

Case study: Orchestrating large-scale stakeholder workshops

HUDSON RIVER SUSTAINABLE SHORELINES PROJECT IN NEW YORK

As the *Sustainable Shorelines* project neared completion, the team held a day-long workshop to share project results and products with approximately 50 stakeholders including engineers, landscape architects, state permitting officials, and researchers. The purpose was to share project results and new tools, and provide an opportunity for stakeholders to practice using the tools in a real-world scenario, but in a lower-pressure, well-supported environment.

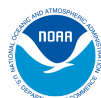
Project team's approach

The team organized participants into groups, consisting of individuals from different disciplines and at least one person who was familiar with the GIS program and the tools developed through the project. Each group had a computer with the tools installed, large format paper maps, and handouts describing a shoreline management problem they were asked to solve using the tools.

Lessons learned and analysis

The workshop was interactive and engaging and met the team's goals for successfully sharing the project's results with stakeholders involved in shoreline management throughout the region. This outcome required several months of intensive workshop design and planning, but it ensured the project met its ultimate goal. Throughout the planning and implementation process the team recorded several lessons, including the following:

- Sharing packets that included informative handouts and data about the project's shoreline restoration sites with participants prior to the workshop enabled them to more quickly and easily engage with the tools and data during group activities.
- The team found that providing short lectures was an effective way to substantiate the need for ecologically enhanced shore zones to audience members who might not have been aware of ecological principles.
 - Design professionals also attended the workshop and gave short lectures on their own innovative shoreline projects.
- The group activity may have been more effective if each participant had access to the tools and datasets on their own computers.
 - The team also noted that additional presentation of the tools and their capabilities prior to the activity may have been beneficial for participants.
- As an incentive for attending the workshop, landscape architects and engineers who registered and attended received professional development credits.
- A run-through of the group activity several days before the event allowed the



team to modify it for clarity and timing.

- The team found it useful to have a facilitator in each group to help participants when they encountered challenges or had questions. The facilitator knew how to use each of the tools presented during the workshop and had a teacher's manual version of the activity packet. Roaming experts observed the exercise process and answered content-specific questions.
- A balance of engineers, natural resource scientists, and regulators in each group helped to stimulate learning, promote discussion, and foster working relationships.

Key advice

Interactive workshops engaging stakeholders require time and effort to plan and implement. Be sure to include resources and time in your proposal for the planning team, speakers, meeting support people like facilitators or GIS specialists, travel, food, and a comfortable venue.

To learn more about this project that was initiated in 2010, visit their [Project Page](#).

To access other case studies and resources for conducting collaborative science projects, visit: [A Guide to Collaborative Science](#).

This case study was developed in 2015 by the NERRS Science Collaborative team when the program was hosted by the University of New Hampshire. This case study was originally featured as part of the Collaborative Project Toolkit.

