

Overview of Responses Submitted to Clean Water Act 303(d) Vision Engagement Questionnaires (December 2013 – February 2014)

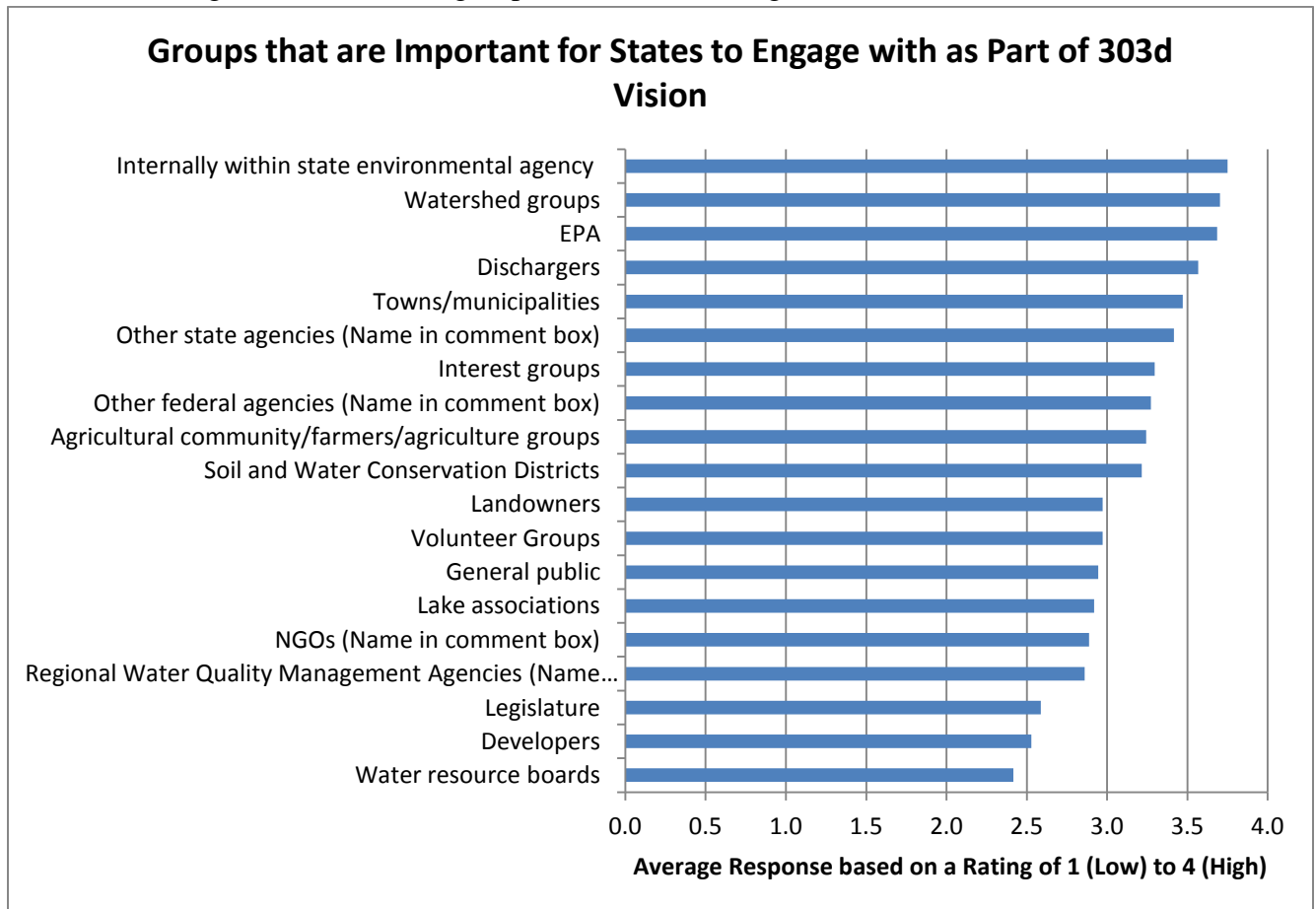
In December 2013, U.S. EPA released a new framework for managing Clean Water Act 303 (d) program responsibilities, entitled “*A Long-Term Vision for Assessment, Restoration, and Protection under the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) Program,*” which was largely informed by a lengthy EPA-state collaborate process launched in 2011. ACWA hosted a series of calls from December 2013 – February 2014 devoted to state discussion of the Vision’s Prioritization, Engagement, and Alternatives Goals. Following each call, ACWA distributed a related online questionnaire to state participants. The below highlights comprise just some key preliminary results of the questionnaire on Engagement. If your state would like an additional opportunity to respond to any of the questionnaires, please contact Susan Kirsch (at email: skirsch@acwa-us.org) to request the online link(s).

Engagement Questionnaire: Updated through May 2, 2014

A total of 35 states¹ responded. The following are preliminary key findings:

Important Partners

- The most important groups for engagement on TMDLs are internal coordination within state environmental agencies, watershed groups, EPA and dischargers.

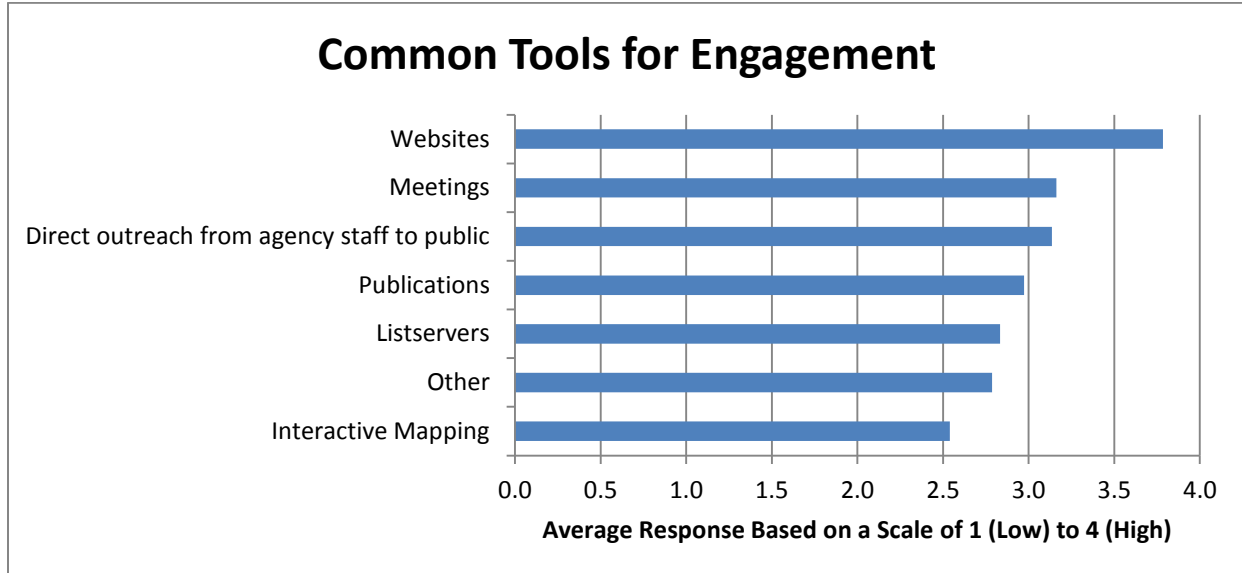


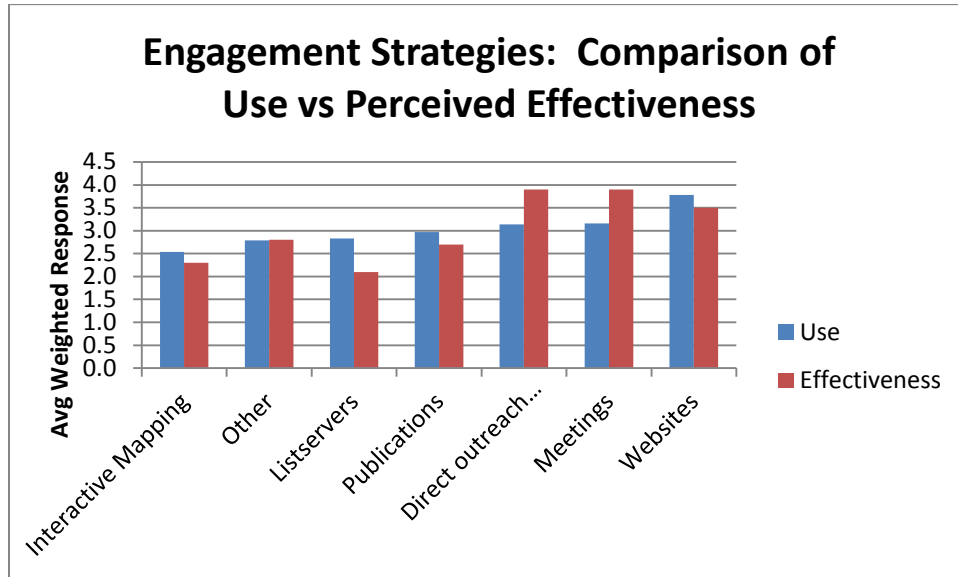
¹ States that have submitted responses as of March 7, 2014: AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NV, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, OH, OR, PA, SC, TX, UT, VA, WY. Results from WI are still pending.

- States generally identify the need to coordinate internally with a wide variety of Clean Water Act Program such as monitoring, standards, 303d, nonpoint source and permitting, as well as other regulatory programs outside of the CWA. The federal and public partners identified were also a broad group and were generally related to those internal programs identified.

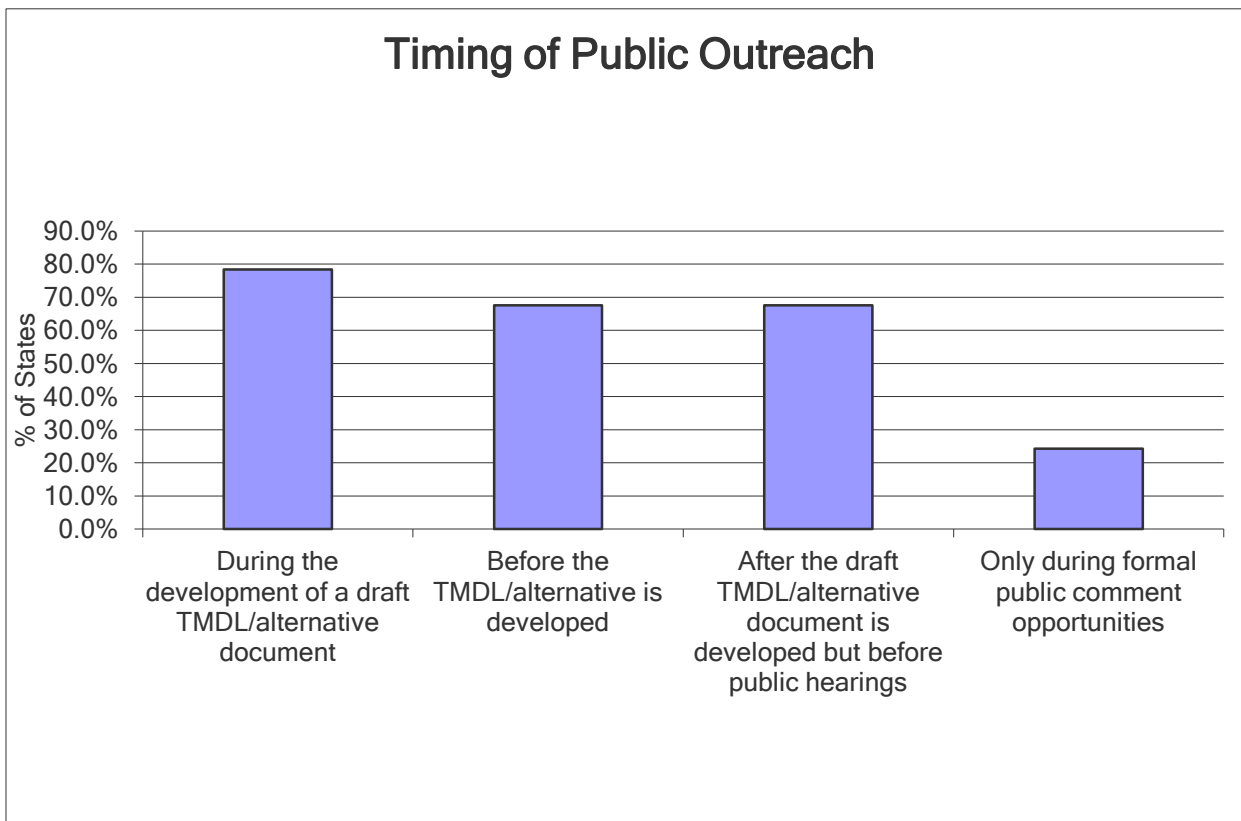
Engagement Process

- Most states (57%) do not have a formal process for conducting public outreach.
- The most used public outreach tools are websites, followed by meetings, direct outreach and publications.
- The least used outreach tools are listservs and interactive mapping.
- The most effective forms of outreach are meetings, direct outreach from staff and websites.
- Listservs are the least effective form of outreach with publications and interactive mapping considered average for effectiveness.
- States were most interested in learning about additional technology-based tools for outreach such as interactive mapping and websites.
- Other tools for engagement included social media such as Facebook and Twitter as well as public demonstrations or participating in public events such as fairs or community events.

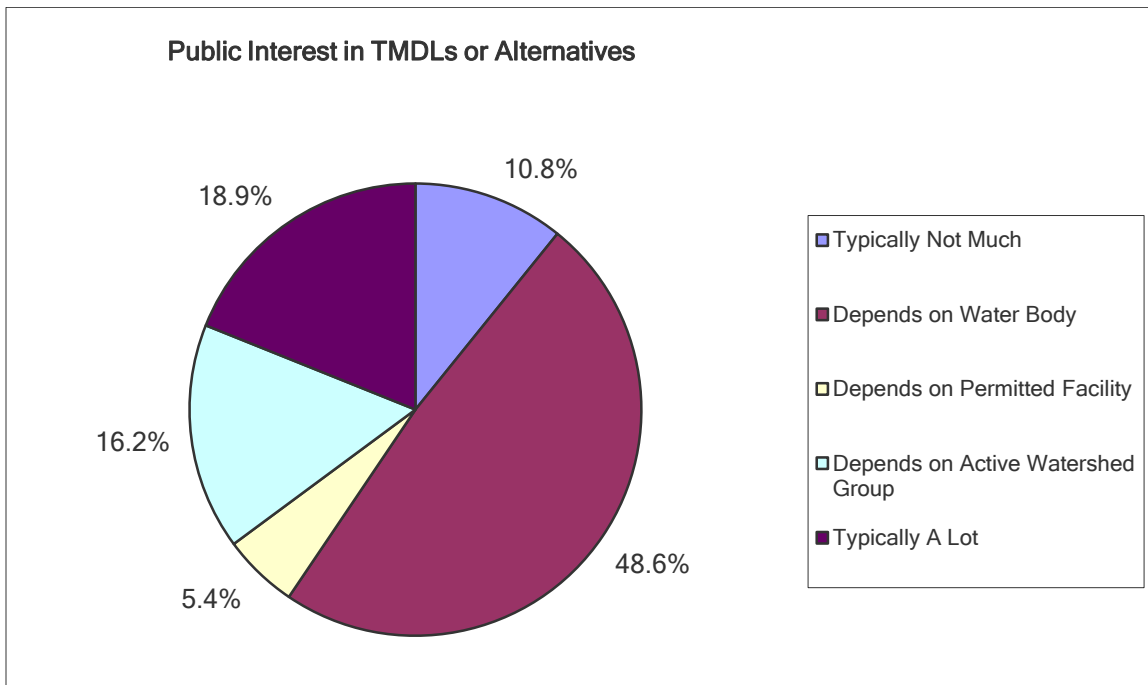




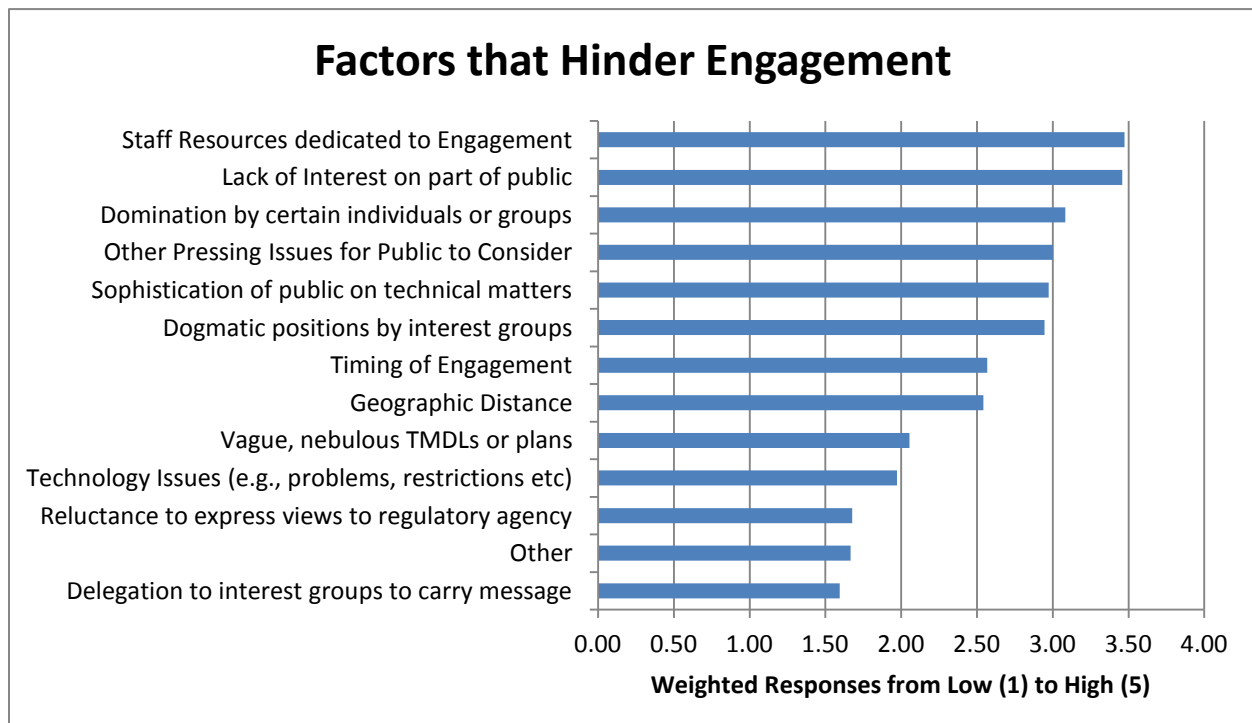
- Most states seem to have public outreach that occurs at multiple points in the TMDL process starting before the TMDL is developed and going through post-development phases.
- Only approximately one quarter of the states (24%) limit public outreach to the public comment period.



- Most states feel that the public is interested in impaired waters. Often that interest is tied to a connection to the resource either from the public or regulated community.

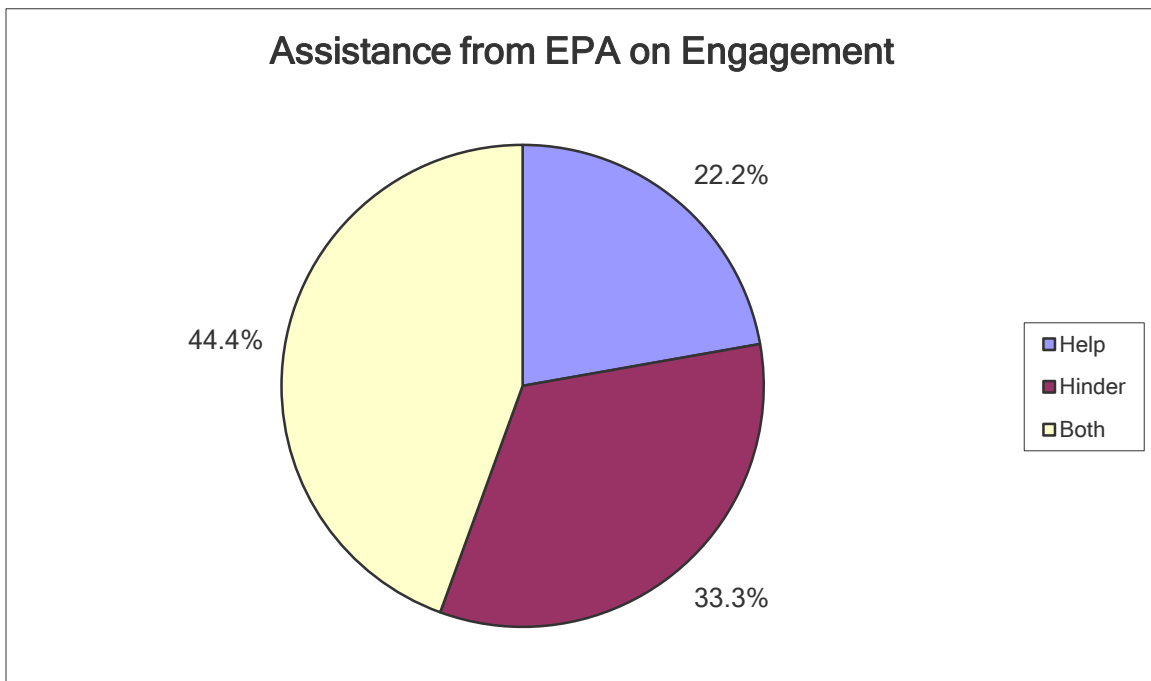


- The greatest factor which hinders effective public engagement is staff resources followed by the lack of interest on part of the public, domination by certain individuals or groups, competing issues for the public to consider and trouble engaging the public on technical matters.



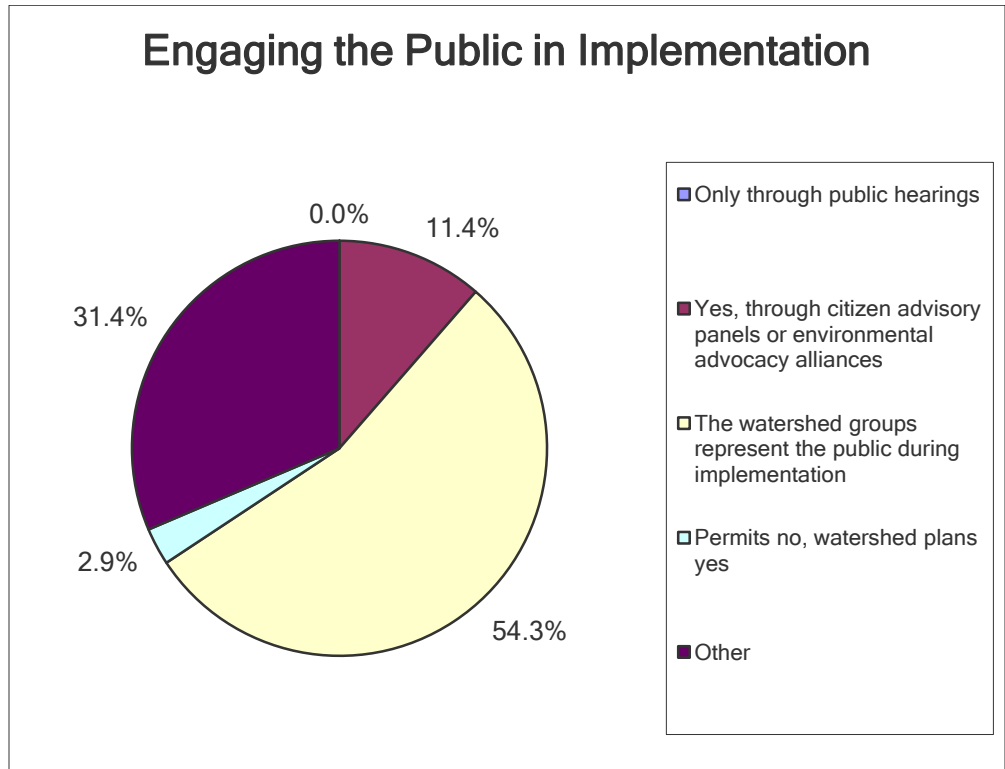
Assistance from EPA

- When asked about EPA help on engagement, most states provided a qualified answer – it depends on the situation.
 - Practical solutions are welcome. Not mandates.
 - There is a concern that federal assistance may not be welcomed by the public in certain settings however in some cases, having federal input would provide assurance to the public. It seems to be a matter of case-specific concerns.
 - Complex situations may benefit from EPA assistance on engagement.
 - EPA could provide assistance through increased funding or development of visual tools, such as mapping and GIS improvements.
 - EPA could provide talking points, web pages, branding or new terminology/name but should do so without technical jargon. Communication needs to be more accessible.
 - EPA might also be able to provide behind the scenes education on the 303d program to national interest groups (e.g. Sierra Club, national business or manufacturing groups, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)
 - Allow for flexibility.
 - EPA assistance could be improved if the federal programs became more familiar with local issues before stepping in.



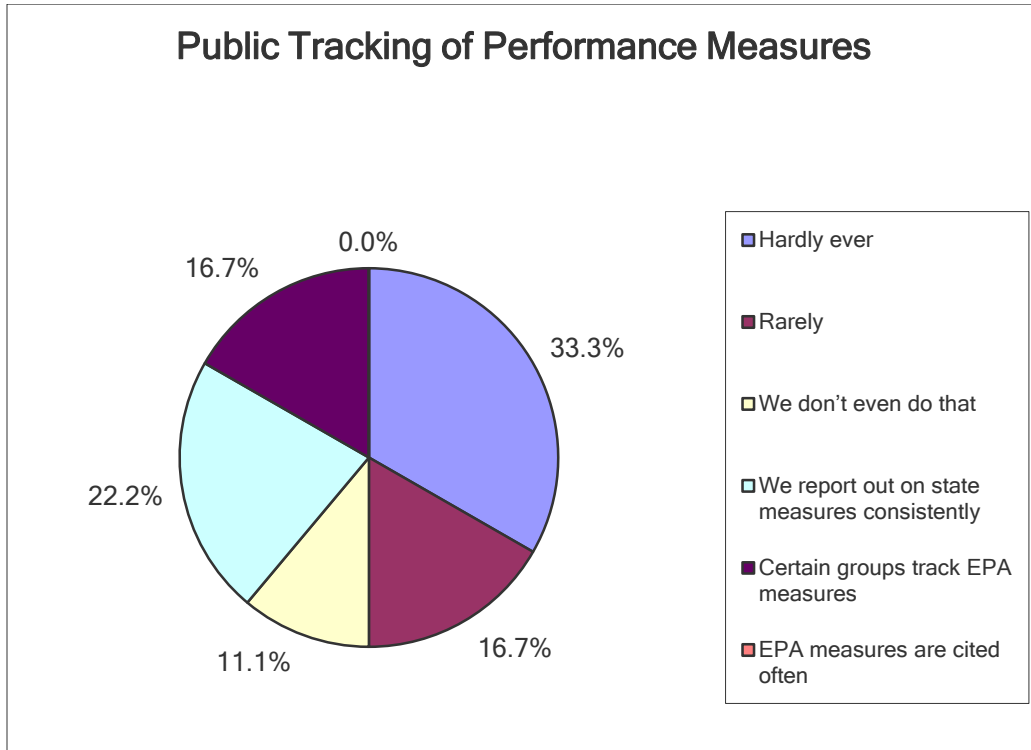
Response from the Public

- Opportunities for public engagement in implementation activities are mostly found through working with watershed groups.



Tracking Progress

- Generally, the public does not track progress through state or federal performance measures.
- Almost 70% of the states believe that it would be beneficial to track progress in improving public engagement although only 20% of the states currently do so; 30% did not feel that tracking public engagement would provide a benefit.
- States are looking for good ways to track progress.



Other Thoughts

- Implementation of the Clean Water Act also includes voluntary measures. There is a need for the public to participate in restoring/protecting water quality but that participation is at time voluntary. This creates a dilemma.
- There needs to be an acknowledgement that TMDLs are not the only answer to water quality problems.
- There is general support for a retooled rebranding of the 303d program.
 - Eliminate technical jargon. Use practical terms.
 - Hire an outside advertisement firm and bring the results to the 2015 303d National meeting.
 - Suggested program terms:
 - Water Quality Management Planning
 - Include the words “Clean Water” in the 303d program name
 - Water Quality Assessment Reports
 - Water Quality Improvements/Solutions Report
 - Water Quality Improvement Plan
 - TMDL = Cleanup Efforts and Process
 - Water Clean-up Plan
 - Water Quality Restoration (or Protection) Management Plans