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## **Eagle Creek Watershed, Indiana: A case study in balancing watershed planning and stakeholder driven stewardship**

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### **Abstract Text:**

In Eagle Creek Watershed, stakeholder stewardship began in 1997 as a group of concerned citizens, the Indianapolis Water Company and Farm Bureau collaborated to address issues of atrazine runoff. In 2003, with the development of a new watershed research and outreach partnership between IUPUI and long-term managers of the Indianapolis water supply, new resources became available and watershed issues were expanded to include E. coli, nutrients, and sediment concerns.

Building on the work of the initial stakeholders and adding new assessments in land use change and watershed analyses, researchers at IUPUI assisted the group in writing a comprehensive watershed management plan. The adopted plan utilized an approach that evaluated both water quality degradation and risk and set specific long term goals designed to both improve areas of water quality degradation as well as mitigate impairments that were deemed destined to occur in the future.

In 2005, with a 319 Watershed Implementation Grant, the Eagle Creek Watershed Alliance began to move forward. With the commitment and energy of an active core of stakeholders, the first year of implementation has seen major successes. The first key step was the development of a set of guiding principles for watershed stewardship that provided a framework for action as community leaders, municipalities, and citizens rapidly embraced the watershed organization and sought guidance on a myriad of topics ranging from land use considerations, planning, community development and overall resource stewardship.

The strong leadership and engagement of the watershed stakeholders has led to increased activities that include a watershed implementation assessment grant (EPA 319) and a National CEAP grant. This presentation will focus on how our stakeholders became empowered and vested, and how they remain active in the implementation of the plan and the goals of improving their watershed.

### **Impact Statement:**

This project has improved water quality by direct implementation of watershed best management practices. The project has also improved watershed management by providing new methods for developing watershed assessments and new idea for enhanced stakeholder involvement and resource stewardship.