

UNRBA Implementation Planning: DRAFT Objectives & Outputs of Each Step in the Process

Unless otherwise stated, the work described below will be conducted by staff with oversight from the UNRBA Implementation Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and Board of Directors. "UNRBA" refers to all of the above, collectively, in addition to UNRBA staff.

1. Draft and Approve Recommendation Sheets

Staff are drafting recommendation sheets for each strategy recommended in the Upper Neuse Watershed Management Plan to explain HOW a local government might meet it. The basic steps and alternatives listed are meant to be inclusive, i.e., all of the basic ways of implementing the strategy should be listed. "Above and Beyond" steps are included so that local governments who want to adopt additional measures have some guidance and are recognized for doing so (see Step 5, Local Management Strategy Reviews). Once the recommendation sheets are completed, they will be compiled and provided to the Board of Directors with a brief explanatory memorandum. They will be included in the Implementation Plan.

2. Determine Focus Areas for Each Recommended Strategy

The UNRBA Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), recommendation sheet reviewers, and staff will determine the geographic areas (watersheds, usually) where implementation of the strategy is most critical to meeting Upper Neuse Watershed Management Plan goals in the short, medium, and long terms. Often, it is more important to implement watershed management strategies in areas that face significant development pressure. Focus Areas will be determined based on criteria set forth in the recommendation sheets and will be included in the Implementation Plan.

3. Analyze How Focus Areas Intersect with Jurisdictional Boundaries

Staff will analyze show which Focus Areas lie within each local government's jurisdiction. This information will be critical to determining which local governments should implement which strategies in what time frame.

4. Present Strategies and Focus Areas to Upper Neuse Localities

At this stage, UNRBA will share information on strategies and Focus Areas with UNRBA member government elected officials, advisory boards, and staff. UNRBA Board representatives and/or staff will present these data to each locality and provide an opportunity to comment on the data within a specified time frame.

5. Review Local Management Strategies

The Local Management Strategy Review (LMSR) is a series of Microsoft Excel worksheets on which local governments will indicate which strategies they have implemented using which alternatives with a simple check (✓) (space for comments is provided). UNRBA staff and the TAC will coordinate these reviews and, in the future, ensure they are updated regularly so that progress on implementation can be tracked over time. These data will inform the next step and will also be used to track long-term progress on Plan implementation.

6. Overlay Focus Areas with Results of Local Management Strategy Reviews and Write Gap Analysis

UNRBA staff will conduct a series of analyses of the focus areas for each strategy and the areas where that strategy is being implemented. With assistance and oversight from the TAC, staff will write a Gap Analysis, a technical memorandum that provides a snapshot of strategy implementation across the basin and assesses the immediacy of the need for implementing each management strategy in each Focus Area.

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7. Communicate Gap Analysis Findings to Localities and Get Feedback

At this stage, UNRBA will share the Gap Analysis memorandum with local staff and elected and advisory boards and solicit their feedback on local needs and policies. This feedback will be provided to the UNRBA Board of Directors and TAC to inform Step 8.

8. Determine Implementation Priorities and Cost Information Needs

The Board of Directors and the Technical Advisory Committee will review the Gap Analysis and local feedback and prioritize the gaps identified. For example, a fast-growing locality without a local sediment & erosion control program is likely to be prioritized for implementation of Strategy #7, Enhanced Construction Site Inspections and Enforcement Action. (Feasibility or local capacity to implement should NOT be a factor at this stage, as this step is to prioritize NEEDS, not means of implementation.)

At this stage, the Board and TAC will also determine whether additional information is needed on costs of implementation for particular strategies and jurisdictions. If so, UNRBA will help member governments obtain or figure out how to obtain that information.

The outcome of this stage will be a memorandum on implementation priorities and information needs.

9. Communicate Implementation Priorities to Localities and Get Feedback

UNRBA will share its Implementation Priorities and Information Needs memorandum with staff and local elected and advisory boards for their consideration and feedback. It is hoped that localities will be able to provide some additional information on possible costs of implementing particular alternatives.

10. Consider Costs of Implementing Priority Strategies and Decide Which Alternatives to Pursue

At this crucial stage, UNRBA will collectively decide how to address the implementation “gaps,” priorities, and information needs. For each priority area, strategy, and jurisdiction, economic costs and benefits of implementing various alternative implementation strategies will be considered. This information will help UNRBA decide whether to pursue an individual, a cooperative, or a regional approach to implementing the strategy. Wherever regional initiatives and/or interlocal partnerships are likely to save money or increase effectiveness, they should be pursued to the greatest possible extent.

Strategies that are not likely to become feasible within the planning cycle should still be included in the Implementation Plan. Implementation steps for these strategies would focus on increasing the feasibility of the strategy, for example, by creating tools, increasing local government capacity, proposing legislation, gathering information, etc.

Products that might be used to organize the work of this stage may include the following:

1) A plan of recommended implementation measures for each local government partner.

This segment of the Implementation Plan will state the strategies that are needed in the focus areas within each partner’s jurisdictional boundaries along with some temporal benchmarks. Ideally, local lists would be adopted by the UNRBA Board of Directors to demonstrate the organization’s unified belief that the strategies listed therein are the most efficient and important strategies for the jurisdiction to implement. This plan would then be presented to the local governing boards as the best and most efficient ways to protect water quality and aquatic habitat in the jurisdiction’s watersheds. It is expected that local government boards will implement (and adapt) the strategies according to local priorities, but they will be able to do so armed with targeted, specific, reasonable, and consistent guidance on watershed needs.

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2) A list of suggested implementation measures for Soil & Water Conservation Districts and other partners for strategies that member governments wish to implement with their assistance. UNRBA can facilitate the development of agreements and other key tasks between local governments and partners to expedite implementation.

3) A work plan for UNRBA to address any gaps in implementation where participants agree that UNRBA should be responsible for implementing all or part of the strategy, for example:

- UNRBA could develop tools or other capacity-building content (e.g., a curriculum for LID education workshops)
- UNRBA could partner with local governments to apply for grants
- UNRBA could provide planning or other services
- etc.

Each sub-plan will include timelines, agencies responsible, possible funding sources, and resources for additional guidance. For strategies that were deemed “not currently feasible,” action steps (including timelines and responsible entities) to increase feasibility will be specified.

The need for good information on costs and resource quality is ongoing; therefore, the Implementation Plan will include procedures for obtaining additional information as needed. An adaptive management approach should be utilized; this would involve including an information-gathering and analysis component for each strategy that would be used to improve how the strategy is implemented over time and to compare its effectiveness against other strategies.

11. Write, Review, and Adopt the Implementation Plan

The three types of plans listed in Step 10 will constitute the core of the Upper Neuse Watershed Management Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan will also include the Recommendation Sheets and maps of Focus Areas for each strategy. The UNRBA website will also be updated to include additional information on implementation resources (e.g., model ordinances, state and federal guidance, manuals, etc.).

12. Disseminate the Implementation Plan

Once the Implementation Plan has been adopted, copies will be provided to all members and partners. All process participants will be notified when the Plan and supplemental materials are posted on the UNRBA website, which will be an important tool for providing Implementation materials to member governments on a targeted and ongoing basis.

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Evaluating and Updating the Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan will include procedures for evaluation and improvement, as well as a system for obtaining and analyzing information on the costs of implementation so that better information is available for the Falls Lake Nutrient Management Strategy and version 2 of the Upper Neuse Watershed Management Plan.

Plan updates will follow the same process to revise the products. Future LMSR results will be summarized and compared to previous LMSR results to show overall progress on implementation of the strategies recommended in the Upper Neuse Watershed Management Plan. The evaluation interval will be consistent with the planning cycle and decided by the UNRBA Board of Directors.