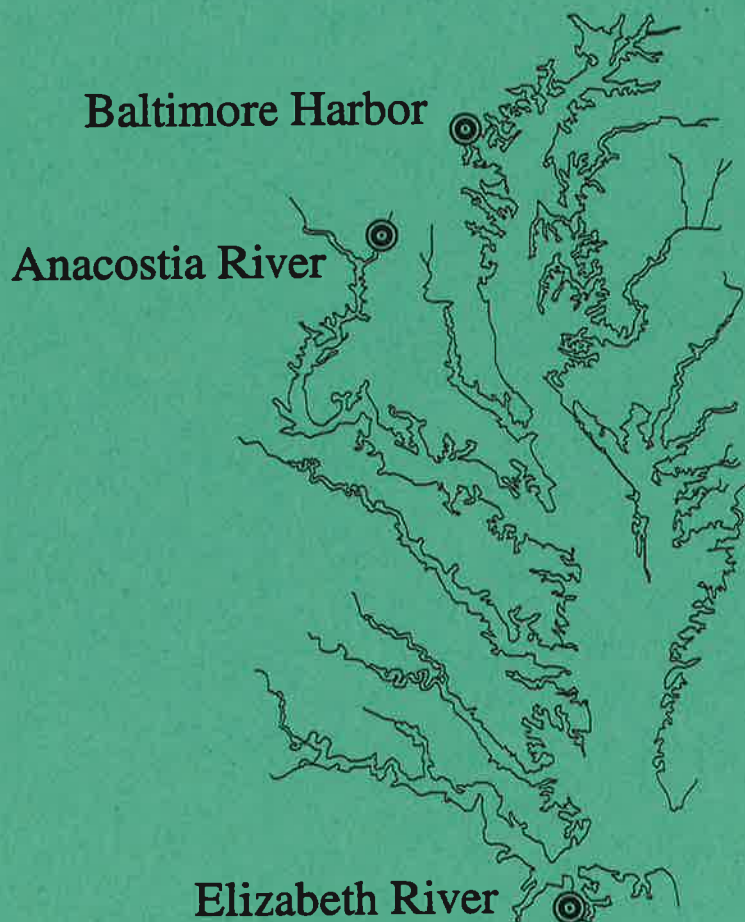


Chesapeake Bay Regional Action Plans Development Guidelines



Chesapeake Bay Program

Chesapeake Bay Regional Action Plan Development Guidelines

April 1997



**CHESAPEAKE BAY REGIONAL ACTION PLAN
DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES**

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for

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The 1994 *Chesapeake Bay Basinwide Toxics Reduction and Prevention Strategy* emphasized using a regional focus to address chemical contaminant-related problems in the Chesapeake Bay. Guided by the objective,

Direct reduction and prevention actions toward regions with known toxic problems as well as areas where significant potential exists for toxic impacts on living resources and habitats, and more directly involve the locally affected community and stakeholders,

the Chesapeake Bay Program is establishing a process for characterizing and designating areas of the Bay as Regions of Concern (e.g., areas with known chemical contaminant-related impacts)¹, and developing Regional Action Plans to guide the cooperative efforts needed to restore and protect the designated Regions of Concern. This guidance document presents an overview of the regional action planning process and an approach for developing Regional Action Plans. A separate document (see Appendix A—*Chesapeake Bay Chemical Contaminant Geographical Targeting Protocol* [Chesapeake Bay Program, 1995]) describes the process the Chesapeake Bay Program will use to identify Regions of Concern within the Chesapeake Bay basin.

The first step in the regional action planning process is for the Chesapeake Executive Council to designate an area as a Region of Concern. The Executive Council designated three areas (i.e., the Elizabeth River in Virginia, Baltimore Harbor in Maryland, and Anacostia River in the District of Columbia and Maryland) in the 1994 *Chesapeake Bay Basinwide Toxics Reduction and Prevention Strategy*; subsequent areas will be designated after completion of the chemical contaminant geographical targeting identification process (see Appendix A).

Once the Executive Council designates a Region of Concern, the next step is to develop and implement a Regional Action Plan. A Regional Action Plan serves as the guidebook for reducing and preventing chemical contamination problems in a designated Region of Concern. Prepared through an active, iterative process involving major stakeholders and the general public, a Regional Action Plan focuses multiagency cooperative efforts and public-private partnerships on planning and implementing the

¹Through the Region of Concern identification process, all Chesapeake Bay tidal areas will eventually be classified into one of four categories: (1) Region of Concern, (2) Area of Emphasis, (3) Area with Low Probability for Adverse Effects, and (4) Area with Insufficient Data. An area will be classified as a Region of Concern when the available data indicate both adverse ambient effects and elevated concentrations of chemical contaminants above thresholds associated with adverse effects. In addition, the data must reveal strong evidence for a causal relationship between the observed chemical contaminant stressors and effects.

necessary assessment, reduction, remediation, and prevention actions to restore and protect the designated Region of Concern.

The remaining chapters of this guidance document lead the reader, step by step, through the process of developing a Regional Action Plan. The document describes the elements of a Regional Action Plan, provides guidance on the planning process (e.g., developing stakeholder groups, which are referred to as Regional Action Teams), identifies the information that should be presented in the Regional Action Plan, suggests approaches for obtaining and analyzing the information needed to prepare the written plan, and presents various formats for displaying the information. The information covered in this guidance document is arranged according to the following chapters:

- Overview of the Regional Action Planning Process (Chapter 2)
- Conducting the Regional Action Planning Process (Chapter 3)
- Defining the Plan's Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Milestones (Chapter 4)
- Defining the Problem (Chapter 5)
- Evaluating Existing Management Programs (Chapter 6)
- Developing Implementation Actions (Chapter 7).

In addition, appendices to this document provide additional information.

This guidance was developed after an evaluation of other geographically based water quality planning efforts. It presents a model for developing and presenting Regional Action Plans based on lessons learned in other areas. The document promotes a common, bay-wide approach for addressing region-specific issues and problems in the context of a Regional Action Plan, while at the same time acknowledging that each Region of Concern is unique, with site-specific conditions and problems requiring tailored solutions. The information contained in this guidance document is intended to provide helpful background information needed to conduct an effective regional action planning process and prepare a well-developed Regional Action Plan. Readers desiring a quick summary of the types of information that should be contained in the final Regional Action Plan, including a recommended checklist of requirements for each chapter of a Regional Action Plan, should turn to Appendix B, Overview of Key Components to be Addressed in a Regional Action Plan.

The jurisdictions charged with developing Regional Action Plans are not required to follow verbatim the model proposed in this guidance document. Just as each Region of Concern has a special

set of circumstances (e.g., different chemical contamination problems) that caused its designation, each Regional Action Plan will also be unique, with different goals and objectives.

The approach proposed for developing Regional Action Plans has been used successfully in other areas (e.g., Great Lakes Remedial Action Plans and Puget Sound Watershed Action Plans for Nonpoint Source Pollution) to develop a targeted implementation approach for addressing the unique problems of a specific location. These planning approaches were successful, in large part, because they secured the commitment of stakeholders, particularly those with a vested interest in the Region of Concern, to assist in developing and implementing the plan. In doing so, the plans extended beyond standard regulatory approaches to pollution control and supplemented them with innovative actions that addressed site-specific problems (Hartig and Zarull 1992; National Water Quality Evaluation Project 1992; Puget Sound Water Quality Authority 1993; Wallin and Haberman 1992). The Chesapeake Bay Program envisions using a similar, stakeholder driven process to develop Regional Action Plans.

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CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

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CHAPTER 2. OVERVIEW OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

In designating an area as a Region of Concern, the Chesapeake Executive Council members commit their respective jurisdictions to the regional action planning process, including preparing a Regional Action Plan. Each responsible jurisdiction designates a lead agency (e.g., typically the state environmental office) to oversee plan development and implementation. Once designated, the lead agency has a great deal of flexibility in choosing its approach for completing the plan, although experience gained from similar planning approaches conducted elsewhere shows that the most effective plans are developed when the lead agency works closely with existing groups and/or stakeholders in the Region of Concern. Regardless of the approach implemented, the lead agency is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Regional Action Plan is delivered to the Executive Council on time, in accordance with the schedule that is determined when the area is designated as a Region of Concern.

This chapter recommends an ideal approach for developing a Regional Action Plan. Although many approaches can be used and should be explored to suit site-specific needs, the steps described in Exhibit 2-1 provide the foundation for a successful plan. This chapter provides an overview of each step in the planning process; subsequent chapters of the guidance lead the reader, step by step through the process of developing a Regional Action Plan.

The overarching goal of each Regional Action Plan is to develop an implementable plan that effectively addresses chemical contamination problems in a Region of Concern. The plan should clearly define the vision, goals, and objectives guiding the process; provide a realistic evaluation of the problems; and summarize the necessary assessment, reduction, remediation, and prevention actions needed to address identified problems. To be effective, the Regional Action Plan must have clearly stated, and measurable, goals and objectives; involve key stakeholders and the general public from project initiation through the planning process; and thoroughly define roles, responsibilities, and commitments for each participant.

One key to developing a successful Regional Action Plan is to involve a representative and balanced stakeholder group (referred to as the Regional Action Team) of interested and affected parties in all stages of the plan development, beginning with defining the problem and establishing a vision statement, goals, and objectives for the plan. It is especially important to involve individuals and/or groups that will play lead roles in implementing the Regional Action Plan, as well as those responsible for completing plan recommendations. The group should comprise key decision-makers, subject matter

**Exhibit 2-1. Steps Needed to Complete the Regional Action Planning Process
(responsible party)**

- 1. Designate Regions of Concern (Executive Council)**
- 2. Identify Lead Agency (Executive Council)**
- 3. Conduct Preliminary Background Research on Region of Concern (Lead Agency)**
 - Identify existing stakeholder groups, if applicable.
 - Begin summarizing information on problems associated with chemical contamination.
- 4. Establish Multidisciplinary Regional Action Team (Lead Agency, with input from existing groups)**
 - Include representatives of persons affected by or contributing to chemical contamination in the Region of Concern, the lead agency, key decision-makers, and subject matter experts.
- 5. Determine Planning Approach (Lead Agency, with input from existing groups)**
 - Define roles and responsibilities.
 - Develop work plan and schedule (including Regional Action Team meetings and deliverables).
 - Outline methodology for developing Regional Action Plan.
- 6. Obtain Commitments of Key Leaders**
- 7. Develop Preliminary Problem Statement (Lead Agency, with input from existing groups and subject matter experts)**
 - Consult readily available information sources, including the Chemical Contaminant Geographical Targeting Protocol, to develop a preliminary understanding of problems related to chemical contamination within the Region of Concern (i.e., What makes the area a Region of Concern?). Much of the information will most likely come from the chemical contaminant geographical targeting process.
 - Prepare summary background paper or fact sheet for distribution to the Regional Action Team.
- 8. Determine a Vision Statement and Identify Preliminary Goals and Objectives (Regional Action Team)**
 - Use the preliminary assessment of problems as a starting point for determining the desired future state of the Region of Concern. Use stakeholders, technical experts, and public participation to define goals and objectives necessary to achieve the desired future state.

**Exhibit 2-1. Steps Needed to Complete the Regional Action Planning Process
(responsible party) (continued)**

- 9. Further Define Problems in the Context of Preliminary Goals and Objectives (Lead Agency, Regional Action Team, Existing Groups, Subject Matter Experts)**
 - Identify and rank adverse ambient effects (e.g., fish tumors) caused by chemical contamination.
 - Identify and rank chemicals (e.g., polyaromatic hydrocarbons) and sources (e.g., urban runoff) causing impacts.
 - Prioritize impacts, chemicals, and sources so that effective, targeted, implementation actions can be developed.
- 10. Assess Effectiveness of Existing Management Programs (Lead Agency, Regional Action Team, Existing Groups, Subject Matter Experts)**
 - Identify key regulatory and nonregulatory programs affecting priority problems in the Region of Concern.
 - Evaluate programs to assess effectiveness.
 - Determine where existing programs are not sufficient to reduce or prevent loadings or releases of the chemical contaminants linked with the existing or potential adverse impacts in the Region of Concern.
 - Determine what additional or new actions, both regulatory and nonregulatory, must be taken to effectively reduce the effects related to chemical contamination.
- 11. Revise Preliminary Goals and Objectives (Regional Action Team)**
- 12. Develop Implementation Approach to Address Problems (Lead Agency, Regional Action Team, Existing Groups, Subject Matter Experts)**
 - Identify specific implementation actions.
 - Summarize the primary components of each action, including methodology and linkage to priority problems.
 - Determine the jurisdictions and entities responsible for completion of each step.
 - Develop an aggressive, yet realistic completion schedule including milestones.
 - Define the key monitoring actions, including monitoring frequency and responsible parties, needed to verify the restoration of uses and the reduction/elimination of adverse living resources.
- 13. Compile final Regional Action Plan for Presentation to Executive Council (Lead Agency, Regional Action Team, Existing Groups)**

experts, and representatives of persons affected by or associated with chemical contamination in the Region of Concern.

The process of developing a Regional Action Plan involves many sequential and overlapping tasks. Although outlined in this chapter as steps (Exhibit 2-1), the planning process is iterative; as more knowledge of a Region of Concern is gained throughout the process, the initial problem statement, goals, and recommendations might be enhanced, refined, or revised. The knowledge base for the plan will continue to evolve during the plan's implementation. Therefore, the process should include periods of re-evaluation to ensure that each part of the plan remains applicable and well-designed.

Obviously, the process begins with designation of a Region of Concern (**Step 1**). After designation, the affiliated jurisdictions name a lead agency, which initiates the Regional Action Planning process (**Step 2**). The lead agency then assembles available background materials on the Region of Concern and develops a preliminary understanding of problems and current players in the Region of Concern (**Step 3**). While assembling and evaluating background information, the lead agency might discover that an existing stakeholder group is already active in the Region of Concern. The lead agency may choose to team with this group or to delegate all responsibility for the Regional Action Plan to the group. Regardless of the approach taken, the lead agency, working with existing groups, should name an independent, multidisciplinary Regional Action Team to make decisions and to provide other support for Regional Action Plan development (**Step 4**). The Regional Action Team should be assembled based on an understanding of the problems, affected parties, and key decision-makers in the Region of Concern. Chapter 3 describes techniques to select a balanced and representative Regional Action Team. A representative from the lead agency should also be included as a member for the Regional Action Team.

Also in these early planning steps, the lead agency, in conjunction with its partner or designee, should prepare a regional action planning work plan, which contains a methodology and timeline for completing the other elements of the plan (**Step 5**). The work plan should also define an overall mission for the group. The work plan should be distributed to the Regional Action Team in advance of its first meeting so that it can be reviewed and finalized when the group meets.

Prior to the first meeting, the lead agency should also work to secure the commitment of key leaders (**Step 6**). High level management support is essential to ensuring the ultimate success of the regional action planning process. Demonstrated management support might help to motivate the Regional

Action Team and encourage participation from other entities in the Region of Concern. In addition, high level management support is critical to obtaining staff and financial resources.

The next step in the process (described in Chapter 4), which can be taken while identifying the Regional Action Team members, is for the lead agency and/or its partner or designee to assemble readily available background materials that address the Region of Concern. From these, a summary background paper and/or fact sheet of problems and other issues in the Region of Concern (kept short and brief at this point of the planning process) should be distributed to the Regional Action Team (**Step 7**). Using these background materials and related presentations to initiate discussion, one of the first planning meetings for the Regional Action Team should be devoted to developing a preliminary problem statement (**Step 7**) and an overall vision for the Region of Concern and associated preliminary goals and objectives to focus the planning process (**Step 8**). The process of developing goals and measurable objectives will continue and become more refined (i.e., measurable objectives will be established) throughout the planning process as more is learned about the Region of Concern. The purpose of investing time at the beginning of the process to understand problems is to help focus limited resources on those areas of greatest concern.

After developing preliminary goals and objectives, the next step (discussed in Chapter 5) is to further define the problems (e.g., identifying the types and sources of chemical contaminants and their effects on living resources), in the context of the goals and objectives (**Step 9**). In situations where there is insufficient background information about the problems to identify preliminary goals and objectives, the Regional Action Team may have to skip ahead to further defining problems (**Step 9**) before completing the identification of goals and objectives (**Step 8**).

After evaluating problems and developing a vision statement and preliminary goals and objectives, the regional action planning process focuses on developing an implementation approach. One important aspect of the implementation approach is to assess the effectiveness of existing management programs that address priority problems in the Region of Concern (**Step 10**). Before completing development of the implementation approach, the Regional Action Team may want to refine or revise its preliminary goals and objectives (**Step 11**) based on its expanding knowledge base about the Region of Concern. In order to complete the implementation approach, the Regional Action Team must build from its understanding of existing management programs to identify new implementation actions (discussed in Chapter 7), if necessary, that will address problems in the Region of Concern (**Step 12**). These implementation actions should address the targeted goals and objectives of the Regional Action Plan. During this step, the

Regional Action Team should recruit commitments for implementation from the stakeholders, develop implementation schedules, and make provisions to track implementation progress and identify measures of success.

The information assimilated during each step of the regional action planning process must be assembled into a single document representing the methodology, findings, and recommendations of the Regional Action Team (**Step 13**). Exhibit 2-2 provides a sample table of contents that can be used as an outline for the Regional Action Plan. After assembling the Regional Action Plan, the Regional Action Team and lead agency present the document to the Chesapeake Bay Program Toxics Subcommittee for review and the Executive Council for formal adoption. Concurrently, the lead agency, Regional Action Team, and other key players (e.g., federal agencies) begin implementation of their commitments according to the Regional Action Plan.

Exhibit 2-2. Recommended Table of Contents for Regional Action Plan

Executive Summary

1. Introduction
2. Overview of Regional Action Plan Development Process
3. Goals, Objectives, and Milestones
4. Definition of the Problem
5. Existing Management Programs
6. Implementation Actions

References

Appendices

Maps and Overlays

The remainder of this document provides more detailed information on the steps required to conduct an effective regional action planning process. As mentioned previously, the guidance was developed after an evaluation of other geographically based approaches to water quality planning. Exhibit 2-3 lists the key considerations learned through the evaluation that should be followed to encourage successful regional action planning.

Exhibit 2-3. Key Considerations for Successful Regional Action Planning**Establishing a Regional Action Team**

- Determine appropriate participants. Represent affected parties (i.e., persons whose use of the Region of Concern is impaired by chemical contamination *and* groups associated with chemical contamination), subject matter experts, and key decision-makers. Involve representatives from groups potentially responsible for implementing aspects of the plan.
- Select a Team that is balanced and representative of all affected parties. One group should not dominate. In most cases, it is inappropriate for more than one individual from a single entity to participate.
- Identify enthusiastic, open-minded, and energetic participants who are committed to the consensus-building process and have time to devote to developing a Regional Action Plan.
- Avoid inviting people not affected by the objective(s) of the Regional Action Plan. Also avoid individuals not committed to the process (e.g., those who are disinterested, unreliable) and/or known meeting "disrupters."
- Aim to have an adequate and balanced stakeholder group that is large enough to have the knowledge and opinions relevant to the planning task, but strive for a manageable group size. For decision-making activities, the optimal group size is 7 to 15 participants.

Conducting the Regional Action Planning Process

- Utilize a participatory, team-driven process to develop the Regional Action Plan.
- Involve affected parties (i.e., stakeholders) at each stage of the planning process, including initiation. Involvement in the planning process empowers stakeholders and leads to local ownership of the plan's recommendations. Such involvement promotes long-term commitment and support from key citizenry.
- Identify a leader for each part of the process (e.g., someone to run meetings, someone to coordinate meetings).
- Designate a staff person from the lead agency to coordinate plan development and implementation, including project administration, coordination, and progress reporting.
- Designate core project staff from participating agencies.
- Have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each part of the process.
- Streamline the planning process by focussing on priority issues.
- Develop a work plan, including a detailed schedule, to guide the planning process.
- Develop clearly stated and measurable goals based on a realistic assessment of the problem and the feasibility of resolution. Throughout the planning process, develop more specific objectives, providing realistic, quantitative targets for each goal. Rank goals and objectives according to priority for action.
- Develop short- and long-term goals. Short-term, achievable goals are important to demonstrate progress to the public to ensure their continued support.

Exhibit 2-3. Key Considerations for Successful Regional Action Planning (continued)**Conducting the Regional Action Planning Process (continued)**

- Develop written milestones for achieving implementation actions and a system to monitor progress to ensure momentum for plan implementation.
- Build local support through public participation and education.
- Build in mechanisms for plan re-evaluation and revision.

Defining Problems

- Focus problem definition investigations on priority goals and objectives. Obtain sufficient (but not excessive) information to develop a sound implementation approach.
- Prioritize problems and focus regional action planning activities on the highest priorities first.
- Maintain discipline and focus when conducting research on problems. Use resources efficiently by focusing on information relevant for decision-making.
- Ensure that the geographic boundaries for the Region of Concern are well defined to encompass the major pollutant sources and "workable" in size so that implementation actions are feasible.

Developing Implementable Solutions

- Focus implementation actions on priority problems and causes of those problems.
- Give top priority to projects with a high probability for reversing water quality impairment.
- Identify funding sources and commitments upfront.
- Ensure compatibility of proposed solutions so that actions do not interfere with each other.
- Effectively use existing regulatory and resource management tools.
- Obtain high level management commitment, including allocation of staff and financial resources.
- Encourage political will through public participation and establishment of citizen "watchdog" groups.

Effectively Measuring Progress

- Ensure that project goals and objectives are realistic, specific, and measurable.
- Require routine progress reports to track implementation status.

Sources: Hartig and Zarull (1992); Klemans (1993); National Rural Clean Water Program (1992); National Water Quality Evaluation Project (1992); Wallin and Haberman (1992).

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CHAPTER 3

CONDUCTING THE REGIONAL ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

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CHAPTER 3. CONDUCTING THE REGIONAL ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

Regional Action Plans should be developed through a coordinated, consensus-building process overseen by the designated lead agency in the Region of Concern¹ and supported by a stakeholder group, referred to as the Regional Action Team. Although the lead agency has considerable flexibility in its approach to conducting the regional action planning process, the Chesapeake Bay Program expects the lead agency to:

- Develop and deliver a Regional Action Plan to the Chesapeake Executive Council within a designated timeframe
- Use a regional action planning process that considers all stakeholder interests
- Identify and work in consultation with the Regional Action Team throughout the planning process, particularly when identifying priorities, determining an overall project vision, setting goals and objectives, and developing implementation actions and milestones
- Work with the Regional Action Team to include the public in the planning process.

This chapter presents background information useful for conducting the regional action planning process. The chapter describes the anticipated activities of the lead agency and the Regional Action Team in developing a Regional Action Plan, presents information on conducting Regional Action Team meetings and building consensus, and discusses the importance of public participation and education. This information is presented in the following sections of the chapter:

- Overview of the Lead Agency's Involvement
 - Assembling an Effective Regional Action Team
 - Identifying Potential Regional Action Team Members
 - Identifying Regional Action Team Leaders
 - Obtaining Management Support
- Overview of the Regional Action Team's Involvement
 - Identifying Stakeholder Interests
 - Evaluating Environmental Problems and Establishing a Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives
 - Evaluating Existing Management Programs
 - Determining Implementation Actions

¹Lead agencies are designated by the jurisdiction(s) containing a Region of Concern.

- Developing a Work Plan
- Conducting Effective Regional Action Team Meetings
- Approaches to Building Consensus
- Public Participation and Education.

Although the guidance recognizes that each Region of Concern is a unique location, with site-specific considerations, the suggestions presented in this chapter apply to most situations and will help determine an efficient and successful regional action planning outcome. Three overarching considerations that apply to all aspects of the planning process include:

- **Someone must coordinate the entire regional action planning process.** The process involves many different steps and participants. In order to keep the process on track, in an orderly and efficient manner, one person should be responsible for mapping each step of the process, assigning roles and responsibilities, and ensuring that tasks get completed on time. This Regional Action Plan coordinator should be affiliated with the group responsible for writing the final plan and delivering it to the Executive Council (generally this group is the lead agency).
- **Roles and responsibilities for each step of the planning process must be clearly defined.** Regional action planning involves many different tasks, including conducting background research, preparing written materials, providing logistical support for Regional Action Team meetings, running Regional Action Team meetings, facilitating decision-making, and writing the final plan. Because different people will be involved in each of these steps, it is essential to clarify, upfront, the roles and responsibilities of each participant. This will clarify the overall approach, ensure efficient participation, and avoid duplication of effort.
- **Each step of the planning process must have a leader.** In addition to the overall plan coordinator, each step of the process must have a discrete leader. Absence of a leader can lead to confusion about roles and responsibilities, cause the process to get off-track, and frustrate participants who are unclear about the best way to participate.

The rationale for having an overall coordinator, defining roles and responsibilities, and identifying leaders for the regional action planning process is simple and straightforward. Regional action planning must occur in an orderly, efficient, and timely fashion so that momentum is maintained, participants' commitment and enthusiasm to the planning process remain high, and goals and objectives are achieved. Defining roles and responsibilities early in the process helps to establish the road map necessary to ensure effective planning. Poorly organized efforts, without a clearly stated mission and understanding of individual and group responsibilities, often fail to achieve the ultimate goal of the regional action planning

process—to develop an implementable plan, representative of the diverse interests in the Region of Concern, that will reduce and prevent problems associated with chemical contamination.

Stakeholder involvement from the early stages is critical to the ultimate success of the Regional Action Plan. Stakeholders are represented through a well-selected Regional Action Team comprised of a diverse group of participants interested in, affected by, or contributing to chemical contaminant-related issues in the Region of Concern. Potential stakeholders for inclusion on the Regional Action Team include representatives from local, state and federal governments; industrial and commercial sectors; citizen and environmental groups; and academic institutions.

Involving stakeholders in the decision-making process leads to local ownership of the Regional Action Plan and a sense of stewardship for the Region of Concern. The coalitions built through an effective stakeholder process will strengthen the Regional Action Plan by elevating the priority given to certain implementation actions, obtaining commitments (e.g., staff resources, funding) for implementation, and engendering trust among diverse interests. In addition, stakeholder commitment is necessary because of the level of political, legal, and behavioral change necessary to achieve some regional action planning goals and objectives. Because of the variety of political bodies and agencies potentially involved in the watersheds linked to a Region of Concern, governmental commitment is also key to affecting change. Most of the implementation actions needed to address a Region of Concern, whether regulatory or nonregulatory, are beyond the conceptual, institutional, and financial reach of any single agency or group and require intra-agency collaboration, public-private partnerships, and stakeholder commitment.

In addition to the Regional Action Team directly involved in plan development, the sustained interest and involvement of the general public is necessary to maintain momentum. The general public can be influential in ensuring that actions are pursued. They can help keep the process focused and, by serving as citizen "watchdogs," can achieve greater accountability from those charged with implementing specific plan recommendations. The general public can also provide technical input to plan development by contributing information and opinions to define problems, assessing existing programs, and determining implementation actions. Citizen groups can also be established to contribute directly to plan implementation by establishing citizen monitoring networks, promoting cleanup days, or initiating other actions. An informed public can provide valuable resources to the regional action planning process, and efforts should be taken, from the start, to ensure public participation.

Exhibit 3-1. Roles and Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Role/Interests	Responsibility	Comments/Other Considerations
Lead agencies	Manage plan development in cooperation with stakeholders (i.e., Regional Action Team) and form institutions with public involvement and commitment	Protect water quality and develop and implement a Regional Action Plan	Establish and coordinate the team and provide technical and financial resources
Responsible agencies (federal, state, and local)	Support plan development and pursue various public interests	Assist lead agencies and commit technical and financial resources; participate in relevant implementation actions	Exercise jurisdiction over resources or management decisions
Industry and local businesses	Ensure business interests are represented in the plan	Contribute technical expertise, time, and funding; participate in relevant implementation actions	Educate the public and inform constituencies of progress and issues
Citizen/environmental groups	Ensure environmental protection issues are represented in the plan	Attend meetings, perform outreach, serve as watch dog for planning process, participate in plan implementation	Educate the public and inform constituencies of progress and issues
Educational institutions	Ensure that scientific and other educational information is disclosed	Provide subject area expertise and perform outreach, technical research, and monitoring	Make grants available to support such projects
General Public	Attend public meetings/hearings and other events about the Region of Concern. Contribute ideas, opinions, and information.	Become informed and serve as "watchdogs" for plan implementation. Maintain political pressure. Take personal responsibility for actions that will improve conditions in the Region of Concern (e.g., recycle, minimize use of hazardous chemicals).	Informing the public early on and throughout the process is a good way to maintain momentum and pressure to ensure implementation.

Exhibit 3-1 provides an overview of the types of key players likely to be active in the regional action planning process. The exhibit outlines major roles and responsibilities and describes the interests of these stakeholders, including lead agencies, other government agencies, industry and local business, citizen/environmental groups, and educational institutions. Later sections of this chapter describe a process for selecting a balanced and representative Regional Action Team from these types of groups.

3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE LEAD AGENCY'S INVOLVEMENT

The lead agency is designated by the jurisdiction(s) having a Region of Concern to oversee the regional action planning process, including plan development and implementation. The lead agency's responsibilities include establishing and coordinating the Regional Action Team, providing technical and financial resources, and offering leadership for the regional action planning process. It is very important that the lead agency be committed to the regional action planning process and work with the Regional Action Team to gather support from elected officials.

The lead agency has a great deal of flexibility in choosing an approach for implementing the regional action planning process. Bearing in mind that the ultimate responsibility of the lead agency is to deliver a Regional Action Plan to the Chesapeake Executive Council by an established deadline, the lead agency can use, or modify, one of several approaches depending on the level of public and stakeholder commitment required to develop and implement the Regional Action Plan, and available funding and other resources:

- Maintain full responsibility for plan development, using the Regional Action Team in an advisory capacity (e.g., reviewing and commenting on materials prepared by the lead agency)
- Share responsibility with the Regional Action Team (e.g., identify the various tasks needed to complete the plan and divide responsibilities according to expertise and ability/willingness to contribute)
- Delegate all authority for plan development to the Regional Action Team (e.g., lead agency may provide technical support, but Regional Action Team has full control in guiding the planning process and making recommendations).

Regardless of the approach taken, it is essential to clearly define roles and responsibilities at the outset. If the lead agency chooses to delegate some or all of its authority to an existing group, it might want to develop a formal or informal memorandum of understanding clearly stating roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the groups involved. If such clarification of roles and responsibilities is not offered early in the planning process, involved parties, including Regional Action Team members, might become confused, frustrated, and disillusioned with the process.

Experience suggests that the most effective approach is one of shared responsibility between the lead agency and the Regional Action Team (Chesapeake Bay Program 1990; Davidson 1994; Harris 1994; Schramik 1994; Shuyler 1994; Swiniuch 1994; Hartig et al. 1994). This approach is often successful because it utilizes the technical and financial resources of the lead agency, while seeking the energy, creativity, support, and commitment from the stakeholders who will ultimately determine the plan's success. Regardless of the approach used by the lead agency, it is important that adequate time be allocated for plan research and development in order to generate a sound, credible, and implementable plan. The lead agency, working with the Regional Action Team, should try to identify and seek involvement from all significant stakeholders and thoroughly understand stakeholder interests. The Regional Action Team should also be given sufficient time and resources to conduct the decision-making process needed to develop a sound implementation approach (e.g., identifying a complete range of implementation actions, such as nonpoint source control techniques, pollution prevention plans, legislative

changes, funding, public involvement). By following this process, it is more likely that the solutions developed will be more acceptable to the team and innovative than a plan produced by a single agency.

3.1.1 Assembling an Effective Regional Action Team

One of the most important early responsibilities of the lead agency is to assemble an effective Regional Action Team. Although many factors determine team effectiveness, it is of utmost importance that the team be balanced and representative of key stakeholders in the Region of Concern. When assembling the team, the lead agency may want to start with existing stakeholder groups (e.g., the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Committee, the Elizabeth River Project) or develop a new group, drawing members from existing stakeholder groups. As one of its first steps in the planning process, the lead agency should conduct enough background research on the Region of Concern to identify groups and/or individuals already active in the Region of Concern. Depending on the situation in the Region of Concern, the lead agency should coordinate with existing stakeholder groups or active individuals, or invite other involved parties (e.g., local governments) to join an initial selection committee (formal or informal) to assemble the Regional Action Team. The lead agency, in conjunction with its partners in the Region of Concern (e.g., selection committee) should determine the size and structure of the Regional Action Team and identify affected parties (i.e., persons/groups associated with or affected by chemical contamination in the Region of Concern), key decision-makers, and subject matter experts to include as participants on the Regional Action Team. When identifying groups and/or individuals to assist in the Regional Action Team selection process, and again when identifying potential team members, it is important to have the participation of individuals who adequately represent the wide variety of interests of those affecting and being affected by chemical contamination problems in the Region of Concern. It is especially important to involve individuals and/or groups that will play lead roles in implementing the Regional Action Plan. Section 3.1.2 of this guidance provides more specific direction on a process that can be used to identify and select Regional Action Team members.

Although it is critical to include representative stakeholders on the Regional Action Team, it is also important to keep the group size manageable—no more than 15 to 20 members are suggested (optimal size is 7 to 15). This smaller number gives the group flexibility and allows it to operate in an efficient manner. It also enhances the consensus-building process, which is essential to the ultimate success of the Regional Action Plan. Although larger groups are possible, it becomes harder to ensure equitable involvement from all team members, and the decision-making process may be more unwieldy. If a group larger than 15 or 20 individuals is required, it may be necessary to form subcommittees (e.g., by source of pollution/land use category). To make drafting the Regional Action Plan workable, a

drafting subcommittee, including approximately five members, may be formed. Alternatively, if resources are available, it may be possible for the lead agency to provide staff and/or contractor support to assemble background materials needed to develop the Regional Action Plan. If such "outside" sources, or even a drafting subcommittee of the Regional Action Team, are used to prepare sections of the Regional Action Plan, all stakeholders comprising the Regional Action Team should agree on the input using a consensus-based approach. Section 3.5 in this chapter ("Approaches to Building Consensus") provides an overview of several approaches to building consensus.

Regional Action Team members should be enthusiastic and energetic about the planning process, have leadership abilities, and be committed to the consensus approach to decision-making. Ideally, the members should have technical familiarity with the issues facing the Region of Concern, but be involved in management to the extent that they can influence the decision-making processes of the organizations they represent. The members should also be able to speak with confidence about the feasibility of putting the proposed implementation approach to work. It is important to involve both those who can contribute to the planning process and those who can contribute to the implementation of the Regional Action Plan.

While it may be tempting to include only supporters of the regional action planning process on the Regional Action Team, it is crucial to select team members representing all affected parties, especially those that might be responsible for implementing a particular plan recommendation. By including representatives from potentially resistant groups (e.g., a major contributor of chemical contamination) in the early stages of the planning process, it may be possible to allay fears, build trust, and develop an implementable plan that avoids potential pitfalls from the lack of cooperation and resistance that could occur if affected parties feel excluded from the planning dialogue. When seeking to include members from potentially resistant groups, it is helpful to identify individuals from those groups who will give the process a chance, agree to use a consensus-based approach, and are willing to participate.

Exhibit 3-2 summarizes selected issues key to assembling an effective Regional Action Team. If these concerns are considered and a strong commitment to a consensus-based process using stakeholders is pursued, then it should be possible to develop a sound, implementable plan. However, there is no guarantee that any one team will succeed. Participants should look for warning signs and avoid pitfalls, such as those listed in Exhibit 3-3.

Exhibit 3-2. Key Elements to Establishing a Regional Action Team

- Determine appropriate participants. Represent affected parties (i.e., persons whose use of the Region of Concern is impaired by chemical contamination *and* groups associated with chemical contamination), subject matter experts, and key decision-makers. Ideally, participants should be able to represent groups of affected parties (e.g., trade associations, coalition of several environmental organizations) rather than individual entities (e.g., a single facility). Involve representatives from groups potentially responsible for implementing aspects of the plan.
- Select a team that is balanced and representative of all affected parties. One group should not dominate. In most cases, it is inappropriate for more than one individual from a single entity to participate.
- Identify affected parties and other potential Regional Action Team members by initially examining available information on the nature of problems in the Region of Concern. After gaining a preliminary understanding of problems in the Region of Concern, identify the types of affected parties associated with each problem. Seek out existing organizations and/or individuals active in the Region of Concern for advice on potential Regional Action Team members.
- Identify enthusiastic, open-minded, and energetic participants who are committed to the consensus-building process and have time to devote to developing a Regional Action Plan.
- Avoid inviting people not affected by the objective(s) of the Regional Action Plan. Also avoid disinterested, unreliable individuals, and/or known meeting "disrupters."
- Aim to have an adequate and balanced stakeholder group that is large enough to contain the knowledge and opinions relevant to the planning task, but strive for a manageable group size. For decision-making activities, the optimal group size is 7 to 15 participants. If more participants are needed, consider establishing smaller subgroups.
- Seek continuity of process and a balanced and representative group at all times by having team members designate an alternate in case they are unable to attend a meeting.

Exhibit 3-3. Reasons Why Consensus Groups Fail

- Failure to produce a plan that represents the interests of all significant stakeholders. This is often caused when certain stakeholders, such as environmental groups, do not join the team. Groups who do not join the team usually attack what they do not like in the draft plan when it is presented for lead agency review or review by the governing body. Therefore, it is important to make every effort to involve each significant stakeholder group in the process directly or indirectly (e.g., by becoming a corresponding member who receives meeting notes and is contacted regularly for ideas and opinions).
- Members walk away from the process or do not commit to the process. This is usually because team members believe their interests can be represented better in another way (e.g., in court, directly with elected officials).
- The team fails to deliver a Regional Action Plan that is adequate to guide implementation. Without clear goals and objectives and strong leadership, teams tend to produce vague plans that do not resolve major issues (e.g., specific implementation tools, such as farm pollution prevention plans to control urban and agricultural runoff).
- The team loses momentum, thereby causing key members to abandon the process. Loss of momentum is usually caused by inefficient and poor process management and getting bogged down on difficult issues.

3.1.2 Identifying Regional Action Team Members

Stakeholder groups, such as the Regional Action Team, should be balanced and represent key decision-makers and affected parties (i.e., persons/groups associated with or affected by chemical contamination) in the Region of Concern. To determine which stakeholders should participate in the Regional Action Team, it is necessary to examine the nature of the chemical contamination problems in the Region of Concern. The lead agency, in conjunction with a formal or informal selection committee,² should assemble and analyze readily available information (e.g., written documentation, personal contact with knowledgeable individuals) to develop a preliminary overview of problems in the Region of Concern. This understanding of problems is the necessary first step for identifying parties affected by or contributing to beneficial use impairment and/or other adverse effects of chemical contamination. After understanding the problems, it is possible to link candidate stakeholder groups and individual representatives of those groups to the problems. Each step of the process to identify Regional Action Team members is summarized below:

- **Assess Nature of Problems**—Lead agency, working with existing stakeholder groups and/or individuals active in the Region of Concern, conducts preliminary investigations to determine the nature of chemical contamination problems in the Region of Concern. Readily available written material (e.g., technical reports, newspaper articles), supplemented by discussions with informed groups or individuals, should be assembled and summarized.
- **Identify Stakeholder Categories to be Represented on the Regional Action Team**—Information on problems and sources of problems provide the basis for identifying the types of stakeholders that should be represented on the Regional Action Team. The lead agency, in consultation with other key groups and/or individuals, develops a generic list of stakeholder categories (e.g., fishing industry, property owners, chemical industry, environmental groups) that should be included.
- **Identify Actual Representatives from Generic Stakeholder Categories**—The lead agency, in consultation with other key groups and/or individuals, analyzes background information to match specific names with stakeholder categories. A review of the literature, but more likely personal knowledge/recommendations from groups and/or individuals already involved in the Region of Concern, will help to identify specific persons associated with each generic stakeholder category. Efforts should be made to identify individuals that represent groups of stakeholders (e.g., an industry association or business group that captures multiple business/industry groups in the Region of Concern). It is important to avoid duplication—there is no need for two or more representatives from any particular stakeholder category; certainly not from the same location/facility/group.

²The lead agency may want to coordinate with existing groups and/or individuals (e.g., an existing stakeholder group such as the Elizabeth River Project or the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Committee) active in the Region of Concern, as well as other involved parties (e.g., local governments) to form a Regional Action Team Selection Committee.

Exhibits 3-4 and 3-5 provide an example of the process of identifying Regional Action Team members. Exhibit 3-4 illustrates each step of the process, while Exhibit 3-5 displays a hypothetical list of stakeholder categories developed from the example in Exhibit 3-4.

In addition to the lead agency, the likely stakeholders to be involved in the process include other relevant local, state, and federal agencies; industry and other business organizations; citizen/environmental groups; and educational institutions. Other organizations and individuals that may be stakeholders include commercial and recreational fishing groups, landowners, homeowner associations, and community organizations, such as civic groups and churches. Ethnic and minority group participation should be a priority.

The ideal candidate for a Regional Action Team is enthusiastic, energetic, and committed to a consensus-building planning process; has leadership abilities; is technically familiar with issues in the Region of Concern and is a key decision-maker and/or connected to management so that he or she can speak with some reliability and commitment about the organization's resources and ability to participate; is willing to contribute to the planning process and/or plan implementation. It is important to match up a region's problems with appropriate team members. For example, if contaminated dredging materials are a problem in one area, the Regional Action Team should probably include representatives from local ports and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. If urban nonpoint source runoff is a concern, the team should probably include city planners, developers, and property owners. For regions affected by agricultural runoff, agricultural stakeholders should be invited to join the team. Exhibit 3-6 lists potential stakeholders representing various interests and matches them with associated problems.

If the lead agency is uncertain about whether to include certain stakeholders, it is possible to rank potential stakeholders by their expected level of impact on the planning process, as well as by process impacts on them. For instance, certain stakeholders may have more influence on the process than others. Similarly, the outcome of the process (e.g., specific cleanup and funding commitments) may affect stakeholders differently. Other ranking or selection factors include anticipated commitment to the process and the expertise and skills the team requires. Because the regional action planning process occurs over an extended period of time, may require participation in meetings and materials preparation, including possibly drafting portions of the plan, it is important to select members—public and private—who have the time and resources to make this commitment. Because the Regional Action Plan will be a technical, as well as a policy, document, the team should include scientists and engineers.

**Exhibit 3-4. Example of Procedure to Identify Participants
for the Regional Action Team**

- **Assess Nature of Problems**—Attaboy Creek was designated by the Executive Council as a Region of Concern. The state Department of Environment was designated as the lead agency but is sharing responsibility with an existing group, "Friends of Attaboy Creek." The Department of Environment, working closely with Friends of Attaboy Creek leaders, assembled and reviewed all readily available background materials. Reports developed by several State agencies and a local university documented many ways that chemical contamination has affected the aquatic living resources in the Attaboy Creek Region of Concern—straining the fish and shellfish populations, causing physical deformities, and destroying the fishing industries. The background information, supplemented by several conversations with university professors and State officials, suggests that most of the chemical contaminants are heavy metals and organics. Given the land use and industrial base of the area, experts suggest that the identified problems are most directly a result of industrial and manufacturing discharges, shipyard discharges, and nonpoint source runoff from commercial and industrial areas. Preliminary research summarized in the background material also suggests such linkages between problems and sources.
- **Identify Stakeholder Groups to be Represented on the Regional Action Team**—After assessing the background materials, the state Department of Environment and its partner, Friends of Attaboy Creek, objectively identified the groups being harmed by chemical contamination (e.g., fisheries) and the groups contributing to or responsible for sources contributing to chemical contamination (e.g., shipyards, municipal planners responsible for storm water control). The Department of Environment and Friends of Attaboy Creek leaders compiled these stakeholder categories into a table (see Exhibit 3-5) to use as the basis for identifying actual representatives, (i.e., individual names) from the stakeholder groups.
- **Identify Actual Representatives from Generic Stakeholder Group Categories**—The lead agency in consultation with other key groups and/or individuals, analyzes background information to match specific names with stakeholder categories. A review of the literature, but more likely personal knowledge/recommendations from groups and/or individuals already involved in the Region of Concern, will help to identify specific persons associated with each generic stakeholder category. Efforts should be made to identify individuals that represent groups of stakeholders (e.g., an industry association or business group that captures multiple business/industry groups in the Region of Concern). It is important to avoid duplication—there is no need for two or more representatives from any particular stakeholder category; certainly not from the same location/facility/group. For example, John Doe may represent an association of shipyards in the Region of Concern. Because he represents multiple shipyards, he would be a good candidate for the Regional Action Team.

Available sources on potential stakeholders are extensive, including surveys of existing stakeholder groups active in the Region of Concern; the *Chesapeake Bay Program Directory*, published annually by the Chesapeake Bay Program Office; local Chamber of Commerce directories; industry directories; lists of government agencies in the area; lists of individuals who have participated in relevant meetings/hearings organized by agencies (e.g., National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System [NPDES] public hearings on draft permits, Chesapeake Bay Program Tributary Strategy hearings); and lists of members of the environmental and conservation community (e.g., annually published *National Wildlife Federation Conservation Directory*). Local planning documents, environmental impact studies, and directories of local planning and economic development commissions may also be useful sources of

Exhibit 3-5. Example of a Stakeholder Category Table Used to Identify Participants for the Regional Action Team

Stakeholder	Reason for Inclusion
Business/industry	Industry and manufacturing are the primary causes of the toxics problems within the Attaboy Creek Region of Concern. Businesses are affected directly by the success of industry. Involving these interests in the planning process may help to develop a more easily accepted plan and may reduce opposition. The main businesses and industry active in the Attaboy Creek Region of Concern are marinas and shipyards, chemical manufacturing plants, and petroleum refineries.
Citizen/environmental groups	Citizens are affected daily by the conditions in which they live. Environmental organizations exist to protect the interests of the citizens and wildlife affected by the health of the environment. The primary citizens groups are the Rotary Club, Jaycees, local garden clubs, and local Parent Teachers Associations. The most active environmental organizations are the Sierra Club and Friends of Attaboy Creek.
Federal government	Federal Government involvement is beneficial in the implementation of the Regional Action Plan. The government has the ability to create and enforce regulations, if necessary, as well as provide financial support for the effort. The U.S. military plays the largest Federal role in the Attaboy Creek Region of Concern, including the presence of the largest U.S. Naval shipyard. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also have large roles in the Attaboy Creek Region.
State government	State government is important in both the planning and implementation phases of the Regional Action Plan. It has the primary responsibility for developing the Regional Action Plan and also has the authority and financial resources to facilitate implementation.
Fisheries	The fisheries and fishery industries have been the group most severely affected by the chemical contamination problem in the Attaboy Creek Region of Concern. The stress put on the fish populations has been excessive, and it is the most obvious indicator of the problems existing.
Land owners/home owners	Land owners and home owners are financially, physically, and aesthetically affected by the health of Attaboy Creek. They also may be affected by proposed actions to protect the river.
Local government	The local government represents individuals living in proximity to Attaboy Creek. The government has control over zoning regulations and other potential actions. There are four cities and two counties in the Attaboy Creek Region of Concern.
Recreational/tourism	Attaboy Creek is attempting to develop a tourism industry that would greatly benefit from the restoration of Attaboy Creek. Recreational users (i.e., pleasure boaters, sport fisherman, and swimmers) would also benefit from cleaner and healthier waters.
Scientists/educators	Faculty from area colleges and universities may have knowledge and information that would be useful in the development of the Regional Action Plan. They can also assure that decisions are being based on accurate data.

Exhibit 3-6. Overview of Potential Stakeholders Within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Potential Problem	Federal Stakeholder Groups																			
	US EPA, Region III	USEPA CBPO	DOD (including Army, Navy, etc.)	USFWS Chesapeake Bay Field Office	USFWS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center	National Park Service	USGS Biological Survey	USGS (info about spills, shipping)	USDA Forest Service	USDA Agricultural Research Service	NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service	USFSA	Army Corps of Engineers	Federal Land Owners						
Fishkills	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Finfish/shellfish tissue contamination	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Finfish tumors	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Restrictions on shellfish harvesting	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Degradation of benthic community	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Water column toxicity	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Sediment toxicity	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Degradation of fish and wildlife populations	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Degradation of phytoplankton/zooplankton populations	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Bird and/or animal deformities or reproductive problems	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Tainting of fish and wildlife flavor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Loss of fish and wildlife habitat	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Restrictions on drinking water consumption	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Restrictions on dredging activities	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Sediment contamination	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Water column contamination	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Groundwater contamination	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Added costs to agricultural/industrial water use consumption	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Beach closings	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Aesthetics degradation	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Sediment transport/erosion	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Stormwater runoff/Combined Sewer Overflows	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Urban runoff	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Agricultural runoff	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Atmospheric deposition of contaminants	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Industrial discharges exhibiting acute/chronic toxicity	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Municipal discharges exhibiting acute/chronic toxicity	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Superfund sites	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Hazardous waste transfer/storage facility	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						

Exhibit 3-6. Overview of Potential Stakeholders Within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Potential Problem	State Stakeholder Groups	State Environmental Regulation Agency	Public Works Administration	State Dept. of Agriculture	State Dept. of Conservation (land & water)	State Water Quality Control Board/Comm.	Port Authority	Local Stakeholder Groups	County Planning Office	Public Works	Soil and Water Conservation Districts	CPES Local Govts. Advisory Committee	Metrol. Wash. Council of Govt.	Regional Fisheries or Watershed Comm.	Harbor Master	Local Water Quality/Resources Board	County Associations
Fishkills																	
Finfish/shellfish tissue contamination																	
Finfish tumors																	
Restrictions on shellfish harvesting																	
Degradation of benthic community																	
Water column toxicity																	
Sediment toxicity																	
Restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption																	
Degradation of fish and wildlife populations																	
Degradation of phytoplankton/zooplankton populations																	
Bird and/or animal deformities or reproductive problems																	
Tainting of fish and wildlife flavor																	
Loss of fish and wildlife habitat																	
Restrictions on drinking water consumption																	
Restrictions on dredging activities																	
Sediment contamination																	
Water column contamination																	
Groundwater contamination																	
Added costs to agricultural/industrial water use consumption																	
Beach closings																	
Aesthetics degradation																	
Sediment transport/erosion																	
Stormwater runoff/Combined Sewer Overflows																	
Urban runoff																	
Agricultural runoff																	
Atmospheric deposition of contaminants																	
Industrial discharges exhibiting acute/chronic toxicity																	
Municipal discharges exhibiting acute/chronic toxicity																	
Superfund sites																	
Hazardous waste transfer/storage facility																	

Exhibit 3-6. Overview of Potential Stakeholders Within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Potential Problem	Citizen/Non-Citizen Stakeholders	Chesapeake Bay Commission	Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay	Chesapeake Bay Foundation	CBP's Citizens Advisory Committee	Local Docks United	Local Audubon Chapter	Local Save Our Streams Chapter	Private/Comm/Indus. Stakeholders	Chambers of Commerce	Local Watermen's Association	Trade and/or Business Associations	Industrial Groups/Councils	Academic/Indus. (Industry/Comm)	General	University Sea Grant Programs	University Water Resources Centers	Chesapeake Research Consortium
Fishkills																		
Finfish/shellfish tissue contamination																		
Finfish tumors																		
Restrictions on shellfish harvesting																		
Degradation of benthic community																		
Water column toxicity																		
Sediment toxicity																		
Restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption																		
Degradation of fish and wildlife populations																		
Degradation of phytoplankton/zooplankton populations																		
Bird and/or animal deformities or reproductive problems																		
Tainting of fish and wildlife flavor																		
Loss of fish and wildlife habitat																		
Restrictions on drinking water consumption																		
Restrictions on dredging activities																		
Sediment contamination																		
Water column contamination																		
Groundwater contamination																		
Added costs to agricultural/industrial water use consumption																		
Beach closings																		
Aesthetics degradation																		
Sediment transport/erosion																		
Stormwater runoff/Combined Sewer Overflows																		
Urban runoff																		
Agricultural runoff																		
Atmospheric deposition of contaminants																		
Industrial discharges exhibiting acute/chronic toxicity																		
Municipal discharges exhibiting acute/chronic toxicity																		
Superfund sites																		
Hazardous waste transfer/storage facility																		

potential stakeholders. Interviewing key stakeholders or community leaders for recommendations is another way to identify stakeholders.

3.1.3 Identifying Regional Action Team Leaders

It is critical to identify and cultivate leaders for a Regional Action Team. The most important role for the team leaders is to work with the lead agency and its partner or designee to determine an overall approach for the regional action planning process, including defining roles and responsibilities for the Regional Action Team and establishing a schedule for completing each step of the process. It is essential that the team leaders understand the goals and objectives of the regional action planning process and are able to convey them to the Regional Action Team. The team leaders are also responsible for running Regional Action Team meetings (e.g., ensuring the meeting agenda is followed and topics are covered in a timely fashion), although they may be supported by other parties (e.g., professional facilitator, lead agency.)

In a consensus-based process, like that envisioned for regional action planning, team leaders should orchestrate, but not dictate, the process. Leaders contribute to the process by providing ideas and information, offering approaches for continued progress, ensuring that the process stays on track and encouraging enthusiastic participation and commitment. They should enjoy respect from the other team members and not show bias when leading meetings, regardless of the interests they represent. In some cases, if the team leader is qualified, he or she may also facilitate the decision-making and/or consensus-building, portions of Regional Action Team meeting. However, if a leader wants to negotiate or otherwise represent his or her interests, then facilitation responsibilities should be given to another team member or outside facilitator.

Leaders for the Regional Action Team can be provided by the lead agency, selected from the Team's membership, or obtained from an outside source. They all should be required to commit substantial time to the process and be enthusiastic about their commitment. Exhibit 3-7 summarizes additional qualities of the team leaders.

To remove any perceptions of bias and to provide objectivity to the planning process, it may be advantageous to use a professional facilitator for the decision-making and/or consensus-building portions of Regional Action Team Meetings (e.g., developing evaluation criteria to select implementation actions). Although some stakeholders may object to a facilitator because of concerns that a facilitator may inhibit team members (e.g., in terms of influencing the process or applying their own leadership skills),

Exhibit 3-7. Team Leader Qualities

- Is a significant stakeholder, but able to remain objective
- Is committed to a consensus-based process, not an autocratic one; is not overly directive in the effort to reach agreement
- Makes time commitment to plan process and goals
- Is organized and energetic to help maintain momentum
- Contributes expertise and skills
- Offers leadership
- Has experience managing and facilitating meetings
- Is willing to contribute resources of organization (may not be possible for each member)

experienced facilitators, involve team members in leading and managing the process. For example, a professional facilitator can periodically assign facilitation responsibilities to a team member. This may give the facilitator a chance to evaluate the approach taken to date and plan the next step in the process.

The facilitator should have experience in applying a consensus-based approach to solving environmental problems. Although specific knowledge of the technical issues regarding watershed restoration is not necessary, the facilitator or facilitation team can also contribute to the process by providing briefings on background information, such as concept papers or fact sheets, and organizing meeting notes. If a team does not have access to a professional facilitator, a facilitator could be chosen from the team or provided by the lead agency. The ideal candidate has leadership abilities, experience successfully facilitating similar meetings, and an understanding of the regional action planning process. If a non-professional facilitator is used (e.g., someone is appointed from the team), it is recommended that the facilitator and as many team members as possible attend a training workshop on consensus-based decision-making. This training should be sponsored by the lead agency.

3.1.4 Obtaining Management Support

The goal of any regional action planning effort is to develop an implementable plan that will effectively reduce and prevent problems associated with chemical contamination in a designated Region of Concern. To be successful in meeting this overall goal, a plan must have a committed management and staff. Individuals believing in the concepts of regional action planning and the proposed implementation approach must exist at all levels, from top management to the staff person(s) who are ultimately responsible for implementing the plan recommendations. The lead agency must provide this level of commitment because it is responsible for initiating the regional action planning process, ensuring

development of the plan, and providing long-term oversight of the implementation actions. Committed management can ensure continued involvement throughout the regional action planning process by directing staff and financial resources; obviously, interest and commitment from the highest levels of management can have the greatest impact. Ideally, the senior agency official responsible for the Regional Action Plan should attend the initial meeting to explain the purpose and importance of the regional action planning activity, the role of the Regional Action Team, and the commitment of the lead agency. Better yet, demonstrated support from elected officials will lend credibility to the process. Team members will be more likely to commit to the planning process if they know that it has the support and commitment from the lead agency's management and/or elected officials. This type of high-level support will lend credibility to the planning process; give team members a heightened sense of purpose that their efforts are important, needed, and will be considered; and may foster greater involvement and cooperation from team members.

Because proposed implementation actions are likely to involve multiple groups (government agencies, affected parties such as industry), management and staff support and commitment from these groups are also critical. Another key role of the lead agency, supplemented by the Regional Action Team, is to provide education and outreach to these groups to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the overall goals of the Regional Action Plan and their roles and responsibilities in implementing proposed actions. The groups should be trained in the importance of the regional action planning process and the implementation actions to which they are charged.

Importance of Government Commitment

Remedial action planning in the Great Lakes' Ashtabula River, Ohio, benefited greatly from demonstrated support from top level agency management and elected officials. After years of perceived inaction addressing severe environmental problems, demonstrated by the lack of actual cleanup actions, the public greeted the first public meeting of the remedial action planning process with cynicism. However, Ohio EPA continued to stress the importance of public involvement at all stages of the planning process. As well, Ohio EPA and Ohio State Senator Robert Boggs invited community members to a meeting to discuss environmental problems of the Ashtabula Area of Concern, the remedial action planning guidelines, and its plan to establish local input at the early stages. The involvement of the well-respected local government official, plus the demonstrated commitment of Ohio EPA, influenced the eventual active participation of many local citizens and community leaders (Letterhos 1992).

In a geographically based approach to chemical contamination prevention and reduction such as that envisioned for Regions of Concern, many different actions, focused on a variety of pollutant types and sources, often occur simultaneously. To ensure smooth, consistent implementation of the plan, it is helpful to have an enthusiastic plan coordinator. The Regional Action Plan coordinator should be

affiliated with the group responsible for writing the final plan and delivering it to the Executive Council (generally this group is the lead agency). An ideal coordinator will be an enthusiastic, organized, and knowledgeable community member, who has the authority to make the recommended changes and who is provided the financial and technical resources to complete his or her job.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF THE REGIONAL ACTION TEAM'S INVOLVEMENT

As described in Section 3.1, the type and level of the Regional Action Team's involvement in the regional action planning process will vary depending on the planning approach selected by the lead agency. If the lead agency chooses to maintain full responsibility for plan development, then the Regional Action Team's role is somewhat limited to reviewing and commenting on material prepared by the lead agency. On the other hand, the lead agency may delegate all authority for plan development to the Regional Action Team. In this scenario, the Regional Action Team is responsible for assembling and evaluating background materials and developing draft chapters of and recommendations for the plan.

The Chesapeake Bay Program recommends an approach of shared responsibility between the lead agency and the Regional Action Team. This type of approach, involving participation of both parties, is successful because it draws upon the technical and financial resources of the lead agency, while still involving stakeholders in decision-making and consensus-building so that buy-in and commitment to the plan is achieved. One way to implement this approach of shared responsibility is to have the lead agency develop relevant background materials and options papers to be used as the foundation for a facilitated consensus-building process involving the Regional Action Team. Background papers provide an overview of the issue, while options papers suggest choices of language for the plan and/or plan recommendations (e.g., implementation actions). Section 3.5 of this chapter describes this process in more detail.

It is essential for the Lead Agency and the Regional Action Team to decide early in the planning process how they want to approach development of the Regional Action Plan, including defining appropriate roles and responsibilities for each step of the process. The approach should be mutually decided and understood by all parties in order for the planning process to proceed effectively. Recognizing that the exact approach to conducting the regional action planning process will be unique to each Region of Concern, the Regional Action Team should be involved in the development of the Regional Action Plan at least to the following extent:

- Evaluating background materials
- Providing expertise and input for the plan (e.g., technical materials, recommendations for additional sources of material and contacts)

- Supporting the decision-making process required for effective plan development.

The Regional Action Team's most important role is that of participating in the decision-making process. As discussed throughout this guidance document, the regional action planning process, and final plan, must be streamlined and focused on priority issues so that limited resources are effectively used. Therefore, many of the steps needed to complete the plan involve decision-making about priorities (e.g., What are the most important adverse ambient effects? What chemical contaminant types and sources are the greatest concern? What implementation actions should be pursued first?). The Regional Action Team should be involved in all decision-making aspects of the plan. In fact, many of tasks toward developing the Regional Action Plan should be accomplished in a consensus-building framework, where the affected parties (stakeholders) are represented by the Regional Action Team.

The remainder of this section further describes the anticipated involvement of the Regional Action Team in the planning process. The information is presented in the following subsections:

- Identifying stakeholder interests
- Evaluating environmental problems and establishing goals and objectives
- Evaluating existing management programs
- Determining implementation actions.

3.2.1 Identifying Stakeholder Interests

The interests of stakeholders participating on the Regional Action Team should be identified as soon as possible, perhaps as early as the initial team meeting. The information gained in this process will help team members understand each other's motivations, as well as the interests that lie behind any positions that might be taken in the planning process. This information can foster an open and honest dialogue.

It is important that team members not judge or evaluate interests—every interest represented by a stakeholder should be welcomed and recorded. The interests generally pertain to human health and the environment, as well as to economic and social issues. The team should make every effort to represent non-human environmental interests.

Positions represent a group's or individual's stand or decision about an issue, whereas interests are the underlying concerns that helped form the position. For example, a group's position could be that they want to ban new industries from being allowed to directly discharge to a Region of Concern, while their interest is restoring a viable recreational fishery (Fisher and Ury 1991).

Planning processes can deteriorate at this early stage because people may try to alter or question other stakeholder interests or because they do not have the patience to spend a few hours or a day identifying and understanding interests. If the team moves through this step efficiently, however, participants will have valuable information for later in the process. When negotiating recommendations, for example, it is necessary to consider the relationship between a stakeholder's position and his or her interests. If the position a stakeholder chooses threatens team consensus, team members should consider whether the position is consistent or inconsistent with the stakeholder's interests. If it is inconsistent, team members should ask the stakeholder to consider whether his or her interests can be satisfied in a different way. For example, if a stakeholder's position is that it is necessary to ban new industries from directly discharging to the Region of Concern but their interest is in restoring a recreational fishery, perhaps the interest could be achieved through a means other than a ban (e.g., modification of existing NPDES permit limits to be more stringent). This kind of situation underscores the importance of understanding stakeholder interests early in the process.

During each Regional Action Team meeting, information such as stakeholder interests, common interests, and conflicting interests, as well as the agenda for the next meeting, should be recorded on flip charts and distributed as notes between meetings.

3.2.2 Evaluating Environmental Problems and Establishing a Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives

The early stages of the regional action planning process should focus additional investigations on priority problems. An effective Regional Action Plan will be streamlined and targeted on the primary sources of chemical contamination identified as contributing to priority problems. In order to prioritize problems for

During this initial problem identification stage, the team and lead agency could sponsor activities to educate and seek input from the public at large on the nature and scope of the identified problems. These activities should include public workshops, roundtable discussions, and citizen surveys, such as mail or telephone surveys to assess the public's awareness and perceptions of the issues involved.

action, the Regional Action Team must have a sense of the vision, goals, and objectives it hopes to achieve in the Region of Concern. The process of identifying and prioritizing problems, including sources, and determining a vision statement, goals, and objectives is iterative—as the Regional Action Team develops its information base on problems, goals and objectives might become apparent. Likewise, achievement of goals and objectives might clearly require focus on specific problems and chemical sources.

The Regional Action Team should be involved in all phases of the decision-making processes to identify and prioritize problems, including chemical contaminant types and contributing sources. The team is also integral in establishing the plan's vision statement, goals, and objectives. The results of this process will not only guide plan development, but will provide much of the written portion of the final plan. Early consensus by the team on these topics can be developed from a general understanding of the problem (i.e., why the area was designated as a Region of Concern), supported by readily available information, including written materials (e.g., newspaper articles, research documents, and other technical reports), consultation with individuals familiar with the Region of Concern, and materials acquired and generated by the Chesapeake Bay Program when identifying the particular Region of Concern. This base level of information will provide the necessary background needed to stimulate the team to further characterize the problem and begin establishing goals. In addition to participating in the decision-making, the team is expected to evaluate materials and provide technical support, as necessary. Chapters 4 and 5 of this guidance document provide more detailed information on establishing the plan's vision statement, goals, and objectives (Chapter 4) and evaluating environmental problems (Chapter 5).

3.2.3 Evaluating Existing Management Programs

The most successful actions to reduce the impacts of chemical contamination in Regions of Concern are often developed by evaluating and modifying existing approaches. Therefore, the thorough evaluation of existing management programs, including regulatory and nonregulatory approaches (e.g., NPDES permit compliance, pollution prevention) is an important and essential prerequisite for developing an implementation approach. The Regional Action Team should play an integral role in identifying and evaluating existing management programs.

Chapter 6 of this guidance defines an approach for evaluating existing management programs. The lead agency would likely spearhead these evaluations, supported by Regional Action Team members. The investigations must include an assessment of regulatory and nonregulatory approaches and activities taken by government agencies and non-governmental organizations. A well-selected Regional Action Team could provide the majority of information needed for these investigations. It is expected that Regional Action Team members representing different stakeholder groups (e.g., government, industry, environmental organizations) could report on key programs and/or provide a list of additional contacts for consultation. The Regional Action Team would also determine the criteria to guide the evaluation (i.e., the basis for measuring effectiveness). Once the evaluation is complete, the Regional Action Team would review the results, determine if additional investigations were needed, and consider which existing management measures should be considered as potential implementation actions.

3.2.4 Determining Implementation Actions

The ultimate effectiveness of a Regional Action Plan hinges on developing effective implementation actions. Chapter 7 of this guidance outlines a procedure to identify and select implementation actions. The Regional Action Team plays a critical role in determining these actions. Because of their importance in determining overall plan effectiveness, it is essential that sufficient time be allocated to identify, research, and rank potential implementation actions; generally, the Regional Action Team needs at least 2 full meeting days to evaluate and select implementation actions.

Although the lead agency may assemble the background materials needed to evaluate potential actions, the Regional Action Team will be involved in most steps of the process—brainstorming about potential actions, providing background information, volunteering to conduct additional research if needed, and developing criteria to evaluate the suitability of actions.

One of the first steps involves developing an organized inventory of potential implementation actions. The facilitator/team leader should first poll the team on suggested approaches for organizing actions. To do this, it may be appropriate for the team to review the purpose of the Regional Action Plan and to structure the actions accordingly (e.g., by pollution source category).

Once the team identifies a loose structure for the implementation actions, team members should "brainstorm" to identify actions within each category (e.g., point source actions, nonpoint source actions, actions directed at urban areas, actions directed at marinas). The team should develop as many actions as possible without judging them. When developing actions, it is important for the team to be innovative and creative in attempting to address stakeholder interests. In addition, it is important to carefully evaluate existing management approaches in the Region of Concern, as well as proposing new ones. It is especially important to consider existing laws and policies; a priority of the planning process should be to evaluate compliance and enforcement effectiveness. The team should also identify gaps in existing laws, programs, and policies so that effective new solutions can be developed.

After developing a list of potential implementation actions (this may take a few meetings), the Regional Action Team must further refine and organize these options. The team may want to establish specific criteria, such as technical feasibility, cost, financing, and public acceptability, to determine whether an action is appropriate and, therefore, a candidate for further evaluation (see Chapter 7). The Regional Action Team should work closely with the lead agency to identify evaluation criteria. These criteria must be well understood by all team members. Although each Regional Action Team may

develop its own evaluation criteria, it is important that the selected criteria enable the team to narrow its comprehensive list of potential actions to a manageable size for further consideration.

Regional Action Team members or subgroups/workgroups of the Regional Action Team, working with the lead agency, can be charged with further evaluating and defining promising actions between team meetings. Meetings will be more productive and time efficient if the team members have this background information prior to the meetings.

During this phase, the Regional Action Team should also evaluate implementation actions with respect to identified stakeholder interests. The team should try to move toward the action that best meets its diverse interests, reminding stakeholders that the option is probably better than the alternatives that would result if an agreement could not be reached.

Strong leadership is essential to timely and complete closure on an issue. Closure entails a full and accurate transcription of recommendations and commitments, as well as assurance that each commitment can be fulfilled. Recommendations should be as thorough as possible and should be related to specific evaluation criteria. The Regional Action Team should work with the lead agency and other responsible groups to ensure that final implementation actions are fully described and address the following questions:

- Who is responsible for implementation?
- What actions are necessary to implement the plan?
- Where should the implementation activities be targeted?
- When should actions be taken?
- How should actions be implemented?

The team should organize its final recommendations into the format of the Regional Action Plan. The lead agency (and responsible agencies, if possible) should be prepared to assist the team in compiling the plan. The draft plan, including implementation actions, should be made available to the team for review and comment before submittal to the general public and any governing agency (e.g., Chesapeake Executive Council) for review, comment, and adoption.

3.3 DEVELOPING A WORK PLAN

It is important that the approach to regional action planning and consensus-building be established near the beginning of the planning process, ideally before the first meeting of the Regional Action Team, so that it can be thoroughly described to all participants in the planning process. In addition, the roles and responsibilities of the lead agency, team leaders, team members, and other participants (e.g., a facilitator) should be clarified.

Frequently, planning activities, including stakeholder meetings to build consensus, suffer from a lack of focus and an unspecified game plan. A perception of disorganization and a lack of clearly defined goals and objectives can severely hurt the regional action planning process and the development of an implementable plan. In the early stages of the regional action planning process, it is important to clarify the overall purpose of the planning activities, identify an approach to the planning process, determine a schedule and planning milestones, and define the roles and responsibilities of participants. The lead agency, in conjunction with an existing stakeholder group (if applicable, should the lead agency choose to delegate some or all of its authority to such a group), and Regional Action Team leaders, may want to draft a work plan to guide the planning process. At a minimum, the work plan should:

- Provide an overview of the approach that will be used to conduct the planning process (e.g., use of a professional facilitator, methods used to make decisions and build consensus)
- Identify roles and responsibilities for the planning process
- Outline potential meeting agendas, including anticipated decision points, for the Regional Action Team
- Present a schedule for planning activities (e.g., proposed meetings, draft materials, and plan completion).

A work plan provides the basis, or road map, for the regional action planning process. It ensures that all participants understand the anticipated process from the beginning, and contains a schedule to keep the process moving in a timely manner. The work plan is intended to serve as a guide only—it is not cast in stone, and should be reviewed throughout the process and revised as necessary. Exhibit 3-8 highlights selected activities that should occur during the development of the Regional Action Plan and should be addressed in the work plan. These activities are tied to hypothetical Regional Action Team meetings. The exhibit presents information on proposed agendas for each meeting, as well as suggestions for background materials needed to prepare the Regional Action Team for the meeting and suggestions for products/outcomes to be generated from the meetings. This information is presented as guidance and

Exhibit 3-8. Overview of Activities Comprising the Regional Action Planning Process

Meeting #1
<p>Materials Distributed in Advance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • List of team members • Background materials (summary materials describing planning process, Region of Concern; draft work plan; fact sheet summarizing existing information on problems; draft language on vision statement, preliminary goals and objectives) <p>Suggested Agenda Topics [Responsible Party]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome [Lead Agency] • Introductions, including statement of participant's interests, and personal goals and objectives for the process [Team Leaders] • Background Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview of the Planning Process [Lead Agency] - Roles and Responsibilities [Lead Agency, Team Leaders] - Preliminary assessment of problems [Lead Agency, Invited Speakers] - Overview of existing activities, including assessment of current actions by representative stakeholders (e.g., success stories) [Lead Agency, Invited Speakers] - Meeting ground rules [Lead Agency, Facilitator] • Present work plan and describe approach for Regional Action Team. [Lead Agency, Team Leaders] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedures (e.g., use of a facilitator; development of background papers) - Roles and responsibilities - Desired final product - Anticipated schedule • Seek agreement on work plan and team approach. [Lead Agency, Team Leaders] • Discuss need for public participation. Seek volunteers to develop public participation strategy. [Lead Agency, Team Leaders] • Review presentations and other existing background information on problems with goal of beginning prioritization. If materials are distributed in advance of meeting (at least one week), it may be appropriate for group to reach facilitated consensus on problem statement and prioritization of problems for consideration. If advance distribution is not possible, use meeting to introduce materials and prepare Regional Action Team for next meeting. [Team Leaders, Facilitator] • Present draft language on vision statement, preliminary goals, and objectives. If distributed in advance of meeting (at least 1 week), it may be appropriate for group to reach facilitated consensus on preliminary goals and objectives. If advance distribution is not possible, use meeting to introduce materials and prepare Regional Action Team for next meeting. [Team Leaders, Facilitator] <p>Products To Be Generated From Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem definition and prioritization (if materials distributed in advance and adequate time allowed to discuss) • Vision statement, preliminary goals and objectives (if materials distributed in advance and adequate time allowed to discuss) • Summary of participants interests and desired outcomes • Finalized work plan • Meeting evaluation

Exhibit 3-8. Overview of Activities Comprising the Regional Action Planning Process (continued)

Meeting #2
<p>Materials Distributed in Advance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Meeting highlights • Background materials (background reports on sources of problems, existing management approaches) <p>Suggested Agenda Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclude unfinished business from previous meetings. [Team Leaders] • Seek consensus on problem definition and prioritization. [Facilitator] • Seek consensus on preliminary goals and objectives. [Facilitator] • Present more detailed problem definition, including chemicals of concern and sources of concern. Present evidence, to date, linking sources to problems. If evidence is sufficient, and/or if team has had time to review materials, begin to prioritize sources for action. Develop criteria for identifying priority sources.¹ [Team Leaders, Lead Agency, Facilitator, Invited Speakers] • Present results of evaluation of existing management measures. [Team Leaders, Lead Agency, Facilitator, Invited Speakers] <p>Products To Be Generated from Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products that must be completed from first meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Final problem definition and prioritization – Vision statement, preliminary goals and objectives • Preliminary ranking of priority source categories. • List of action items for next meeting. • Meeting evaluation.
Meeting #3
<p>Materials Distributed in Advance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Meeting Highlights • Background materials (final report summarizing sources of chemical contamination; preliminary list of implementation actions based on preliminary ranking of source categories). <p>Suggested Agenda Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclude unfinished business from previous meetings. [Team Leaders] • Present additional information linking sources of chemical contamination to priority problems. Discuss sources of chemical contamination. Develop final ranking of sources based on evaluation criteria. [Team Leaders, Lead Agency, Invited Speakers, Facilitator] • Evaluate preliminary goals and objectives. Modify as needed to reflect new information. [Facilitator, Team Leaders] <p>¹It is important to remember that the Regional Action Plan's ultimate goal is to present an implementation approach for addressing problems caused by chemical contamination in a designated Region of Concern. The analyses conducted for the planning process should always bear this goal in mind so that limited resources can be utilized effectively. It is useful to streamline the planning approach by focusing on priority problems and sources of problems. Once priority problems and sources are identified, further investigations should be focused on those areas.</p>

Exhibit 3-8. Overview of Activities Comprising the Regional Action Planning Process (continued)

Meeting #3 (continued)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work plan. Determine if work plan needs to be modified. [Facilitator, Team Leaders] • Report of approach and results for identifying implementation actions.² [Lead Agency, Team Leaders, Invited Speakers] <p>Products to Be Generated from Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final ranking of priority source categories • List of action items for next meeting • Meeting evaluation.
Meeting #4
<p>Materials Distributed in Advance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Meeting highlights • Background materials (reports presenting comprehensive list of implementation actions by source category, including qualitative information needed to evaluate and prioritize actions) <p>Suggested Agenda Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclude unfinished business from previous meetings. [Team Leaders] • Present research on implementation actions. [Lead Agency, Team Leaders, Invited Speakers] • Select implementation actions to be pursued further. [Lead Agency, Team Leaders, Invited Speakers] <p>Products To Be Generated from Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short list of implementation actions to be evaluated in more detail. • Meeting evaluation
Meeting #5
<p>Materials Distributed in Advance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Meeting Highlights • Background materials (final report on implementation actions, outline and materials prepared to date for final plan) <p>Suggested Agenda Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclude unfinished business from previous meetings. [Team Leaders] • Review status of implementation actions. Seek implementation commitments. [Team Leaders, Invited Speakers, Facilitators] • Discuss presentation of final plan (it is appropriate throughout the planning process for the lead agency and/or a drafting subcommittee from the Regional Action Team to prepare draft chapters of the plan for distribution, review, and comment). [Team Leaders, Lead Agency] • Determine schedule for additional meetings, if necessary. [Team Leaders] <p>Products to Be Generated from Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach, including assigned responsibilities, for preparing final plan and securing commitments for implementation actions. • List of remaining action items and next steps. • Meeting evaluation.

²When developing implementation actions, it is important to focus on priority problems and sources. Also, the level of detail needed in the assessment should be limited to that required for sound decision-making (e.g., a qualitative analysis may be all that is needed for the purpose of narrowing list of potential implementation actions to those that should be pursued in more detail for the final plan). Excess analysis should be avoided.

should be modified to suit the unique needs of the Region of Concern. As discussed in more detail in Section 3.4, it is important to set aside sufficient time during the meetings to adequately cover each agenda topic.

3.4 CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE REGIONAL ACTION TEAM MEETINGS

Successful regional action planning depends largely on effective stakeholder involvement so that parties affected by and contributing to chemical contamination problems in the Region of Concern feel an important part of the process, gain a sense of ownership to the plan, and commit to the proposed implementation actions. Since the Regional Action Team is the main forum for involving stakeholders, it is important to conduct effective Regional Action Team meetings. The efficiency and effectiveness of Regional Action Team meetings depends on an organized approach with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all participants, a well-planned meeting schedule that accounts for all phases of plan development, and clearly articulated meeting agendas and approaches to developing the plan. Without these elements, the chances of conducting a successful regional action planning process are greatly reduced, as:

- Confusion over roles and responsibilities may result in a duplication of efforts and/or gaps in responsibilities.
- Meetings may lose focus, become rambling discussions, or are side-tracked, so that concrete action items are not developed.
- Participants may become disinterested and discouraged because they feel that they are not accomplishing anything (not a part of the process) or they lose sight of the overall purpose and end goal of the planning process.
- The resulting plan may lack focus and/or may not adequately represent stakeholder groups.

It is important to ensure that the overall meeting schedule, and individual meeting agendas, allow enough time for the consensus-based process to occur. The Regional Action Team must reach consensus on many issues throughout the planning process—vision statement, goals, and objectives; problem definition and prioritization; and implementation action selection. In order for the team to feel a legitimate part of the planning process, it is necessary for them to have time to review background materials, formulate their ideas, and discuss their opinions in a facilitated process. The amount of time needed for these activities varies, depending on the complexity of issues being addressed and the size of the Regional Action Team. In general, a facilitator needs at least 2 to 3 hours per issue (e.g., identifying goals and objectives) to effectively work with the Regional Action Team. The length of each team meeting should

be adjusted to reflect the number of issues being addressed. In many situations, it works well to have the Regional Action Team meeting run from mid-morning to early afternoon (e.g., 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.), with a break for lunch. This structure enables the morning session to cover background material, gives the team members time to discuss information and formulate opinions during the lunch break, and saves sufficient time for facilitated decision-making in the afternoon. The lead agency and team leaders should work closely with the facilitator to block off appropriate amounts of time for each topic.

The importance of clearly defining meeting roles and responsibilities, in terms of who is responsible for which parts of the meeting and how the meeting will be conducted, cannot be overemphasized. An effective Regional Action Team meeting must have a designated team leader or co-leaders and a balanced and representative group of participants (i.e., team members) representing key stakeholders. In addition, it is recommended that a facilitator conduct portions of the meeting and a meeting recorder provide notetaking and other support for the meeting. The appropriate roles and responsibilities for participants in Regional Action Team meetings (i.e., team leaders, team members, lead agency, facilitator, and recorder) are defined in Exhibit 3-9. The lead agency can remain active in the planning process by providing technical support and/or facilitation expertise, if possible. Frequently, it helps to have an outside facilitator to build trust among all meeting participants, so they do not perceive a hidden agenda. For this reason, it is also advisable that the Regional Action Team leader(s) be someone other than the lead agency. However, the lead agency is a valid stakeholder in the planning process and should appoint a member to the Regional Action Team.

Just as it is important to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities among planning participants, it is also necessary to have clearly articulated meeting agendas and approaches. The lead agency, its partner or designee (e.g., existing groups), team leaders, and the facilitator should work together to develop effective meeting agendas and approaches. Sometimes this process can be guided through the joint development of a work plan to guide the planning process (see Section 3.3). Regional Action Plans are developed from the evaluation of different types of information, as well as substantial input from the Regional Action Team and the general public. To effectively synthesize the information in a timely and efficient fashion and to ensure that all parties are adequately represented requires an organized meeting approach. Without an organized approach, meetings and/or the planning process can get side-tracked, result in time-consuming, unfocused discussions, and potentially not achieve the goals of the planning process.

Exhibit 3-9. Roles and Responsibilities—Regional Action Team Meetings

Team Leader or Co-Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish meeting objectives and plans and are responsible for the overall direction of the meeting • Clarify participants' roles and responsibilities • Start meeting on time • Provide introductions, summarize meeting objectives and agenda items, and define roles and responsibilities • Work with facilitator to ensure meeting agenda is followed in a timely manner • Participate as group members • Summarize key decisions and actions
Team Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate ideas, analyze information, provide technical input, make decisions, and implement action plans • Review agenda and other meeting materials before attending meetings • Conduct enough pre-meeting background research to participate effectively in the meeting • Know purpose of meeting ahead of time and do "homework" if necessary to prepare • Confirm attendance and delegate an alternate if cannot attend • Attend meeting on time • Keep an open mind, avoid premature judgment, and try to understand other perspectives • Help facilitator eliminate distractions and encourage active involvement • Speak up; share useful ideas • Support ground rules and other meeting guidelines • Participate in a timely fashion • Volunteer for tasks only if capable of following through • Agree to participate in consensus-building exercises
Lead Agency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides technical and financial support • Schedules meetings • Prepares draft agenda • Provides background materials for the meeting • Participates as a team member
Facilitator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages how people work and communicate in the meeting • Is responsible for flow of the meeting • Coordinates with Regional Action Team leaders and lead agency to acquire any needed background or other preparatory information • Reviews planned agenda and action items • Ensures meeting runs smoothly • Reviews team's ground rules • Focuses the group • Monitors and regulates participation • Evaluates effectiveness of process and suggests alternative methods and processes as necessary • Protects people from "attack" and deals with problem people • Remains neutral at all times, particularly during disagreements
Recorder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps track of important information throughout the meeting, prepares flip charts and other necessary visual aids during the meeting, and prepares post-meeting summaries and action items. • Prepares necessary meeting summaries, highlights, and other materials. • Captures ideas visually without editing or paraphrasing. • Checks to ensure that appropriate information has been recorded; obtains clarification from the participant if needed. • Helps leader and facilitator keep track of information. • Produces meeting summaries, highlights, and other materials.

Source: Adapted from Chang and Kehoe (1994)

Many references exist that summarize the elements of productive meetings, including preparing the meeting, conducting the meeting, and evaluating the meeting (Chang and Kehoe 1994; Doyle and Straus 1976; Fisher and Ury 1991). Exhibit 3-10 summarizes some basic considerations for conducting effective meetings in the context of regional action planning.

Exhibit 3-10. Basic Considerations for Conducting Effective Regional Action Team Meetings

- Determine appropriate participants (e.g., subject matter experts, key decision-makers, and affected parties, not unaffected parties and known meeting "disrupters").
- Ensure continual and balanced representation. Primary team member should select alternate if he/she cannot attend.
- Clearly define and reach agreement on roles and responsibilities for all meeting participants, including meeting leaders, meeting facilitator, recorder, Regional Action Team members, and lead agency. Define and maintain roles and responsibilities from the beginning to end of the process.
- Fully consider each stage of meeting development: (1) Preparing for the meeting, (2) Conducting the meeting, and (3) evaluating the meeting. No stage should be ignored or minimized.
- Develop a well-thought out agenda providing the following information: meeting objectives, logistics, anticipated attendee list (defining leader, facilitator, recorder), roles and responsibilities, action items (i.e., list of items that must be covered to achieve meeting objectives), and allocated time.
- Reach agreement on approach to planning process, including meeting schedules, ground rules, and guidelines.
- Distribute necessary background materials to meeting participants sufficiently in advance of the meeting
- Keep meetings focused on priority issues. When making decisions, develop a variety of options from which to prioritize using a consensus-based set of objective evaluation criteria.
- Allow sufficient time to cover the subject adequately and build consensus, if necessary.
- Avoid getting bogged down in details. Investigations are designed to support the development of sound implementation actions. Detail beyond that needed for the purpose of developing implementation actions may be superfluous.
- Ensure open and balanced participation from all participants.
- Strive toward consensus-based decision-making.
- Produce meeting summaries and progress reports to ensure that the overall planning process remains focused toward its end goal.
- Evaluate the meeting to ensure that participants are satisfied with the approach.

Sources: Chang and Kehoe (1994); Fisher and Ury (1991); Chechile and Carlisle (1991); Doyle and Straus (1976)

3.5 APPROACHES TO BUILDING CONSENSUS

An effective Regional Action Plan will be developed using a consensus-based process involving major stakeholders represented through the Regional Action Team. This type of process, which ensures that all parties are heard and the actions are not dictated, but mutually agreed upon, typically leads to a greater sense of ownership to the plan, commitment to its recommendations, and a better chance that it will last over the long run. There are many techniques that can be used to develop plans based on a consensus-approach, depending on the size of the group involved and the particular situation in the Region of Concern. As mentioned previously, the optimal group size for this type of process is no more than 7 to 15 participants; if more people are needed, it may be necessary to break into smaller subgroups.

In an ideal planning situation, a trained facilitator (especially one having some technical familiarity with the issues facing the Region of Concern) will provide the skills needed to guide the Regional Action Team. If it is not possible for the Regional Action Team to have a professional facilitator, the team leader, or someone from the lead agency, could perform these duties if the team agrees to that approach and the chosen facilitator is able to remain objective. Alternatively, the lead agency may want to offer facilitation training as part of its overall technical assistance to the regional action planning process. Many organizations offer facilitation services and/or training. Regardless of the approach used to obtain a facilitator, care should be taken in the selection process because the facilitator has a great deal of influence on the overall success of the planning process. Selection criteria include experience with similar planning situations, familiarity with a variety of approaches used to build consensus, familiarity with the ground rules and procedures to conduct efficient meetings, enough technical background to have some familiarity with Region of Concern issues, experience working with groups of a similar size and composition, and ability to remain neutral (not representing any interests).

While it is beyond the scope of this document to provide a thorough discussion of the consensus-building approach to decision-making, two key elements are essential (Fisher and Ury 1991; Doyle and Straus 1976):

- Generating a wide variety of possibilities and alternatives before making a decision
- Measuring the possibilities against previously agreed upon, objective evaluation criteria to determine final outcome.

When evaluating candidates for the facilitator's role, it would be useful to ensure they have familiarity with this kind of approach.

Facility-based pollution prevention planning provides one example of using this approach. Typically, the facilities determine at the outset of the planning process the environmental problems or issues of greatest concern. Using those priorities as the basis for further investigations, the facilities identify a broad range of pollution prevention opportunities that will address targeted environmental problems. This broad list of opportunities is then compared against predetermined evaluation criteria (e.g., liability, regulatory compliance, implementation considerations, costs, environmental impacts) to determine final choices (Chechile and Carlisle 1991; Gaunt et al. 1994; SAIC 1993). Chapter 7 and Appendix D of this guidance document provide more information on decision-making using evaluation criteria.

In order to provide effective input to the planning process, participants need to have enough background information to form the basis for sound decision-making. Ideally, Regional Action Team members will have some technical familiarity and understanding of the issues concerning a Region of Concern. The preparation of background materials in advance of planned meetings can also help. An approach that was effective in conducting the Chesapeake Bay Program's Nonpoint Source Evaluation Panel (Chesapeake Bay Program 1990) is briefly summarized below and may be applicable to the regional action planning process:

- **Identify topics for investigation**—Overall purpose of the planning process is defined by Lead Agency and Regional Action Team, and discrete topics needing additional information are identified. For example, the Regional Action Team may want to learn more about the effectiveness of existing management approaches.
- **Prepare background and options papers**—Lead agency (or volunteers from the Regional Action Team) prepares background materials (e.g., short overview papers) on identified topics. In addition, options papers, outlining specific choices the group may want to use as the basis for its decision-making process, may be prepared. For example, the background paper would summarize the effectiveness of existing management programs, while the options paper would make suggestions on ways to modify/improve the existing programs. Suggestions made in the options paper could be included by the Regional Action Team as potential recommendations in the final plan. Background and options papers should be distributed to team members in advance of the planned meeting so they can have time to review the information (e.g., at least 1 week). The background and options papers may also be supplemented by a presentation at the meeting.
- **Facilitate decision-making**—Using the background and options papers as the basis for dialogue at the meeting, a facilitator guides the group through a consensus-building process to reach agreement on choices (e.g., which options paper recommendations to include in the final plan).
- **Prepare plan**—Using the decision-points generated from the options papers, supplemented by additional input, the lead agency, or a subcommittee of the Regional Action Team,

prepares sections of the final plan. Each section, and the completed draft plan, are distributed to the group for review, comment, and approval.

The length of time for this process obviously varies depending on the situation. It is necessary to give team members adequate time to review materials before the scheduled meetings, so drafts should be distributed at least a week in advance. As well, it is important to allocate sufficient time at the meetings to fully discuss issues and reach consensus. It may be necessary to discuss some issues over the course of several meetings. As outlined in Exhibit 3-8, the regional action planning process should plan on at least the following schedule (Note: Schedule assumes meetings will be conducted for most of a day [e.g., 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.]):

- Defining vision, goals, and preliminary objectives—One early meeting, but to be modified and refined throughout the process
- Developing a problem statement—One meeting
- Reviewing the efficacy of existing measures—Half of a meeting to one meeting. Could be coupled with a preliminary overview of proposed implementation actions.
- Developing implementation actions—At least two meetings.

3.6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION

A public participation and education program should be implemented throughout the regional action planning process. The Regional Action Team, in conjunction with the lead agency, should take responsibility for defining a public participation approach. Because the Regional Action Team may be consumed with developing the Regional Action Plan, a subset of the team, or a new group designated by the Regional Action Team and/or lead agency, should take responsibility for involving the public. In addition, the Regional Action Team should include ongoing public participation and education as an implementation action for the Regional Action Plan.

The public participation and education program recommended for regional action planning is different from, and moves beyond, stakeholder involvement on the Regional Action Team. Although specific segments of the public are represented on the Regional Action Team, the extent and level of public participation envisioned for the regional action planning process is much broader than the representation provided by the Regional Action Team. In addition, the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Action Team are very different than what is needed for public participation and education. The Regional Action Team is a small group tasked with developing a Regional Action Plan, whereas the

public participation and education approach is intended to build support for the Plan's implementation by informing and enthusing the general public about the Region of Concern.

The public includes all citizens who live in the area—those represented by specific stakeholder groups (e.g., Regional Action Team, civic groups, business associations, environmental organizations) and citizens who may not be so represented (e.g., homemakers, subsistence fishers). Some examples of specific sectors of the public that should be included in a public participation and education approach are private businesses, homeowners associations, garden clubs, civic groups, schools and colleges, churches, educational nonprofit organizations, and groups that represent racial and ethnic minorities. The broad involvement of these groups is necessary to ensure successful plan implementation. Only when the public understands and embraces the plan, will they be able to support implementation.

The importance of including the general public cannot be overemphasized. Public involvement is a critical link between plan development and implementation. During this era of severe constraints on both government and private sector funding, recognizing the value of the public as a resource is essential to achieving the goals and objectives of Regional Action Plans. Likewise, public involvement in planning will generate more commitment and volunteerism during implementation. An educated and motivated public can provide much of the expertise, time, effort, and leadership needed to protect and monitor the Region of Concern. Two factors are crucial for encouraging public involvement: (1) education about the Region of Concern, including how the individual is a part of the problem and solution, and (2) inclusion in the planning process, even if it is just to be kept informed. People work for that which they understand and are committed, and people are committed to that which they help create. The public's talents, energy, and technical and financial resources can be a cost-effective way of solving many of the Region of Concern's problems.

One of the cornerstones of successful action planning efforts is the building of coalitions among government agencies, parties affected by or contributing to problems in the Region of Concern, and an informed, committed general public. Citizens are important in keeping the regional action planning process focused and moving towards its goals. As well, citizens groups may be active participants in the process—serving as watchdogs, conducting volunteer cleanup and monitoring activities (e.g., schools and churches can sponsor an "adopt a watershed" program, contribute to "Bay or river watch" computer bulletin boards, or help with a speaker's bureau and with periodic conferences and workshops). The resident of a Region of Concern will work harder to secure his or her own future than other, more transient entities (e.g., distant government employees) (Hartig and Zarull 1992; Law and Hartig 1993).

Because the development and implementation of Regional Action Plans is a long-term, ongoing process, continued public involvement and a long-term commitment to regional action planning is essential.

Continued effective involvement can only be maintained, however, if all participants are convinced that the time spent on regional action planning is productive. If the public does not see short-term progress in remediation, they may become disillusioned and abandon the process. Short-term, focused projects must be organized that are of interest to and achievable by the public. Building a record of such successes is one mechanism of sustaining public involvement.

Two important components to any public participation program are to define the elements of effective public participation and to design a public participation program that will produce the support needed for Regional Action Plans. Critical elements to every public participation program are trust, communication, opportunity, and flexibility (Law and Hartig 1993). Trust must be established between those directly involved in the regional action planning process and the public. Although it is the most difficult of the four elements to attain, trust is also the most essential element in a successfully implemented Regional Action Plan. To establish *trust* the following must occur: *communication* must be open between participants, *opportunities* must exist for public input, and *flexibility* must be maintained in the planning process to accommodate both new information and necessary changes in the program.

To build broad-based community support, effective public participation in the regional action planning process should be encouraged throughout the entire planning process. Public involvement should be initiated at the outset of the planning process with the distribution of information (e.g., press releases, public meetings) about the planning process, including goals and objectives, approach, and timeframes and milestones. Opportunities for continued public involvement should also be outlined at that time. Actions to inform and involve the public should occur throughout the life of the planning process, especially at critical stages, such as defining the problems, developing goals and objectives, and brainstorming about implementation actions. The public should also be involved in monitoring the Plan's implementation until restoration is complete. It is not intended that the public become part of the Regional Action Team. Rather, the public participation and education approach provides opportunities for the general public to provide input to the Regional Action Team. Such citizen involvement will provide the Regional Action Plan with invaluable local knowledge, the continuous and vigorous public oversight needed to overcome bureaucratic inertia, and the political will accomplish goals and objectives (Hartig and Zarull 1992; Law and Hartig 1993).

To maximize its effectiveness, the public outreach should compliment existing user groups and avoid costly duplication of other groups' efforts. The Regional Action Plan's public participation programs most useful role may be coordinating between and filling gaps in existing programs. There are many ways to achieve these objectives; however, the following scenario is presented for example. First, the Regional Action Team or its public participation subgroup should identify the Regional Action Plan's educational priorities. Second, existing public education and outreach programs in the Region of Concern should be surveyed. This investigation may demonstrate that many public and private groups in the Region of Concern are addressing issues that the Regional Action Plan deems important. Once the list of major education organizations is compiled, the list can be analyzed for specific geographic areas or focus on a specific issue. The Regional Action Plan represents many interests throughout the Region of Concern and may serve a unique role as coordinator of a network of complementary, overlapping interests. Gaps of information can be filled by sharing and disseminating information and resources.

Not all user groups are the same and the Regional Action Plan should determine the audience's level of knowledge and involvement with the Region of Concern. The Regional Action Plan's public participation program should provide a foundation for a true understanding of issues related to the Region of Concern. Accordingly, the public participation program should devise a public education strategy that provides for different levels of involvement. First, the Regional Action Plan may promote existing programs. Second, the Regional Action Plan may seek to change existing programs or broaden their focus to incorporate Regional Action Plan messages. Third, the Regional Action Plan should encourage the creation of new programs when appropriate. For example, if another group is addressing an issue adequately, the Regional Action Plan may help to promote and publicize its efforts. Whereas, if a second group needs financial or logistical assistance, the Regional Action Plan may try to provide the resources necessary for the group to organize its work. As a last resort, if the Regional Action Plan identifies an educational need that no one else is addressing, then the Regional Action Plan should initiate a new program.

Once it defines areas needing additional involvement, the team should implement a range of public participation and education tools. In addition, the team should coordinate with any existing communications activities that support the Chesapeake Bay Program. Throughout the planning process, the public should be given regular updates through newsletters, fact sheets, and press releases. It is important to communicate possible planning options to the public before they are narrowed or selected. It may also be appropriate to publish a newsletter for each Region of Concern. Team members should periodically speak to organizations that represent sectors of the general public. Among other activities,

the team should establish contacts with the media and encourage regular stories and news clips. The media should be encouraged to take responsibility for educating the public at large by contributing staff and other resources to educational video spots and public service announcements, along with other actions. Depending on the public's involvement in the Region of Concern, it may be useful to consider establishing a nonprofit organization that could promote public education and participation during plan development and implementation or to build upon the efforts of an existing organization.

Public Participation and Education Tools

- Public meetings and hearings
- Public workshops and forums
- Public roundtables
- Speakers' bureau
- Outreach to schools, such as teachers' guides and curricula
- Citizen surveys
- Citizen monitoring and/or watchdog groups
- Newsletters, videos, and television programs
- Annual progress reports
- Computer bulletin boards
- Nonprofit educational groups
- Cleanup days and other special events

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CHAPTER 3

CONDUCTING THE REGIONAL ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

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CHAPTER 3. CONDUCTING THE REGIONAL ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

Regional Action Plans should be developed through a coordinated, consensus-building process overseen by the designated lead agency in the Region of Concern¹ and supported by a stakeholder group, referred to as the Regional Action Team. Although the lead agency has considerable flexibility in its approach to conducting the regional action planning process, the Chesapeake Bay Program expects the lead agency to:

- Develop and deliver a Regional Action Plan to the Chesapeake Executive Council within a designated timeframe
- Use a regional action planning process that considers all stakeholder interests
- Identify and work in consultation with the Regional Action Team throughout the planning process, particularly when identifying priorities, determining an overall project vision, setting goals and objectives, and developing implementation actions and milestones
- Work with the Regional Action Team to include the public in the planning process.

This chapter presents background information useful for conducting the regional action planning process. The chapter describes the anticipated activities of the lead agency and the Regional Action Team in developing a Regional Action Plan, presents information on conducting Regional Action Team meetings and building consensus, and discusses the importance of public participation and education. This information is presented in the following sections of the chapter:

- Overview of the Lead Agency's Involvement
 - Assembling an Effective Regional Action Team
 - Identifying Potential Regional Action Team Members
 - Identifying Regional Action Team Leaders
 - Obtaining Management Support
- Overview of the Regional Action Team's Involvement
 - Identifying Stakeholder Interests
 - Evaluating Environmental Problems and Establishing a Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives
 - Evaluating Existing Management Programs
 - Determining Implementation Actions

¹Lead agencies are designated by the jurisdiction(s) containing a Region of Concern.

- Developing a Work Plan
- Conducting Effective Regional Action Team Meetings
- Approaches to Building Consensus
- Public Participation and Education.

Although the guidance recognizes that each Region of Concern is a unique location, with site-specific considerations, the suggestions presented in this chapter apply to most situations and will help determine an efficient and successful regional action planning outcome. Three overarching considerations that apply to all aspects of the planning process include:

- **Someone must coordinate the entire regional action planning process.** The process involves many different steps and participants. In order to keep the process on track, in an orderly and efficient manner, one person should be responsible for mapping each step of the process, assigning roles and responsibilities, and ensuring that tasks get completed on time. This Regional Action Plan coordinator should be affiliated with the group responsible for writing the final plan and delivering it to the Executive Council (generally this group is the lead agency).
- **Roles and responsibilities for each step of the planning process must be clearly defined.** Regional action planning involves many different tasks, including conducting background research, preparing written materials, providing logistical support for Regional Action Team meetings, running Regional Action Team meetings, facilitating decision-making, and writing the final plan. Because different people will be involved in each of these steps, it is essential to clarify, upfront, the roles and responsibilities of each participant. This will clarify the overall approach, ensure efficient participation, and avoid duplication of effort.
- **Each step of the planning process must have a leader.** In addition to the overall plan coordinator, each step of the process must have a discrete leader. Absence of a leader can lead to confusion about roles and responsibilities, cause the process to get off-track, and frustrate participants who are unclear about the best way to participate.

The rationale for having an overall coordinator, defining roles and responsibilities, and identifying leaders for the regional action planning process is simple and straightforward. Regional action planning must occur in an orderly, efficient, and timely fashion so that momentum is maintained, participants' commitment and enthusiasm to the planning process remain high, and goals and objectives are achieved. Defining roles and responsibilities early in the process helps to establish the road map necessary to ensure effective planning. Poorly organized efforts, without a clearly stated mission and understanding of individual and group responsibilities, often fail to achieve the ultimate goal of the regional action planning

process—to develop an implementable plan, representative of the diverse interests in the Region of Concern, that will reduce and prevent problems associated with chemical contamination.

Stakeholder involvement from the early stages is critical to the ultimate success of the Regional Action Plan. Stakeholders are represented through a well-selected Regional Action Team comprised of a diverse group of participants interested in, affected by, or contributing to chemical contaminant-related issues in the Region of Concern. Potential stakeholders for inclusion on the Regional Action Team include representatives from local, state and federal governments; industrial and commercial sectors; citizen and environmental groups; and academic institutions.

Involving stakeholders in the decision-making process leads to local ownership of the Regional Action Plan and a sense of stewardship for the Region of Concern. The coalitions built through an effective stakeholder process will strengthen the Regional Action Plan by elevating the priority given to certain implementation actions, obtaining commitments (e.g., staff resources, funding) for implementation, and engendering trust among diverse interests. In addition, stakeholder commitment is necessary because of the level of political, legal, and behavioral change necessary to achieve some regional action planning goals and objectives. Because of the variety of political bodies and agencies potentially involved in the watersheds linked to a Region of Concern, governmental commitment is also key to affecting change. Most of the implementation actions needed to address a Region of Concern, whether regulatory or nonregulatory, are beyond the conceptual, institutional, and financial reach of any single agency or group and require intra-agency collaboration, public-private partnerships, and stakeholder commitment.

In addition to the Regional Action Team directly involved in plan development, the sustained interest and involvement of the general public is necessary to maintain momentum. The general public can be influential in ensuring that actions are pursued. They can help keep the process focused and, by serving as citizen "watchdogs," can achieve greater accountability from those charged with implementing specific plan recommendations. The general public can also provide technical input to plan development by contributing information and opinions to define problems, assessing existing programs, and determining implementation actions. Citizen groups can also be established to contribute directly to plan implementation by establishing citizen monitoring networks, promoting cleanup days, or initiating other actions. An informed public can provide valuable resources to the regional action planning process, and efforts should be taken, from the start, to ensure public participation.

Exhibit 3-1. Roles and Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Role/Interests	Responsibility	Comments/Other Considerations
Lead agencies	Manage plan development in cooperation with stakeholders (i.e., Regional Action Team) and form institutions with public involvement and commitment	Protect water quality and develop and implement a Regional Action Plan	Establish and coordinate the team and provide technical and financial resources
Responsible agencies (federal, state, and local)	Support plan development and pursue various public interests	Assist lead agencies and commit technical and financial resources; participate in relevant implementation actions	Exercise jurisdiction over resources or management decisions
Industry and local businesses	Ensure business interests are represented in the plan	Contribute technical expertise, time, and funding; participate in relevant implementation actions	Educate the public and inform constituencies of progress and issues
Citizen/environmental groups	Ensure environmental protection issues are represented in the plan	Attend meetings, perform outreach, serve as watch dog for planning process, participate in plan implementation	Educate the public and inform constituencies of progress and issues
Educational institutions	Ensure that scientific and other educational information is disclosed	Provide subject area expertise and perform outreach, technical research, and monitoring	Make grants available to support such projects
General Public	Attend public meetings/hearings and other events about the Region of Concern. Contribute ideas, opinions, and information.	Become informed and serve as "watchdogs" for plan implementation. Maintain political pressure. Take personal responsibility for actions that will improve conditions in the Region of Concern (e.g., recycle, minimize use of hazardous chemicals).	Informing the public early on and throughout the process is a good way to maintain momentum and pressure to ensure implementation.

Exhibit 3-1 provides an overview of the types of key players likely to be active in the regional action planning process. The exhibit outlines major roles and responsibilities and describes the interests of these stakeholders, including lead agencies, other government agencies, industry and local business, citizen/environmental groups, and educational institutions. Later sections of this chapter describe a process for selecting a balanced and representative Regional Action Team from these types of groups.

3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE LEAD AGENCY'S INVOLVEMENT

The lead agency is designated by the jurisdiction(s) having a Region of Concern to oversee the regional action planning process, including plan development and implementation. The lead agency's responsibilities include establishing and coordinating the Regional Action Team, providing technical and financial resources, and offering leadership for the regional action planning process. It is very important that the lead agency be committed to the regional action planning process and work with the Regional Action Team to gather support from elected officials.

The lead agency has a great deal of flexibility in choosing an approach for implementing the regional action planning process. Bearing in mind that the ultimate responsibility of the lead agency is to deliver a Regional Action Plan to the Chesapeake Executive Council by an established deadline, the lead agency can use, or modify, one of several approaches depending on the level of public and stakeholder commitment required to develop and implement the Regional Action Plan, and available funding and other resources:

- Maintain full responsibility for plan development, using the Regional Action Team in an advisory capacity (e.g., reviewing and commenting on materials prepared by the lead agency)
- Share responsibility with the Regional Action Team (e.g., identify the various tasks needed to complete the plan and divide responsibilities according to expertise and ability/willingness to contribute)
- Delegate all authority for plan development to the Regional Action Team (e.g., lead agency may provide technical support, but Regional Action Team has full control in guiding the planning process and making recommendations).

Regardless of the approach taken, it is essential to clearly define roles and responsibilities at the outset. If the lead agency chooses to delegate some or all of its authority to an existing group, it might want to develop a formal or informal memorandum of understanding clearly stating roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the groups involved. If such clarification of roles and responsibilities is not offered early in the planning process, involved parties, including Regional Action Team members, might become confused, frustrated, and disillusioned with the process.

Experience suggests that the most effective approach is one of shared responsibility between the lead agency and the Regional Action Team (Chesapeake Bay Program 1990; Davidson 1994; Harris 1994; Schramik 1994; Shuyler 1994; Swiniuch 1994; Hartig et al. 1994). This approach is often successful because it utilizes the technical and financial resources of the lead agency, while seeking the energy, creativity, support, and commitment from the stakeholders who will ultimately determine the plan's success. Regardless of the approach used by the lead agency, it is important that adequate time be allocated for plan research and development in order to generate a sound, credible, and implementable plan. The lead agency, working with the Regional Action Team, should try to identify and seek involvement from all significant stakeholders and thoroughly understand stakeholder interests. The Regional Action Team should also be given sufficient time and resources to conduct the decision-making process needed to develop a sound implementation approach (e.g., identifying a complete range of implementation actions, such as nonpoint source control techniques, pollution prevention plans, legislative

changes, funding, public involvement). By following this process, it is more likely that the solutions developed will be more acceptable to the team and innovative than a plan produced by a single agency.

3.1.1 Assembling an Effective Regional Action Team

One of the most important early responsibilities of the lead agency is to assemble an effective Regional Action Team. Although many factors determine team effectiveness, it is of utmost importance that the team be balanced and representative of key stakeholders in the Region of Concern. When assembling the team, the lead agency may want to start with existing stakeholder groups (e.g., the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Committee, the Elizabeth River Project) or develop a new group, drawing members from existing stakeholder groups. As one of its first steps in the planning process, the lead agency should conduct enough background research on the Region of Concern to identify groups and/or individuals already active in the Region of Concern. Depending on the situation in the Region of Concern, the lead agency should coordinate with existing stakeholder groups or active individuals, or invite other involved parties (e.g., local governments) to join an initial selection committee (formal or informal) to assemble the Regional Action Team. The lead agency, in conjunction with its partners in the Region of Concern (e.g., selection committee) should determine the size and structure of the Regional Action Team and identify affected parties (i.e., persons/groups associated with or affected by chemical contamination in the Region of Concern), key decision-makers, and subject matter experts to include as participants on the Regional Action Team. When identifying groups and/or individuals to assist in the Regional Action Team selection process, and again when identifying potential team members, it is important to have the participation of individuals who adequately represent the wide variety of interests of those affecting and being affected by chemical contamination problems in the Region of Concern. It is especially important to involve individuals and/or groups that will play lead roles in implementing the Regional Action Plan. Section 3.1.2 of this guidance provides more specific direction on a process that can be used to identify and select Regional Action Team members.

Although it is critical to include representative stakeholders on the Regional Action Team, it is also important to keep the group size manageable—no more than 15 to 20 members are suggested (optimal size is 7 to 15). This smaller number gives the group flexibility and allows it to operate in an efficient manner. It also enhances the consensus-building process, which is essential to the ultimate success of the Regional Action Plan. Although larger groups are possible, it becomes harder to ensure equitable involvement from all team members, and the decision-making process may be more unwieldy. If a group larger than 15 or 20 individuals is required, it may be necessary to form subcommittees (e.g., by source of pollution/land use category). To make drafting the Regional Action Plan workable, a

drafting subcommittee, including approximately five members, may be formed. Alternatively, if resources are available, it may be possible for the lead agency to provide staff and/or contractor support to assemble background materials needed to develop the Regional Action Plan. If such "outside" sources, or even a drafting subcommittee of the Regional Action Team, are used to prepare sections of the Regional Action Plan, all stakeholders comprising the Regional Action Team should agree on the input using a consensus-based approach. Section 3.5 in this chapter ("Approaches to Building Consensus") provides an overview of several approaches to building consensus.

Regional Action Team members should be enthusiastic and energetic about the planning process, have leadership abilities, and be committed to the consensus approach to decision-making. Ideally, the members should have technical familiarity with the issues facing the Region of Concern, but be involved in management to the extent that they can influence the decision-making processes of the organizations they represent. The members should also be able to speak with confidence about the feasibility of putting the proposed implementation approach to work. It is important to involve both those who can contribute to the planning process and those who can contribute to the implementation of the Regional Action Plan.

While it may be tempting to include only supporters of the regional action planning process on the Regional Action Team, it is crucial to select team members representing all affected parties, especially those that might be responsible for implementing a particular plan recommendation. By including representatives from potentially resistant groups (e.g., a major contributor of chemical contamination) in the early stages of the planning process, it may be possible to allay fears, build trust, and develop an implementable plan that avoids potential pitfalls from the lack of cooperation and resistance that could occur if affected parties feel excluded from the planning dialogue. When seeking to include members from potentially resistant groups, it is helpful to identify individuals from those groups who will give the process a chance, agree to use a consensus-based approach, and are willing to participate.

Exhibit 3-2 summarizes selected issues key to assembling an effective Regional Action Team. If these concerns are considered and a strong commitment to a consensus-based process-using stakeholders is pursued, then it should be possible to develop a sound, implementable plan. However, there is no guarantee that any one team will succeed. Participants should look for warning signs and avoid pitfalls, such as those listed in Exhibit 3-3.

Exhibit 3-2. Key Elements to Establishing a Regional Action Team

- Determine appropriate participants. Represent affected parties (i.e., persons whose use of the Region of Concern is impaired by chemical contamination *and* groups associated with chemical contamination), subject matter experts, and key decision-makers. Ideally, participants should be able to represent groups of affected parties (e.g., trade associations, coalition of several environmental organizations) rather than individual entities (e.g., a single facility). Involve representatives from groups potentially responsible for implementing aspects of the plan.
- Select a team that is balanced and representative of all affected parties. One group should not dominate. In most cases, it is inappropriate for more than one individual from a single entity to participate.
- Identify affected parties and other potential Regional Action Team members by initially examining available information on the nature of problems in the Region of Concern. After gaining a preliminary understanding of problems in the Region of Concern, identify the types of affected parties associated with each problem. Seek out existing organizations and/or individuals active in the Region of Concern for advice on potential Regional Action Team members.
- Identify enthusiastic, open-minded, and energetic participants who are committed to the consensus-building process and have time to devote to developing a Regional Action Plan.
- Avoid inviting people not affected by the objective(s) of the Regional Action Plan. Also avoid disinterested, unreliable individuals, and/or known meeting "disrupters."
- Aim to have an adequate and balanced stakeholder group that is large enough to contain the knowledge and opinions relevant to the planning task, but strive for a manageable group size. For decision-making activities, the optimal group size is 7 to 15 participants. If more participants are needed, consider establishing smaller subgroups.
- Seek continuity of process and a balanced and representative group at all times by having team members designate an alternate in case they are unable to attend a meeting.

Exhibit 3-3. Reasons Why Consensus Groups Fail

- Failure to produce a plan that represents the interests of all significant stakeholders. This is often caused when certain stakeholders, such as environmental groups, do not join the team. Groups who do not join the team usually attack what they do not like in the draft plan when it is presented for lead agency review or review by the governing body. Therefore, it is important to make every effort to involve each significant stakeholder group in the process directly or indirectly (e.g., by becoming a corresponding member who receives meeting notes and is contacted regularly for ideas and opinions).
- Members walk away from the process or do not commit to the process. This is usually because team members believe their interests can be represented better in another way (e.g., in court, directly with elected officials).
- The team fails to deliver a Regional Action Plan that is adequate to guide implementation. Without clear goals and objectives and strong leadership, teams tend to produce vague plans that do not resolve major issues (e.g., specific implementation tools, such as farm pollution prevention plans to control urban and agricultural runoff).
- The team loses momentum, thereby causing key members to abandon the process. Loss of momentum is usually caused by inefficient and poor process management and getting bogged down on difficult issues.

3.1.2 Identifying Regional Action Team Members

Stakeholder groups, such as the Regional Action Team, should be balanced and represent key decision-makers and affected parties (i.e., persons/groups associated with or affected by chemical contamination) in the Region of Concern. To determine which stakeholders should participate in the Regional Action Team, it is necessary to examine the nature of the chemical contamination problems in the Region of Concern. The lead agency, in conjunction with a formal or informal selection committee,² should assemble and analyze readily available information (e.g., written documentation, personal contact with knowledgeable individuals) to develop a preliminary overview of problems in the Region of Concern. This understanding of problems is the necessary first step for identifying parties affected by or contributing to beneficial use impairment and/or other adverse effects of chemical contamination. After understanding the problems, it is possible to link candidate stakeholder groups and individual representatives of those groups to the problems. Each step of the process to identify Regional Action Team members is summarized below:

- **Assess Nature of Problems**—Lead agency, working with existing stakeholder groups and/or individuals active in the Region of Concern, conducts preliminary investigations to determine the nature of chemical contamination problems in the Region of Concern. Readily available written material (e.g., technical reports, newspaper articles), supplemented by discussions with informed groups or individuals, should be assembled and summarized.
- **Identify Stakeholder Categories to be Represented on the Regional Action Team**—Information on problems and sources of problems provide the basis for identifying the types of stakeholders that should be represented on the Regional Action Team. The lead agency, in consultation with other key groups and/or individuals, develops a generic list of stakeholder categories (e.g., fishing industry, property owners, chemical industry, environmental groups) that should be included.
- **Identify Actual Representatives from Generic Stakeholder Categories**—The lead agency, in consultation with other key groups and/or individuals, analyzes background information to match specific names with stakeholder categories. A review of the literature, but more likely personal knowledge/recommendations from groups and/or individuals already involved in the Region of Concern, will help to identify specific persons associated with each generic stakeholder category. Efforts should be made to identify individuals that represent groups of stakeholders (e.g., an industry association or business group that captures multiple business/industry groups in the Region of Concern). It is important to avoid duplication—there is no need for two or more representatives from any particular stakeholder category; certainly not from the same location/facility/group.

²The lead agency may want to coordinate with existing groups and/or individuals (e.g., an existing stakeholder group such as the Elizabeth River Project or the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Committee) active in the Region of Concern, as well as other involved parties (e.g., local governments) to form a Regional Action Team Selection Committee.

Exhibits 3-4 and 3-5 provide an example of the process of identifying Regional Action Team members. Exhibit 3-4 illustrates each step of the process, while Exhibit 3-5 displays a hypothetical list of stakeholder categories developed from the example in Exhibit 3-4.

In addition to the lead agency, the likely stakeholders to be involved in the process include other relevant local, state, and federal agencies; industry and other business organizations; citizen/environmental groups; and educational institutions. Other organizations and individuals that may be stakeholders include commercial and recreational fishing groups, landowners, homeowner associations, and community organizations, such as civic groups and churches. Ethnic and minority group participation should be a priority.

The ideal candidate for a Regional Action Team is enthusiastic, energetic, and committed to a consensus-building planning process; has leadership abilities; is technically familiar with issues in the Region of Concern and is a key decision-maker and/or connected to management so that he or she can speak with some reliability and commitment about the organization's resources and ability to participate; is willing to contribute to the planning process and/or plan implementation. It is important to match up a region's problems with appropriate team members. For example, if contaminated dredging materials are a problem in one area, the Regional Action Team should probably include representatives from local ports and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. If urban nonpoint source runoff is a concern, the team should probably include city planners, developers, and property owners. For regions affected by agricultural runoff, agricultural stakeholders should be invited to join the team. Exhibit 3-6 lists potential stakeholders representing various interests and matches them with associated problems.

If the lead agency is uncertain about whether to include certain stakeholders, it is possible to rank potential stakeholders by their expected level of impact on the planning process, as well as by process impacts on them. For instance, certain stakeholders may have more influence on the process than others. Similarly, the outcome of the process (e.g., specific cleanup and funding commitments) may affect stakeholders differently. Other ranking or selection factors include anticipated commitment to the process and the expertise and skills the team requires. Because the regional action planning process occurs over an extended period of time, may require participation in meetings and materials preparation, including possibly drafting portions of the plan, it is important to select members—public and private—who have the time and resources to make this commitment. Because the Regional Action Plan will be a technical, as well as a policy, document, the team should include scientists and engineers.