



## 6. Stakeholder Involvement

The Versar Team, led by subcontractor Capuco Consulting Services, worked closely with CA throughout the CWMP project to design and implement each element of the stakeholder involvement work plan.

### 6.1 Stakeholder Involvement Planning

Maryland and Federal guidance state that stakeholder involvement methods should be used to identify, recruit, and structure the involvement of diverse stakeholders throughout the watershed planning process. This is intended to help align the resources of stakeholders toward common goals. Stakeholder involvement is also believed to be essential to adopting and implementing any watershed plan. It is believed that stakeholder involvement helps ensure that the watershed plan is realistic and scientifically sound, and that it reflects community values and desires.

For the CWMP, stakeholder involvement was intended to be *an information and education component used to enhance public understanding of the project and encourage their early and continued participation in selecting, designing, and implementing the nonpoint source management measures.*

To accomplish this objective, stakeholder groups were identified, and specific measures were used to involve each stakeholder group. The stakeholder groups include the following:

- Residents of Columbia and groups representing residents including the External Relations Committee ERC of the CA Board of Directors and the Watershed Advisory Committee (WAC)
- Businesses, commercial property owners, and business associations
- Non-profit organizations representing environmentalist concerns
- Regulatory agencies including Federal, State, and County agencies
- Potential funders such as government granting agencies and granting foundations

Throughout the Columbia watershed management planning process, stakeholders were engaged using the numerous tools available through the Columbia Association's network of newsletters, web sites, and meetings. Stakeholder opinions and comments were gathered using the following tools:

- Monthly meetings of the WAC – The first Tuesday of each month, the WAC holds a meeting that is open to the public. In June, August, November, and January, the Versar team participated in the WAC meetings specifically to solicit comments on the development of the watershed management plan. In June, WAC comments were sought on the goals and objectives of the plan. In August, the WAC provided comments on the preliminary findings and prioritization of sites for restoration. In November, further comments were solicited in two meetings on prioritization of the potential restoration sites. In January, 2009, the WAC participated in the public meeting where a 30-minute question and answer period occurred.

- Watershed web site requests for information – In the fall of 2008, using a URL developed expressly to assist with the stewardship strategy, stakeholders were asked to submit information on locations that may have stormwater management issues. A number of useful comments were offered and incorporated into the watershed management planning process. To date, a general invitation to comment remains on the watershed web site. Stakeholder comments are forwarded to CA staff for response.
- Meetings with the Howard County Chamber of Commerce – CA staff have attended several meetings of the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the watershed management planning efforts.
- Meetings with the Howard County Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB) – In an effort to secure county-wide support for the watershed management plan, CA staff and the Versar team have participated in several ESB meetings.
- Public Meeting in January 2009 – More than 70 residents attended a public meeting at Amherst House in Kings Contrivance Village Center to learn how they can be a part of watershed restoration. During the two-hour meeting, Versar presented information on the stream conditions in Columbia, the types of restoration and enhancement that can be accomplished, and measures that can be implemented by individual residents and businesses. The meeting also included a question and answer session and informal review of six large maps of the Columbia watersheds depicting stream conditions and potential restoration projects.

## 6.2 Community Stewardship Strategy

The stewardship strategy was designed and implemented beginning in July 2008. To teach the stakeholder groups ways to be stewards of the watershed, a series of messages were put out to the public using a variety of delivery tools. The goal was to reach many different audiences. In all, seven messaging strategies were developed and implemented providing information to stakeholders for 14 months.

**CWMP Brand.** The first step taken was to develop a brand for all stewardship messages and communications regarding the CWMP. The logo was designed for use on all CWMP products. It was designed to be easily recognized by all stakeholder groups.

Using that branding, a series of press releases were produced and placed in community newsletters such as the CA Monthly, the Howard County Chamber of Commerce newsletter, all ten Villages of Columbia's newsletters, and the Baltimore Sun. The articles were intended to begin educating stakeholders about the concept of protecting and restoring the waters of Columbia.

**Communication.** Stewardship messages were also produced and placed on electronic messaging panels at CA facilities. These messages rotated every 2 weeks and focused on time-sensitive calls to action. Another communication tool used to deliver stewardship messages has been





the CA Voice Mail system. It provides callers that are on hold with useful information on ways to protect and restore the waters of Columbia.

The most powerful stewardship education tool has been the development of the watershed web site at [www.columbiawatershed.org](http://www.columbiawatershed.org). There stakeholders can find information on numerous activities to help protect and restore the watershed. The web site provides links to other resources that provide more in-depth information. There is also a section with activities for kids, and an interactive map enabling users to pinpoint which stream is nearest to their home. Links to this website are present on all other CA websites.

**Columbia Association** *Columbia welcomes diversity, respects the land and fosters the growth of individuals.*

LINKS TO RESOURCES CONTACT US HOME

COLUMBIA ASSOCIATION  
**watershed**  
MANAGEMENT

PROTECTING & RESTORING THE WATERS OF COLUMBIA

ABOUT WAC MEETINGS MANAGEMENT PLAN FAQS WATERSHED FOR KIDS MAPS

**QUICK TIPS**  
**CAR WASHING**  
Use a commercial car wash that treats or recycles its wastewater.  
Use biodegradable, phosphate-free, water-based cleaners only.  
[READ MORE QUICK TIPS!](#)

**INTERACTIVE MAPS**  
CLICK ON THE MAP TO SEE THE SUBWATERSHED WHERE YOU LIVE

**What is a watershed?**  
A watershed is the land region draining into a stream, river or body of water. There are 20 sub-watersheds in the Columbia area. The main two watersheds are the Little and Middle Patuxent rivers, which are part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. While Columbia has an area of 28 square miles, the watershed draining area is 49 square miles.

**What we're doing.**  
Columbia Association is developing the Columbia Watershed Management Plan, or CWMP, with the objective of protecting and restoring the waters of Columbia. The plan will use two distinct approaches. The first is identifying and restoring the watershed infrastructure, performing intensive investigations to find pollution sources and designing restoration projects to reduce them. The second is educating and involving residents and property owners in watershed stewardship.

Be a part of watershed restoration. CA's Watershed Advisory Committee wants your input

Tell CA about locations where you have observed flooding, erosion, runoff or debris. Share your concerns and comments about our lakes, streams and water resources. [Click here for more information](#)

**columbia association**

MORE GREAT CA SITES

CA has a number of web sites supporting all CA services and activities. Watershed messaging has been prevalent on the primary CA website, [www.ColumbiaAssociation.org](http://www.ColumbiaAssociation.org), and the newsletter web site, [www.CAMonthly.org](http://www.CAMonthly.org). In November 2008 it was also featured on the Columbia Matters website, [www.ColumbiaMatters.org](http://www.ColumbiaMatters.org).

In October, stakeholders were offered an opportunity to participate in a community reforestation effort. At the Saturday morning tree planting, children and adults were taught techniques for tree planting and protection from deer browsing, and the importance of forest buffers along streams. Photos of the event were included in the CA Monthly newsletter in an effort to increase awareness of the significance of forest buffers.



In late fall, a video was produced and aired on the “Columbia Matters” show. It featured the Versar Principal Ecologist, Dr. Mark Southerland, and the CA Project Manager, Sean Harbaugh, presenting examples of the current condition of the waters of Columbia and areas where watershed restoration might occur.

**Public Meetings.** On January 26, 2009 a public meeting was held by CA to present the status of the CWMP. Approximately 70 stakeholders attended the informational session to learn about protecting and restoring the waters of Columbia. Topics covered included the current condition of the local Watersheds; the watershed restoration effort through retrofit projects; community early action projects; and what can stakeholders do? Participants were able to view large maps of the watershed depicting a ecological conditions and proposed restoration projects. Extensive question and answer sessions focused on ways individuals can help protect and restore the waters of Columbia by taking actions such as rain barrel and rain garden installation. Educational materials developed and distributed at the meeting included a glossary of watershed terms, an information sheet explaining what a watershed is and what can be done to protect and restore the waters of Columbia, and information request forms. All meeting handouts and presentation materials were posted to [www.columbiawatershed.org](http://www.columbiawatershed.org).

Implementation of the stewardship strategy will continue through July 2009 with messages developed by the Versar team. Some of the activities planned include volunteer opportunities for storm drain stenciling and rain garden construction. CA participated in the Howard County Green Fest on April 4, 2009, delivering educational information on ways to protect and restore the waters of Columbia.