

CHAPTER SEVEN

COMPARING THE CASE STUDIES

7.1 Generalizability of the Case Studies to Environmental Decisionmaking

The Chesapeake Bay Program is a regional attempt by the federal government, three states and the District of Columbia to improve the conditions of a large body of water. Despite regulations, voluntary programs, and other attempts at curtailing ecosystem damage, environmental degradation of the Bay continues. The partners in this effort have recognized the need to have an open process and involve local people in these efforts. The Chesapeake Bay Program has indicated it utilizes a participatory, democratic approach to decisionmaking by creating a dialogue among the affected parties to reach decisions. The Community Watershed Initiative was an attempt by the Chesapeake Bay Program to involve people from affected localities in a collaborative approach to determining a course of action in efforts to enhance the Bay's ecosystem. One of the case studies examined this regional body's interaction with communities in what appeared to be a collaborative process. The Chesapeake Bay's use of collaborative environmental decisionmaking was worth examining because, if the process were successful, it had the potential of being utilized by many governmental agencies as a decisionmaking process.

The Elizabeth River Project is a grassroots program, as opposed to the Chesapeake Bay Program's heavy governmental presence. It is also more localized and more open to ordinary citizens. The Elizabeth River Project Watershed Action Team was comprised of volunteers from many parts of society, all desiring to do something about their local environment. This group of

119 individuals successfully produced an action plan. The Watershed Action Team evolved into an implementation team that put the plan into effect. This example of decisionmaking may be applied to other situations where communities have an environmental issue to resolve and where literally hundreds of local citizens and groups want to be involved in the decisionmaking process.

7.2 The Documents

The documents of the Chesapeake Bay Program ' s Community Watershed Initiative refer to the need to carry out an open, collaborative process with cooperation, public participation, power sharing, and joint decisionmaking among affected parties, partners, and communities -- a reflection of all the elements of collaborative decisionmaking identified in Chapter Three:

- the establishment of a formal organization
- the involvement of all affected parties,
- open discussions,
- the sharing of information, and
- the sharing of power.

The Elizabeth River Project also documented efforts to involve all affected parties through references to community involvement and a commitment to bring all parties to the table -- business interests, residents, civic groups, educational and scientific institutions, recreational organizations, environmental groups, governments and agencies -- all working toward a common goal. References to a partnership of people, community responsibility, and an educated citizenry sharing information in open discussions corroborate the presence of the basic elements of collaborative decisionmaking. Thus, a review of documentation reveals that both of these groups reflect the elements of collaborative environmental decisionmaking identified in both the literature

and the examination of stakeholder decisionmaking processes.

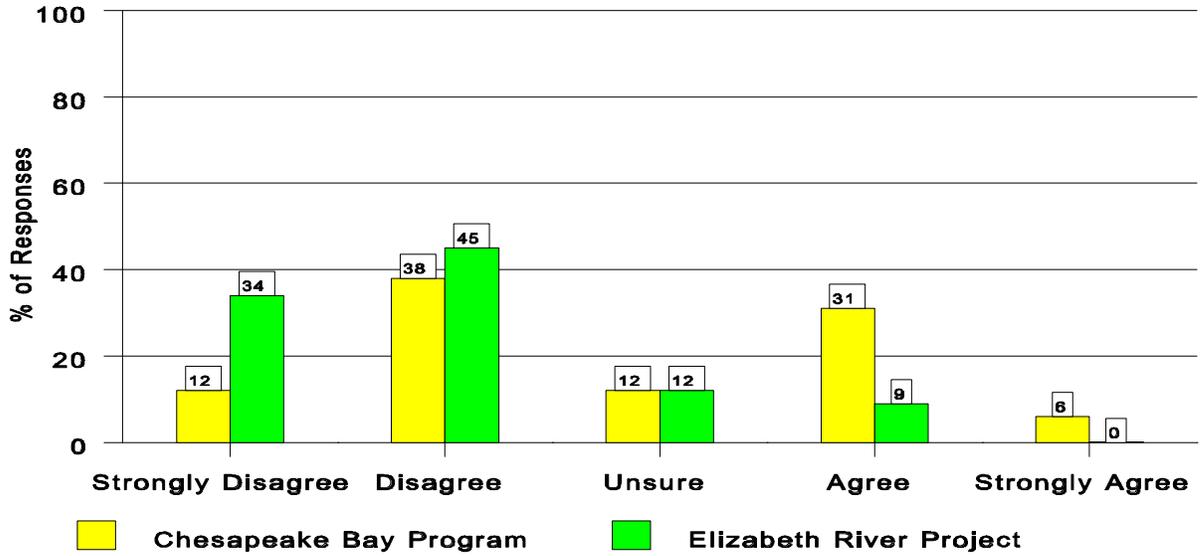
7.3 The Survey Results

When the answers provided by the respondents to the survey who were a part of the Chesapeake Bay Program 's Community Watershed Initiative Workgroup are compared to the answers received from participants in the Elizabeth River Project Watershed Action Team, some differences emerge.

In examining the responses to the three questions that address the nature of the discussions held during meetings, the answers from the Chesapeake Bay Program group are almost the same as those from the Elizabeth River Project group. Ninety-three percent (93%) of both groups agreed that they had the opportunity to express concerns during meetings; 87% of Chesapeake Bay Program respondents and 88% of Elizabeth River Project respondents agreed that their concerns were discussed; and 93% of Chesapeake Bay Program respondents and 83% of Elizabeth River Project respondents agreed that information was shared at the meetings. A chi square test revealed no statistically significant differences in the responses for these three questions between the two groups.

The group of questions addressing the ability of the case studies to resolve issues did reveal some differences between the Chesapeake Bay Program Workgroup and the Elizabeth River Project Watershed Action Team. While 79% of the respondents from the Elizabeth River Project disagreed with the statement that one person was responsible for making decisions, only 50% of the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents disagreed with it (Figure Nine). However, the difference was not statistically significant at the .05 level of probability.

Figure Nine. Comparison of answers to the question concerning whether one person was responsible for making final decisions expressed as a percentage of the total responses (CBP, n=16; ERP, n=60).



Both groups felt that some people had more influence than others (Elizabeth River Project - 82%; Chesapeake Bay Program - 99%). However, only 50% of the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents felt that decisions were made by a majority of the participants, whereas 79% of the Elizabeth River Project respondents believed that decisions were made by a majority of the participants (Figure Ten). The difference between the two groups was not statistically significant.

While only 42% of the respondents from the Elizabeth River Project Team felt that decisions were made by consensus, none of the respondents from the Chesapeake Bay Program Workgroup indicated that consensus played a role in decisionmaking (Figure Eleven). This difference in responses by the two groups was statistically significant.

The collection of questions relating to the ability of the groups to resolve issues revealed some differences between the two processes. While the difference was not statistically significant, it is certainly notable. Seventy-four percent (74%) of the Elizabeth River Project group felt that solutions were developed in the course of the process, but only 47% of the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents felt this way (Figure Twelve).

Figure Ten. Comparison of answers to the question concerning whether decisions were made by a majority of participants expressed as a percentage of the total responses (CBP, n=16; ERP, n=60).

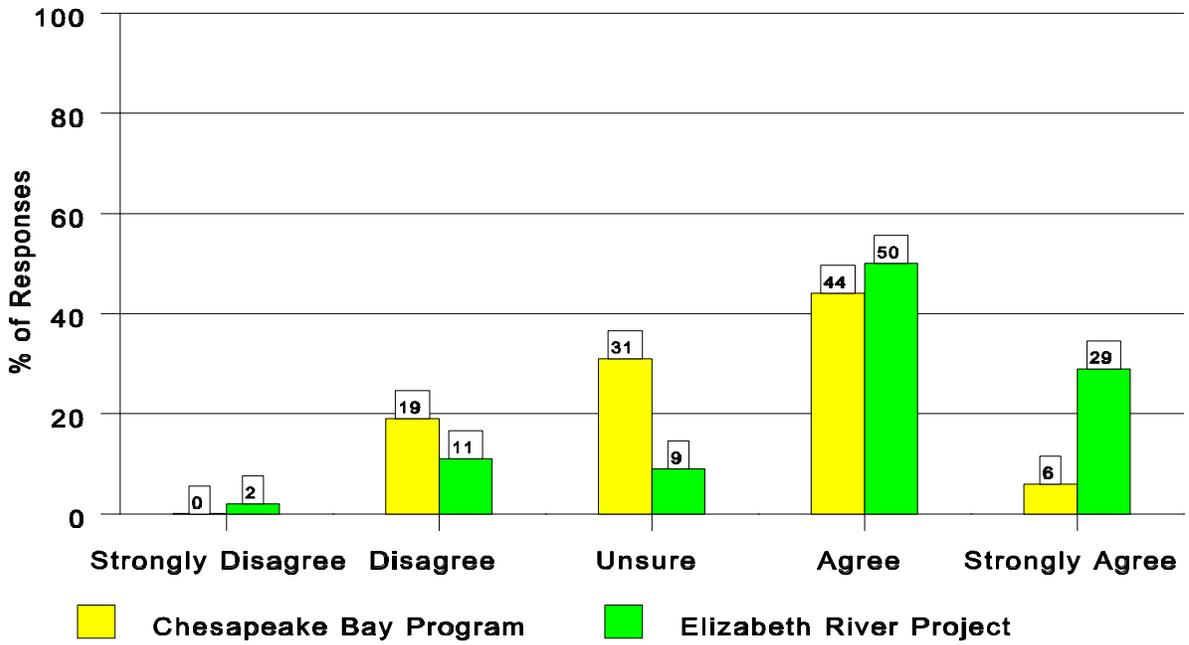


Figure Eleven. Comparison of answers to the question concerning whether decisions were made by consensus expressed as a percentage of the total responses (CBP, n=16; ERP, n=60).

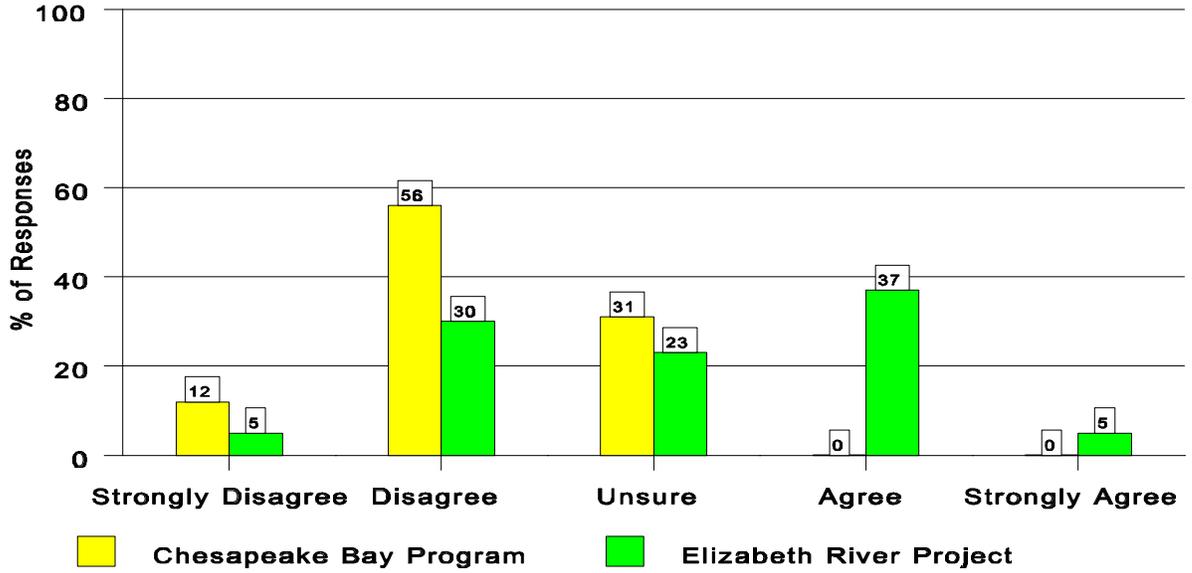
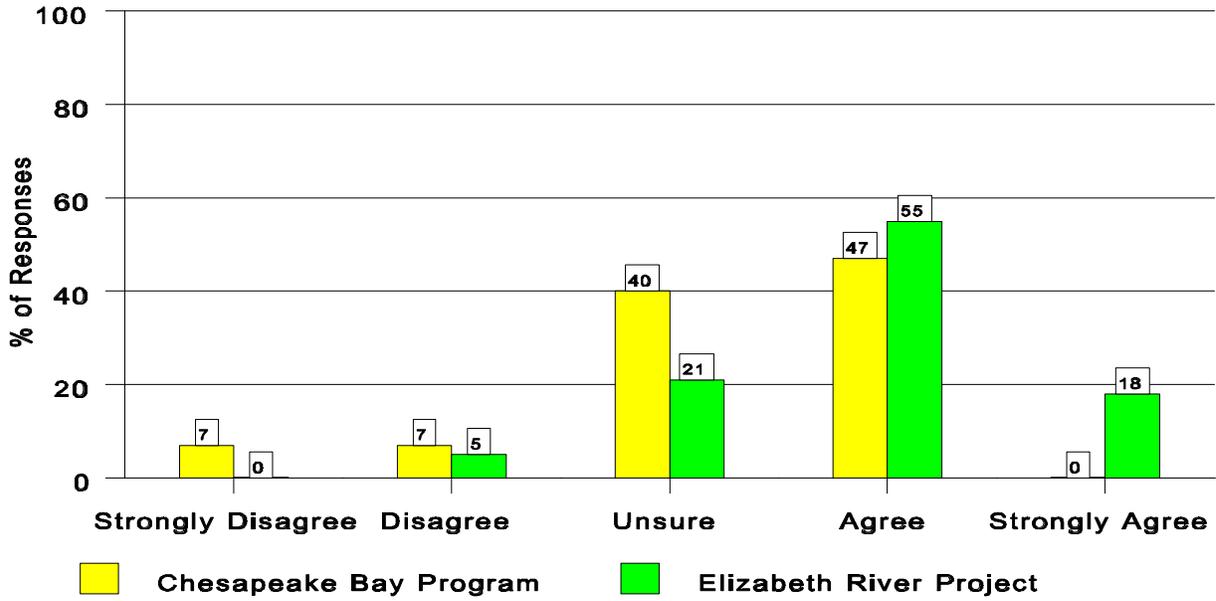
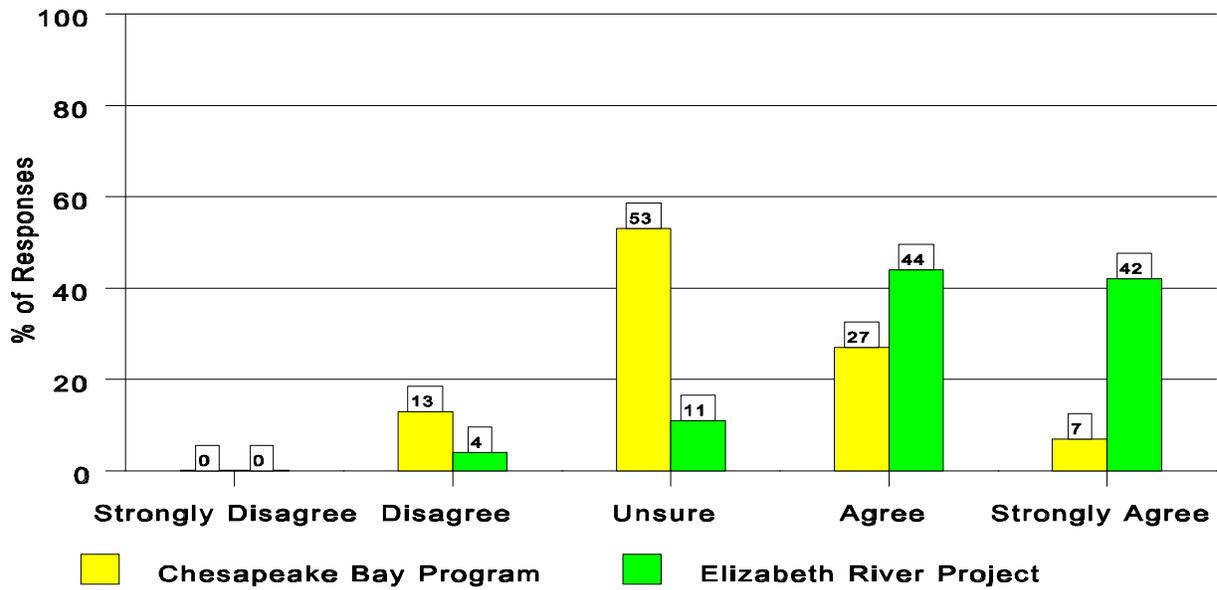


Figure Twelve. Comparison of answers to the question concerning whether solutions were developed by the group expressed as a percentage of the total responses (CBP, n=16; ERP, n=60).



Both groups indicated that perhaps not all participants were committed to reaching solutions, with 20% of the Elizabeth River Project group and 31% of Chesapeake Bay Program respondents answering that way. Both groups felt that several possible solutions were discussed during the course of the process (89% Elizabeth River Project and 88% Chesapeake Bay Program). However, when it came to indicating whether the process was successful, there was a significant difference in the answers from the two groups. While 86% of the respondents from the Elizabeth River Project group indicated that they thought the process was a success, only 33% of the Chesapeake Bay Program people felt this way (Figure Thirteen).

Figure Thirteen. Comparison of answers to the question concerning whether the respondents felt the process was successful expressed as a percentage of the total responses (CBP, n=16; ERP, n=60).



Since the two groups did differ in terms of how they answered some of the questions, the next examination involved a comparison of certain characteristics of the people participating in each group. It turns out that, in several aspects, they were different. Only 10% of the Elizabeth River Project respondents represented federal agencies, while 28% of the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents indicated they attended the meetings on behalf of a federal agency. Sixteen percent (16%) of the Elizabeth River Project respondents were from local government; 5% of the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents indicated a local government affiliation. Ten percent (10%) of the Elizabeth River Project respondents represented industry; none of the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents so indicated. Eleven percent (11%) of Elizabeth River Project respondents came to meetings on behalf of civic groups; none of the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents did. However, the biggest differences were in terms of the representation of private citizens, with 25% of the Elizabeth River Project respondents describing themselves in that manner, as opposed to only 6% of the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents. Also, only 3% of the Elizabeth River Project respondents indicated they represented an environmental group, as opposed to 22% of the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents (Figure Fourteen). When these representations were statistically analyzed, they revealed a significant difference existed between the two groups.

In terms of demographics, there were two statistically significant differences between the two groups -- age and location of residence. Respondents from the Elizabeth River Project were older than those of the Chesapeake Bay Program (Figure Fifteen). They were also more likely to live in less populated areas than the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents (Figure Sixteen).

Figure Fourteen. Comparison of participant affiliations expressed as a percentage of the total responses (CBP, n=16; ERP, n=60).

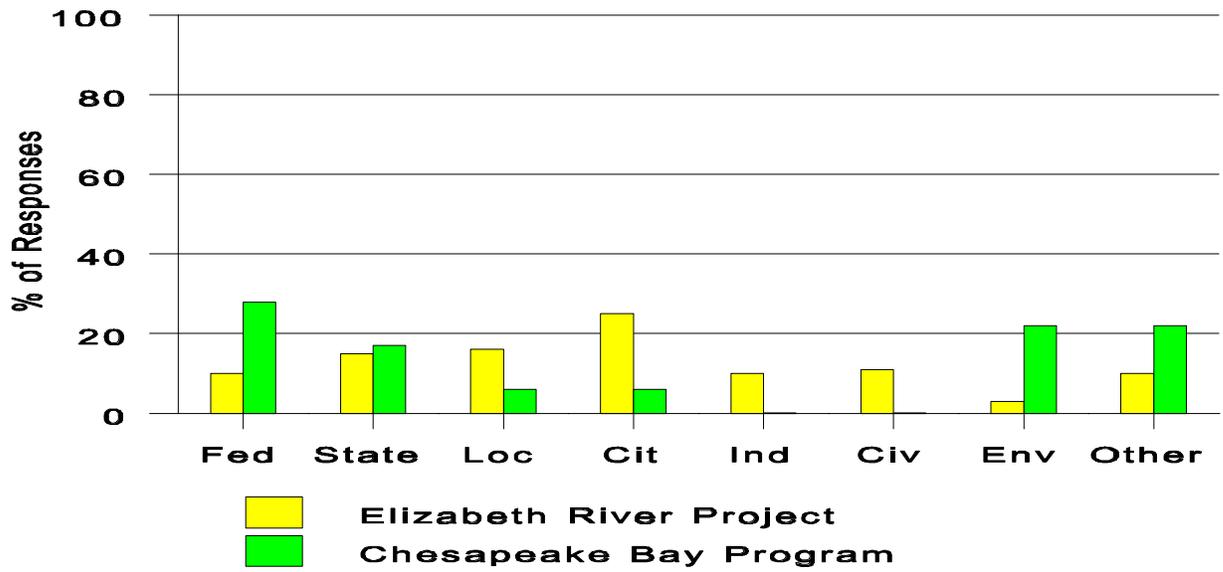


Figure Fifteen. Comparison of the ages of the respondents expressed as a percentage of the total responses (CBP, n=16; ERP, n=60).

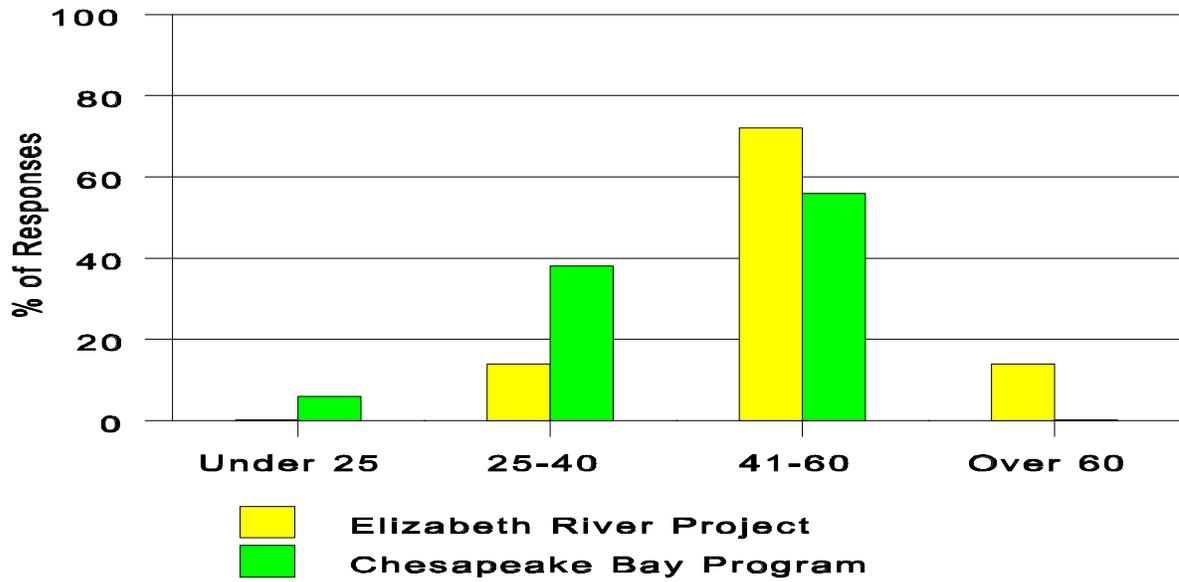
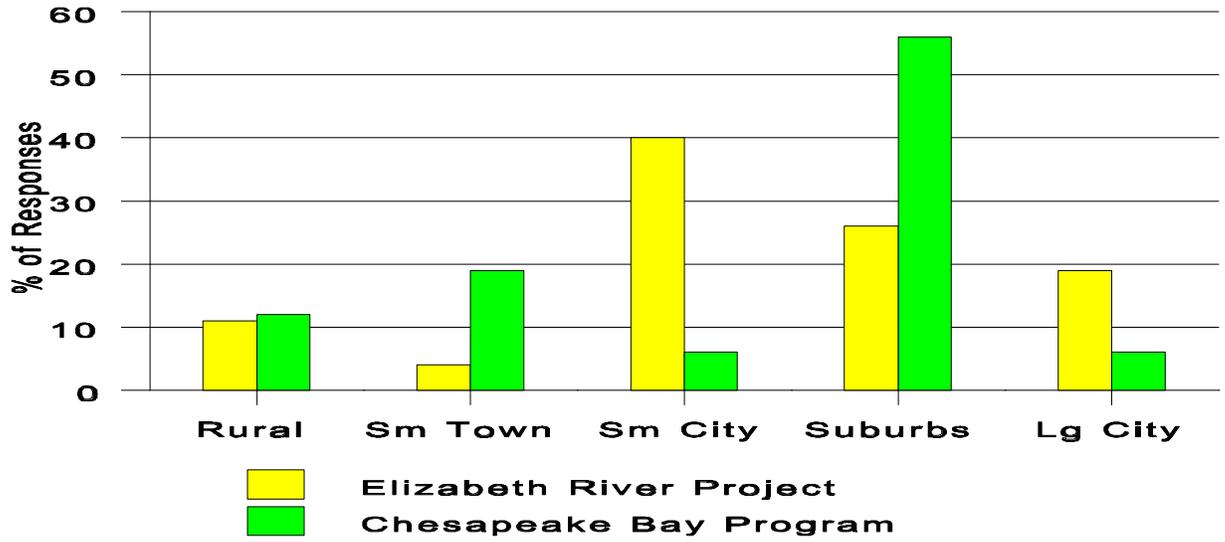


Figure Sixteen. Comparison of residence location for the two groups expressed as a percentage of the total responses (CBP, n=16; ERP, n=60).



One of the most important differences between the two case studies may be the difference involving how the respondents answered the two questions that address position changes over the course of the time the groups were meeting. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the respondents from the Chesapeake Bay Program and 64% of the Elizabeth River Project respondents experienced a change in the positions they held between the beginning and end of their participation. The Elizabeth River Project respondents experienced position changes at twice the percentage of the Chesapeake Bay Program respondents.

7.4 The Interviews

The interviews indicated that the Elizabeth River Project Watershed Action Team exhibited the elements of a collaborative effort, but that the Chesapeake Bay Program Community Watershed Initiative Workgroup did not truly reflect the elements of collaborative decisionmaking.

Involvement of Affected Parties

When interviewed, some of the participants in the Chesapeake Bay Program Workgroup indicated that meetings were not open to the public and that there were no overt acts to get the public involved. One participant went so far as to say that the Bay Program staff determined who to ask to meetings and that many local groups were never contacted. Another comment was that the Program staff assumed the “right” people were there and that no one else needed to be included. Other comments addressed the lack of local government and community involvement.

In contrast, several participants on the Elizabeth River Project Team indicated that meetings were open to the public and that anyone who wanted to be on the Team was welcome.

Information Sharing

Participants in both the Chesapeake Bay Program Workgroup and the Elizabeth River Watershed Team responded that information was shared.

Open Discussions

Chesapeake Bay Program interviewees stated that everyone was given a chance to speak at meetings, but that the discussions were steered by the facilitator. One person stated that, while able to express opinions, the opinions were not discussed. Other comments included statements that federal agency participants had nothing to offer and that local representatives' comments were not taken seriously.

People involved in the Elizabeth River Project stated that communication was open and two-way, that everyone had the opportunity to talk and that, in fact, there was open dialogue to the point of exhaustion -- too much discussion. There were no exclusions to what anyone could say. Participants were able to freely express their positions.

Power Sharing

When it came to making decisions, the people participating in the Chesapeake Bay Program Workgroup indicated that different people were in command. Some said the state was

trying to control the process. Others stated that both the federal agencies and the state people retained control. Several people commented that people affiliated with the Chesapeake Bay Program ran meetings, that they controlled the process, and that they made final decisions. Others indicated that they had no ownership in the document produced by the Workgroup, that it was a bland consensus document, and that did not express what was discussed in the course of meetings.

While some participants on the Elizabeth River Team indicated ultimate power may have been retained by one individual or group, most stated that the participants shared power and had ownership of a collaborative event where a consensus process was used to reach decisions.

7.5 Summarizing the Comparison of the Two Groups

Reviewing the documentation produced by both groups would indicate that the processes were similar and that they both reflected the elements of collaboration. Had the examination halted there, the conclusion would be that these were good examples of collaborative environmental decisionmaking. However, when the people involved were given the chance to respond as individuals, both by survey and by interview, a different picture emerges. The Chesapeake Bay Program Community Watershed Initiative Workgroup emerges as a top-down, controlled process with limited participation and a predetermined conclusion. In contrast, the Elizabeth River Project Watershed Action Team appears to be a bottom-up, all inclusive process where all the participants shaped decisionmaking.