

Kawkawlin River Organization Leadership Development

A. Narrative

Organization Information

The Kawkawlin River Watershed Property Owners Association (KRWPOA) was established in 1993 with the objectives of promoting and advocating for watershed issues in the Kawkawlin River basin. Primary among these issues include recreation, safety, education about watershed issues, and the conservation and protection of water quality. To that end, the KRWPOA sponsors several events and projects that increase appreciation of the Kawkawlin River and watershed. These projects include a long-term water monitoring effort, the placement of channel marker buoys for recreational boaters, an annual river cleanup event, a website, and the publication of a quarterly newsletter.

The KRWPOA focuses its advocacy efforts towards improvement of water quality in the Kawkawlin River watershed and works in support of the interests of watershed residents and property owners. The KRWPOA actively participated in the creation of the Kawkawlin River Watershed Management Plan approved by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality in 2011 and is identified in the plan as a key stakeholder in the education and outreach efforts outlined within. Furthermore, the KRWPOA has served as the resident voice related to issues such as dredging, and marine and winter safety patrolling of the navigable area of the river.

The KRWPOA currently has approximately 150 members who subscribe at a minimum of \$25.00 per member per year. The KRWPOA operates as an all volunteer organization and has been highly successful in coordination of events such as the Annual Kawkawlin River Cleanup. The Kawkawlin River Cleanup, now in its 18th year, drew over 80 volunteers on June 2, 2012 to remove an estimated 10 tons of trash from the Kawkawlin River, coordinated in partnership with the Bay Area Road Commission which disposed of the debris collected. In years past, the cleanup has resulted in the removal of up to 40 tons of trash and debris from the river.

The KRWPOA has experienced many successes since its inception, but is ready to move into the next phase in its organizational development. Efforts that support long-term organizational sustainability, increased member recruitment, leadership development, and expansion of outreach and engagement activities have been identified as key elements in supporting KRWPOA's mission of improving the Kawkawlin River watershed.

Statement of Need

The Kawkawlin River is a focal point for the Bay Area community and local residents. The lower portion of the river is lined with boat docks and moorings. Recreational boating on the river is a key component of life in this community, and the river features four public access points that encourage resident and visitor use of the resource. The Kawkawlin River is also known for its great warm water fishery, and fishing is a recreational past-time for many community residents.

Unfortunately, the Kawkawlin has also become known as a polluted water body. The Bay County Health Department has been monitoring the Kawkawlin River for E. coli over the last several years, and has had to issue public health advisories for the water body. Since 2005, the Kawkawlin River has been under a public health advisory 209 times for excessive levels of E. coli. This has drawn a lot of attention locally, and people in the area are demanding answers. Additionally, phosphorus impacts resulting in nuisance algae and duckweed blooms occur in various places on the river. This has also created concern about polluted runoff contaminating the community's recreation area.

To begin to address these issues local leaders stepped up and implemented a watershed planning grant to identify and address on going sources of pollution in the watershed. The watershed group, KRWPOA, has been working closely with Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) and Delta College to monitor the river and look for possible solutions to pollution. SVSU and Delta have developed a good working partnership over the last few years to begin a monitoring program and utilize the Kawkawlin River as an outdoor laboratory engaging students in having a positive impact on the local environment. (see http://www.ourmidland.com/news/article_0d3d6662-7f17-11e1-9fd5-0019bb2963f4.html).

Collaboration in the Kawkawlin River involves harnessing the energies of numerous groups already active in the restoration of this watershed. There are a number of groups each spearheading their own efforts. Several past and ongoing watershed efforts demonstrate a local commitment to improving the Kawkawlin River and include:

Bay County Health Department and Bay County Environmental Affairs Department have developed a Countywide Revolving Loan Fund to provide low interest loans to homeowners to address failing septic systems that are contributing to contamination of surface waters.

Bay County Health Department continues to develop their septic system tracking and outreach program.

Bay County Health Department is working with Tuscola, Huron, and Central Michigan Health Departments to develop a regional sanitary code that includes

regular maintenance inspections and an operator's permit in addition to the current construction permit.

The Kawkawlin River watershed has been adopted as an outdoor classroom for study by Saginaw Valley State University and Delta College to provide students interested in water chemistry, water quality, watershed biology and benthic monitoring an opportunity to experience infield environmental monitoring. A study of E.coli in the sediment in the lower reach is being completed by Saginaw Valley State University, also the University is developing a "fingerprint" technique to determine source of the E.coli, whether the source is human, domestic animals or wild animals.

The Bay County Drain Commissioner has recently completed a Vegetated Buffer Strip Study and modeling to determine minimum width of vegetated filter strip with maximum sediment removal rates.

The Bay County Drain Commissioner has implemented a local grant to promote ongoing public education on Phosphorus in the Saginaw Bay Watershed.

The Bay Area Stormwater Authority (BASWA) developed the Kawkawlin River Stormwater Management Plan and has ongoing permit requirements to address stormwater pollution in this watershed.

The Kawkawlin River Watershed Property Owners Association (KRWPOA) has been and continues to be an active voice for the River. Their website (<http://kawkawlinriver.net/>) outlines many of the activities and projects that they are currently involved in. One of these activities is an annual river cleanup sponsored and coordinated by KRWPOA.

Unfortunately, there is currently not a single entity with the mission and capacity to pull all of these diverse efforts together into a coordinated watershed action plan. The KRWPOA has the mission to protect and restore the Kawkawlin River, but it does not have sufficient capacity or outreach to fully carry out their mission. This project will provide funding to assess the current capacity of the KRWPOA, identify challenges, and recommend opportunities to advance their role as the primary watershed advocacy organization for the Kawkawlin River watershed. Furthermore, the project will allow the organization to assess their readiness and ability to take on a more active role in supporting collaborative efforts at this critical time in the watershed.

Project Details

The Kawkawlin River Organization Leadership Development project will take a phased approach to development of the organization in order to provide the KRWPOA with two products that will benefit their capacity building efforts: an Evaluation of Organizational Capacity and an Evaluation of their Communication Strategy. These products will outline the challenges to and opportunities for growth of their organization, and will provide the organization with an action plan and

framework for moving forward. The project will be completed over the next year and will prepare the KRWPOA for development of future outreach efforts.

Performing an organizational capacity assessment provides a unique opportunity for KRWPOA to develop organizational benchmarks, examine best practices and create an action plan for achieving excellence. Engaging KRWPOA members in the assessment process will assist the organization in building ownership and developing new leaders who will organize and implement activities that support organizational sustainability. The assessment will provide KRWPOA with pertinent information that can assist the organization in recruiting new members and donors in support of the mission of promoting and advocating for watershed issues in the Kawkawlin River basin.

The KRWPOA organizational capacity evaluation will establish benchmarks, and identify and prioritize areas in which to focus future efforts through a review of the primary activities of the organization, board and leadership structure and evaluation of these elements within the framework of best practices for all volunteer organizations. Organizational composition will be examined including existing board and committee leadership, membership and volunteer distribution. The baseline information will be utilized to examine existing structure and identify opportunities to enable continued operations (succession planning) and possible expansion of role of the KRWPOA in advancing advocacy and collaborative efforts in the Kawkawlin River watershed. Challenges and opportunities related to fundraising, resources and financial management of the organization will be examined as well the scope and effectiveness of current marketing and outreach activities.

KRWPOA leaders and member will complete a guided organizational assessment utilizing the framework developed by the Institute for Conservation Leadership (ICL), a national organization that focuses on empowering leaders and building volunteer institutions that protect and conserve the Earth's environment. A consultant will be engaged to assist in facilitating the assessment process, interpret findings and gather relevant data to guide the KRWPOA in developing an action plan based on the findings of organizational assessment.

In conjunction with the organizational assessment, the consultant will gather data reflective of the current communication strategy of the KRWPOA, highlighting successes and challenges of the current internal and external communications of the organization. The communications assessment will examine internal information sharing between leadership, committee leaders, event organizers and the current membership including individual communication practices and development and dissemination of materials such as the KWPOA quarterly newsletter. Additionally, external communications related to interactions with partner organizations, media agencies and the general public through existing communications mechanisms such

as the KRWPOA website, facebook page, displays and outreach materials will be evaluated.

The combined results of the organizational assessment and communications strategy evaluation will allow the consultant to assist KRWPOA in developing an outreach and communications strategy that successfully brands the organization while laying the groundwork for expansion of efforts that support the mission of the KRWPOA. Key communication objectives, messaging and branding material will reflect the objectives identified in the organizational assessment action plan and will provide a framework for the KRWPOA to advance outreach and engagement activities moving forward. Furthermore, development of a clear messaging strategy will assist the KRWPOA in interactions with partner organizations working in the Kawkawlin River watershed in order to advance collaborative efforts that support enhanced environmental quality in the watershed.

Collaboration

As previously noted, Kawkawlin River Watershed Property Owners Association was formed in 1993 with the objectives of promoting and advocating for watershed issues in the Kawkawlin River basin. Toward this end, the KRWPOA has worked in partnership with a numbers of organizations to advance its mission including the Bay County Drain Commissioners office, the Bay Area Road Commission, the Bay Area Stormwater Authority, Bay County Farm Bureau, NRCS, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Saginaw Valley State University, Delta College and many others.

Assessing the organizational capacity and communication strategy of the KRWPOA will assist the organization in serving as an effective partner in the collaborative efforts undertaken by the partner organizations identified in order to promote the health of the Kawkawlin River. Where appropriate, partner organizations will be invited to participate in the communications assessment. Additionally, this project will lay the groundwork to identify if the KRWPOA is able to undertake a larger role in community level outreach in support of the collaborative activities of the partners working in the Kawkawlin River watershed.

Evaluation

In order to be effective in advocating for watershed issues in the Kawkawlin River basin, the KRWPOA and partners must foster the development of an informed and engaged public. Residents and community leaders must be inspired to learn more, take actions and build connections with the watershed. Developing advocates and supporters around issues of recreation, safety, watershed education and

conservation in support of improved of water quality requires strategic outreach and communications campaigns, coalition management and organizational capacity.

The Kawkawlin River Organization Leadership Development project will provide a framework from which the KRWPOA can assess organizational capacity and develop an action plan that supports effective and sustainable operations. Additionally, evaluation of the communications strategy will provide a starting point from which the KRWPOA can design and implement communication and education strategies that inspire individuals, civic institutions and elected and appointed leaders to make the connection between their values and the health of the Kawkawlin River watershed. The KRWPOA aims to encourage community residents and leaders to value the role of Kawkawlin River in sustaining quality of life and to take action to protect and restore the watershed and to use their natural resources in a responsible manner.

Success will be measured by the effectiveness of the KRWPOA in advancing its mission. Upon completion of the organization and communication evaluations, the KRWPOA will focus efforts on implementing the action plan and communications strategy developed. It is anticipated that key components of that plan will include mechanisms by which to build membership, promote organizational sustainability, increases effective outreach, and engage residents and leaders in promoting the health and stewardship of the Kawkawlin River watershed while laying the groundwork for improved collaboration aimed at implementing an action plan for the Kawkawlin River watershed.

B. Budget

The cost for the Kawkawlin River Organization Leadership Development project is \$8000.

The Kawkawlin River Watershed Property Owners Association (KRWPOA) has secured the following funds for this project:

Delta College (website update)	\$500 (In-Kind)
KRWPOA (member outreach)	\$500 (In-Kind)

The request from the Bay Area Community Foundation is \$7000.

The project expenses for this project are as follows:

- \$1500 – Data collection and member outreach
- \$2000 – Meeting facilitation, interviews (organizational capacity assessment)
- \$1000 – Materials (Assessing All Volunteer Organizations workbooks, other)
- \$2000 – Development of communication evaluation & graphic design guidelines
- \$500 – KRWPOA website update
- \$250 – Consultant travel to and from Bay City (4 trips)
- \$250 – Hosting and facility rental
- \$500 – Final report production & printing costs

Attachments
