

Public Participation Process Guidance for the Watershed Permit (General Permit No. MIG610000)

This guidance is designed to assist the permittee with developing a public participation process (PPP), or revised PPP, as required by Part I.A.3.a of the Watershed General Permit.

PPP Purpose

To facilitate the involvement of watershed jurisdictions, agencies, organizations, and the general public in the development, implementation, and update of the Watershed Management Plan (WMP). Special effort should be made to involve those entities with the authority, ability, and desire to bring about necessary change by developing and implementing the WMP. The following format is recommended for the PPP.

Part 1. General Information

Identify the Watershed, as identified in your Certificate of Coverage (COC), for which this PPP has been developed.

Identify the permittee(s) submitting this PPP.

Identify the person, group, or agency responsible for coordinating the development of the WMP.

Part 2. Building the Team (Table)

This part provides a framework for building and engaging the initial team. Watershed planning, however, is a dynamic process. Ongoing implementation of the PPP should include consideration of which stakeholders are most critical and focus level of efforts accordingly.

Provide a 3-column table:

Column 1—Identifying Stakeholders: List who you plan to involve in your watershed management planning (or updating and implementation) process.

Column 2—Soliciting Participation: List the methods you plan to use to bring stakeholders into your planning (or updating and implementation) process.

Column 3—Responsible Party: List who will be responsible for implementing each method.

Example Table Format:

Targeted Stakeholders	Methods for Soliciting Participation	Responsible Party

Table Column 1. Identifying Stakeholders

Identify all of the stakeholders in your watershed who will be specifically invited to participate in the watershed planning (or updating and implementation) process. Remember that your WMP will be only as good as your ability to implement it. Include anyone who will be able to notably influence your ability to implement the recommendations in the WMP. The following should be included, unless there are justifiable reasons why they are not applicable in your situation. (They are listed here as general categories. The PPP should identify them by name; e.g., River Township Planning Commission.)

1. All other MS4 permittees in your watershed, as defined in your permit application and COC. If this is identical to the information provided in Part 1, then you may reference Part 1.
2. Entities with jurisdictional MS4 permits.
3. Entities with authority over the following (some may already be MS4 permittees):
 - a. Operation and maintenance of infrastructure: e.g., public works, drain commissioner, road commission, MDOT.
 - b. Land management: e.g., city, village, township, and county planning commissions/boards/councils, zoning boards, parks and recreation commissions/boards/departments.
 - c. Ordinance development and enforcement: e.g., local government boards and councils, zoning administrators, and ordinance officers.
 - d. Enforcement of local programs relevant to water quality: e.g., soil erosion control agencies, health department (public and private sanitary systems).
4. Natural resource/environmental organizations: e.g., conservation districts, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Department of Natural Resources, watershed councils, lake and resort associations, riparian organizations, Natural Resources Conservation Service, tribal agencies, land conservancies, environmental protection societies.
5. Private Sector: e.g., chamber of commerce, economic development council, developers, builders, realtors, major local employers, industry groups.
6. Educational or outreach organizations: e.g., local school districts, universities, extension services, community volunteer groups, nature centers, zoos.

7. Other organizations important in your community or with something valuable to contribute to developing or implementing a WMP.
8. General public/open invitation. You must make special effort to ensure that the watershed planning process is in no way exclusive, and that anyone who wants to participate feels welcome.

Table Column 2. Soliciting Participation

Sending a broad-based invitation letter may not result in meaningful participation. Your goal is to have stakeholders who will take an active role in developing and implementing the WMP, not simply show up for a few meetings. Different organizations and agencies have different interests, and may not respond to the same type of solicitation. Target stakeholders with a message that will inspire them to become an active participant in the watershed planning (or updating and implementation) process. It is also important to recognize the iterative nature of soliciting participation. Initial attempts may not be successful; you will need ongoing efforts to make more people aware of the watershed planning and updating process, and ensure that they are welcomed into it. Keeping in mind that you eventually need to implement your WMP, the methods you use should convince stakeholders to get involved, and stay involved well beyond publication of the WMP.

Table Column 3. Responsible Party for Implementing this Task

Identify who will ensure completion of the participation solicitation method identified in Column 2.

Part 3. Continuing Communication with Stakeholders

Identify the methods you will use to ensure that there is adequate communication to your stakeholders throughout the watershed planning and updating process, keeping in mind that many of these methods should be carried forward into the WMP's implementation period as well. To be effective, you should identify and use multiple methods for keeping your team, as well as the general public, informed about watershed planning. For WMPs that are being updated or implemented, revise this section of the PPP, as needed, to focus on communication with stakeholders following the initial planning stage. It is very important that you provide multiple opportunities for stakeholders to provide input and feed-back. Consider the following:

1. e-mail distribution list for meeting notices, etc., to individually-identified members of your team;
2. a web-site with information about the WMP;
3. press releases to announce various milestones, including the kick-off of your planning process or WMP update process;
4. other types of communication to the local press;
5. attending meetings of local boards, councils, associations, and other interested groups;

6. articles in existing newsletters or circulars;
7. workshops, seminars, open-houses;
8. surveys; and
9. public notices and public meetings. These may be especially important in providing the general public with an opportunity to provide feed-back on your draft WMP, as well as keeping the public informed of progress once implementation begins.

Part 4. Time Line

Provide a time line, in monthly or quarterly increments, that lays out your schedule from the time the PPP is developed until the WMP is submitted to the DEQ (use the compliance dates in your Certificate of Coverage). The schedule should include your time frame for soliciting participation, general frequency of meetings, milestones for WMP development (e.g., data gathering, development of measurable goals, identification of remedies, providing a draft for public comment), and estimated dates for when the communication methods in Part 3 will be initiated, completed, or ongoing.

For existing WMPs, a timeline should be provided that lays out your schedule from the time the PPP is updated through the WMP update process. Although the WMP lays out a schedule for implementation, your PPP should give a general time frame for public participation during the implementation phase (e.g., frequency of watershed group meetings, estimated dates for public meetings, estimated checkpoint dates for assessing implementation progress).

Part 5. Coming to Agreement

Identify the method(s) you will use to come to agreement (e.g., majority vote, consensus) on difficult issues during the WMP development and/or update process. Identify how you will document different points of view. Identify how you will resolve conflicts. The process for coming to agreement should consider all of the active participants, which would include specific permit obligations of MS4 permittees.

Part 6. Adaptive Management

As noted above, your PPP efforts will likely be iterative. Identify a method for tracking participation. Identify how you will evaluate the success of your public participation efforts. Identify steps you will take if your evaluation indicates that public participation was not adequate.

Note: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "Getting in Step: Engaging and Involving Stakeholders in Your Watershed" offers tools for effectively involving stakeholders in the watershed management planning process (January 2003, <http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/outreach/documents/>).