



# Everything We Need to Know (to Conduct a Successful Stakeholder Process) We Learned in Kindergarten

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“Whether you think you can,  
or you think you can’t, you  
are right.”

– Henry Ford



**“I know you know what to do,  
sometimes you just need to  
be reminded.”**

**– Diane Murphy**



# #1

## Share everything

Our water resources are limited and the demands for those resources overlap. In this environment every stakeholder's use needs to be seen as valid. Unless all parties are accepting of an outcome everyone eventually loses.



# #2

## Play fair

Complex issues utilities face today require open and honest communication. Closed door agreements or covert negotiations undermine trust and eventually the process.



# #3

## Don't hit people.

The stakeholder process is “information exchange” not “information delivery.” Stakeholders, especially smaller ones, do not appreciate being blindsided with predetermined solutions or perceived collusion.



# #4

## **Put things back where you found them.**

The future of sustainable resources will require the creation and management of existing resources. Resource planners and stakeholder groups in all regions must begin to look at the recapture and replenishment of resources.



# #5

## **Clean up your own mess - Take responsibility.**

If you have made an error in judgment along the way, admit it and fix it, you will be respected for it.



# #6

## **Don't take things that aren't yours.**

The resources needed for people, agriculture, and the environment are no longer independent issues. The long-term solution to resource shortages isn't in bringing them from elsewhere. Doing so serves only to create a resource house of cards. Resources must be addressed and solved locally if sound, long-term sustainability is the objective.



# #7

## **Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.**

Stakeholder processes struggle, breakdown, and fail to start for the same reason... old baggage. Each of us has our a perspective of reality and it should be no surprise that these perspectives are not the same. We have all failed to see another's point-of-view. We can make great strides when we realize, accept, and rectify these infractions.



# #8

## Wash your hands before you eat.

Don't bring something to the negotiating table that doesn't belong there. Focus on the issue in front of the group. If there are other issues to be discussed schedule a time to address those issues. Whether it is a tangential issue of little immediate significance or someone reaching into the chip bowl with a dirty hand, the reaction is the same... the group doesn't know what to do with it.



# #9

## Flush.

Old ideas, antiquated approaches, old baggage, closed-mindedness, and inflexibility bog down the negotiating process and waste energy that could otherwise be spent on meaningful solutions. A productive group will focus energy on “how we can,” and not allow discussion of “why we can’t.” Take what doesn’t work off the table and “flush” it to make room for new ideas.



# #10

## **Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.**

Coffee, danish, and bagels, even at hotel rates, are an investment. These are the lubricants to the stakeholder meeting machinery. Every meeting goes smoother when they are available.

# #11

**Live a balanced life – learn and think, draw and paint, sing and dance, play and work some everyday.**

Stakeholders cannot be expected to act in the best interest of each other if they are convened only as a need arises. Stakeholder groups should interact on a regular basis. Through this interaction will come an appreciation of perspectives, identification of shared objectives, and a deeper understanding of values underlying a particular position.



# #12

## Take a nap every afternoon.

Long-term resource planning takes time and impacts future generations. Start early, take your time, and allow reasonable time for all parties to assimilate the information before moving forward.

# #13

**When you go out in the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together.**

Chances are that you now, or in the future will, share a water resource. You and the other stakeholders do, or will, work together as a unified body in the best interest of everyone to maximize the benefit of that resource. However, not everyone plays that nice, it's good to know someone is watching your back.

# #14

## Be aware of wonder.

We could all sit down around a table, our personal objectives in hand, dig in our heels and wait everyone out. Imagine, though, if we sat down, looked at the long-term resource problem and said, “What if...”

# #15

**Goldfish, hamsters, even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup – they all die. So do we.**

Things change. The decisions we make today are not for us. The failure or lasting benefit of those decisions will have impact far beyond our lives. We must demonstrate the conviction and wisdom to make decisions that make sense not for us, but for our children. It is that wisdom by which we will be judged.

# #16

**Remember the Dick and Jane books and the first word you learned – LOOK.**

Look out for each other, look to the horizon, be creative, search for the best sustainable solution.



**“The problems we face  
cannot be solved at the  
same level of thinking that  
created them.”**

**– Albert Einstein**

# Thank you



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