The Ins and Outs of Regional Stormwater Utilities

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Regional Experience

- Horry County SC and towns
- Beaufort County SC and towns
- Four County Authority, GA
- Baldwin County Consortium, AL
- NEORSD, OH
- Charlotte, NC Mecklenburg Co., and towns
- Nashville and Satellite cities, TN
- Fayetteville and Cumberland County, NC
- Douglas County, CO
- SEMSWA, CO
- Mesa County Group, CO
- Louisville MSD and towns
Rule #1 – Get the process right
Your group needs:

- Roadmap
- Ground rules
- Policy making process
- Help*

* mandatory consultant statement
Steps in Regional Feasibility

1. Why might this be an attractive idea?
2. What would the regional agency do?
3. How would its activities be paid for?
4. How would it be governed and managed?
5. What is the process for setting it up?
Steps in Feasibility

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Rule #2 – have compelling reasons to do this
Compelling Case for a Utility…

We are going to develop a stormwater utility because:

- Erosion of channels & creeks
- Flooding problems
- Aging infrastructure
- Development pressures
- Water quality & ecology
- Regulatory mandates
- Quality of life & aesthetics
- Source water preservation
- Preservation of property value
- Erosion of channels & creeks
- Recreation or fisheries
- Lawsuits

✓ Wastewater or Septic Pressures
✓ Flooding problems
✓ Aging infrastructure
✓ Development pressures
✓ Water quality & ecology
✓ Regulatory mandates
✓ Quality of life & aesthetics
✓ Source water preservation
✓ Preservation of property value
✓ Erosion of channels & creeks
✓ Recreation or fisheries
✓ Lawsuits
We are going to develop a regional stormwater utility because:

- Economies of scale
- Better able to gain outside funding
- Watershed consistency – cross jurisdictional
- (more) Free of politics
- Better access to talent
- Local governments not focused or able
- Deal with larger streams and larger problems
- Match regulatory programs’ geography
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and not do!!
Rule #3 – solve felt needs
day one
The five questions:

1. Where will we work (geography or program area)? **extent of service**
2. What will we do when we get there? **type of service**
3. How good will we do it or how much will we do? **level of service**
4. How will we know we have done it? **measure of service**
5. How will others know? **communication of service**
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Rule #4 – fund your program fairly, stably and adequately.

The Storm Water Management Authority Wants Elected Officials to Double Fees on Your Property.

Jefferson County and our city have to receive a storm water permit from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). Instead of working directly with ADEM our officials pay the Storm Water Management Authority Inc. (SWMA) to get permits for residents and businesses.

SWMA collects a $5 fee on every home and $15 on business through our property tax bill. This fee is paid every year. Now they want to more than double these fees to $12 on every home and $30 on every business.

Even worse is the fact that over the past couple of years SWMA has become responsible for fewer permits. In fact when SWMA was created it was responsible to get permits for all properties 5 acres and less. Today SWMA only has to get permits for those properties 1 acres or less.

SWMA wants Millions more of our tax dollars to do less work.

Now its up to our city council members and our county commissioners to say NO to SWMA. In the upcoming weeks our officials have the opportunity to say NO to higher fees on our property and drop out of SWMA for good.

Call you County Commissioner and City Council Member and tell them to drop out of SWMA. We don’t need SWMA or their higher fees.

(People Allied Now Against Corporation Energy Abuse (PANACEA), Birmingham, AL)

SWMA collected over $2.5 million last year and wants over $6 million next year.
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Relationships

- Cousins
- Siblings
- Twins
- Identical Twins
- Siamese Twins
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Perfect Strangers
Rule #5 – define your relationships in writing
Why might this be an unattractive idea?

- One area “bailing out” another one – “paying for another’s past sins”
- Losing local control of zoning, land use, etc. – “big brother decides for me”
- Building a bureaucracy - “fee creep”
- Consistency in treatment, fairness – “getting my share”
- Responsiveness – “who controls priorities”
Denver Urban Drainage District

- Metro authority created by state legislation
- Taxes all entities
- Manages all larger drainageways
- Cost shares CIP and some maintenance
- Integrates NPDES and other joint things
- Others run independent local programs
Beaufort County, SC

- Multi-entity Utility
- Basic program county-wide
- NPDES and integrated concerns
- Others run independent local programs with rate on top of base rate
Louisville MSD

- One stormwater utility
- Handles comprehensive SW program from bottom of the catch basins and downstream
- Small towns forced to be part by state law
- Large towns have a choice – some in some not – holes in the program – but still cooperate
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A question of “due diligence”

Establishing a successful regional water resource organization requires that you pay attention to five key areas of due diligence:

1. Governance and inter-municipal consensus
2. Program concept and the compelling case
3. Public and political education and support
4. Financial policies and documents
5. Database development & accuracy and customer service
Rule #6 – Get the message right
“If we shot all the reporters in the afternoon we’d have news from hell by breakfast”

Gen. W.T. Sherman
Regionalization of key services can lead to many benefits.

Doing it right is not easy or cheap.

Doing it wrong is really not cheap – cause you get to do it again!
Well... that’s it

Go out and conquer...

write if you feel overwhelmed...

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