

Principles of Negotiating Contentious Watershed Issues

Dr. James D. Gregory

Professor Emeritus

Dept. of Forestry & Environmental Resources
North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC

Principal, Watershed Hydrology Consultants LLC
Raleigh, NC



Two Examples from my Experience

- Governors Coastal Water Management Task Force (GCWMTF): 1981- 1982, 18 monthly meetings. I was a Task Force member.
- Neuse River Basin Riparian Buffer Rules Stakeholder's Committee (NRBRBR): 1998 – 1999, 10 semi-monthly meetings; I was a Committee technical representative
- Also will comment on the 2001 “Lake George Planning for the Future: Final Plan”

Define the Issues

- Real issues
- Unreal, i.e. concocted issues – Environmental impacts of chip mills and clearcut harvesting to supply the mills; Dogwood Alliance
- Issues of importance often differ among the constituencies

Real Watershed Management Issues

- GCWMTF - Declining catches of marine fish and shellfish in coastal waters over an extended period
 - NC Div. of Marine Fisheries and commercial fisherman blamed excessive freshwater runoff to estuaries from agriculture and forestry drainage.
 - But research by the GCWMTF also revealed that numbers of commercial fisherman had increased and equipment improvements increased ease of catching fish. Overfishing?
 - Research by NCSU fisheries biologists over the next few years also revealed that late spring cold spells that decimated populations of juvenile fish and shellfish in estuaries and algae blooms caused by nutrient enrichment also contributed to fish & shellfish population declines



Albemarle – Pamlico Peninsula

13.72 mi

Image USDA Farm Service Agency
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Real Watershed Management Issues

- NRBRBR - Neuse River Estuary was experiencing algae blooms and fish kills in early 1990s due to above normal nutrient levels, mainly N & P
 - Key issue – need to reduce nutrient discharges to the river throughout the watershed. Four programs initiated by the NC Environmental Management Commission
 - Nutrient discharges from sewage treatment plants
 - Agricultural nutrient management
 - Nutrient discharges in stormwater
 - Riparian buffer protection program

Define the Constituencies

- GCWMTF – extremely sensitive and contentious issues; the Governor issued an executive order establishing the Task Force and appointing the members.
 - State agencies – Marine Fisheries, Water Quality, Soil and Water Conservation (agriculture), Coastal Management, Wildlife Resources Commission
 - University scientists – forest hydrology, wetland soils & agriculture, drainage engineering, fisheries
 - Trade organizations – Farm Bureau, NC Forestry Assoc., Commercial Fisheries Assoc.
 - Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), i.e., environmental organizations
 - Commercial fishermen
 - Agriculture industry – owner of a large farm
 - Forest industry – representative of Weyerhaeuser Company

Define the Constituencies

- NRBBR - extremely sensitive and contentious issues; law passed by the NC Legislature established the Committee and specified the 24 members
 - State agencies – Environmental Management Commission, Water Quality, Water Resources, Wildlife Resources Commission, Land Resources, Soil and Water Conservation
 - Trade organizations – Home Builders Assoc., Farm Bureau, NC Forestry Assoc.,
 - Several NGOs
 - Forest industry – representative of Weyerhaeuser Company
 - Agricultural industry – owner of a large farm
 - No scientists on the committee – I served as a technical representative and also chair of an ad hoc committee to consider and recommend elements of the buffer rule related to forest management

Organize for Debate

- Committee or Task Force
 - Professional moderator – conduct the meetings, keep minutes, etc.
 - Membership
 - Mission and objectives
 - Guidelines for deliverables
- Technology transfer meetings – committee and the public; from whom, to whom, what information?
 - GCWMTF – each scientist presented an overview related to his/her professional specialty
 - NRBRBR – invited speakers; I discussed the scientific issues when asked or when I felt the need to do so

Formal Report of the Committee

- Discuss the issues and background
- Summarize the committee's debate
- Recommendations

Will Any Useful Actions Follow Issuance of the Committee's Report?

- Who receives the report and follows up
- Political will
- Funds

Governor's Coastal Water Management Task Force

- Continuing research on water management in agriculture and forestry drainage systems and the biology/ecology of important marine fish/shellfish species
- Incorporation of new knowledge into university courses, extension programs, and state agency programs
- Revised rules on commercial fishing to limit catches of species under pressure

Neuse River Basin Riparian Buffer Rules Stakeholders Committee

- Developed significantly revised riparian buffer protection rule that was adopted and implemented with few changes by the NC Environmental Management Commission and the NC Legislature
- At my suggestion, recommended the establishment of the NC Stream Technical Advisory Committee
 - Developed stream definitions that were incorporated into the Neuse Buffer Rules and have become standard NC definitions
 - Assisted NC Division of Water Quality in the development and testing of the stream identification methodology
 - Recommended research on characteristics and functions of headwaters streams and new methods for more accurate stream mapping