

Memorandum

To: Interim Board members

From: John Moriarty, Statewide Coordinator

Date: April 18, 2006

Subject: Non-voting Board Member Recruiting

Background

During the November 2005 Watershed Council Gathering in Bend, the councils who were present expressed that they would prefer that, at least for now, the Network board of directors be composed of members directly associated with watershed councils (coordinators/executive directors and/or key members). This direction came in response to the suggestion that a small number of board seats be dedicated to people from outside the direct watershed council world, with the intention of complementing the skills and contacts of our board members. While councils preferred *not* to include voting at-large members on the board at this time, they did feel that it would be important to invite advisory participation from other entities.

To that end, the Interim Board asked the coordinator to assist with a board skills assessment survey to provide some direction about the kinds of individuals and skill sets that would best augment the skills of our members. All but one interim board member completed a brief “skills/knowledge and contacts/influence” survey to provide a rough indication of our extant abilities. In a word, the results of that survey indicate that we are blessed with a *very* skilled and well-rounded board (see Appendix A for a summary of the assessment).

At the same time, there are some skill and contact areas that are not as well covered, are critical to the development of the Network, and/or may not be met due to limited time availability of our board members. Combining all self-assessment scores for each skill and contact area resulted in a cumulative score for each. Using an arbitrary cumulative threshold score of 30 or greater as an indicator of how well that skill or contact area is covered, several potential areas for additional assistance emerge.

Clearly, this is not a purely scientific exercise on a number of levels. First, it is a very subjective self-evaluation in which participants may have over- or (more likely) underestimated their skill levels. Also, by depending on cumulative scores to indicate areas of additional need, we may not reflect one or more of our board members who possess high skill level in that area. At the same time, a quick review of the areas with cumulative scores below 30, indicate skills and contacts that might be good to recruit to complement the skills we have. These include:

Skills and Knowledge

- ❖ Accounting/financial management
- ❖ Fundraising
- ❖ Facilitation/mediation
- ❖ Legal issues
- ❖ Website development
- ❖ Volunteer recruitment (which I find hard to believe)

Contacts and Influence

- ❖ Business community
 - ❖ Media
 - ❖ Private foundations
 - ❖ Forestry
 - ❖ (Government/public sector)
 - ❖ (Conservation organizations)
- (both score above 30, but important sectors to consider for participation)

Suggestions

The Interim Board could use these results as a basis for recruiting a small group of people to serve either as non-voting members of the board, or as a separate Advisory Board. Recruiting additional non-voting board members, rather than a separate advisory board, might encourage those individuals to participate more directly and consistently with the voting members of the board in conversations about the development of the organization. However, it may be possible to create a separate Advisory Board and invite their close participation with the voting board.

We would have much to gain from the input, expertise, contacts and different perspective that would come with non-voting members/advisors who are not necessarily directly involved with watershed councils. At the same time, inviting broad public participation would require sharing sometimes challenging conversations about councils and our organization with members who are not necessarily as closely related to councils. Therefore, it would be important to recruit people who are supporters of the mission of councils and the Network.

In addition to recruiting individuals with the necessary skills and/or contacts, councils also indicated a desire for the Interim Board to respect geographic diversity when identifying potential non-voting members or advisors. Therefore, the board will want to view potential members through the additional filter of their geographic location.

A final thought: increasing the size of our board (especially with people who must travel considerable distances) will increase the cost of board meetings unless those non-voting members are willing and able to cover their own travel costs.

Requested Action

- ❖ Provide direction to the coordinator for preparation of a draft policy for non-voting members
 - Advisory Board or integrated into the existing board?
 - Number of non-voting members
 - Roles and responsibilities
- ❖ Identify some specific skill and contact needs the board would like to address
- ❖ Brainstorm some potential recruits
- ❖ (Future) Adopt non-voting member policy
- ❖ (Future) Decide on some non-voting members to recruit
- ❖ (Future) Assume responsibility for recruiting some specific non-voting members