

“Much work remains to be done and the path to continued environmental improvements will require a new emphasis on partnerships. Some of the most creative solutions to our problems are generated at the local level by citizens, business, state and local government, and other interested organizations, and we all need to work together to achieve the next generation of environmental progress.”—Christine Whitman, Administrator, US Environmental Protection Agency

COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Over the past thirty years, the EPA and others have made considerable strides in addressing environmental problems in the United States. Yet environmental degradation continues, and many ecological services—such as regulating the flow of streams and rivers and maintaining air quality—are impaired or inadequately managed.

The traditional approach to environmental management

has been sector-based. Government, nongovernmental, and private organizations alike have focused energy, dollars, and people based on the media with which they were concerned, like air, water, or wildlife. The desired approach to environmental stewardship (Figure 19) reflects the idea that natural, economic, and human resources must be managed in a way that is inclusive in nature, balances ecological and economic values, and en-

courages proactive involvement by all stakeholders.

A review of other programs has indicated that successful ones have learned the following lessons:

1. Encourage the participation of a broad spectrum of participants;
2. Focus on the integration of government agencies;
3. Involve and inform the public;
4. Embrace clear, strong, specific, comprehensive, and measurable goals;
5. Use sound science, and combine theory, detailed knowledge, monitoring and modeling;
6. Provide incentives and methods for institutional cooperation; and
7. Demonstrate and communicate results.

Canaan Valley Institute has taken the best of the lessons learned and used them to create an innovative process for improved environmental stewardship. This process for

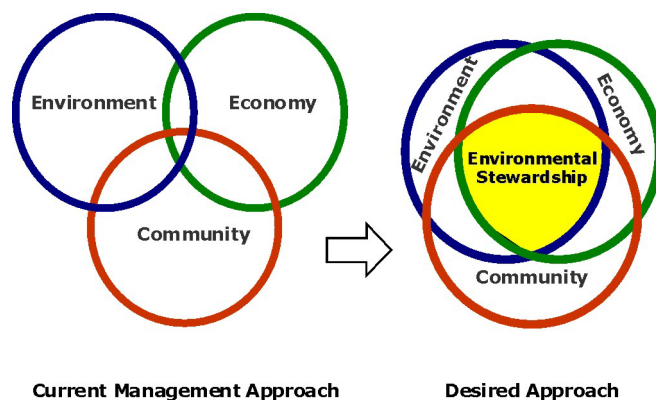


Figure 19. Sustainable environmental stewardship requires that we move from our current approach to the desired approach where environment, economy, and community are considered together.

environmental stewardship has been illustrated throughout this document (Figure 20). First, the process seeks out and involves local citizens, commerce, and government groups. Next, it emphasizes knowing and understanding the ecological and socioeconomic character of an area, and using sound science leads to the development of creative actions to solve problems. Finally, the process should include mechanisms to measure success, share knowledge, and learn from the past. Through-

out this process, economic growth, maintaining a quality environment, and wise use of resources go hand in hand to ensure a rising standard of living for all Americans.

In order to integrate the economy, environment, and community, several principles are clear. The approach must foster local decision making in support of sustainable communities. It must develop or inspire partnerships between local communities, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations,

research institutions, and the private sector to develop creative solutions. And, it must integrate environmental science, social science, and knowledge of sound management practices.

That brings the discussion back to the diagram of an environmental stewardship process: a process that involves all stakeholders in the identification of concerns, the characterization of their environment, the discovery of stressors and causes of these stressors, and the development, implementation, and measurement of solutions (Figure 20).

The process enables both region-wide and local watershed problem solving, with its goals to protect, enhance, and restore entire watersheds throughout the Mid-Atlantic Highlands while creating jobs and opportunities for local citizens. This process is not new. It is already working at the local level, as the example projects in the preceding section demonstrate.

Existing place-based environmental stewardship programs are successful and need to be replicated throughout the Highlands.



Figure 20. An approach for environmental stewardship founded on the scientific method, modified based on lesson learned from other federal programs, and which has proven successful over the past 7 years.