

CHAPTER 8: DARBY PARTNERSHIP

West Central Ohio

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Darby Partnership is an example of a very informal watershed-based collaborative effort with no by-laws or even a memorandum of agreement. Darby Partnership has struggled to become less agency driven and involve local citizen groups such as a unique farmers organization called Operation Future Association. The fact that each agency and organization maintains its own decision-making authority and that the partnership often does not go beyond information sharing allows the partnership to avoid some of the challenges faced by other groups analyzed in this report.

Interviews:

Teri Devlin, The Nature Conservancy, (3/25/99)

Dennis Hall, Ohio State University Extension and Executive Director of Operation Future Association, (3/16/99)

Mary Ann Core, USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service, (3/16/99)

Marc Smith, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, (3/15/99)

Melissa Horton, USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service, (3/11/99)

Yetty Alley, former Darby Partnership member with Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Scenic Rivers Division, (2/23/99)

Kathy Smith, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, (2/23/99)

PART I: BACKGROUND¹

Origin and Issues

Located in west central Ohio, the Big Darby Creek's main stem is approximately eighty-eight miles long and contains 245 miles of tributaries that meander from the headwaters near Marysville to its confluence with the Scioto River. The Big Darby and Little Darby Creek's 580-square mile watershed is one of the healthiest aquatic systems in the Midwest. The meandering, free flowing streams of the watershed support eighty-six species of fish and more than forty-one species of mussels, thirty-five of which are rare or endangered species. The Big and Little Darby have been given many distinctions for their high quality habitat. Notable designations are; its rank among the top freshwater habitats in the region by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA), "National Scenic River" designation by the U.S. Department of the Interior, and its name as "One of the Last Great Places in the Western Hemisphere" by The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

¹ Background information was compiled from several sources including; *A Great Place...The Darby Creek Hydrologic Unit Area*, USDA, *The Darby Book*, *A Guide for Residents of the Darby Creek Watershed*, *Darby Partners 1996 Resource Directory*, *Operation Future: Farmers Protecting Darby Creek and the Bottom Line* by Dennis Hall, and the interviews listed above.

Approximately eighty percent of the land used within the watershed is farmland, the majority being corn and soybean row crops. Kathy Smith from Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) noted the lack of public land within the watershed: "We really don't have any public lands other than Columbus area Metro Parks." The creek banks are often flanked with native vegetation including hardwood forests of buckeye, sycamore, silver maple and box elder. Moreover, the watershed has not been subject to large amounts of industrial or municipal waste and therefore has been able to maintain much of its natural balance. According to an ecological risk assessment done by the U.S. and Ohio EPA and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) the main stresses to the Darby Creeks are increased sedimentation, nutrient overloading, rising water temperatures and flooding (Edwards, 1996). Some of the increased risk to the watershed comes from the conversion of the watershed from farmland to urban and industrial land uses as the city of Columbus expands westward.

In 1989, the Head of Watershed Planning for the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the project coordinator for the NRCS's Top of the Ohio Resource Conservation and Development and the Director of the Ohio Chapter of TNC met to discuss the potential of working together (USDA). Over the next two years several partnerships, involving mainly agencies, evolved as the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1991 selected Darby Creek as one of its seventy Hydrologic Unit Areas (HUA). Furthermore, a great deal of attention was brought to the Darby watershed as TNC named the creek "One of the Last Great Places in the Western Hemisphere." The HUA brought together three participating USDA agencies (NRCS, Farm Service, and Ohio State University (OSU) Extension) as well as many other organizations that joined to implement parts of the HUA. In 1991, TNC offered to facilitate a partnership of federal, state and local agencies as well as private organizations and other watershed groups. It was this facilitation of over thirty organizations and agencies that led to the creation of Darby Partners (later to be called the Darby Partnership).

The Darby Partnership, throughout the years, has dealt with a variety of issues in the watershed. Teri Devlin the Program Manager for TNC's Darby Project stressed, "The reason why we are working on the Darby is the Darby provides high quality habitat for freshwater fish and fresh water mussels, a number of which are rare and endangered." Kathy Smith explained, "Initially with USDA we were looking at reducing the amount of soil being carried into the stream. Sedimentation being the key problem." One of the main issues the partnership has focused upon is promoting agricultural stewardship in order to reduce runoff from farms throughout the watershed. Sedimentation from topsoil running off during heavy rains is one of Darby's biggest threats. "Sediment reduction and agricultural non-point source reduction has clearly been something we have worked on," noted Dennis Hall from OSU Extension and Executive Director of Operation Future Association (OFA). Educating not only the farmers, but also the entire watershed community on various issues such as septic tank maintenance, watershed recreation, responsible lawn and landscape management, stream bank erosion, protecting riparian wooded corridors, household hazardous waste and other issues have also been a focus.

Organization and Process

The mission of the Darby Partnership is to be a proactive resource for the citizens of the watershed who want to protect the resource and acts as a "think tank" for conservation efforts within the watershed (USDA). Over the years the structure and membership makeup of the partnership has changed several times. For several years the core group of thirty-plus members consisted of the heads of agencies, environmental groups, local governments and organizations, meeting to develop cooperative strategies to preserve, maintain and enhance the aquatic and riparian ecosystem. "There was an interesting split for a while," explained Yetty Alley a former Darby Partner with ODNr's Scenic River Division, "The Partners' meetings were viewed as upper management and they had one meeting while the field staff had another." This core group held quarterly meetings to discuss current issues and share field staff accomplishments. Mary Ann Core from NRCS noted that, "Early on they were always concerned about getting all the agency head involved because they are the ones that get the money." At the same time a group of field staff from the many agencies and organizations were meeting on a regular basis.

The two meeting structure began to lose its effectiveness as some of the agency heads began to lose interest, not many non agency people came to meetings, communication between the Partners' meetings and the field staff was lacking and others just complained that there were too many meetings. "After a while upper management staff started to drop off and you had some people attending both meetings which did not make sense, so we began to combine them and that seemed better," said Yetty Alley.

Not only did some field staff go to both Darby Partnership meetings, but they also had HUA meetings. After four years of operating in that format the need for a change was expressed. A brainstorming session resulted in a list of perceived problems within the watershed that members' thought needed to be addressed: livestock management, communications, land use and stream management. Members then signed up to work on one of the four teams that formed around those issues. Melissa Horton from NRCS described the brainstorming session: "We had a facilitated meeting, a mini gripe session, then we regrouped to allow members to be more focused." Along with these four "teams" that met as needed, the Partners meeting, facilitated by TNC's Teri Devlin, still takes place quarterly.

The Darby Partnership is very informal in structure. Melissa Horton refers to the group as, "a hologram...It is not a formal type thing, it is very informal, that is why I call it a hologram." Marc Smith of OEPA describes the structure as, "A loose knit collaborative effort of a lot of agencies, private entities and citizens. Basically everyone has their say in the partnership, but it is not like we are voting members or anything. It is primarily an information dissemination organization." "The Darby Partnership is a place where information can be exchanged without the need for judgement and so people can come to their own conclusions about what the information means to them," said Dennis Hall. Hall felt the informal structure was beneficial: "I think that process is very important in today's policy arena where everything seems like it has to be a yes or no."

Teri Devlin described the partnership as, "A group of representatives from agencies and organizations and our commonality is we work on the Darby in some way or another or have a concern about the Darby system. We meet quarterly since 1991. We have no plan. We have no agreement. There is no entity on paper or any other legal or organizational way that says we are Darby Partnership. Funding comes through our individual sources. There has been funding that has come to the partnership's work...but money does not flow into a central pot."

Some of the over forty organizations and agencies members of the Darby Partnership include: NRCS, TNC, OEPA, Operation Future Association (OFA), OSU Extension, USGS, ODNR, The Darby Creek Association, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), City of Columbus Division Of Water, Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Ohio Farm Bureau among others. Each organization and agency maintains independent decision-making authority as meetings are mainly used to share information and plan cooperative activities.

In response to the intensified attention Darby Partnership placed on farming issues and with the assistance of OSU Extension, a small group of farmers from across the watershed came together to better understand the expectations from the non-farming community. In 1991, a farmer task force was established to facilitate farmer participation in the watershed. This task force later formed its own private, nonprofit organization, Operation Future Association (OFA). Today, OFA membership includes more than 140 farmers that represent more than thirty-percent of "high priority areas" adjacent to the Darby and its tributaries. According to Dennis Hall, the Executive Director of OFA, "[OFA] represent farmers perspective in the watershed and provide balanced, progressive feedback to the partners on issues that relate to agriculture."

Teri Devlin of TNC described her organization's role in the Darby Partnership: "The Nature Conservancy is one of the partners and has offered since 1991 to facilitate the process. By that I mean we have a place to meet, food to eat, and an agenda, and kind of coordinating the quarterly meetings." Devlin continued, "One of the reasons TNC is appropriate to facilitate the partnership is we have been willing to fund full time people on the creek." From speaking with other members it is clear that Devlin's role is crucial to Darby Partnership. Mary Ann Core said, "Agendas are set a month prior to meetings by Teri. She sends out a call for agenda items and if there is something out there she will let us know." Speaking about Devlin, Marc Smith said, "She acts as a moderator. If she feels something is not being covered she will call on someone there at the meeting that could speak to that point. That position has really helped the partnership." Smith continued, "So, if anyone has a topic that they wish to discuss they will call Teri and say I want to talk about whatever. She get the agenda rolling."

Each of the four "teams" created in 1995, have different structures and are active at various times with a variety of issues. According to Melissa Horton, the stream team, "went full blast for a while, then did zero last year," The stream team is composed of up to three landowners and seventeen individuals representing ten different agencies. At their first meeting they brainstormed ideas on how members would like to see the team serve the watershed. One role the stream team played was on-site evaluation and recommendations given to landowners that called on them to get advice on stream bank erosion on their farms. Mary

Ann Core said, "We would save up two or three sights to visit and then go out and inventory the sight, usually around five or six of us. We would talk about alternatives and I would write up a report and then give it to the landowner." Other issues the stream team worked on during the first two years were stream stabilization practice sheets and a landowner stream management guide. According to Horton there are current efforts to get the stream team back working again. When asked how successful the stream team was, Core said, "It is hard to coordinate and it would take a long time to get answers back to the land owner. You can only do so much, but we got some actions [on the part of landowners] out of it."

Outcomes

Due to the informality of the group as well as the number of organizations participating, outcomes from Darby Partnership are often not clearly linked to the partnership, rather are often credited to individual organizations. Melissa Horton spoke of the challenge of giving credit to the partnership when writing a stream team manual: "You could not say this is a product of the partnership, we felt like we needed a clause, but it is not in print." At the same time Mary Ann Core noted that, "People don't realize it, but the partnership is working all the time. Not as a unit, but when you have forty to sixty people in a partnership from different agencies and municipalities the work of the Darby Partnership is going on at all times."

One outcome often mentioned is a greater awareness of issues affecting the Darby watershed. This is because Darby Partnership has focused upon education. Several Darby Partnership members put together a book, *The Darby Book*, which is widely distributed throughout the watershed. The goal of *The Darby Book* is to educate the residents in the watershed on the various stresses to the creek such as leaking septic tanks, livestock grazing too closely to streams, and wetland loss among others. An education event that many members have spoken highly about are a series of canoe trips arranged by OFA where landowners are paired in canoes with an agency official. Other education events include cleanup days along the stream where residents go out in canoes to pick up trash, and field days where farmers open up their farms to groups in order to inform the public of their farming practices.

In terms of on-the-ground achievements, many have credited the partnership with promoting various programs that have helped to reduce sediment runoff from farmland. In 1991, 45,000 acres of cropland within the watershed were in conservation tillage. By 1995, that number had grown to over 139,00 acres farmed with conservation tillage and has reduced sediment entry into the stream by 35,000 tons per year (USDA).² Currently the partnership has begun to focus more attention towards urban sediment runoff. It is feared that the reductions in sediment coming from farmland will be offset by setbacks as the watershed continues to be paved over.

Some other accomplishments and programs that have been designed by the Darby Partnership to address the threats to the watershed include: environmentally benign streambank stabilization techniques, mapping of land use trends and point source pollution,

² Conservation tillage entails leaving the field alone after harvest. The farmer does not churn up the soil which allows plant residue to remain on the surface. The plant residue retains water on the soil surface rather than allowing it to run off and cause erosion.

reforestation of high priority areas in the riparian corridor, and citizen adopt-a-stream programs.

Members had a variety of responses when asked what has been the greatest accomplishment of the Darby Partnership:

- Mary Ann Core mentioned the educational aspect: "Raising awareness of water resource and land use and how they truly effect the streams. We have done a great job at that."
- Melissa Horton spoke about changing peoples' attitudes: "[The Partnership] made people think about the streams in their backyards and started to get the idea out that they are not a sewer. I think [Darby Partners] have gotten a lot of people involved."
- Marc Smith said the greatest accomplishments were, "The group sticking together and continuing to work at getting everybody to the table and the process. There are a lot of neat things that have happened."
- Kathy Smith felt the greatest accomplishment was educating people in the watershed: "The education of those in the watershed and even myself who work in other watersheds as well. I have learned a lot going through the process. I hope that is the lingering effect."
- Yetty Alley the greatest achievements were, "A lot of the education type things that took place, canoe tours, family days at the Metro Parks, teacher workshops, and tours of farming communities."
- Teri Devlin felt the greatest achievement was the continued healthy state of the stream: "The Darby is still very healthy, that is the greatest accomplishment. Now how you tie that to the partnership work becomes ephemeral in some areas because some of the things that keep the Darby healthy would have occurred anyway. Although having that amount of resource expertise and focus going on I guarantee helped to keep the Darby healthy."

PART II: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITES

Why Collaboration?

There are various reasons why members of the Darby Partnership chose to participate. First, the USDA's HUA program along with distinctions bestowed upon Darby Creek brought a great deal of attention and funding. It was the funding and attention the provided for staff to be assigned to the Darby especially from several of the agencies such as NRCS and OSU Extension. Second, TNC's naming Darby Creek "One of the Last Great Places in the Western Hemisphere" brought with it a concerted effort from TNC to protect the stream through a watershed based approach.

Members had the following responses when asked why they chose to participate in the Darby Partnership:

- Yetty Alley spoke about all the activity in the watershed and efforts to reduce duplicated work: "With the HUA and 319 funding there was a lot of activity starting to happen and it seemed to make sense for everyone to know what others were doing so you were not duplicating efforts and so you could cooperate on different things to make money go further and see what types of gaps are there."
- Kathy Smith was hired to work with the Darby Partnership and has since seen a large increase in the number of watershed groups in her region: "When I was hired nine years ago this was part of my duties. When I came on board here [the partnership] was one of the things listed for me to work with. When I started there were two watershed projects, now I am up to eight or nine."
- Teri Devlin mentioned the size and complexity of the watershed: "When you have 560-square miles of land drained by a system it is ludicrous to think that you can do anything by yourself. [TNC] is very good at specific channels of work. A specific focus we are real good at is our science, land acquisition. We are very good at strategizing, but we do not know much about agriculture. We do not know much about urban planning. How does a developer go about planning? We really needed help in learning and the ability grow in our ability to leverage our work. So the partnership was an absolute necessity on our part."
- Marc Smith noted that, "It was my interest in the Darby watershed and they invited me to come participate because of my knowledge of the water resource quality and problems."
- Melissa Horton worked with the partnership as part of her duties: "I was assigned and that was fine."
- Mary Ann Core spoke about the necessity of bringing people together in a watershed this size: "Because it is such a big monster. Nobody wants to take it on alone. Nobody wants to make any decisions alone. It was a way of educating and informing people."

Dennis Hall from OSU Extension is also the Executive Director of OFA and therefore had different responses for why he, OFA and OSU Extension chose to participate in the Darby Partnership. "For me I am interested in community development. I am interested in citizenship and developing people in the community and am an advocate of win-win perspectives," said Hall, "If we take the time sit down together, work creatively we can come up with better solutions than if any of us work independently. I am not convinced that my perspective by itself is better or lesser than any other." Hall then continued on to talk about why OSU Extension chose to participate: "I think OSU Extension is involved because we have been promoting learning...our job in extension is more about facilitating learning and providing interpersonal exchange." Lastly Hall spoke about OFA: "They had their agricultural interests they wanted to protect and did not really see anyone at the table that was really doing that."

Alternatives

According to Darby Partnership members, agencies would have gone about their normal way of managing the watershed, and citizens and landowners would have been more frustrated. Moreover, there would not have been the overall understanding of issues affecting the Darby had the partnership not formed.

Teri Devlin explained: "I think a lot of the agency personnel would have done their jobs and will always do their job and therefore a lot of the agricultural stresses to the Darby would have been helped. What the partnership did was two-fold. First, is if you get that many people from all those agencies together talking about one area it gets a lot of attention and attention is a magnet for more attention which means more resources, more ability to work on things which all translates into success. Secondly, is that I think it is very easy to focus only on your interests given the limited time we have. I do not think there would have been the overall kind of thinking, the long range kind of thinking about what could happen here. Also the realization that you do not have to be an expert on everything. You team up with experts and therefore get a hole bunch more done than you ever could by yourself." Kathy Smith had similar sentiments: "Probably without the partnership things would not have been addressed on such a large scale. With the attention these issues have gotten because we have broadcast its unique characteristics...issues would probably have been addressed on a much smaller scale."

Several members focused mainly upon the attention and the awareness that the partnership has brought to the stresses within the watershed. "Without the partnership I think fewer people would be involved," said Dennis Hall, "The successes would have been much smaller. I think we have in place here a new social structure and have altered the context to a degree that the Darby has a chance of continuing to improve." Marc Smith noted that, "There has been an increased amount of public awareness of the resource, the quality of the resource." Melissa Horton had similar feelings stating, "I think [the Darby Partnership] has gotten a lot of people involved. It has given all a different perspective on things."

Specifically focusing upon how the partnership has changed the interaction between landowners, mainly farmers, and the agencies regulating them both Melissa Horton and Dennis Hall had similar thoughts. Melissa Horton said: "I think a lot more people would have been frustrated in and around the stream. Many landowners were frustrated with all the hoops with rules and regulations that they needed to jump through. I think [Darby Partnership] simplified it for them." Dennis Hall said: "I think if we would have adopted more of a selling approach saying okay farmers this is what you have to do and these are the reasons why and just do it, we might have gotten adoption. What I am not sure we would have gotten is the conviction. Now I think we have got a completely different mindset about the stream and the role of the farmers in protecting it."

Ensuring Stakeholder Representation

Challenges

Most members of the Darby Partnership did not feel ensuring stakeholder representation was a challenge for the partnership. Several members felt that the partnership could have done a better job at recruiting citizens and citizen groups, while others felt that high staff turnover in the agencies posed difficulties.

Not a Challenge

Most Darby Partnership members could not think of any group or interest that has not been represented at the table. "I am not sure there has [been someone left out of the process]. Nothing pops up in my mind," said Marc Smith. Smith continued saying, "Anytime you have a communal resource though, there are people concerned that are not being heard." "If anyone was left out, they were quickly added," said Melissa Horton, "I can't say anyone was purposely left out." Dennis Hall stated, "No, I do not think anyone raised the concern that someone might have been left out."

Citizens and Developers

Although none of the Darby Partnership members felt the lack of any interest had affected their ability to work to improve the stream, several members did think that citizens and developers are lacking at the table. Securing their involvement would improve the group's ability to accommodate diverse capabilities and could prove crucial to the future of the partnership.

Since the USDA's HUA project ran out in 1998, several agencies have not been able to spend as much of their resources, including staff time, within the Darby watershed. This has led several members of the Darby Partnership to feel the need to become more citizen oriented. "The more they are trying to get the community involved, the more citizen input is becoming more crucial as they reach the point where funding is decreasing," said Yetty Alley. Mary Ann Core said "regular people" were needed more at meetings, referring to general citizens with an interest in the watershed. Speaking about how often citizens come to Darby Partnership meetings, Teri Devlin said, "It depends upon the issue. For instance at the last meeting we had about one hundred citizen show up because of the touchy issue of a proposed Fish and Wildlife Service refuge near the Darby."

Along with the funding changes occurring with the Darby Partnership, the partnership is also trying to become more focused on urban development and sprawl within the watershed coming from Columbus expanding westward. Dennis Hall explained: "As we move on, land use policy is increasingly important and therefore local public officials are becoming increasingly important. Increasingly, developers and realtors are important and I do not think we have done the job there in terms of bringing that perspective in. Yet, it has been recognized as a need. We have made different attempts to reach out that have been somewhat successful."

Teri Devlin mentioned both citizen groups and developers are interests the partnership needs to actively recruit more of: "I think there are two areas where we have not had good representation. The one group is developers. I do not think we are well represented by the people we are pointing our fingers at. Nor has any developer asked to be there and I have on a regular basis invited several to come. Frankly though, the partnership has not worked as hard at it should to get those people there. The other is that we meet during the day and I think that limits some citizen groups who are volunteers from being in attendance. I have not had a lot of complaints about that, but I think if we were to have the meetings in the evening it would be a different participation." Devlin continued when asked what the greatest challenge faced by the partnership today she responded, "To become more citizen-based. We have two citizen groups (OFA and Darby Creek Association) that have been formed that have the ear of the agriculture and suburban communities. I think we need to expand that." Devlin also said, "I think the Darby can act as a model of what not to do on a watershed. That is, we were so lucky to have such great agency and organization buy-in and real good funding that what got lost was the community of people. The landowners kind of got put over on the side because we were just steam rolling our way to getting things done. Now as soon as you have funding or resources removed from those agencies, what have you got. What I think the benefit of the Darby can provide is to show that if you don't start with citizen-based and real citizen involvement...down the road you may end up with nothing."

Staff Turnover

Another challenge that Kathy Smith brought up was the fact that many of the agency staff move on after time. Smith explained that, "Over the years we have added a lot of new people. As things come up people come and go from meetings." Smith also mentioned that for most agency personnel, "The Darby is just one of the watersheds we have to deal with."

Strategies

The Darby Partnership uses several strategies to ensure stakeholder representation. Most members feel the openness of their process is the most important factor in attracting a diverse membership. Other strategies include Teri Devlin, and other members active recruitment of stakeholders they feel should be at the table and making meetings more accessible.

Yetty Alley described the way the Darby Partnership selected its membership as "pretty much it was an open invitation for anyone." Marc Smith felt the agencies have played an important role in getting participants: "Agencies were contacted and those most active in the watershed were sought out."

Darby Partnership is open to anyone wanting to attend meetings. TNC's Teri Devlin pulls in members that she feels need to be at the table as topics emerge that are related to their interests. "I think it is generally open to anyone that wants to come," said Dennis Hall. Hall continued that the selection of members "was related to what were the issues and what were the perspectives that were needed to be given consideration." Devlin similarly said, "The partnership invitations have always gone out to all organizations and agencies who had expressed, or shown, or demonstrated interest in the Darby. It has always gone to the head of the organization or agency and they choose who would represent them. The partnership has

always been open to anyone who wishes to come to the table and has something to offer. In other words, citizens are always invited, but they must be willing to bring something to the partnership. That does not mean money necessarily. It could be expertise, it could be ideas, it could mean they sit there representing a number of landowners." Each member interviewed spoke highly of TNC's role in the partnership and Devlin's ability to get various stakeholders to the table to discuss issues in a non-confrontational manner.

Darby Partnership members suggested evening meeting times to get more citizens involved. Yetty Alley remembers, "There was talk of moving one meeting a year to the evening to get more citizen input." Alley continued, "They recognize meetings during the day can be difficult for some." Although Mary Ann Core said, "Meetings at night and direct mailings to citizens wasn't that fruitful."

Advice

Darby Partnership members felt communication, a neutral facilitator whose job it was to get all stakeholders to the table as well as the need for perseverance, were all important in ensuring stakeholder representation.

- Yetty Alley felt communication among members is key: "It takes a lot of communication. The partnership eventually broke into teams..so that people attending these would be more interested in the topic. Try to figure out how to keep everyone informed and up to speed and not to have the meetings just be a reporting period. Very few agency people are solely devoted to the Darby. They have other duties as well. Having one person or a few who coordinate seems like a good way to go."
- Kathy Smith stressed getting everyone to the table: "Try to bring everyone to the table. Don't be afraid to have what you perceive to be an enemy at the table because if you don't invite them to the table to discuss the issues it makes it harder in the long run to accomplish what you want and there is an educational component."
- Teri Devlin felt a facilitator is helpful: "I think you need a very neutral facilitator. [TNC] sometimes are not seen as neutral, but early on I think we were because we were private and not under grant money. That neutrality allows you to not have one or two strong issues that bring the group in one direction."
- Marc Smith felt not giving up was important: "Keep hammering at it. Try to approach it through many different route. One mode of communication is not going to reach everyone so you have to keep trying, local newspaper, direct mailings."
- Mary Ann Core said: "It depends upon the size of the watershed. If you have a small watershed you really can do a good job of getting citizens there."
- Dennis Hall expressed the need for a staff person: "It needs to be someone's job to be thinking about that. Everybody's commitment to be open to the process. Even today I run into people who want to categorize people as friends and enemies. I am not willing to

accept the creek has any enemies. We need to continue to reach out to people even as we question the judgement of some of the landowners."

Accommodating Diverse Interests

Various federal, state and local agencies and other governmental entities such as NRCS, USGS, US EPA, USFWS, ODNR, OEPA, Franklin County Zoning Commission, City of Columbus, Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, provide the basis for the diversity within Darby Partnership. Other members such as Darby Association, a local grassroots preservation group began over twenty-five years ago, TNC and OFA make up the majority of the non-governmental diversity. At various other times depending upon the issue being discussed citizens, developers, other environmental organizations and citizen groups have made up diverse interests around the table.

Challenges

The challenges the diversity of interests' poses for Darby Partnership is limited due to the informal, information sharing structure where each member maintains autonomous decision-making authority. Several members did mention a few challenges that diverse interests brought to the process. Several felt trusting government motives, the fact that there may be too many interest within the watershed, and different agency objectives, are some issues raised by members.

When asked about the challenge of compromise from diverse perspectives, Teri Devlin explained: "It is more information sharing so that issue has not really come up. People give back advice from their expertise, sometimes it stops at that. Sometimes it is taken up by a smaller group of partners that have specific interests in that and then we continue to work at it until we come up with a solution." Devlin continued, "The term win-win is what we would always aim for. TNC's position is to always find a solution that meets everyone's needs...we look for the highest value for everyone."

Yetty Alley described a personal challenge she had coming from an agency that took a different approach than other agencies. Alley stated: "Agencies had different standards and goals in mind. I was with the Scenic Rivers section of the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves and we took a more of a preservationist type of approach. Our agency was more for non-structural [stream] stabilization methods. Some of the other agencies were more for putting in hard structures. Through the partnership we had a method to deal with that. It was not very constructive to have conflicting measures running around out there." Kathy Smith had similar interaction and states: "Some issues will not come to an understanding. Farmers see trees as a hindrance to drainage although without the trees the creek would not be what it is. There are some farmers out there that will never plant trees and they would say it to my face that they would rip them out at first chance."

Several members mentioned that having six counties and numerous townships and municipalities within the watershed each having different zoning ordinances and regulation is posing an increasing challenge as they move to address urban land use issues. "I would guess

zoning and consistency of regulations is the biggest challenge with regards to diverse interests," said Marc Smith, "There are so many different governmental entities that have responsibility over the watershed. We have six counties, god knows how many townships. They each have different ideas on how things should be done."

Dennis Hall saw two challenges faced by Darby Partnership due to the diversity of interests within the watershed. Similar to what Marc Smith saw as a challenge, Dennis Hall said, "One of the challenges may be unique to here, is that the Darby watershed is in six counties, I don't remember how many townships and other political jurisdictions. Yet it is home to nobody. I think the largest county has maybe thirty to forty percent of its land in the watershed. It is difficult to manage or lead these multi-jurisdictional efforts. Somehow the Darby has to find its way to find its own voice. The citizenry has to be leading this at some point. Otherwise it will be a neat phenomenon that occurred in the 90's and kind of went away." The second challenge posed by the diverse interests as stated by Hall: "There is a facilitation challenge keeping all the interests at the table and making sure they feel comfortable there. We have from my perspective one of the real great facilitators in Teri Devlin. Someone who just knows how to make people feel welcome and comfortable and honored in their perspective. I think if someone has a strong self interest to be gained by the partnership they run the risk of really threatening its integrity. I think Teri has been the right degree of friendship and has been a great facilitator in honoring all points of view."

Wildlife Refuge

One specific challenge came to the mind of both Teri Devlin and Dennis Hall. A recently proposed USFWS refuge within the watershed along Darby Creek has stirred mixed emotions within the community and is creating some problems for members of the partnership. To Devlin the USFWS proposed refuge has caused her to question her relationship with several members and to re-evaluate certain communities within the watershed. For Hall, the proposed refuge has led him to question the commitment the USFWS has to the collaborative process and has reminded him politics can even play out within the partnership.

When Teri Devlin was asked about her role as a neutral leader of the partnership is when the refuge challenge was brought up. Speaking about her neutrality she said, "I think it is still alright. Although [TNC] has taken a strong position on this refuge and I think it has polarized our position with some agencies." Devlin continued on by stating, "Until recently I never had an issue with trust. With this refuge I think I may have been a little ignorant and our organization may have been a little ignorant of the level of distrust in the community for the federal government." Devlin mentioned that she may have "destroyed some trust I had with individuals and I am also questioning trust I had built [with certain individuals]." Devlin felt, "by listening" she could rebuild that trust.

Dennis Hall mentioned the proposed refuge when asked about controversy surrounding Darby Partnership. Hall stated: "It is not like we agree on everything. Right now we have a Fish and Wildlife Service proposed wildlife refuge and the local farm community has perceived that as a major threat to the agricultural integrity of their community." Hall continued to talk about the politics surrounding the USFWS decision: "I am really frustrated

with the Fish and Wildlife Service in that they claim to be collaborative, but not feeling anything like that. They maintain all the information...they think up what they need to and then present that to the public and you have a chance to like it or not...Their process is not open and collaborative. In the end that has resulted in a lot of mistrust from the local people and now they have taken up a competing perspective and have worked diligently to oppose the refuge."

Opportunities

The main opportunities presented to the members of Darby Partnership from the diversity at the table was the diversity allowed for different perspectives to be heard that normally would not have been heard. Melissa Horton explained: "[Diversity] lets us look at thing from a different angle.". Marc Smith stated, "I think the main positive benefit is that it makes people from the opposite side of the fence look at the problem from the view of the person on the other side." Smith continued, "It allows you to see different perspectives and realize what we are talking about is a resource used by many different people for many different uses."

Similar to Horton and Marc Smith, the positive aspect for Kathy Smith was: "Working with people I probably would not have ever had the chance to work with before." Smith continued that, "In my normal scheme of things I would not have had any contact with some people such as USGS, TNC or some people at EPA."

"This is going to seem a bit esoteric," said Teri Devlin, "but I think having not only agriculture agencies and conservation agencies sitting at the table has been valuable, but to have actual farmers sitting at the table. We can sit and talk about agricultural incentive programs, agricultural stresses to the creek. It is different when you sit with farmers and talk about these issues and they talk about what the incentive program has meant to his land. All of a sudden it is very local, fully fleshed out issue." Devlin continued, "There are issues that create polarity, but more often than not they have been issues that have brought people together to enlarge thinking and get rid of stereotypes."

Strategies

There are several ways that the Darby Partnership deals with the diverse interests in order to promote the opportunities and to limit any challenges the diversity may bring. Participants mentioned having Teri Devlin as a facilitator, not going beyond an information sharing structure, and promoting a non-confrontational atmosphere as strategies used in the partnership.

Several members also mentioned a unique way the Darby Partnership has brought together members to help develop the relationship side among diverse interests. Early on in the partnership, OFA decided canoe trips where agency officials would share a canoe with a farmer would be a good way to place their relationships on a personal level. "[OFA] did a canoe trip," said Dennis Hall, "and farmers hosted the canoe trip and invited some of the stream advocates to go along with them so they could learn about the stream from their point of view. They also wanted to share their perspective and it was at that point that [OFA] really

began to take off." Hall continued, "People could see it was not a matter of competing interests, but it was a matter of shared interests. There was a lot more we had in common than in disagreement and it was realized that it was much better we work together than separately to accomplish our goals."

Kathy Smith also spoke about the canoe trips, "Canoe trips are an awesome thing to try. If you can pull something like that off. All of my watersheds now use something like that. You are either going to drown or have a wonderful time." Teri Devlin said, "At a very personal level to get a farmer in the canoe with a regional planner, normal relationships that would not normally occur happen on the canoe trip and it is happening in the habitat. You not only forage personal relationships, but you can get out of the canoe and see the fish and begin to understand how beautiful. It is very powerful." Devlin continued, "It is much different from sitting in a conference room around a table with blank walls. I recommend some kind of hiking or getting out into the habitat on a one on one basis."

Advice

When members of the Darby Partnership were asked to give advice to other collaborative partnership regarding the issue of accommodating various interests at the table they came up with a variety of ideas:

- Dennis Hall had several pieces of advice: "People need to recognize that collaboration does take more time, but does yield higher quality results and I think a greater quantity of results. I talk about marketing your weakness that when you look at the partnership look for your weaknesses or other holes and use that to go out and recruit new members. Furthermore, acknowledge that you can not do everything. If the partnership is humble and does only what they can do well it has a better chance at surviving."
- Melissa Horton explained: "Don't bite off too much. It can take a lot of time and there may be topics that are not necessarily of interest to you. It is nice to have someone at the top of the partnership who has the patience to keep it all going."
- Marc Smith felt it was important to, "Try to get all concerned parties to the table at one time. Promote a non-confrontational environment. Permit everyone an equal say. Try to promote respect for the over viewpoints. A lot of time you come to the table quite suspicious of other peoples motives. You have to figure out how to get around that. There are reasons why people have their ideas, try to understand the other person's point of view. Also education explaining to other people why you have a certain viewpoint."
- Yetty Alley mentioned peoples needs for credit: "Try to get over turf battles and give credit where credit is due. There were several instances where one group got the credit where several groups worked on it. Give other people credit."
- Teri Devlin said, "In general I don't think you get much done unless you are diverse. I think when you form a group one piece of advice is not to get caught up in the issues that are hot that have brought you together. Slow down so you keep trying to see who is there,

who is missing, who should be there, how we are forming our relationships with each other. The groups that I have seen fail are the groups that get on an issue that everyone is energized around changing. They go directly at that issue and solving that rather than looking long term and if we get all these people together we can do more than this. I don't think many groups spend the time on relationship and enlarging the table which has to be done right up front."

Dealing with Scientific Issues

When Dennis Hall was asked to describe the scientific issues Darby Partnership has dealt with, he replied, "There were so many different types it is hard to characterize because it is such a holistic perspective." Hall continued to say, "We have been very involved in an ecological risk assessment in order to look at the major stresses to the stream and to prioritize those. Sediment reduction and agricultural non-point sources and changes in hydrology has been clearly something we have focused upon."

Darby Partnership has dealt with numerous scientific issues during its first nine years. Many of the scientific aspects revolved around issues such as putting together a manual regarding techniques to mitigate stream bank erosion, implementing forested filter strips along streams, putting forth nutrient management plans for area farmers. The bulk of the science was provided in a forum of information sharing by the numerous agencies as an educational component in order for all stakeholders to make more sound decisions.

Challenges

Most Darby Partnership members thought the group handled scientific issues well. A few members mentioned challenges such as missing baseline data and making the science accessible to citizens who attend meetings. Generally, with so many agency representatives, Darby Partnership handles scientific discussions well and appears to base many issues on science.

Teri Devlin explained: "There are so many of our representatives that are based upon science that we can have a pretty good conversation." Devlin also expressed a challenge that several other members mentioned: "If we have more citizen groups sitting at the table there might be a need to change our orientation of our discussions so that everyone knows what we are talking about." At the last meeting Devlin noted, "We had a large number of citizens and we were using some buzzwords, some acronyms, so they were not fully understood." Continuing Devlin said, "I think as the partnership grows and changes, I think the science is integral to everything we are doing. First of all to prove what we are doing is right and to justify it, but I think it is also intimidating to many, including myself. I had to gear up."

Yetty Alley and Kathy Smith had similar sentiments regarding technical discussions in a citizen-based group. Alley stated: "Most of the folks at least from the government side had more of a scientific or technical background so it was not very difficult for most people to pick up. But when you start to include members of the general public it becomes more of an

issue that would need more attention." Smith noted that, "All of us tend to talk in our own jargon and use terms familiar with us and that can be a challenge."

A particular challenge Mary Ann Core faced during several meetings was not understanding the scientific analysis being presented. Core stated, "I sat through numerous meetings where I did not understand one half of what the researchers were saying." Core continued, "But they try to bring science to whoever is there." Noting that she did not see any significant problem with not understanding she stated, "You get what you get out of it. It is not my job to understand about the re-colonization of algae. My job is understanding the rapid runoff into the stream."

Melissa Horton also had a particular challenge not mentioned by any other member. Horton stated, "We always wished we had more baseline data to begin with. We did lack an engineer on the stream team. We did get one from time to time, but we never consistently had one that was committed to attending all the meetings."

Strategies

Darby Partnership members all felt that either the necessary scientific background was at the table or they went outside the group and got whatever expertise they needed. "I'd say if it wasn't at the table, it was just a short time lag before it came," stated Dennis Hall when asked if the needed expertise was at the table. Asked if the partnership brought in experts if needed, Kathy Smith replied, "Yup, bring them to the table and make them a partner."

Marc Smith said, "I think we have dealt with the science very well." He continued: "I am sure people are drawing upon research done elsewhere. An example is TNC had a hydrologist from their national headquarters come in and do some work. There have been things like that, but it isn't like we are hiring a consultant to come in." Smith also noted that there has, "been a lot of interest in the Darby because of the amount of data and the high profile. So, we have had people coming to us to do research and consequently they are invited to the partnership."

Advice

Darby Partnership members had a variety of advice to give to other collaborative groups regarding dealing with the scientific dimensions of issues:

- Mary Ann Core stressed going out and getting the information: "You go out and get as many sources of information as you can. Figure it out. Science is there, it just takes a lot of time and people to sit around and discuss it. It also depends upon the complexity of the issue."
- Marc Smith explained the need to be accessible: "Be accessible. A lot of scientists come off as unapproachable or seem esoteric to the lay person. Figure out ways of presenting material that is understandable to the average person. Be willing to go out and present your findings to various groups."

- Kathy Smith said, "That is tough because everyone comes at the issue with a different twist. Be willing to present all sides of whatever science you are trying to present. I would hope that if you are dealing with an agency on an issue that the agency is given some sort of credibility with the group. Trust has to be there or it does not work. For the most part our agency folks have been looked upon with some authority. They are willing to trust what we are saying."
- Teri Devlin felt there are numerous places a group can get its scientific information: "They need to understand that here are agencies available to them to get that science done. Do not ignore colleges and universities. Welcome in those experts and be clear in what your needs are. Don't just say can you become a partner. Say we need GIS mapping, we need to know about X."

Accommodating Diverse Capabilities

Challenges

Due to the informal structure of the Darby Partnership most participants did not view accommodating the various levels of knowledge, power and even skills as a problem. Members also felt the original meeting structure, having teams with specialized interests, and a concerted effort to make everyone feel equal allowed the partnership to take advantage of diverse capabilities.

Asked how the Darby Partnership encountered the various levels of knowledge, power and skills members inevitably came to the table with, Kathy Smith said, "That is probably why initially they had the [heads of the individual agencies] at one meeting and the worker bees (field staff) at another meeting. That kept us on one level of power, skills and knowledge and us on one level. We just kept integrating with the head chiefs and as they merged you leveled out some of the playing field." Smith continued to say, "You had landowners sitting at the table that just had an interest in the watershed and maybe did not have a lot of knowledge, but they were willing to sit there at the table and learn with us. If you come to the table thinking you know it all, I don't think it will fly." Marc Smith noted that accommodating diverse capabilities was a challenge, but felt the group handled it well. "I think that has definitely been recognized and we handle it well."

Melissa Horton acknowledged that in order to work with people having diverse capabilities one needs to be able to trust other members. Furthermore, ones ability to work productively with these individuals also depends upon an individual's personality. Horton stated, "Depends upon your personality. If you trusted the person you take it for what they say. I don't think it takes long to build trust." Horton continued, "I think if you work with them you build trust with them."

Teri Devlin also felt accommodating diverse capabilities is a matter of trusting other members and what they are telling you. Devlin speaking about the various capabilities stated: "It was not a problem, but it is trust." Devlin continued with an example, "A regulatory

agency sits there with a hole different personal possibilities than a farmer group does. So, how do they deal with each other when their normal relationship has always been to regulate? One regulates and the other tries to get the approval of the other to get their work done." Devlin then proceeded to state, "I have not seen in the Darby Partnership any power struggle or any tipping of the scales on one another. The power in the partnership was when you brought the agencies together and they began to understand what the other could do instead of dealing in myth."

Dennis Hall felt a challenge diverse capabilities posed was who gets credit for successes. Hall stated, "One of the areas that threatens the integrity of the partnership are notions of inequitable recognition of different players. I think a piece of advice is that people getting started need to think about what their recognition needs are. My notion of what is important in terms of recognition may not be the same for others." Hall mentioned he has felt from his director a need for OSU Extension to be more recognized in certain instances. "Those issues can nip at and threaten the integrity of the partnership," said Hall.

Strategies

The original structure with two meetings; one with the agency heads, the other with the field staff, may have helped to alleviate early tensions among members. More importantly the informal information-sharing atmosphere in which each individual retains his/her own independent decision-making authority allowed the variety of agency personnel to collaborate with diverse organizations and citizens without significant challenges. Lastly, the various teams formed in 1995 helped to focus participants into groups where individual's knowledge and skills could be most useful and they could feel most comfortable with discussions.

Marc Smith spoke about the effort to make all members feel welcome: "I think there has been a definite attempt to make everyone feel comfortable in the group and to value their contribution independent their level of expertise or ability to provide input. Everyone has an equal opportunity to present their view." Smith also noted the contributions of Teri Devlin: "Teri has definitely contributed toward that to make everyone feel comfortable and to minimize any confrontations."

Advice

Darby Partnership members did not have much specific advice to other collaborative groups regarding the challenge of accommodating diverse capabilities. One insight several members provided that appears to have helped Darby Partnership members integrate more successfully, were the canoe trips highlighted above. Most members' felt trusting partners was key, as well as listening and respecting everyone's opinion no matter their level of knowledge power and skills.

Specifically, Kathy Smith's advice was, "It comes down to sitting at the table and listening to other peoples opinions. Being willing to listen no matter what kind of power you have. Listen and learn where other interests are coming from is an invaluable resource because you may

have the power to change something, but maybe by listening to others you can realize new issues and problems you had never thought about."

Insights Particular to this Case

Army Corps Ruling

Several members mentioned a recent U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ruling that may result in more dredging within the stream that could prove harmful to water quality and has posed a challenge to the group. "We are not sure if it will result in more dredging in the stream which could be deviating. It could have as much impact as the Clean Water Act in my mind," said Marc Smith. Although Teri Devlin mentioned, "As negative for the creek as it may be, it may have been positive for the partnership in that it has re-energized some of the participation from some of the partners." Devlin continued, "We had a very good meeting about it and realized there were some things we could do, some good expertise and some good protective levels that are still available." This example illustrates how high profile challenges can act to rejuvenate a partnership as they search for common relief from a perceived threat.

Citations

Edwards, Randall. "Studies Point to Ecological Threats to Darby Creek," *The Columbus Dispatch*, November 25, 1996.

United States Department of Agriculture. "A Great Place...The Darby Creek, Hydrologic Unit Area, Ohio."