

# Building Watershed Communities Through Citizen Involvement

Active citizen led groups can make a difference in improving water quality.

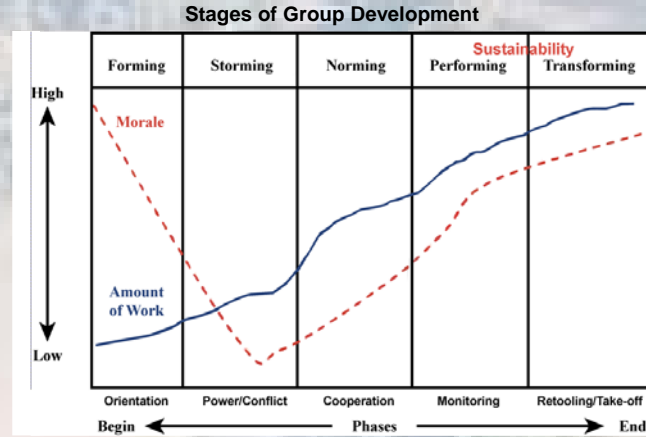
## Getting Organized

The basic decisions a newly formed watershed group must make during the first few months are:

- INTENT** What is the intent and mission of the group? How does that fit into the community vision for the watershed?
- WHO** Who should we include in a citizen-led watershed group? Who should we include as watershed group partners?
- AWARENESS** What is the history and present condition of our watershed?  
  
What information do we need to make educated decisions about: who we are, what we want to do, and how we want to do it?
- WHERE** Where do we want to regularly meet? Is there a neutral place for all participants?
- WHEN** Do we want to set a regular meeting date?
- STRUCTURE** How will the group make decisions? What kind of leadership will provide group stability, continuity, and accomplish the group intent?



## Sustaining Action



Adapted from Tuckman's Model Group Development Stages, 1972, by Beverlyn Lundy Allen, Iowa State University Extension to Communities, June 14, 2001.

For leadership and organizational development support, contact your local ISU County Extension Office, Steve Padgitt, ISU Extension to Communities (515) 294-8397, or Lois Wright Morton, Sociology Extension (515) 294-2843.



Photo by Peggy Murdoch

Maintaining water quality needs the contributions of everyone—residents, local leaders, and agency staff alike.

## Celebrating Accomplishments

### Survey of Iowa Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners (N=41)

A 2003 survey finds that the majority of county SWCD commissioners acknowledge the importance and usefulness of getting local residents more involved in the monitoring of waters and discussions about solutions. This suggests that the value of collective actions around water issues is a norm that is being reinforced.

- 67% report residents of their county are involved or highly involved in local water issues
- 85% would like to see more people involved
- 56% report at least one voluntary citizen group that works with SWCD
- 24% say they would be interested in working with a voluntary group

### Maquoketa River Watershed

- Maquoketa Headwaters citizen council: meets regularly (since 2000) to discuss farm conservation incentives and policies, learn about best management practice models, undertake water monitoring, and encourage demonstration plots
- 7 farmers hosted on-farm manure demonstrations in crop year 2002
- 16 producers hosted small-plot nitrogen (N) and phosphorous (P) demonstrations on their farms over last 3 years
- Mineral Creek citizen council: seeks to learn from scientists about best management practice models to reduce phosphorus
- Student tile monitoring project includes 89 tile lines on 37 farms
- Subwatershed groups in 2003 began to work together on a comprehensive watershed plan



### Squaw Creek Watershed Coalition

- Celebrating its 2<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting March, 2004
- Has volunteers monitoring water quality at more than 30 sites in Squaw Creek Watershed
- Developed and implemented by-laws in support of organizational structure
- Sponsored or co-sponsored watershed projects:
  - Storm water stenciling along College Creek
  - Trash clean-up days in the creek
  - Learning tours of the headwaters
  - Prairie restoration
- Building supportive relationships with local University, business community, and municipal government