BUILDING TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS AS THE CORE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Catawba-Wateree Water Management Group

March 29, 2023

BUILDING BLOCKS OF TRUST

CREATING AUTHENTIC AND EQUITABLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND WATER UTILITIES

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ABOUT RIVER NETWORK

River Network grows and strengthens a transformational national network of water, justice, and river advocates.
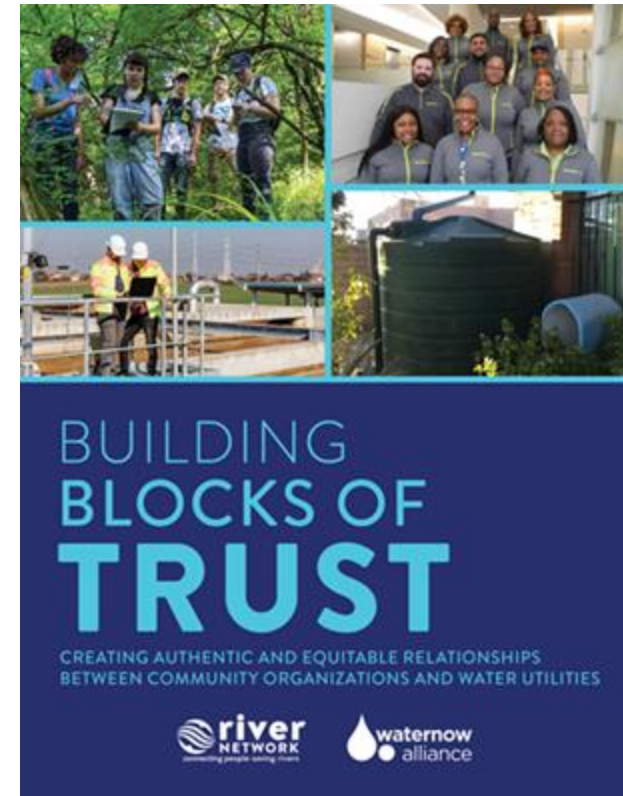
We envision a powerful and inclusive movement that ensures abundant clean water for all people and nature to thrive.

Meet the network and access resources for water organizations on our website: *rivernetwork.org*

AGENDA

- Framing/outcomes

- Background + Context

- Group exercise - spectrum of community engagement

- Case Studies - focus on source water protection

- Next steps conversations + report out

Framing

Session Purpose

Supporting the Growth of Authentic and Equitable Relationships Between Community Organizations and Water Utilities

Outcomes

- The why for partnering
- Some tools for how to partner
- Thinking on next steps

TRUST BUILDING BETWEEN COMMUNITY GROUPS & WATER UTILITIES - OVERVIEW
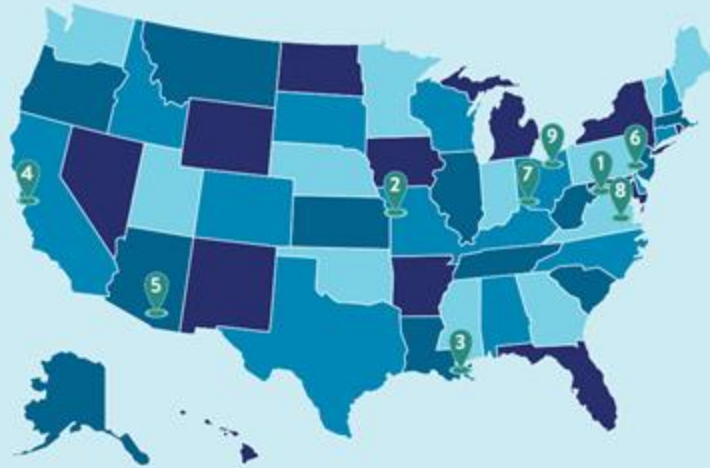
BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN UTILITIES & COMMUNITY GROUPS

WATER TRUST WORKGROUP COMMUNITIES

Below are the Water Trust Workgroup communities who shaped this report. More about each partnership can be found throughout this report.

1 Harpers Ferry, WV – West Virginia Rivers Coalition and Harpers Ferry Water Commission

2 Kansas City, MO – Heartland Conservation Alliance and Kansas City Water

3 New Orleans, LA – Healthy Community Services and Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans

4 Santa Cruz, CA – Santa Cruz Water Supply Advisory Committee and Santa Cruz Water Department

5 Tucson, AZ – Sonora Environmental Research Institute and Tucson Water

6 Philadelphia, PA – Schuylkill Action Network and Philadelphia Water Department

7 Northern Kentucky – Groundwork Ohio River Valley and Sanitation District Number 1 of Northern Kentucky

8 Richmond, VA – Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and the City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities

9 Cleveland, OH – CHN Housing Partners and Northeast Ohio Regional Sewage District

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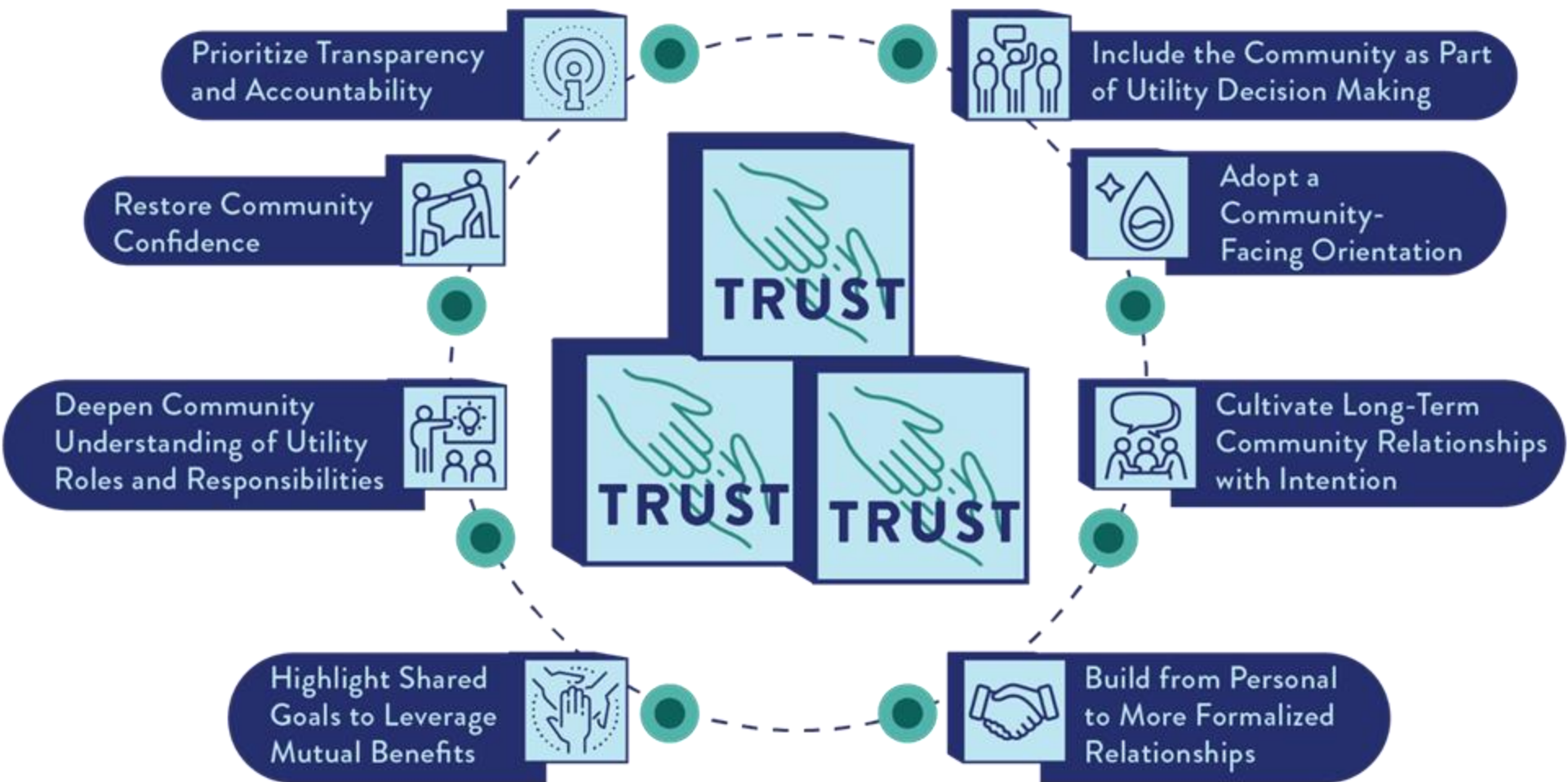water leaders. resilient solutions.

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BUILDING TRUST
A CONSTELLATION OF PRACTICES

Prioritize Transparency and Accountability

Include the Community as Part of Utility Decision Making

Restore Community Confidence

Adopt a Community-Facing Orientation

Deepen Community Understanding of Utility Roles and Responsibilities

Cultivate Long-Term Community Relationships with Intention

Highlight Shared Goals to Leverage Mutual Benefits

Build from Personal to More Formalized Relationships

TRUST TRUST TRUST

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Group Exercise

Group Exercise

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

**Building Trust –
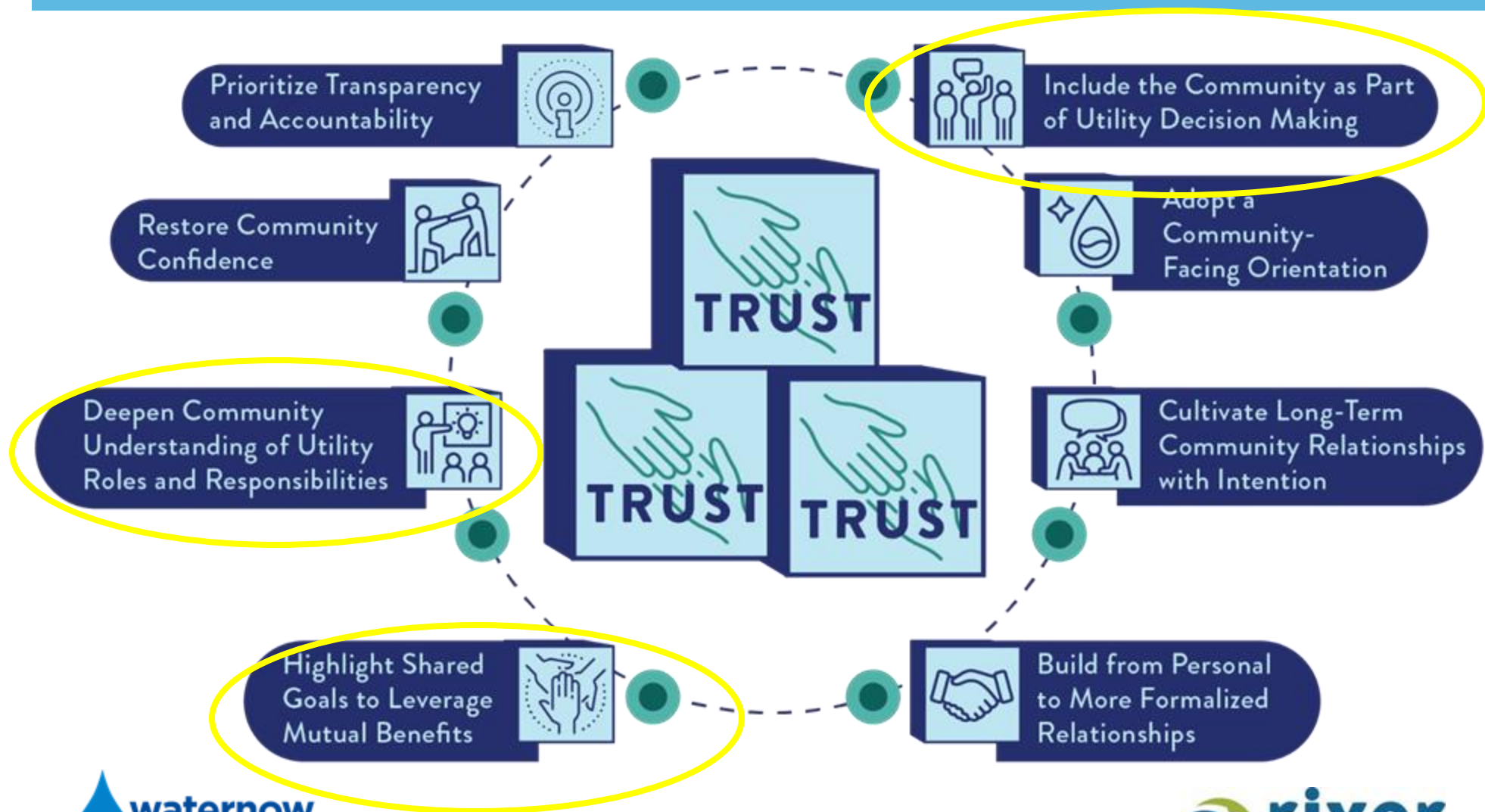Select Building Blocks and
Real World Case Studies**

BUILDING TRUST
A CONSTELLATION OF PRACTICES

HIGHLIGHTING SHARED GOALS TO LEVERAGE MUTUAL BENEFITS

PARTNERSHIP PROFILE

CLEVELAND, OHIO – INCREASING ACCESS TO WATER AFFORDABILITY ASSISTANCE

+ CHN Housing Partners
+ Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District

PARTNERSHIP PROFILE

NORTHERN KENTUCKY, OHIO RIVER VALLEY – PARTNERING ON GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR CLEAN WATER

+ Groundwork Ohio River Valley
+ Sanitation District 1 of Northern Kentucky

FOUNDATIONS AND BUILDING BLOCKS

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR DEEPENING COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING OF UTILITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

WATER UTILITIES

+ Water utilities provide opportunities to learn more about utility operations (e.g. provide tours of utility facilities and hold utility open houses)

+ Create a citizens' academy to educate community members on how the utility works

+ Include community members on utility boards and water utility staff on nonprofit boards and advisory committees
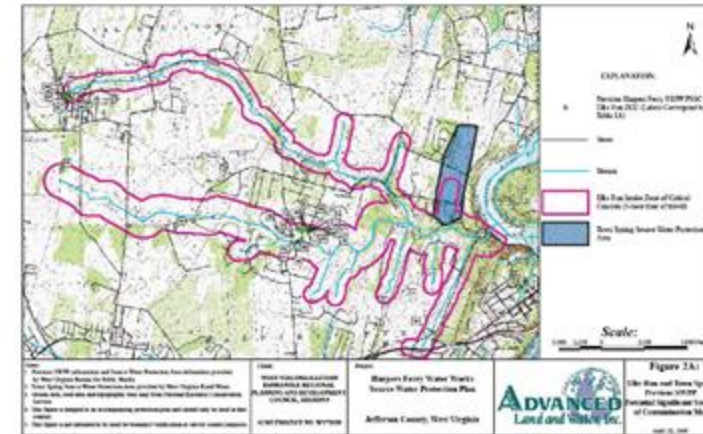
COMMUNITY GROUPS

+ Community groups take time to learn about the water utility and its operations

+ Be empathetic to challenges facing utilities

+ Conduct outreach to utilities in ways that recognize they are juggling lots of competing interests

DEEPENING COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING OF UTILITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PARTNERSHIP PROFILE

HARPERS FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA – STEPPING TOGETHER TOWARD SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

+ West Virginia Rivers Coalition
+ Harpers Ferry Water Commission

Safe Water Starts Upstream

How Safe Is the Source of Your Drinking Water?

The Harpers Ferry Water Works gets its water from Elks Run and Elk Branch, a tributary of Elks Run. The figure below shows these two stream segments and the area of "critical concern" adjoining them. Land uses upstream of Elks Run can affect the quality of your drinking water.

Currently, the principal use of the Elks Run watershed is farming with 1,859 acres of cropland and 2,309 acres of pasture in the entire watershed. Houses, towns and roads make up 1,726 acres in the entire watershed.

Everything done in a watershed impacts the quality and quantity

human consumption by removing disease-causing organisms, including viruses, bacteria and algae, and suspended solids such as sediment.

The Harpers Ferry Water Works is a partner with West Virginia Rivers which has created the Safe Water for West Virginia program to help utilities and citizen groups with watershed protection. The local program - Safe Water Harpers Ferry - has its focus on Elks Run. These efforts will help protect your source water from contamination, reduce the cost burden on the water treatment plant, and minimizes the possibility of contaminants reaching the
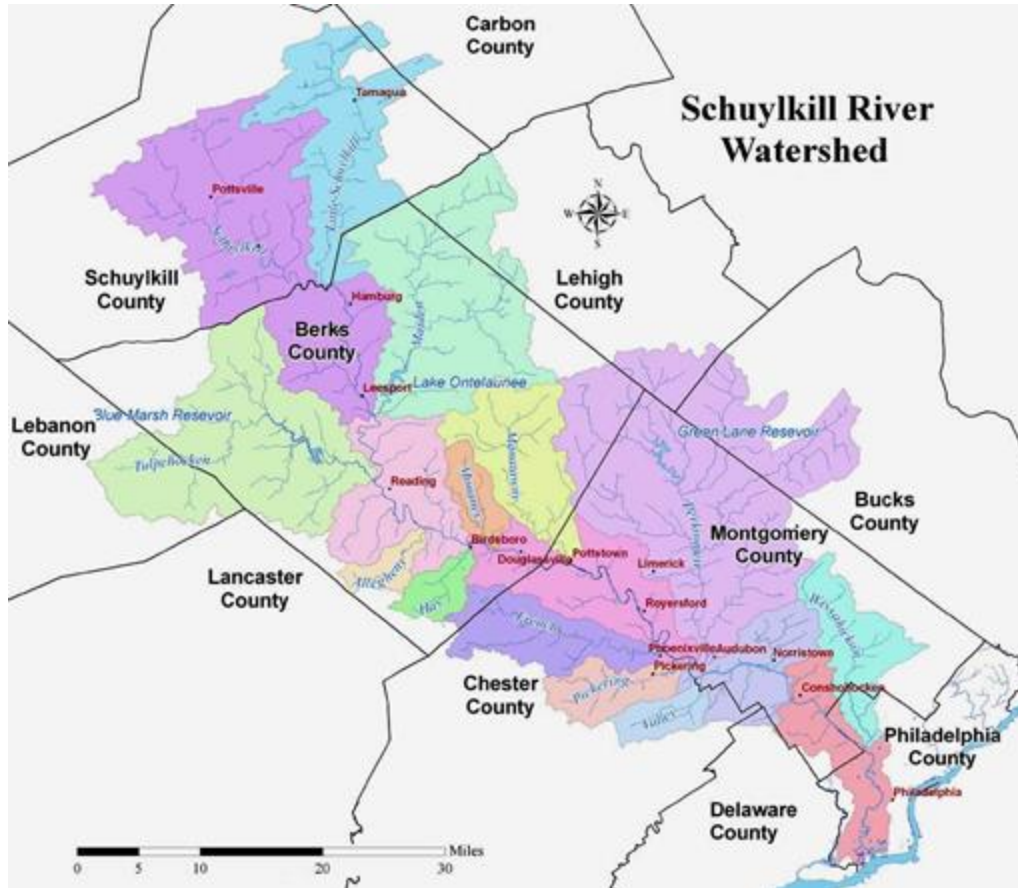
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR INCLUDING THE COMMUNITY AS PART OF UTILITY DECISION MAKING

WATER UTILITIES

+ Identify and promote existing opportunities for community members to inform utility decision making processes

+ Establish community-based advisory councils

+ Create mechanisms where they don't exist and be clear about their purpose, for example supporting or engaging in Community-Led Research

+ Be creative and inclusive in engagement approaches to allow for a variety of schedules and styles to facilitate engagement by underrepresented community members

COMMUNITY GROUPS

+ Identify and support community members interested in serving on utility boards and committees

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Application: Schuylkill River Watershed

- 11 counties
- 235 individual municipalities
- 2,000 square mile watershed
- 130 miles long
- Largest tributary to the Delaware River
- Drinking water source for ~2 million people
    - 40% of Philadelphia
    - Other parts of Southeastern PA
- Only 2% of Watershed is within City of Philadelphia

Today: Schuylkill Action Network

A Critical Partnership

- Water utility
- Provides steadfast funding
  - SAN Administration
  - Schuylkill River Restoration Fund
- Has members at every level of the SAN (Executive Steering Committee, Planning Committee, and most workgroups)

- Regional non-profit organization
- Manages 2+ staff for SAN administration
- Facilitates workgroup meetings, plans events, and connects with partners & stakeholders
- **Expands reach and abilities of PWD through SAN**

Successes

- Transparency and honesty; open about needs, capacities, and feedback
- Started with professional relationships, now both professional and personal relationships thrive
- Bridging gaps between water utilities and the community
- Creating and advancing shared goals
- Dedication

Small Group Breakouts: Next Steps

- Take a look at the handout - a short version of the building blocks of trust

- Use the questions on page 4 to write down and discuss:
  - What is your top take-away from today's session?

  - What do you think is the biggest benefit of partnering with community?

  - What is one action you plan to take as a follow-up from today's session?

    - What do you want to do?
    - Who will you engage with?
    - When do you want to do it?
    - What are the first few steps to get started?

CONCLUSION + CLOSING THOUGHTS

Top takeaways + Next steps??

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THANK YOU!