

- *In preparation for: KENTUCKY'S STREAMS AND WETLANDS CONSERVATION PLANNING (SWCP) PROCESS*
- *This section summarizes the goals, objectives and methods that were used during this initial phase of streams and wetlands conservation and restoration.*

RECRUITING A STEERING COMMITTEE:

In February 2009, approximately 15 state, federal and university persons were invited to provide guidance and direction into the development of the State's Streams and Wetlands Conservation Plan (SWCP). Persons were identified and invited based on their key role in stream and wetlands conservation, restoration and/or mitigation projects or programs. Key university faculty were also identified based on consultation with the Kentucky Division of Water (KDOW) and those various university faculty who have provided consultation services on various DOW projects were also recruited. All 15 persons who were identified readily accepted invitation to sit on the steering committee.

It is worth noting that, over the course of 8 weeks, this multi-agency-university steering committee expanded beyond the original 15 to include other state and federal employees who also were involved in watershed and water management issues. Several other persons with years of experience, but retired from their government posts, also volunteered their time to provide input and perspective into this strategic planning process.

Thus, from the original 15 member list, the SWCP steering committee expanded into a 43 member committee of university, regulatory and other agency experts. The members of the SWCP Steering Committee are listed on the second page of this document as principal contributors to this planning process.



February 5th Panel with Pat Banks, Kentucky RIVERKEEPER and Ken Cooke, Kentucky Watershed Watch with EKU Biology student, Jon Mollish.



February 6th Panel with Steering Committee members, Joseph Zimmerman, KDFWR and Danny Peake, KDOT with EKU graduate student, Pierce Johnson



February 10th Panel with Barbara Scott, KDOW/ Project Manager and Lee Anne Devine, US ACE with EKU Biology student, Matt O'Brien



February 12th Panel with Steering Committee members Sherry Harrel, EKU Biological Sciences and Eric Eisiminger, Kentucky Division of Water with EKU university student Jon Mollish (Biological Sciences).



Second February 12th Panel with Steering Committee Members: David Eisenhour, Morehead Biological Sciences and Matt Thomas, Kentucky Dept. Fish and Wildlife with EKU university student Frank Ross (Sociology).



February 16th Panel with Steering Committee Members: Guenter Schuster, EKU Biological Sciences and Andy Wigginton, UK Biological Sciences with EKU university student William Feltner (Biological Sciences)

In order to elicit their guidance and direction, a series of moderated panels were held where advisory members were invited as panel members to answer the following questions:

1. What are your thoughts regarding current efforts in Kentucky to conserve and restore stream and wetland areas?
2. What agencies, organizations and/ or partnerships do you see as most effective in conserving or restoring Kentucky's streams and wetlands?
3. In your opinion, what enables them to be effective?
4. What do you see as the top 2 or 3 potential opportunities for conserving and restoring Kentucky's streams and wetlands in the years ahead?
5. What do you see as the top 2 or 3 challenges or barriers to conserving and restoring Kentucky's streams and wetlands in the years ahead?
6. What is the most important change to make in the years ahead to ensure the long-term health and viability of Kentucky's streams and wetlands?
7. What is your view of Kentucky's success in ensuring "no net loss" of streams and wetlands?
8. If you could offer one critical piece of advice to those doing long-term strategic planning for Kentucky's streams and wetlands, -what would that be?

These sessions were held in a university classroom setting where university students participated in the panels as moderators. Students instructed the panelists to take no more than 5 minutes in responding to each question. All outside question from university faculty and students were held to the end of each panel so that the focus stayed on responding to the above questions.



February 23rd Panel with Steering Committee Members: Jennifer Garland, US Fish and Wildlife Services and Mike Hardin, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Resources with EKU university student Christina Martin (Biological Sciences)



February 25th Panel with Steering Committee Members: Mike Griffin, US Geological Survey and Dwayne Sims, Gateway ADD with EKU university student, Brent Williams (Biological Sciences)



March 2nd Panel with Steering Committee members: Ted Withrow (Retired KDOW), Lajaunda Haight-Maybriar (KDOW, Licking River Basin Coordinator and Leon Smothers (Retired KDOW) with David Brown's Wetland Biology Class. Panel moderated by EKU university student Steven Blomer (Biological Sciences).



March 18th Panel with Steering Committee members: Jim Gibson, SD-1 Facility and David Hawes, Regional Water Resource Agency, Owensboro with EKU university student, Randi Bird (Biological Sciences).



March 18th Panel with Steering Committee members: Russ Turpin, ECOGRO/ Bluegrass Rain Garden Alliance, Carol Hanley, UK Tracey Farmer Center/ Bluegrass Rain Garden Alliance and Amanda Gumbert, Extension Water Quality Liaison, UK Cooperative Extension Service.



March 20th Panel with Steering Committee Members: Art Parola, Director of the Stream Institute, University of Louisville and Tom Biebighauser, U.S. Forest Service. The panel was moderated by EKU university student (graduate student) Tyler Rankin (Biological Sciences/ Ornithology).

RECRUITING A STEERING COMMITTEE:, *Continued*

Over the 8 week period, from February through March, fourteen moderated panels were held and subsequent input into the State's streams and wetlands conservation plan was provided by 30 advisory persons. Two outside persons from two main watershed organizations (Kentucky RIVERKEEPER and the Kentucky Water Ways Alliance) were also invited to participate in a moderated forum but their input was treated separately as part of the telephone interviews with other stakeholders. Other steering committee members who were unable to attend a moderated session were likewise interviewed over the telephone. All moderated panels were video-taped while all telephone interviews were tape-recorded. These tapes were then transcribed and analyzed for key themes and directions based on responses to several of the key interview questions (opportunities and challenges facing streams and wetlands protection, single most important change we need to make, views on "no net loss" and critical advice for long-term strategic planning and protection).

Based on responses to these sets of questions, certain themes and directions were identified and hence, these themes and directions serve as the principal basis behind the framework of this report. It is hoped that through the use of formal panels methods and formal methods of analyzing the transcripts for themes and content, that this document captures and reflects the directions and perspectives provided by the SWCP Steering Committee.



March 25th Panel with Demetrio Zourarakis, KLP/ Commonwealth Office of Technology; Randy Payne, Kentucky Division of Water and Jay Mitchell, Kentucky Division of Abandoned Mine Lands with Ben Marks (Senior, Biological Sciences).



March 30th Panel with Ryan Evans, Kentucky Nature Preserves Commission; Hugh Archer, Kentucky Land Trust and Jason Flickner, Kentucky Waterways Alliance with Caitlin Borck (Graduate student, Biological Sciences).

COLLECTING ADDITIONAL INPUT FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDERS STATEWIDE:

Along with input from a multi-agency-university steering committee, other stakeholders from across the state were also interviewed to provide additional guidance, direction and perspective. As mentioned, a university research team collected stakeholder views through over-the-telephone interviews whereby participants were asked to respond to the same set of questions as steering committee members. These telephone interviews took place over an intensive three week period (mid February to early March).

Stakeholder responses to these sets of questions were tape-recorded¹ and transcribed by members of the university research team. These transcripts were then coded according to key and emerging themes and concerns and subsequently, these interviews with stakeholders provide further substance and direction into the issues and challenges facing stream and wetland conservation and restoration within the State. Total, 44 persons from across the state were asked to provide added direction into the development of the streams and wetlands conservation plan. The various groups that these persons represent include various environmental organizations, sportsmen clubs, private engineering firms (involved in wetlands and streams restoration), farmers, persons from the coal mining sector, flood plain managers as well as others from other stakeholder groups (see corresponding photo inset for other groups that were interviewed by various members of the university research team.)



Ben Morris (Geography) interviewing persons from environmental groups and conservation districts



Matt Obrien (Biological Sciences) interviewing sportsmen and state and federal wildlife managers.



Jon Mollish (Biological Sciences) interviewing various university experts

1. Note: Stakeholders were interviewed in accord with approved research protocols to protect their confidentiality. These protocols for handling the transcripts were approved by a university Institution Review Board (approval received January 14, 2008; IRB Case # 09-054).

COLLECTING STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS, *Continued:*

Marcus Thacker (Environmental Health Science) interviewing persons from the Natural Resource Conservation Service.



Jessica Pulliam (Environmental Studies and Sociology) interviewing members of the 2005 Taskforce on State Assumption of 404 program and other key stakeholder groups (Nature Conservancy, KFTC, etc)



Stephanie Dunaway (Sociology) interviewing persons from the forest and farm sectors



Frank Ross (Sociology) interviewing watershed coordinators and members of the water utility community.



Stephen Pennington (Sociology) interviewing persons from private engineering / reclamation firms.



Christy Robar (Social Work and Political Science) interviewing persons from eastern Kentucky and the Big Sandy Watershed Basin.



DISTRIBUTING AN ONLINE SURVEY TO KNOWLEDGEABLE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS:

An online survey² was launched in mid February and closed at the approximate same time that the telephone interviews were completed, -mid March (2009). This survey was targeted to those persons that were knowledgeable, involved and/or tied in other ways to streams and wetlands issues. Electronic lists of various relevant stakeholder groups were compiled by members of the research team months prior to the February distribution date. Some of the targeted groups included other federal and state agency staff persons working in watershed and water management issues, flood plain managers, private engineers, Area Development Districts, environmental groups and so forth.

Response to the survey was considerable: Of the 1077 persons who opened the survey to consider it, 723 respondents completed it. This rate of response (67%) exceeds standard acceptable survey response rates that typically range from 40 to 60 percent. A review of the corresponding chart (Chart 1) shows the breakdown of respondents by their role or job position in relation to streams and wetlands issues. Other breakdowns are presented on the following page and suggest that many different sectors, knowledgeable about streams and wetlands did, in fact, take the time to respond to and complete this survey.

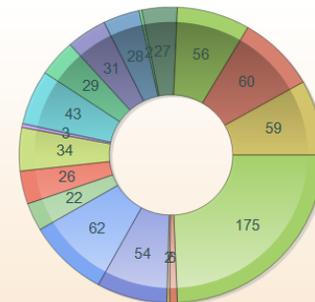


CHART 1: “What would you consider as your primary role or job position in relation to streams and wetlands?” Numbers show a high number of survey respondents as state or federal employees (175) followed by farmers (62), concerned citizens (60) and members of hunting and fishing groups (60).

2. Acknowledgement: Our university research team would like to formally acknowledge the Montana Wetland Office, Lynda Saul for sharing their original survey instruments. The Montana survey was modified to reflect the concerns and issues facing Kentucky and then was peer-reviewed and pilot-tested prior to posting online, -this is in accord with standard survey design methodologies.

Chart 2 provides a summary of level of involvement in wetland and streams issues and most respondents (89%) reported being either very involved (24%), involved (29%) or somewhat involved (36%) in watershed related issues. Likewise, when asked about whether they were aware of sources of information on Kentucky’s streams and wetlands (Chart 3), the vast majority (87%) reported that they were aware of such sources. The final chart (Chart 4) shows the breakdown by watershed based on the question, “In which region is most of your work based or with which you are most familiar.” Most persons reported being most familiar with the Kentucky River Basin while a good number (14%) said that they were familiar with stream and wetland issues across Kentucky. In short, the typical respondent was probably a state or federal employee, who was involved at some level in streams and wetland issues, and was already well aware of various sources of information and outreach that are available on the stream and wetland restoration and conservation issues facing Kentucky.

Other questions on the survey asked knowledgeable respondents to identify, in their view, the major impacts to Kentucky’s streams and wetlands. Sewage, the effects of development (storm water and residential growth) and coal and energy development were rated as the principal impacts by the largest percentage of survey respondents. These principal concerns provide further framework for this streams and wetlands planning document (see Section 4 of this document). In addition, like Steering Committee members and other stakeholders, survey participants were asked to provide some “critical advice to those doing long-term strategic planning.” In responding to this open-ended write-in question, 493 persons provided additional input with some writing in depth and at length regarding advice and direction. These comments were treated similarly to the transcripts in that comments were read, coded and categorized. Hence, these open-ended comments provide even further direction and substance to the contents of this document.

TO SUMMARIZE:

Overall, over 800 persons with knowledge and investment in streams and wetlands were asked to provide input into the State’s streams and wetlands conservation plan. In gathering this input, formal interview methods were used in soliciting the perspectives and position of steering committee members (42 persons) and other stakeholders (44 persons). Similarly, standard survey methods were used to collect the responses from a broad range of others (723 persons who were surveyed). Considering the level of interest, commitment and response of so many persons from across the state, the following planning framework should hold some significant weight in a statewide discussion on streams and wetlands conservation and restoration.

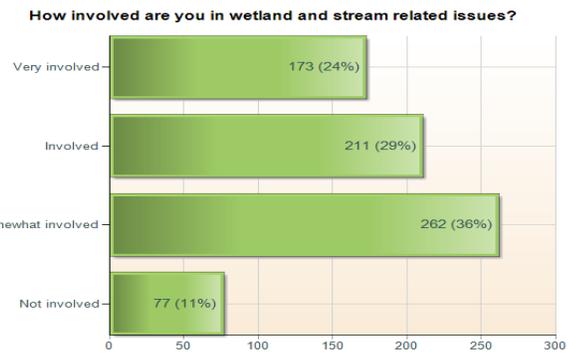


CHART 2: “How involved are you in wetland and stream related issues?” Numbers show many respondents are at some level involved in stream and wetland issues.

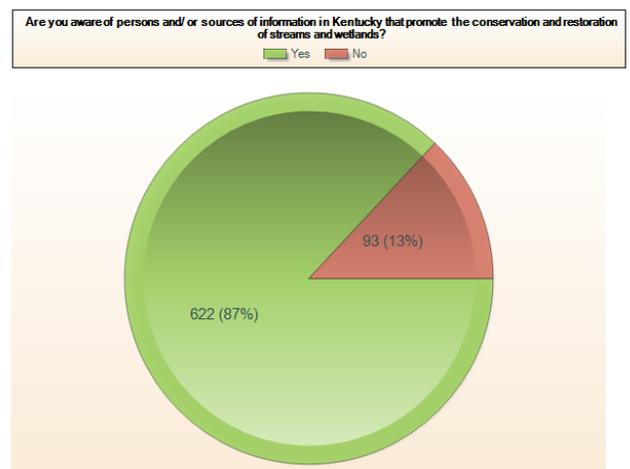


CHART 3: Most survey respondents (622) were already well aware of persons or sources of information in Kentucky that promote the conservation and restoration of streams and wetlands.

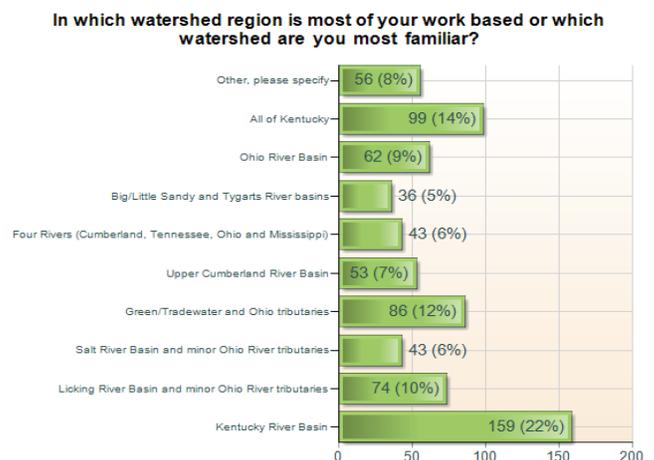


CHART 4: Many respondents (159) were in the Kentucky River Basin, followed by the Green/Tradewater River Basin (86).