CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM
COMMUNITY WATERSHED INITIATIVE WORKGROUP

5.1   Introduction

Chesapeake Bay is the largest and most productive estuarine system in the United

States. It stretches from the mouth of the Susquehanna River in Maryland to Cape Charles,

Virginia, where it meets the Atlantic Ocean -- a distance of 180 miles. The Bay supports a

range of aquatic ecosystems from completely fresh to completely salt water environments.

While the Bay's surface waters cover 2,500 square miles, its watershed extends over 64,000

square miles. It supports over 2,700 species of plants and animals, with productivity due in

large part to its shallowness -- the average depth of the Bay is 22 feet. The Bay also holds and

concentrates the materials released into its many tributaries by the over 13 million people that

live in the watershed. Over 1.5 billion gallons of treated sewage is discharged into the

watershed each day, and this does not include the nonpoint source pollution that contributes

pesticides, fertilizers, and other harmful materials to the Bay's waters (Swanson, 1997).

In 1975, Congress directed the EPA to carry out an extensive investigation into the

environmental health of Chesapeake Bay (Yaffee, 1996). Up to that time, studies of the Bay

were more or less limited to the effects of individual pollutants or individual plant and animal

species. The EPA study was the first holistic look at the Bay, and it found that human activities

occurring on the lands within the Bay's watershed were a major source of the Bay's problems

(Swanson, 1997). As a result of this study, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Washington

D.C., the EPA, and the Chesapeake Bay Commission agreed to become partners in a cooperative and coordinated effort at Bay restoration activities. These Partners created the Chesapeake Bay Program in 1983. This Program was designed to be an inclusive process that brought state and federal government agencies together with representatives of industry, local government, business, and the public to develop restoration and conservation strategies (Swanson, 1997).

5.2   Information Obtained from the Chesapeake Bay Program

The implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Program Community Watershed Initiative, a directive of the Chesapeake Executive Council, can be followed through an examination of several documents. They include the following:

- The 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement,

- The Chesapeake Executive Council Community Watershed Initiative,

- The Community Watershed Initiative ad-hoc Workgroup Meeting Summary of March 16, 1998,

- The Community Watershed Workgroup Discussion paper Prepared for the May 12, 1998 Meeting, and

- The Community Watershed Initiative Strategy.

These documents are linked in a temporal sequence that illustrates how the Community Watershed Initiative gave rise to a strategic plan through a partnership of federal and state governments, and community watersheds.

The Chesapeake Bay Program supplied a list of the names and addresses of people who

participated in the Community Watershed Initiative Workgroup. All 40 people on this list were sent the survey questionnaire described previously. Sixteen were returned -- a 40% response rate. Over half the respondents represented government agencies -- 28% were from federal agencies, 17% from state agencies, and 6% from local governments. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the respondents were from environmental groups, 25% were from other organizations (12% indicated they were affiliated with universities), and 6% were private citizens. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the respondents were male. Fifty-six percent (56%) were between 41 and 60 years old, 38% between 25 and 40. Sixty-nine percent (69%) had graduate or professional degrees, 25% undergraduate degrees. Forty-four percent (44%) had family incomes of over $75,000, 25% had incomes between $50,000 and $75,000. Fifty-six percent (56%) live in the suburbs. Thus, the group of respondents can be generally characterized as well-educated, middle-aged, well-off, suburban, government employees.

A chi square test of significance was used to examine the responses for any connections between the answers provided by the respondents and participant sex, age, income, and residential location. When the expected distribution of answers was compared to the actual responses, at the .05 level of significance no significant relationships were found. However, when the respondents were broken into two groups, federal and state agency representatives versus all other respondents, one significant association did appear. It seems that the government representatives had less confidence in the process than the other respondents. People from federal and state agencies indicated they were not sure that the Workgroup was successful in developing solutions.

Seven people that participated in the Workgroup were personally interviewed:

- Russ Baxter, Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission;

- Carl Herschner, Virginia Institute of Marine Science Professor;

- Carl Fisher, Retired NOAA Captain and Oceanography Ph.D.;

- Billy Mills, Mattaponi and Pamonkee Rivers Association;

- Patty Jackson, Executive Director of the James River Association;

- Kerri Bentkowski, Fellow with the Chesapeake Bay Program; and

- Jerry Griswold, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

5.3   Verifying the Presence of the Elements of Collaboration

Involvement of All Affected Parties

A review of the documents produced by the Chesapeake Bay Program indicates that attempts were made to involve all affected parties in the process of developing a Community Watershed Initiative Strategy. The 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement, a direct consequence of the findings of the EPA's Bay study, was signed by the governors of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, the Mayor of Washington, D.C., the EPA Administrator, and the Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission. It outlines goals and priority commitments that include efforts to increase public awareness and improve intergovernmental cooperation (Swanson, 1997). It

specifically notes the need to increase public participation in decisions and programs affecting the Bay (Chesapeake Bay Agreement, 1987). This document formally recognizes a need to involve more parties than just state and federal government officials in planning and decisionmaking processes addressing the Bay's restoration. References to cooperation and public participation are also indicative of a move toward greater involvement of affected parties.

The Community Watershed Initiative is a directive signed by the Chesapeake Executive Council, which is comprised of the officials that signed the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. While recognizing that the Chesapeake Bay Program's principal goal remains the restoration of water quality and living resources, it indicates that local governments, watershed groups, and citizens are key partners in the implementation of strategies and in the achievements of Bay Program goals and commitments. The Community Watershed Initiative implements the objectives of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement by "seeking the counsel of citizens, landowners, federal, state, and local governments, nonprofit organizations, business and industry and others" (Chesapeake Executive Council, 1997). It states that cooperative efforts are needed to strengthen and coordinate actions to protect resources and encourage public participation. It further indicates that supporting community-based watershed planning and engaging local organizations, citizens, and local governments will strengthen the foundation for continued progress toward a healthier Chesapeake Bay.

In response to the directive of the Chesapeake Executive Council for a Community Watershed Initiative, the Chesapeake Bay Program established an ad-hoc workgroup to develop the Community Watershed Strategy. During the March 16, 1998 meeting of this workgroup, a

panel discussion was held. The panel specifically noted that one of the things the Bay Program does well is "getting local knowledge/expertise up to other levels of government by bringing together [the] diverse community of stakeholders-citizens, businesses, [and] local government" (Community Watershed Initiative ad-hoc Workgroup, 1998). A discussion paper prepared for the May 12, 1998 meeting of the Workgroup indicates that the Chesapeake Bay Program encourages the development of watershed organizations by developing strong working relationships with local governments and getting the support of a broad-based group of stakeholders. The paper also indicates that, in cooperating with watershed and community organizations, the Bay Program should plan local actions that contribute to Baywide goals. The paper identifies a need to link state and federal efforts to community watershed planning and to develop forums for local watershed groups (Community Watershed Workgroup, 1998).

The final product of the workgroup, a Community Watershed Strategy, was developed through a self-described collaborative process that involved Bay Program Partners, watershed organizations, watershed-based nonprofit organizations, and local governments. The Strategy indicates the need for work at the community watershed level and notes attempts to strengthen the relationship among federal, state, and local governments, and community watersheds. It recommends the creation of a Community Watershed Task Force to evaluate the Chesapeake Bay Program in terms of its ability to build partnerships among these groups. The Strategy specifies that cooperation through partnerships among all stakeholders is the defining element of the Bay Program's success (Community Watershed Strategy Workgroup, 1998).

The interviews conducted with participants revealed something different. Initially, Russ Baxter, chair of the Community Watershed Initiative Workgroup, indicated that prior to the

adoption of the Community Watershed Initiative the Chesapeake Bay Program had only looked at the big scale -- the entire Chesapeake Bay Watershed. He recounted that the Community Watershed Initiative was developed because the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, Tayloe Murphy, a Virginia state-level elected official, was interested in executing programs at a smaller, watershed scale. The Chesapeake Bay Program then began to look at smaller and smaller watersheds, eventually reaching the local level. However, Mr. Baxter noted that while meetings were not closed to the public, they also were not advertised. He related that there was a general lack of local government involvement, and he believed the venue was not favorable to local watershed groups because meetings were held during weekdays in Annapolis, Maryland. As a result, the Workgroup's input from the watersheds was obtained from Billy Mills and Patty Jackson, representatives of only two watershed associations.

Billy Mills saw his role in the Community Watershed Initiative Workshop as that of a representative of small grassroots organizations, as opposed to Patty Jackson, whom he thought represented large grassroots watersheds. Mr. Mills indicated that, normally, what the Bay Program does means nothing to his watershed association, but that this particular process interested him. Patty Jackson stated that the Chesapeake Bay Program did not focus on the lower tributaries until 1987. The Program centered on mainstream tributaries because its personnel believed that the lower tributaries do not have a major impact on the Bay. This created some concern for her association, but she was buoyed by the fact that the 1992 revision commitments to clean the Bay involved a fine-tuning that involved the lower tributaries. Ms. Jackson stated that she and Billy Mills talked to Tayloe Murphy about community level watersheds early on, when he was Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission. They both knew

he was considering something similar to what they had in mind. He took their ideas involving

engagement of more of the public at the local watershed level to the executive committee of the

Chesapeake Bay Commission. The Commission was interested in determining how local

activities could benefit the Chesapeake Bay Program, as well as how the Program could benefit

local watershed groups. Yet, according to Ms. Jackson, this still did not result in involvement

of local people. Meetings were not really open to the public. The Chesapeake Bay Commission

determined whom to ask to meetings, and many local groups were never contacted. She felt

these groups would have come, but they were not invited.

Carl Herschner indicated that the Workgroup was initiated by legislators through the

Chesapeake Bay Program partners. Word then went out from the Chesapeake Bay Program

that a group was being formed in a self-nominating, membership process. The first meeting was

attended by a combination of federal and state agency representatives, watershed association

people, and a few others like Dr. Herschner. However, he indicated that even though meetings

were publicly announced, attendance quickly fell back to a small, active group. There were

more than 20 people at the first meeting, 10 to 20 at the next 3 or 4 meetings, and less each

successive meeting. Carl Fisher also recounted that, while the public was not openly invited,

grassroots community watershed associations were. Kerry Bentkowski stated that, at the

beginning of the process, the Workgroup meetings were attended by the usual people associated

with the Chesapeake Bay Program. However, as the meetings continued, the grassroots

watershed people came. Eventually, there were as many watershed association people, citizens,

and others as bureaucrats.

Mr. Griswold stated that the Workgroup was set up through the Chesapeake Bay

Program Implementation Committee. The first meeting was held in the Program Director's office and about 15 people attended. While the meetings were open to the public, there were no overt acts to get the public in. He thinks the Bay Program assumed that the "right people" were already there. Griswold was able to express this to the group, but the matter was not discussed. He felt that the local watershed groups were treated as outsiders who were allowed to come in and give presentations. The major shortcoming Griswold saw with the group is that, while Ann Swanson saw the need for a link to the local level, the Chesapeake Bay Program does not have personnel with experience in dealing with regular people like farmers and homeowners. Mr. Griswold noted that the federal government has an information delivery system connected to the local level. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has employees at the local level, in counties, alongside the states' county agricultural extension agents.

Obviously, all of the parties affected by the Community Watershed Initiative did not participate in Workgroup meetings, and it appears that local people in particular were not asked to be a part of the process. While slightly contradictory, the interviews seem to indicate that the process did not include this element of collaborative decisionmaking, with government representation much heavier than local or community participation.

Formal Organization Established

The Chesapeake Bay Program resulted from an agreement reached by the federal and state government that was formalized in the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. The Community Watershed Initiative was a directive issued by the governmental partners to this Agreement, and it formally directed the Chesapeake Bay Partners to convene an open and inclusive process in

order to develop a Community Watershed Strategy. This established and recognized the process of organizing a Workgroup through existing governmental processes.

Information Sharing

The summary document of the March 16, 1998 meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Program Community Watershed Initiative Workgroup noted that an analysis of Chesapeake Bay Program outreach efforts indicates that stakeholders need collaborative planning opportunities to address issues and obtain information. The Workgroup's conclusory document recommended the formation of a Task Force whose functions would include the distribution of information through forums and meetings where community watershed efforts could be linked to the Bay Program. Further, respondents to the survey overwhelming indicated that information was shared (88%) (Figure Three). None of the interviewees indicated a lack of information sharing. Russ Baxter stated that he thought the sharing of information among the participants -- successes, difficulties, and what works -- was the best part of the process. He felt that participants believed their concerns were being listened to and understood. Ms. Bentkowski clearly stated that participants were able to exchange information.

Thus, while information sharing was not clearly addressed to the extent of other elements of collaboration, the documents, the survey, and the interviews indicate its presence in the process.

Figure Three. Questions on whether participants were able to express concerns, discuss concerns, and share information. Results expressed as a percentage of the total responses (n=16).
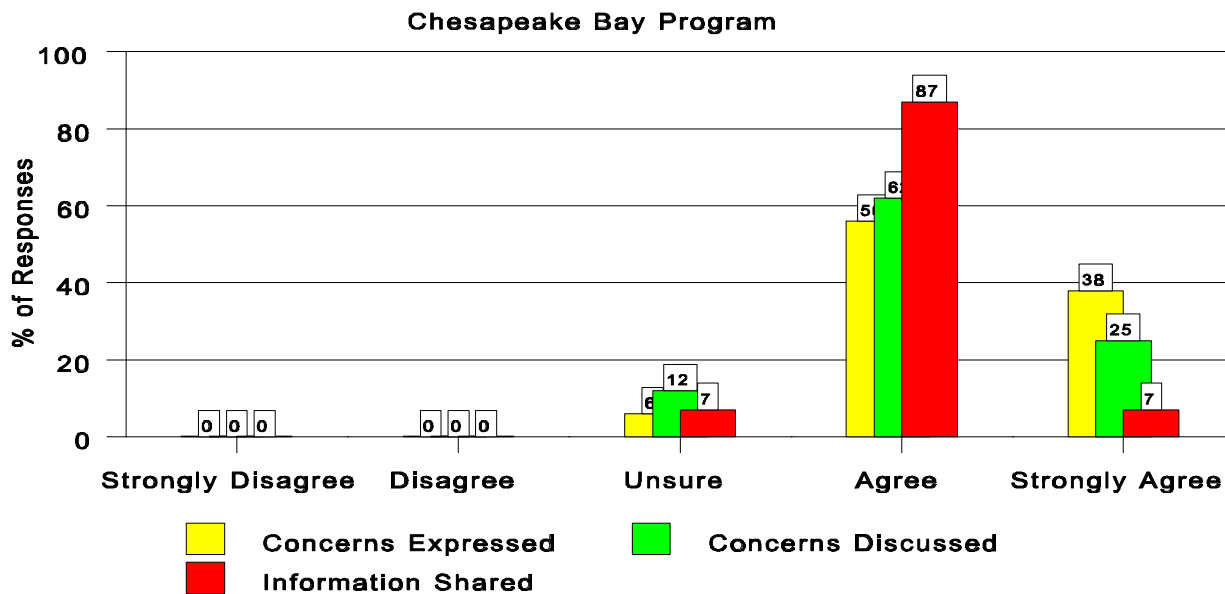
Power Sharing

References in the Community Watershed Initiative to partners, cooperation, community based planning, and seeking the counsel of participants are indicative of power sharing. The language in this document also reflects a desire to involve communities, the public, and local organizations in decisionmaking. However, respondents to the survey felt that some people had more influence than others (88%). Half the respondents indicated that one person was not making the decisions, while half indicated they were either unsure or that only one person made decisions. Half felt decisions were made by a majority of the participants, but 31% were unsure and 19% thought decisions were not made by a majority. None of the respondents indicated they thought decisions were made by consensus (Figure Four).

Indications from the interviews were that power was not being shared. In the opinion of several of the people interviewed, decisionmaking was controlled. Dr. Herschner described the Chesapeake Bay Program as a hierarchy -- a big federal program at the top with the states below it and local associations below that. However. He felt the Community Watershed Initiative as at least an attempt to focus on local watersheds. Dr. Herschner gave Tayloe Murphy, drafter of the Community Watershed Initiative, recommendations to restructure at the watershed level. However, the state agencies and Chesapeake Bay Program people decided that they were unable to restructure. When Herschner presented this to the group, it was discussed and then rationalized off the table as being too difficult to accomplish. He thinks this is because Russ Baxter and Ann Swanson wanted to maintain power. Russ Baxter and Ann Swanson ran the meetings. Baxter chose what would be discussed, with Swanson

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Figure Four. Questions on whether participants made decisions by consensus, whether one person made decisions, and whether a majority made decisions. Results expressed as a percentage of the total responses (n=16).
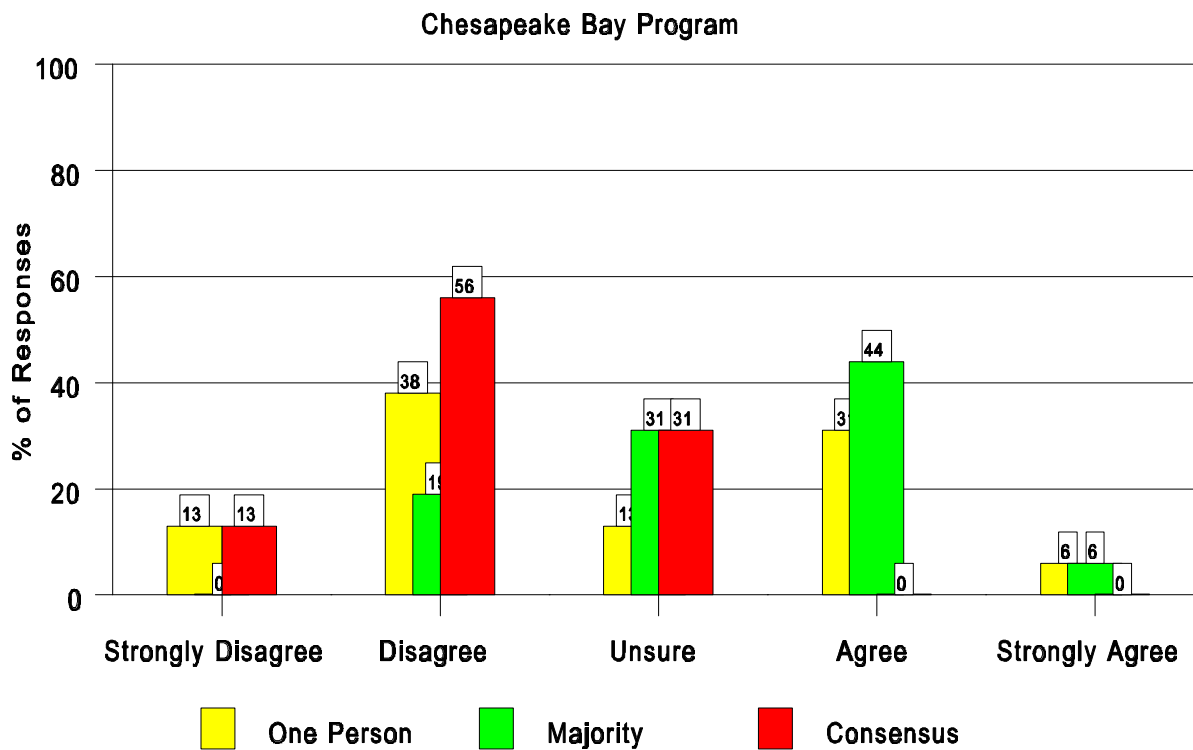
indicating the direction in which she wanted the meetings to proceed.

Dr. Fisher, coming from a grassroots group, the Elizabeth River Project, felt intimidated at the meetings. He said that while Ann Swanson stated that the workgroup needed to hear from grassroots organizations, federal and state people tended to dominate the meetings and told the grassroots groups what they could and could not do. Dr. Fisher felt agency personnel did not understand the point of grassroots involvement in developing a community watershed strategy. The watershed associations did not get enough say, and this never changed. Further, the state agency people indicated they were capable of doing what the watershed groups were doing, and that they should get the funding to do it, not the grassroots groups. This was particularly true of the Virginia people. Dr. Fisher indicated there were not only skeptics at the meetings, but also people with hidden agendas.

Mr. Mills indicated that driving negotiations in the Workgroup was a concern over shrinking budgets. None of the Chesapeake Bay Program people wanted to see a new structural element that could reduce their share of the pot. The state felt that anything jeopardizing state pass-through was risky. He felt that the Workgroup ended up being another table skirmish over funds, with three or four federal and state representatives going against each watershed association representative. Mr. Mills believed that, while the Chesapeake Bay Program preaches working hand in hand with the state, local watershed groups are formed because of what the state is not doing. He stated that when a grassroots group forms, it alienates the state. Mills felt that this is particularly true in rural areas that have low levels of pollution that keep them from becoming partners with the state. Just as others noted, Mr. Mills believes the Chesapeake Bay Program has become a bureaucracy. He feels that, as a result, for

all of the innovation and science-based validity of the Chesapeake Bay Program, it now has its

own problems adjusting to innovation.

Ms. Jackson stated that the Community Watershed Initiative Workgroup was created to

flush out a strategy as to how the Initiative could fit in to the overall Bay Program. However,

she felt that there was a sense by the Chesapeake Bay Program people that the Community

Watershed Initiative was premature. She stated that some participants were entrenched in

Chesapeake Bay Program subcommittees, and that they were mostly concerned about their

funding and staffing issues. This was frustrating to her. She saw it as a matter of turf

protection by existing subcommittees of the Bay Program and that the Chesapeake Bay

Program was too top-down oriented. Ms. Jackson indicated that those with experience in the

Chesapeake Bay Program had more influence in the Workgroup. Ms. Jackson got angry at

some meetings, mainly due to misrepresentations by Virginia state people who asserted they had

great rapport with local groups. She saw the state trying to control the process. The James

River Association is happy working directly with the Chesapeake Bay Program; yet, the Bay

Program relies on the state agencies to implement its program. Ms. Jackson indicated that when

the state agencies are the ones opposing your position, it is hard to sit down across from them

and cooperate. Ms. Jackson indicated that state people were trying to make themselves look

good with the EPA and attempted to cover up for actions they had to accomplish. Each state

was also at a different level; for example, Pennsylvania representatives already had watershed

coordination. Other states did not want EPA or the Chesapeake Bay Program taking over their

programs. Ms. Jackson felt Baxter, Swanson, and the federal and state agencies were all

thinking in terms of whether the Executive Committee would agree with what they created. She

believes that, while decisions were collective, they were flavored by Bay Program budget and subcommittee resistance. While she indicated that decisions were reached by determining if everybody could live with the issues and that she believed the process worked, she still felt that the federal and state people retained control. If they did not agree with something, it would not go forward. The watershed people could therefore never prevail on an issue.

Ms. Bentkowski observed that Ann Swanson and Russ Baxter ran the meetings, with Swanson opening them and Baxter having the bottom line. Baxter did most of the drafting, but Swanson put the whole document together. She believed that the Chesapeake Bay Commission wrote the strategy, based on ideas from the participants. Ms. Bentkowski also felt that the federal representatives had nothing to offer the group as some of them made only negative comments throughout the process. At the state level, Virginia had particular troubles working with the participants in the Workgroup. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation would send low-level people as their token representatives, people that did not have the authority to make decisions. They also sent different people to each meeting. Her experience has led her to believe that the Chesapeake Bay Program can only think in terms of their subcommittees.

Mr. Griswold came to the group with a position -- that watersheds were the way to address the problems of the Chesapeake. He felt that to be effective, matters had to be worked out with "real people" at the local level. While the Workgroup brought in some "real people," the watershed association representatives, Mr. Griswold felt their comments were not taken seriously. He felt that the Chesapeake Bay Program people were of the opinion that if an idea did not come from within their organization, it did not count. The insiders, federal and state

agency representatives, shared how things worked, such as the delivery of money. He noted

that, within states, money passes to local communities through the state agencies. Griswold

also pointed out that Ann Swanson and Russ Baxter ran the meetings. He felt that Swanson

had an agenda -- she wanted a new watershed subcommittee, and that while Workgroup

decisions appeared to be made by consensus, final decisions were made by Swanson. As a

result, the strategy was written the way Swanson and Baxter wanted it.

Paradoxically, Mr. Baxter stated that decisions were collaborative and that they used the

consensus concept, but that he had to make decisions. Mr. Baxter also indicated that the

workgroup process did not quite work out collaboratively. He stated that there was a good

deal of initial confusion and concern about the states' roles, and that although anyone interested

could come to the meetings, the state representatives dominated the process. He indicated that

the states appeared to be particularly interested in the outcome of the Workgroup and always

sent people to meetings. He felt this interest was due to a perception that the Chesapeake Bay

Program might discount state input. Mr. Baxter thought that the states were initially confused

over the role of the Community Watershed Initiative but became more comfortable with the

Workgroup process over time. They had a bigger stake in the outcome, and while these

representatives wrongly perceived initial motives, they were able to get past this.

Ms. Swanson, executive director of the Chesapeake Bay Program, declined to be interviewed

for this study.

Open Discussions

The Community Watershed Initiative gave the Chesapeake Bay Partners the authority to

carry out an open process in developing a strategy to implement the objectives of the Initiative

by actively obtaining advice from all stakeholders (Chesapeake Executive Council, 1997).

Respondents to the survey overwhelming indicated that they felt participants in the

Workgroup had the opportunity to express their concerns (94%) and that the group was able to

discuss the issues (88%) (Figure Three).

In interviews, Mr. Baxter indicated the Workgroup was an open process where all

participants were able to relate their positions. He felt that those who wanted to participate did.

Dr. Herschner recounted that all participants were able to present their ideas. At meetings,

they would go around the table, allowing everyone to speak several times. Mr. Mills indicated

he was able to convey his position at meetings and that there was a lot of give and take, even

though the Chesapeake Bay Program people ran the meetings. Kerri Bentkowski stated that the

meetings were open to discussion, with participants free to say whatever they wanted, but that

Swanson and Baxter facilitated the conversation. She described communication as semi-formal

but free flowing. It was orderly, with a chair, and did not degrade into arguments. Everyone

was given a chance to talk.

This element of collaborative decisionmaking was present in the Chesapeake Bay

Program Community Watershed Initiative process.

5.4   The Success of the Process

Mr. Baxter stated that the Chesapeake Bay Commission was tasked with convening the first meeting of the Workgroup, which was held shortly after the first of the year in 1998. The process was time limited; the group needed to produce a strategy document by October of 1998. The Workgroup held 6 or 8 meetings over a 6-month period. Dr. Herschner indicated that the process was based on drafting and redrafting a strategy. Workgroup decisions were made after circulating drafts of the strategy between meetings. At subsequent meetings, participants made comments and deliberated recommendations. To reach a final decision on a point, Baxter would determine if they had consensus on an issue. However, Dr. Herschner stated that the federal agency representatives were not committed to this process. To him, they appeared not to care about what was happening, and this did not change over time. It also became apparent to Dr. Herschner that the meetings were going to revolve around a controversy between the watershed associations and the states. He noted that, at the second Workgroup meeting, the watershed people told the Chesapeake Bay Program staff that the Chesapeake Bay Program was not relevant to them. They did not need more unfunded mandates; they needed money. Herschner stated that there was one meeting in particular where the Virginia Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Development representative and Patty Jackson, the executive director of the James River Association, had a "bloodletting." In Dr. Herschner's opinion, for the process to have been more effective, people should have presented an idea and then given up personal ownership of it.

Ms. Bentkowski noted that, at this same second meeting, the watershed groups asked for technical support during what was supposed to be a general discussion. The federal and

state representatives heard this as a demand for funding, but this was not how Ms. Bentkowski heard it. She felt the local people came with a desire to help, but that the state representatives were particularly unaccepting of the process. As an example, Ms. Bentkowski related how Virginia representatives showed up for a particular meeting having looked at a rather old draft from several previous meetings and stated how they did not like its contents. The watershed association representatives took offense at this as they had long ago moved past that point. Yet, Ms. Bentkowski did indicate that this changed over time as the participants became used to working together. She stated that, by the end of the process, the state representatives, EPA, the Chesapeake Bay Program people, and the locals all understood each other's perspectives. Dr. Fisher indicated that the process improved over time as the participants in the workgroup obtained more knowledge and became more familiar with each other. However, Mr. Griswold believed decisions became harder to make over time because what was discussed became more specific and meaningful.

Mr. Mills initially thought the Workgroup process was going to create a breakthrough because it had two strong legs to stand on:

- The Chesapeake Bay Program was not getting the job done, and

- The Program had not tried a bottom-up approach.

Mr. Mills felt that the initial idea was to create a common, low-level meeting ground so that members of the different Chesapeake Bay Program committees could talk to the local watershed groups. However, he felt that this communication concept was lost during the meeting process. The second question of the survey provided a list of pertinent issues, including a blank space labeled "Other," and asked respondents to rank what they thought were the three most

important issues facing the Chesapeake Bay watershed at the start of their participation in the Workgroup. Having then answered questions about participation, the discussions during meetings, the decisionmaking process within the Workgroup, and the success of the Workgroup, the 16th question asked respondents to rank what they thought were the three most important issues facing the Chesapeake Bay watershed at the end of their participation in the Workgroup. Thirty-one percent (31%) indicated a change in either issues chosen or their ranking between the beginning and end of participation in the Workgroup. Something happened to almost a third of the respondents during the time they were involved in this process that changed the way they thought about the issues facing the Chesapeake Bay watershed. So, while the interviews related a basically negative experience, there was an effect on participant thinking.

5.5   Achieving Results

Documents produced by the Chesapeake Bay Program indicate that the Community Watershed Initiative culminated in a plan that was developed through a cooperative process where partnerships among stakeholders and the distribution of information through forums were key ingredients. This is demonstrative of a collaborative decisionmaking process. However, while it appears that solutions were discussed and that some were reached by the group, all of the participants may not have been committed to reaching solutions (Figure Five). In examining the responses, whether the Workgroup accomplished anything is problematic as 53% of the respondents indicated they were unsure as to the success of the process.

Mr. Baxter felt that the workgroup came up with a strategy document that reflected an understanding of local and state interests. He believed that he captured everyone's input in a

Figure Five. Questions on whether the workgroup was able to develop solutions, to discuss solutions and alternatives, and to reach solutions; and whether participants believed the process was a success. Results expressed as a percentage of the total responses (n=16).

Chesapeake Bay Program
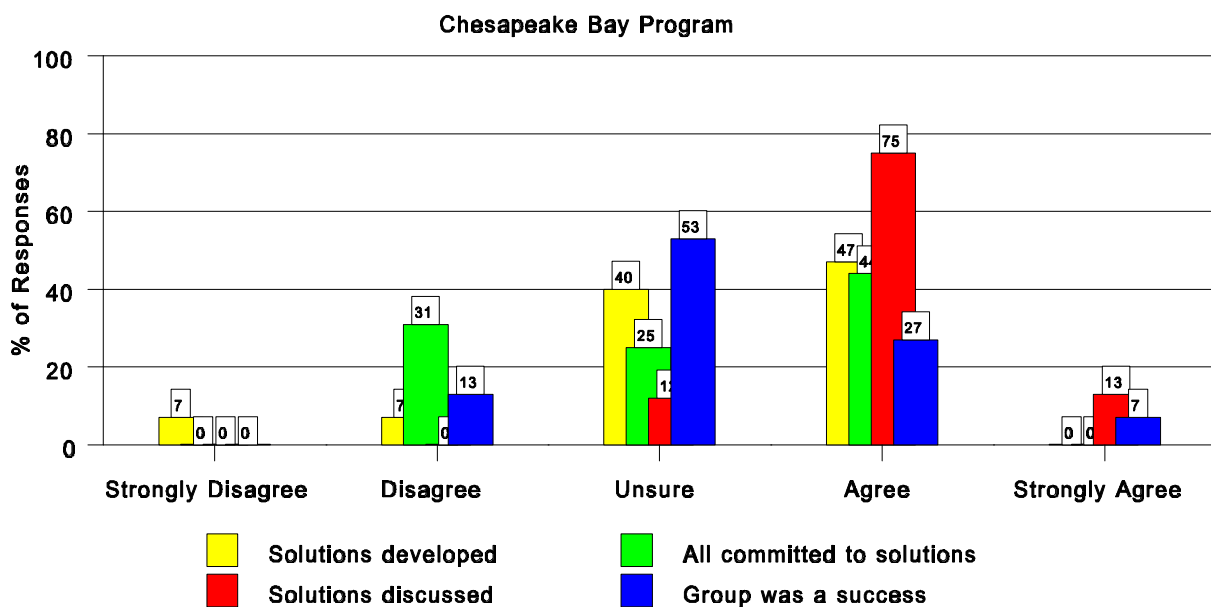
consensus document. The Executive Council then adopted the strategy in October of 1998. He

related that the process was useful and produced a strategy that would lead to a more intensive

look at the problems of local watersheds. Mr. Baxter noted that the development of a task

force, the main recommendation coming out of the meetings, was what the Commission had in

mind for the Workgroup. Thus, he felt the Workgroup accomplished what the Chesapeake

Executive Commission directive required. He thought that everything was in place for the

Initiative to advance. Mr. Baxter believed the concept of a task force to be more balanced and

more reflective of a community-based approach, and that it would be an implementing vehicle

for the Community Watershed Initiative. He thinks the task force can determine what the

Chesapeake Bay Program has to offer to the grassroots watershed organizations that will make

them stronger.

Dr. Herschner believed that the idea of developing a task force to look into community

watershed involvement in the Chesapeake Bay Program reflected the one key issue of the

Community Watershed Initiative -- how to help the community watershed associations. He

reiterated that after each meeting, Baxter would draft a document and come back to the next

meeting with that document. However, while all the participants were pleased with the first

draft, the second draft came back expressing some hidden agendas. In Dr. Herschner's opinion,

it did not represent what took place at the meetings. There were four substantive drafts of the

Strategy, and what eventually came out was a bland, consensus document of attrition. Dr.

Herschner felt there was a lot of substantive material from the meetings that was never put in

the document. He believed that, as a result, the watershed association representatives ended up

feeling they had no ownership in the document that was finally produced.

Mr. Mills stated that Baxter would gather information and draft a document. However, what he wrote was not what Mr. Mills heard. Mr. Mills felt that Baxter shored up the federal, state and Chesapeake Bay Program positions with each draft. Mr. Mills became increasingly frustrated and less optimistic, and the Workgroup became a low priority activity with him. Eventually, he just agreed to go with what was written. Mr. Mills stated that, while local problems are cumulative and the big federal program came into being to address these cumulative problems, the ability of a local manager or citizen to grasp the entire Chesapeake Bay Program is overwhelming because the watershed and its problems are so big. He indicated that, as a result, the Chesapeake Bay Program is just not meaningful to locals. The Community Watershed Initiative should have been a small watershed initiative. In the end, Mr. Mills believed that while the process was given a rare opportunity to institute some change for the better, it ultimately failed.

Ms. Jackson stated that whether the process was successful remains to be seen. However, it did accomplish getting people together to share or learn from each other. Her watershed association was given the opportunity to be part of a bigger picture. Yet, Ms. Jackson noted that the smaller groups do not have the time to be involved in Chesapeake Bay Program processes. They are busy trying to engage citizens, not work the bureaucracy. The cost of attending meetings is not conducive to small groups either timewise or moneywise. However, Ms. Jackson felt that the process opened the door. She believes that, as the strategy is implemented and evolved, it will become less threatening. Mr. Griswold indicated that the Workgroup resulted in the recommendation of appointing a task force, but that it is too soon to

tell if the task force will be successful. While this concept has potential, Mr. Griswold is afraid the task force will fail to make the local connection.

Ms. Bentkowski stated that the process was difficult, but necessary. The process helped the participants learn to work together. She felt that this kind of forum needs to occur more often. She saw it help the relationships among participants. Thus, while meetings were tedious and it was hard to keep the process fresh, in the end the participants came up with several good ideas. Eventually, all of the participants bought into the strategy. Thus, the Workgroup created a nice document, but there were whole parts of the Community Watershed Initiative that were not addressed. She noted that an unresolved major area is implementation. How the link between the locals and the Chesapeake Bay Program is going to occur was not determined.

Dr. Fisher also believed they accomplished a major change in the philosophy of the Chesapeake Bay Program -- making it consider the positions of community watershed associations. Dr. Fisher noted that many of the federal and state participants were concerned that community involvement could only result in the loss of funds to existing programs, and that because of this community involvement may never develop. However, Fisher remains convinced that this process is the only way to effect change, and watershed groups are now getting a lot more attention.

In the end, the Chesapeake Bay Program Community Watershed Initiative was technically a success in that it created a strategic document, although the actual value of the document was diminished by an ineffective process.

5.6   Summary of Information Obtained from the Chesapeake Bay Program Community Watershed Initiative Workgroup

Documents prepared in support of, and by, the Chesapeake Bay Program Community Watershed Initiative Workgroup indicate that the process was designed to be an inclusive partnership of state and federal government agencies, industry, local government, business, and the public.   References to the involvement of communities, the public, and local organizations in decisionmaking indicate a sharing of power. These key ingredients would indicate that the process was an example of collaborative decisionmaking.   However, the survey results show that what appeared on paper might not have reflected the actual situation.

Responses to the survey indicated that, while open discussions occurred and information was shared, none of the respondents thought decisions were made by consensus. Many respondents felt that power was not shared. Interviews illuminated the reasons behind these responses.

Those interviewed indicated that one or two people were controlling the process and that the local or community-oriented representatives had little power. The Chesapeake Bay Program was described as a hierarchy with the federal government at the top, the states below it, and local associations below that. Because federal and state people dominated the meetings, the watershed association representatives did not have an equal part in the process and did not develop any ownership in the final product. However, there were indications that the collaborative process as a concept has merit.