	http://www.clearfieldcreekwatershed.org/
Cowanshannock Creek Watershed Association	PO Box 307	Rural Valley	PA	16249	724-783-6692	info@cowanshannock.org	http://www.cowanshannock.org/
Crafts Creek Spring Hill Brook Watershed Association	2454 Axe Factory Road	Bordentown	NJ	08505	609-298-4262	robtal@comcast.net	
Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mines	101 S. Main Street	Ashley	PA	18706	570-674-3411	rhughes@epcamr.org	www.orangewaternetwork.org
Edinboro Lake Watershed Association	124 Meadville St.	Edinboro	PA	16412	734-1212		
Friends of Fishing Creek	74 Fairview Road	New Providence	PA	17560	717-786-1970		
Friends of McConnells Mill State Park	PO Box 63	New Wilmington	PA	16142	724-946-8405	bergeynh@nwboronet.com	http://www.fmmsp.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1
Gallows Run Watershed Association	P.O. Box 24	Kintnersville	PA	18930	(610) 346-8997	stoneloft@aol.com	http://www.grwabucks.org/
Hay Creek Watershed Association	P.O. Box 162	Geigertown	PA	19523	610-404-4292	dloesch@haycreekwatershed.org	http://www.haycreekwatershed.org
Juniata Clean Water Partnership	416 Penn St.	Huntingdon	PA	16652	(814) 506-1190	jcwp@jcwp.org	http://www.jcwp.org/
Kiskiminetas Watershed Association	PO Box 83	Leechburg	PA	15656	724-568-2385	gness@comcast.net	
Lower Penns Creek Watershed Association	Snyder County Conservation District	PO Box 293 New Berlin	PA	17855	(570) 837-0007	pennscreekwatershed@yahoo.com	http://www.pennscreekwatershed.org/
Martins-Jacoby Watershed Association	PO Box 52	7701 Martins Creek/Belvide re Highway Bangor	PA	18013		PMcine4325@aol.com	http://www.mjwa.org/

Organization	Address		City	ST	zip	Phone	Email	Website
North Area Environmental Council	Box 71		Ingomar	PA	15127	724-935-4418	wmoul@acm.org	
Park Creek Watershed Association	C/O Horsham Township	1025 Horsham Road	Horsham	PA	19044	2156753177	membership@parkcreek.org	http://www.parkcreek.org/
Paxton Creek Watershed and Education Association	PO Box 61674		Harrisburg	PA	17106	717-545-1336	pcwea@paxtoncreek.org	http://paxtoncreek.org/
Penns Valley Conservation Association	P.O. Box 165		Aaronsburg	PA	16820	814-349-5692	BAL150@centrehotel.com	http://www.pennsvalley.net/
Pidcock Creek Watershed Association	40 Bowmans Hill Wildflower Preserve		New Hope	PA	18938			
Prettyboy Watershed Alliance	PO Box 512		Monkton	MD	21111-0512	410-239-0640	prettyboywatershed@gmail.com	http://www.prettyboywatershed.org/
Rose Valley/Mill Creek Watershed Association	PO Box 159		Trout Run	PA	17771		rvmcwa@earthlink.net	
Sewickley Creek Watershed Association	PO Box 323	300 E. Hill's Street	Youngwood	PA	15697	7248368764	myers@prc.org	http://www.sewickleycreek.com/
Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance	PO Box 263		Mount Carmel	PA	17851-0215	5706440029	jkoharski@verizon.net	http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/ki/rby/scrablurb.h
South Fayette Conservation Group	515 Millers Run Rd.		Morgan	PA	15064	412-370-7127		
South Sandy Creek Watershed Association	P. O. Box 223		Stoneboro	PA	16153	8144257308	sscwa@earthlink.net	
Stewards of the Lower Susquehanna, Inc. (SOLS)	324 West Market St.		York	PA	17401-1010	7177797915	lowsusriver@hotmail.com	http://www.lowersusquehannariverkeeper.org
Streets Run Watershed Association	3344 Churchview Ave.		Pittsburgh	PA	15227	4124772474	ascott@chesterengineers.com	
Susquehanna River Trail Association	P. O. Box 62023		Harrisburg	PA	17106-2023	7179486780	bbishoff@paonline.com	http://www.susquehannarivertrail.org/
Tioga County Concerned Citizens Committee	P. O. Box 124		Blossburg	PA	16912	5706383356	charlie@tcccc-inc.org	http://www.tccc@tccc-inc.org
Twin & Walker Creeks Watershed Conservancy	132 East Shore Drive		Shohola	PA	18458	5702966482	rcioppa@gmail.com	http://www.twcwc.com/
Watershed Alliance of York (WAY)	118 Pleasant Acres Road		York	PA	17402	7178407430	gpeacock@yorkccd.org	http://www.watershedyork.org
Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (WPCAMR)	226 Donohoe Road	Suite 110	Greensburg	PA	15601	724-832-3625	bruce@wpcamr.org	http://www.wpcamr.org/
Yellow Breeches Watershed Association	C/O Lower Allen Township Authority	120 Limekiln Rd	New Cumberland	PA	17070-2428	717-774-0610	john_brossman@lower-allen.pa.us	http://www.ybwa.org

Evaluating and Assessing Pennsylvania's River Conservation Plans

PA Organization for Watersheds and Rivers
130 Locust Street, Suite 200
Harrisburg, PA 17101
www.pawatersheds.org

Background

PA DCNR has funded at least 83 Rivers Conservation Plans (RCPs) in recent years in all the major watersheds across the state. While the development of RCPs in and of itself is a great resource for conservation, to realize the full benefit of these plans, implementation is crucial. Unfortunately, DCNR has already invested such a large amount of money into the development of RCPs that are not currently being implemented. To date, no specific assessment of the numerous RCPs has been done, and up to date information on implementation activities and status of watershed conservation is greatly lacking. The Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers (POWR) is proposing a project to evaluate, assess, and consolidate RCP documents, recommendations and strategies in order to better understand and thereby improve the effectiveness of implementation efforts.

In one recent report, released in 2006, the Conservation and Natural Resource Advisory Council's (CNRAC) *Review and Recommendations to DCNR's Rivers Conservation Grants Program* outlined six different groups' experience with writing and implementing RCPs and made recommendations for improving the program.

- 1) Clarify DCNR's grant-funding priorities to grant applicants.
- 2) Consider providing implementation funds to projects identified in the RCPs as priorities for action. Expand the types of projects that will be funded by the Department to match these priority needs. Good work performed in RCPs should not go unrewarded and unfunded.
- 3) If DCNR continues to focus on funding recreation projects, then more funds should be made available to implement those recreation projects identified in the RCPs.
- 4) If DCNR chooses to broaden projects it will fund, then the priorities identified in the RCPs should receive the highest consideration for implementation funding.
- 5) If no implementation funding is to be provided, grant applicants should be made aware of that up front.
- 6) There is very little technology information available for local administration of some water quality and quantity issues, such as storm water management. DCNR should work with other state and federal agencies to provide direction and scientific funding to local communities and watershed groups to study these issues.
- 7) Another area of funding need noted in our discussions was the recognition that economic impacts of watershed improvements have not been identified and documented. Several groups commented that funding for this purpose would be extremely helpful in generating future financial assistance, and general public acceptance and support for watershed improvement projects.
- 8) There appears to be no clear DCNR land acquisition strategy. This is noted as a concern as several watershed groups have identified key strategic large tracts of land that would greatly assist them in addressing their RCP priorities. However, they don't have a sense as to what DCNR's priorities are relating to land acquisition, and don't know whether to bother going through the process of applying for land acquisition grant funding. A recognizable DCNR strategic plan for land acquisition would be helpful to them.

Environmental and Social Benefits

The conservation benefits of the project are far-reaching. RCPs must be implemented in order to realize their full impact on the environment statewide. Also, the implementation of these plans serves the greater good in a number of ways. Having usable waterways ties directly into the mindset that recreation leads to conservation. This directly correlates to the PA River Sojourn Program and its underlying mission.

There is a general impact on the job demographic in the state on numerous levels; specifically this pertains to water recreation. The affected areas must have their RCPs implemented in order to sustain healthy waterways. With healthy waterways there will be an ability to increase recreation on said waters (specifically fishing and boating). With an increase in these activities there will arise a need for more outfitters on the waters, hence creating more jobs.

Public input is sought in the development of RCPs. There will be a portion of public involvement in this process in the form of an advisory committee. This advisory committee will consist of stakeholders (including members of watershed groups who have already developed RCPs, but are looking for the best strategies to implement said RCPs), municipalities, DCNR, and the PA Environmental Council.

POWR will develop a number of partnerships as a result of this project. First and foremost, POWR will partner with the watershed organizations and municipalities who developed the various RCPs to be examined. This will allow POWR to gain additional insight into the development of these RCPs. POWR will also partner with state agency, nonprofit organizations, and key stakeholders to form a small informal advisory committee. This team will develop an implementation strategy based on the recommendations put forth in the various RCPs to be reviewed. River Conservation Planning is managed by DCNR but has implications and affects other state and local agencies. DEP Watershed Management has a strong interest in implementation of the RCPs and we will work closely with their staff.

Proposed Scope of Work

The PA Organization for Watersheds and Rivers (POWR) will work with DCNR, DEP, local watershed associations, and other stakeholders to review and assess the status of implementation of each of the 80+ River Conservation Plans (RCP) on the PA Rivers Registry. By directly engaging past staff involved in drafting the documents, as well as current organizations actively implementing RCP recommendations, we will pinpoint common implementation priorities and develop a comprehensive, online database of RCP documents, activities, and contacts. There will be a substantial coordination and outreach effort involved in this project in order to engage the diverse stakeholder organizations, which we will accomplish through personal interviews and surveys. Once the analysis is complete, we will publish a report on our efforts, make recommendations for improving the implementation of RCPs, and make the database of information publicly available. The DCNR Rivers Program has expressed great interest in seeing us accomplish this project and will be a willing partner.

Since the groups have actually developed the RCPs, they will need to be involved in implementation, as will the municipalities in which these waters lie. The first half of the project will be devoted to the analysis of existing RCPs and determination of status and implementation activities. The second half of the project will see the development of a strategy.

Project Deliverables

- Review and analyze existing River Conservation Plans.
 - Review all RCPs in the Rivers Registry, including contacts, implementation recommendations, documents, maps, and recent activity
 - Report on common recommendations and activities, including frequency of implementation, cost estimates, and other factors found across the RCPs
 - Develop an online database of documents easily retrieved from POWR's website
- Recruit and form advisory committee
 - Solicit Involvement in Advisory Council to determine recommendations
 - Organize and hold Advisory Council meetings
- Develop strategy for accelerating implementation
 - Compile list of tactics for accelerating RCP implementation
 - Present final recommendations to Foundation for PA Watersheds, DEP, DCNR, and other stakeholders through print and electronic report