

A Review of Colorado Watershed Projects: Strategies for Implementation Planning and Stakeholder Involvement - In partnership with the Big Thompson Watershed Forum

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Abstract. Hundreds of hours are put into the creation of watershed projects with limited attention given to strategies with which they will be implemented. Recommendations for watershed projects are often difficult to enforce because the communities for which they are designed often lack a network of empowered and committed citizens who will enforce the execution of the proposed plan. A watershed project is a community-based monitoring and management process that collaboratively identifies and prioritizes issues to maintain or improve water quality within a watershed. The goal of this study is to compare the successes and failures of past and current watershed projects in Colorado in order to determine the best strategies for implementing future projects. It is anticipated that effective watershed projects will have the following traits: 1) goals and objectives of the project are defined early in the planning process; 2) potential stakeholders are identified at the beginning stages of the project, and widely represent the community in which the watershed is located; 3) multi-media methods of communication are used to educate and involve the highest potential group of interested parties; 4) evidence can be provided that smaller projects have previously been done successfully within that watershed before taking on a larger project; 5) the work is done by local citizens, and 6) there is a system of self-evaluation by the committee to promote flexibility and adaptability in the planning process. An interactive Geographic Information System (GIS) map will be created that spatially displays the metrics of success. The results will be used by the Big Thompson Watershed Forum (BTWF) to gauge the success of their watershed project. The final product will create a basis for future watershed projects to follow so that stakeholder commitment is established at the onset of the planning process, resulting in more successful, long-term projects.

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