Water is Life

Stakeholder Participation in Water Management Policy

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Desire for meaningful stakeholder participation is not new...
What does this have to do with water management in Alabama?

• In 2012, Governor Bentley directed 5 state agencies to develop recommendations for a water management plan by December 1, 2013.

• His directive contained 4 key components, one of which was to “meet with stakeholders”.

Photo: Istock
What is a stakeholder?

...One who is involved in or affected by a course of action

Merriam-Webster dictionary

Stakeholder = Citizen in the context of public policy
Ladder of Citizen Participation*

*Arnstein, S., AIP Journal July 1969

Photo: Nelson Brooke
Who could be a “have-not” in AL Water Management?

- Anyone downstream
- Anyone who does not own riparian land
- Anyone who is impacted by drought
- Anyone who uses water
Where are we on the ladder?

Informing rung:
“Informing citizens...can be the most important first step toward legitimate citizen participation. However, too frequently the emphasis is placed on one-way flow of information with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation.”

Consulting rung:
“Inviting citizens’ opinions...can be a legitimate step...but if not combined with other modes..., this rung offers no assurance that citizens’ concerns will be taken into account.”

Arnstein, S., AIP Journal July 1969 pg 219
Informing and Consulting...

AWAWG actions:

• The "Water Management Issues in Alabama" report was sent out to 247 individuals and organizations inviting comments
• Responses were received from 70 stakeholders
• Website was developed including timeline, comments from stakeholders, and analysis of comments of stakeholders
• AAWWG members have met personally with stakeholders all across the state

http://www.adeca.alabama.gov/Divisions/owr/awawg/Pages/default.aspx
Informing and Consulting cont’d

- Alabama Rivers Alliance and partners across the state hosted 5 water policy symposia reaching almost 500 people from various interests
- Each meeting included informative presentations and opportunity for public discussion
Informing and consulting cont’d

ARA Water Policy Symposia Attendees

- Business/Industry: 33%
- Academic: 28%
- NGO: 6%
- Government: 6%
- Utility: 6%
- Tribe & Faith: 12%
- Media: 11%
- Unidentified: 3%
- 0.30%
Informing and consulting cont’d

NGO Sector Breakdown

- Conservation
- Environmental
- Lake Group
- Environmental Justice
- Recreation
- Other
Moving toward Partnership

Partnership rung:

“At this rung of the ladder, power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and powerholders. They agree to share planning and decision-making....”

Arnstein, S., AIP Journal July 1969
pg 221
Recommendations for success in achieving water management policy

- Develop “Partnership” process for true negotiations among stakeholders
- Process needs professional, neutral facilitation
- Transparent process with participation from all interested parties
- Timeline established that holds state accountable for water policy now.