



Technical Memorandum
Compelling Case Backgrounder for Workshop #1

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Overview

Understanding the problems is the basis for building a “compelling case for action”. In every community there are good, even compelling, reasons to improve the way stormwater programs are executed. It might be a popular stream that is becoming increasingly impacted, a lack of riparian park space, decaying drainage infrastructure and mounting complaints, unfunded regulatory mandates, local flooding, financial pressures, loss of fish, beach closings, a roadway or bridge collapse, or law suits. Such issues can draw the attention and energy of stakeholders and leaders and turn into opportunities for action.

Drivers for Change

When we look at stormwater programs around the country and identify what caused, changed, and improved stormwater programs, we recognize ten key “drivers” or forces. No community experiences all of these drivers, and not all of them compel local citizens. Each of these drivers can be understood and expressed in various ways depending on the local situation – so these are generic titles:

1. ***Water quality and ecology***
Examples: beach and shellfish bed closures; nutrient-impaired embayments and recreational waters; fish kills; reduced ecological health; reduced number of game fish, destroyed habitat; toxic pollution; eutrophication of lakes and ponds; bacterial pollution; illicit connections and illegal dumping; combined sewer or sanitary sewer overflows, or other point discharge issues; urban hot spot pollution.
2. ***Quality of life and aesthetics***
Examples: degrading water quality near beaches and subsequent loss of tourism; detention basin safety hazards or appearance; weeds, erosion or other stream impacts; loss of natural appearances; desire for greenways or trails; toxic or dangerous organisms that can effect human health and safety.
3. ***Preservation of property value***
Examples: reduction in waterfront property values, floodplain property values declining, opportunities for waterfront enhancement, loss of reputation for safety or for natural features, development pressures eroding natural features, or protection of unique water-related features.
4. ***Drinking water supply protection and enhancement***
Examples: pollution of groundwater and drinking water supplies, well head pollution issues, filling of reservoirs, eutrophication and water taste issues, declining low flows for

water treatment, effluent pollution.

5. ***Flooding problems***

Examples: major stream flooding, small system flooding, system backups, tidal influences, culvert back-ups.

6. ***Aging infrastructure***

Examples: limited life and need to replace leaching facilities, clogged systems, erosion of property, damaged systems, rusted culvert inverts, cracked and failing concrete, undersized systems due to new development, failing dams and detention ponds.

7. ***Development pressures***

Examples: development related increased flows and flooding, filled detention ponds, increasing pollution and erosion.

8. ***Erosion of channels and creeks***

Examples: major stream erosion, bridge undermining, infrastructure failure due to erosion, minor ditch erosion, head cutting, sediment buildup, filling lakes and ponds.

9. ***Regulatory mandates***

Examples: NPDES permit (including anticipated requirements of renewed MS4 general permit), FEMA regulations, TMDLs, endangered species act, drinking water protection, well head protection, wetlands permitting, other state, regional or local regulations.

10. ***Lawsuits***

Examples: flooding caused by roads, environmental compliance law suites, nuisance flooding, erosion or other issues, health and safety suits.

Building a Compelling Case

Assembling a “compelling case” is an initial step in framing the key reasons why you need to change and improve the stormwater program.

In general, people are motivated along two complimentary courses of persuasion – information (data) and stories. Some people want facts and statistics (data), while others are moved to action by horror stories and pictures. When we begin to quantify the community’s perception of program need or make the case for change and new funding, we seek to address both types of people. Table 1 gives some examples taken from successful stormwater utilities.

Building a compelling case and knowing when, how, and to whom it should be presented is more of a political and technical art form than it is a science. But taking time to build informed consent to move forward and to support program change and new funding methods is vitally necessary.

It is also important to consider who would be motivated by the different compelling reasons for change. The fact that you are “out of money” or that “the government is making us do

this” are not compelling messages for the every day citizen; and it might even backfire (“so, I am out of money too!”).

Table 1 Compelling Case Examples

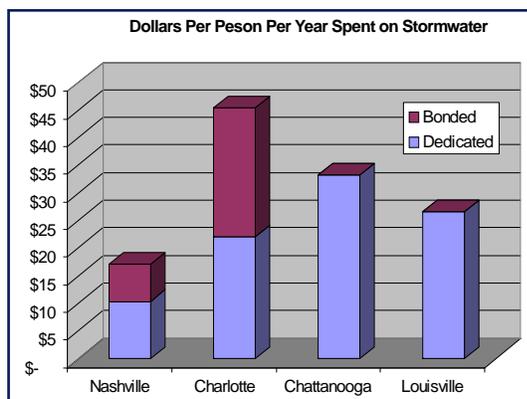
“Left Brain”

- Statistics on repair costs
- Cost information
- Infrastructure information
- Lost revenue or tourist dollars
- Regulatory Facts
- Backlog information on flooding
- Unfunded mandate information

“Right Brain”

- Flooding pictures
- Horror stories
- Movies
- Testimonials
- Environmental or aesthetic appeals
- Drawings of a future greenway, trail, etc.

Below are several pictures that have been used in compelling case presentations.



Our Workshop Exercise

There has already been significant discussion among staff during the program development meetings. These discussions have led to the preliminary identification of several factors which would likely go into the Portsmouth compelling Case. These include:

- ◆ Aging infrastructure
- ◆ Pollution of streams and embayments
- ◆ Federal mandates
- ◆ Desire of citizens for a green and aesthetically pleasing environment

During the workshop we will identify our list of reasons for change and discuss which are in fact the most compelling and how best to craft the messages around them.