

The NC Ecosystem Enhancement Program's Local Watershed Planning Initiatives:

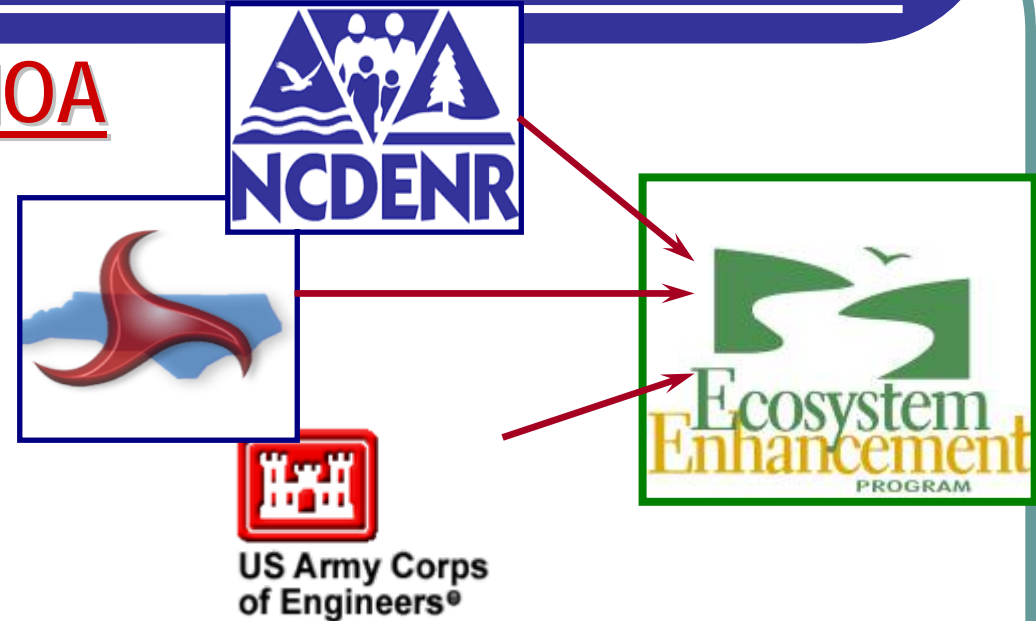
Public Involvement in Western North Carolina

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The Ecosystem Enhancement Program

- Formed via 3-party MOA
(July'03)



- Mission

- *Restore – Enhance – Protect streams, stream buffers and wetlands*
- *Provide ecologically effective compensatory mitigation in advance of permitted impacts*

NC EEP Goal

- All compensatory mitigation to be based on a detailed assessment of local watershed needs
 - Local Watershed Planning, including...
 - Identification of key functional stressors.
 - Basis for projects intended to provide 'Functional Uplift'
 - Hydrology; Water Quality; Habitat



Local Watershed Planning by NC EEP

➤ Objectives of Local Watershed Planning

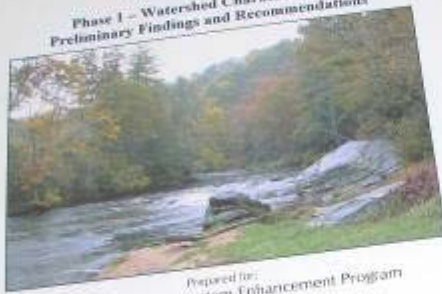
- *Phase I – preliminary watershed characterization (GIS + available water quality data; limited field work)*
- *Phase II – detailed assessment of field conditions; identification of major functional stressors; prioritization of sub-watersheds (for mitigation projects & other watershed solutions)*
- *Phase III – develop Watershed Management Plan & Project Atlas*
- *Phase IV – implement Plan recommendations; recruit landowners & procure project sites (signed options & easements)*

Phases I through III typically require ~18 to 24 months



LWP Products

Little River and Laurel Branch
Local Watershed Plans
Phase I – Watershed Characterization
Preliminary Findings and Recommendations



Prepared for:
North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program

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In association with:
The Catena Group
and
Ecologic Associates
March 5, 2004

Watershed
Assessment
Report

Phase I – Preliminary Findings Report
Phase II – Detailed Assessment Report

BALD CREEK LOCAL WATERSHED PLAN
HU: 06010106080028
Northucky River Catalog Unit: French Broad River Basin
January 24, 2018



A Project Of
The NC Ecosystem Enhancement Program



(1) EEP-fundable
projects

(2) Projects & BMPs
fundable by *other*
groups/agencies

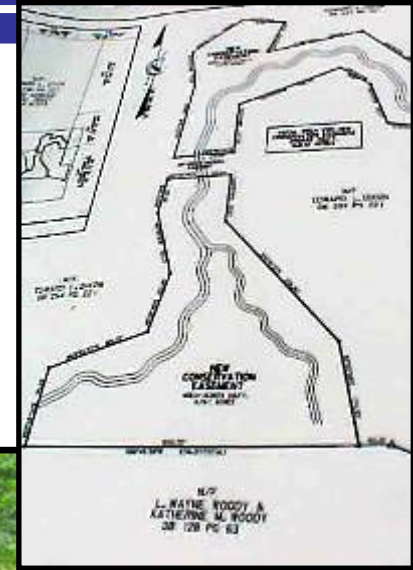
(3) Watershed
Management
Tools/Strategies

**Phase III – Watershed Management
Plan & Project Atlas**



The *Most Important* Products

[EEP Perspective]



- ✓ *Good Project Sites*
- ✓ *In Priority Sub-watersheds*
- ✓ *With Interested Landowners...*
- ✓ *Signed Easements*

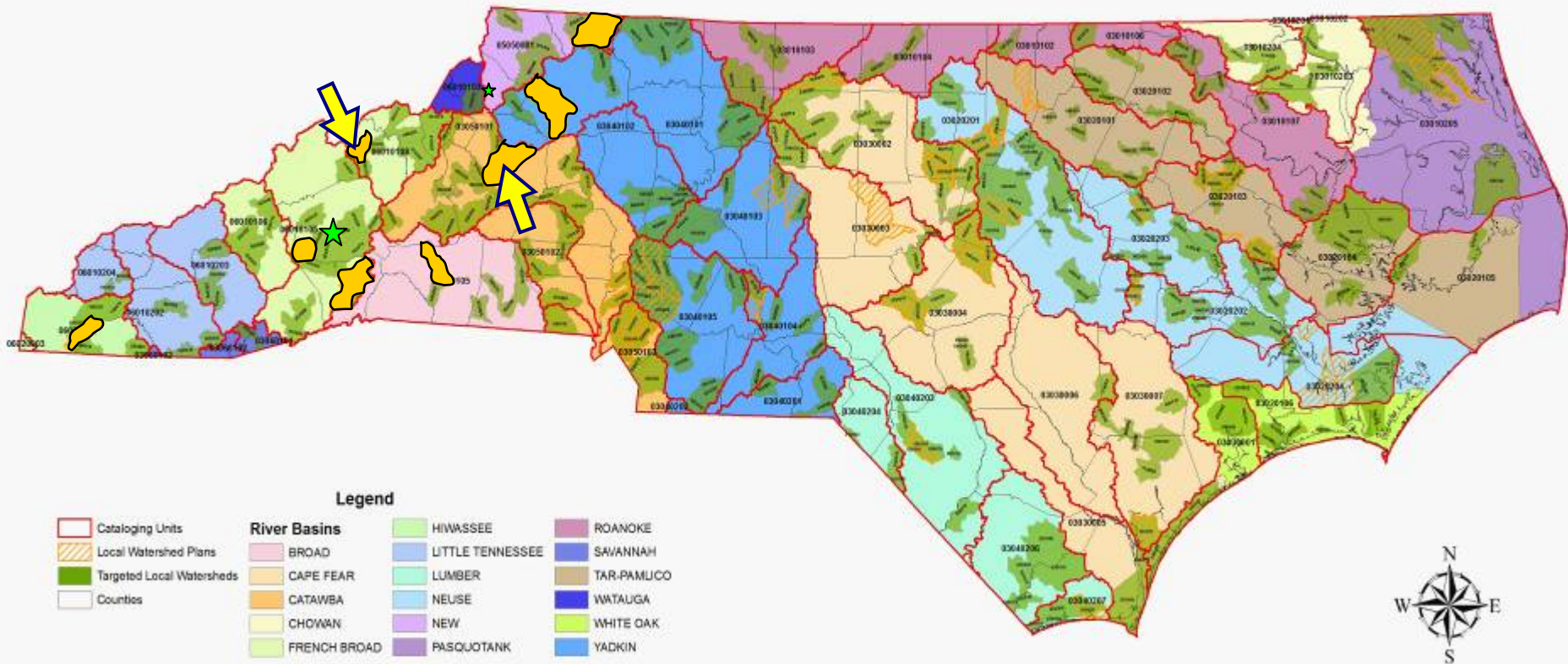


Statewide LWP Watersheds

Ecosystem Enhancement Program Targeted Local Watersheds and Local Watershed Plans



<http://www.nceep.net/pages/planning.htm>



50 0 50 Miles



Identifying Watershed Stakeholders

● Watershed Stakeholders

- *EEP*
- *Local Resource Professionals (RPs) – SWCDs, NRCS, Coop Ext, planners & storm water staff, COGs*
- *Local/regional Land Trusts*
- *DENR programs (sister agencies) -- WRC, DFR, DWQ, Regional Office staff*
- *Watershed Residents/Landowners*
- *Elected Officials (Councils, Commissions)*



● Objectives of Stakeholder Involvement

1. *Incorporate local knowledge & priorities into watershed assessment & Plan development; local “buy in” & “ownership”*
2. *Provide liaison to landowners and local officials for Plan implementation: projects & other recommended solutions*

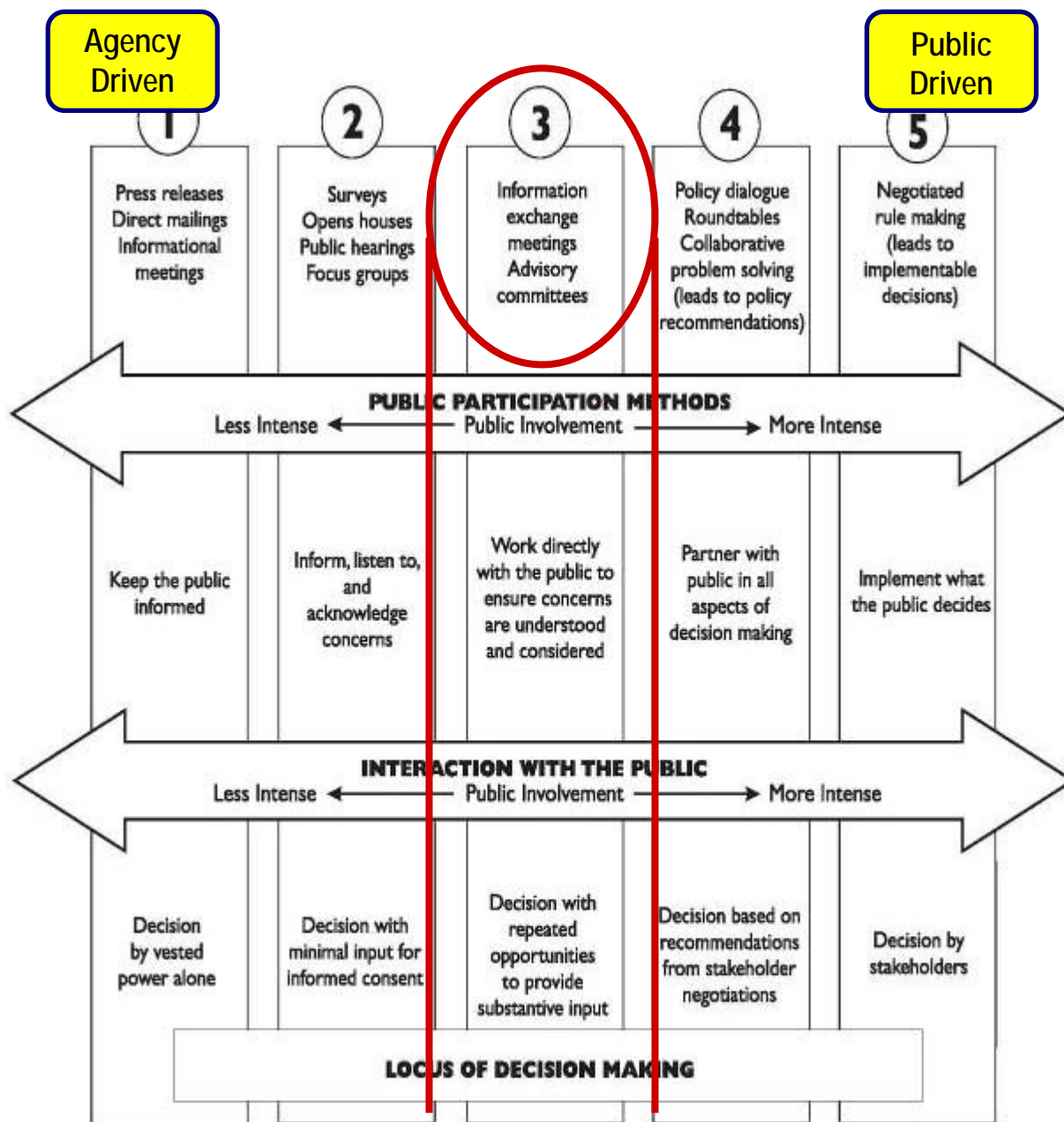
Public Participation *Rules of Thumb*

[NC Cooperative Ext./WECO, 2003. *LWP: Citizen Participation Guidebook*]

- Involving a wider public requires more time/resources; but ...
- It's generally best to err on the side of openness & inclusiveness; but ...
- For complex *watershed issues*, smaller groups are better able than larger groups to make progress towards recommendations & actions.



Public Involvement Continuum



The EEP Approach Generally Falls in the Middle:

1 – Advisory Committees

2 – Information Exchange Meetings

Few opp.s for public input Plentiful opp.s for input



LWP Advisory Teams, aka **TACs**

- **Typical Composition**

- *State & Local RPs*
- *City/Town/County staff*
- *Local/regional Land Trusts*
- *At least one influential landowner (e.g., farmer)*



- **Major Roles**

- *Agree to attend quarterly meetings; share information/expertise & data*
- *Review & provide input to Final Plan recommendations*
- *Help identify/recruit long-term “champions” for Plan implementation*
- *Liaison to interested landowners & elected officials*
- *Help EEP present at public meetings*



Methods for Involving Local Watershed Stakeholders

- Local Resource Professionals:
 - *Quarterly TAC meetings; meeting summaries & watershed newsletters*
- Landowners:
 - *TAC members make initial contact with interested landowners*
 - *EEP staff and/or consultants do follow-up site visits, answer Q's, obtain signed landowner interest forms*
- Elected Officials:
 - *Joint EEP/TAC presentations to Town Councils & County Commissions*
- General Public:
 - *Newspaper articles and (sometimes) TV spots; informational videos*
 - *Public meetings and/or "watershed events"*

Basic Structure for the EEP Local Watershed Planning Process

Phases of **WATERSHED ASSESSMENT & PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

(typically ~18- to 24-month process)

TAC

TAC

TAC

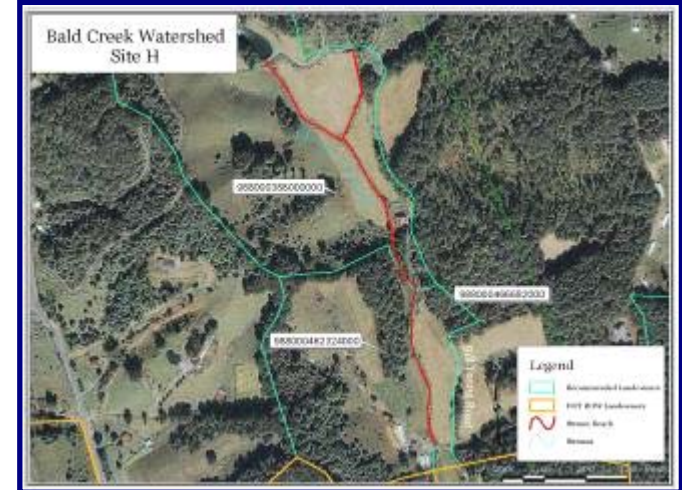
PUBLIC
MEETING or
"Watershed
Event"

TAC

Phase IV: presentation of Plan to
local commissions/councils;
landowner outreach & recruiting...

Case #1: Bald Creek LWP, Yancey County (French Broad River)

- Small rural watershed: constrained bottom-land agricultural, forested headwater tracts
- Phase III included large public meeting attended by vocal **anti-buffer folks**
 - *Opportunity to educate, but not the best forum*
- Phase IV being built around core group of local stakeholders from initial TAC, incl. CES, BRRLT, DFR & landowner
- Added 3 new watersheds (59 mi²) to original LWP area of 18 mi²
- EEP and Consulting Team [Equinox] working “behind the scenes” with a few key local RPs who are county residents
- Planning to hold **Phase IV workshops** to recruit landowners for *preservation, forest stewardship* projects



OUTLOOK: ... Guarded

Case #2: Lower Creek LWP, Caldwell & Burke Counties (Catawba River)

- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) formed @ start of Phase II
 - *City of Lenoir, Counties, NRCS, DWQ, WRC, Foothills Conservancy, CES, Greenways Group, DFR*
- Quarterly TAC mtg.s for ~16 months; facilitated by WPCOG
- Public Meeting held early in the process
 - *Very light turn-out; but not contentious*
- Education sub-committee & key RPs provided valuable input to Final Plan recommendations
- Phase IV challenge: **keeping the momentum going!**
- Hoping to establish long-term watershed group:
water quality committee within local non-profit
[Caldwell Co. *Pathways*] – connection to Lake Rhodhiss (319 & CWMTF \$\$)
- Upcoming EEP/COG presentations to Town & County officials
- One EEP project complete; 2 in design



OUTLOOK: ... Good

Lessons Learned

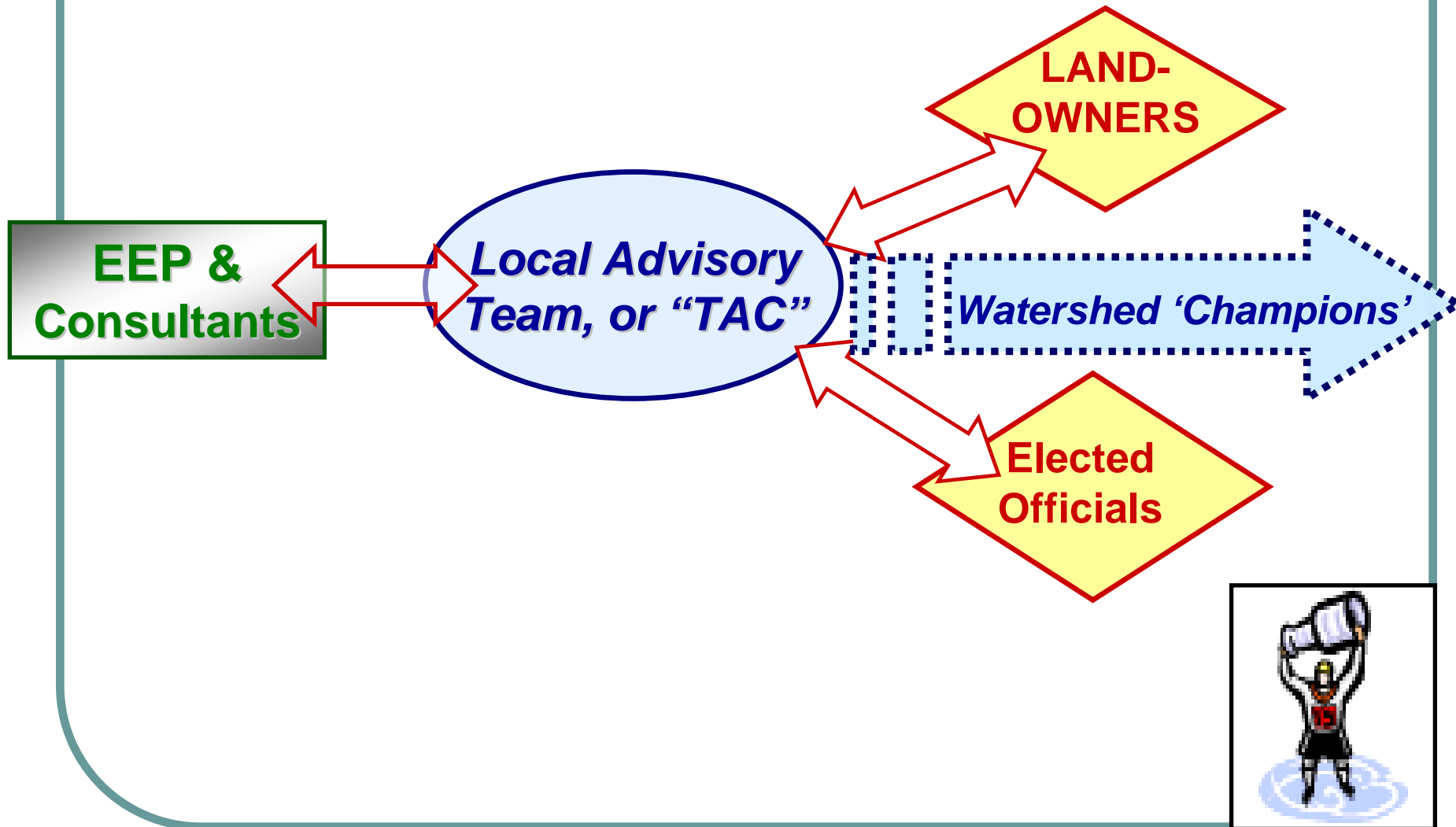


- Avoid a “one size fits all” strategy for public involvement
- Know your stakeholders & the interests they represent before convening your process; know the major community concerns
- The Watershed Solutions stage (Plan recommendations) is where most discussion/debate is likely – reserve enough time for this
- A good facilitator is worth their weight in gold!
- Be upfront about what EEP needs to get out of the process (mitigation projects) ... But don't focus on EEP needs at the expense of what RPs are telling you will work locally – e.g., greenways, forest stewardship, relatively modest Ag BMPs, etc.
- Find local folks willing to stand up with you at potentially contentious public meetings – technical professionals may be better than elected officials in this role

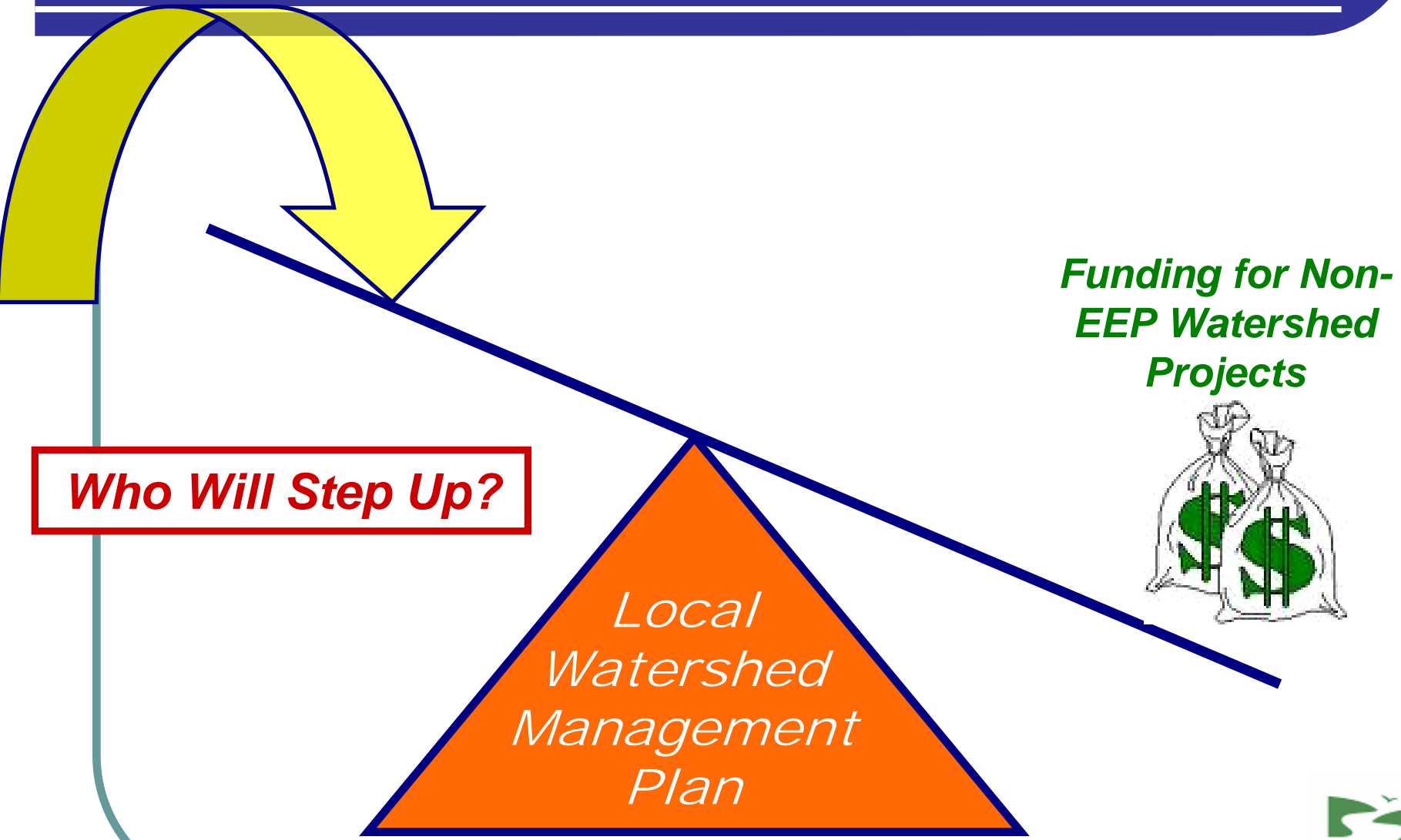
Lessons Learned, Part II

- In economically depressed counties, emphasize the economic benefits of EEP projects, incl. connection to tourism/recreation
- **Already having one or two EEP stream projects in the area helps**
- Expect to be approached & questioned by local residents; use these as opportunities to educate and to empathize
- **Don't expect landowner participation if you don't put the time/effort into meeting with them and listening to their stories -- one-on-one "face time" is critical!**
- Don't overwhelm landowners with a heavy sales pitch, or with lots of technical information; focus on what's in it for them and how you can help "fix their streams"
- **Early on, let the TAC know that long-term success depends on local champions/leaders emerging...**
- At Advisory Committee meetings, always provide good drinks & snacks 😊

Summary of EEP's Approach to Public Involvement



EEP Plans: Leverage for *Local Funding*



Who Will Step Up?

Local Watershed Management Plan

Funding for Non-EEP Watershed Projects



Questions, Comments?

