

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

This is a reminder of the LOON issues brainstorm that has been set to follow the Great Lakes Network (of No Time To Waste fame) meeting next Tuesday at the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy in Toronto January 16th. The Great Lakes meeting is scheduled for the morning and the LOON meeting will go from 1 - 5 pm. We have lots of issues in common with that network, so the whole day should be very useful.

LOON at this point needs a reaffirmation of direction and purpose, a recommitment of support from its member organizations and a clearer definition of process. We will evaluate our progress and our process, formulate some guidelines that will enhance the usefulness of the network as a tool, and develop an overall strategy for the next two years.

Enclosed is a preliminary agenda for the meeting, a brief overview of some of the issues on the table and some of my thoughts on what a network is. Thanks to everyone who gave me ideas and helped flesh out the issues. This is a DRAFT! This isn't intended to be adopted without lots of revision. I have no (or not much, I hope) attachment to these ideas - they are just a place to start. Please take a few minutes to read and think about what changes, additions and additional issues that need to be included. Also think about your potential involvement in basin-wide projects for the next two years.

If you won't be able to be there in the flesh, please consider sending or faxing (315-475-6719) your ideas so that we can throw them into the brain storm.

See you there!

Sincerely,

Sue Mihalyi  
Great Lakes Coordinator  
Atlantic States Legal Foundation

## **AGENDA**

This meeting will consist primarily of discussions and brainstorms. We will hopefully draft resolutions that can be distributed to the membership for comment.

**Review Agenda** - make revisions, set order and time limits for items

**Purpose and Goals** - What are we here for? What do we hope to accomplish?

**Group identities** and roles within the network - separateness, overlap of purposes, etc. How do we avoid competition? How can we structure this so that group limitations can be followed? How do we promote active groups w/o appearing to play favorites?

**Structure and Leadership** - What are the possibilities? What is needed?

**Membership** - What kinds of groups should we target? What about individuals?

**Process and Communication** - What have been the problems so far? Brainstorm possible solutions? What agreements can we make about communication w/in the Network?

**The next two years** - roughing out an agenda or plan

**Evaluation** - How can we measure our success?

**Project development**, structures and guidelines, coordination of similar projects - How much structure is needed to enhance the process rather than stifle it?

## Overview of Some Agenda items

### Purpose and Goals

As stated in the preface of A Citizens' Agenda for Restoring Lake Ontario, "the purpose of the LOON project is to mobilize citizen support to implement the recommendations of the Regional Meeting to clean up toxic pollution in Lake Ontario." Is this still an accurate statement of purpose? What needs to be added?

The following is a proposed Statement of Purpose:

LOON is a communication tool designed to enhance the effectiveness of the environmental community in the Lake Ontario Basin. The goal of the membership is to clean up toxic pollution in Lake Ontario through cooperative action on environmental projects.

### Objectives:

- To increase the number of joint project in the basin
- To develop working relationships between member organizations
- To promote information sharing and idea exchange
- To build an interdependent and effective environmental community
- To develop a working agenda for clean up efforts in the basin
- To increase the number of groups that belong to the Network
- To increase the level of awareness of environmental issues and projects in the general public

### Group Identities

There have been expressed concerns about boundaries, limits, roles, power, money, etc. throughout the history of LOON. We have to keep in mind that socialization in western society seems to stress personal gain over cooperative effort. LOON is really a departure from the norm. We need to keep these issues out in the open as much as possible. To use the network effectively, we must have some basic agreements about roles and process. We need to know what to expect from the network itself and from the other participants. We need ground rules. Here are some suggestions:

### Proposed Agreements and Definitions

We recognize that communicating through a network requires conscious effort.

We acknowledge that this type of communication is somewhat slower than working by ourselves or the group down the street.

We agree to communicate through the Network in spite of the disadvantages because of the benefits gained by working together.

We agree to commit some portion of our time and resources to furthering the objectives of LOON by one or more of the following:

- contribute information on issues, activities and projects to the network
- participate in projects whenever possible
- share ideas about new projects

communicate with other organizations more than before  
participate in LOON meetings  
act on a project steering committee  
act on the LOON steering committee  
hold news conferences on LOON issues and projects  
help promote LOON  
help promote LOON members  
give credit to all participants in my project  
lend resources to projects and project organizations  
pass LOON information on to my membership

### **Structure, Leadership and Membership**

What kind of leadership do we want? Do we want to have a steering committee or a leadership group or something more formal like a chair or officers? What about some kind of committee structure? Is there some other structure that would work as well? How would no structure work? How will people become part of this leadership structure? How will we take care of our leaders?

How will we ensure even representation and participation from around the Lake? How can we support the involvement of the small organizations as well as the large ones? What about people who are not affiliated with any particular organization? The guiding principle is one of voluntary association of groups from among the groups which are affiliated with the LOON network.

Thoughts: It seems as though the organizations that cover large geographical areas (GLU, ASLF, Greenpeace, etc.) have lots of reason to be involved in the overall leadership. In essence they represent various regions in the basin because of memberships and other affiliations. But that also represents a problem in that the same players are up all the time. We should not limit the leadership group in terms of numbers. Perhaps some funding could be sought to support travel to these type meetings. Sharing the project leadership roles gives a variety of groups the opportunity to build new and effective working relationships with other active groups in the basin, share and develop environmental and campaign related expertise, develop new relationships with environmental funders etc.

I would like to see a building block type structure to LOON. This could be organized by sub-basin or by a more loosely defined geographic region (east, west, north & south?). Each of these regional groups or sub-basin groups would have a leadership group and send representatives to the basin-wide leadership group. That way, concerns that pertain to one region more than another will be less likely to get overlooked.

This type of structure also fits in with what we are trying to do in the Great Lakes Basin. Each Lakewide network then becomes a building block of the Great Lakes Basin Network

## **Communication**

Several organizations have funding to continue work on the Lake Ontario Organizing Network or Great Lakes issues. Many others of us are seeking funding for major projects or have decided to commit some of our resources to the issues whether we have specific funding or not. Part of the purpose of the Network is to coordinate the myriad activities planned or underway to get the maximum result. We can only do this by communicating with each other. Project reporting uses existing newsletters produced by the participating groups as much as possible.

A network of this sort requires continual input of energy to keep the lines open and to avoid in-group / out-group feelings from happening. How shall we do this? How can we support each other without feeling our pet projects or funding threatened? How can we promote the network concept? How can we increase the numbers of individuals and organizations participating in the Network? How can we get more done?

## **Project Development**

What is the next step? What are the most important projects to focus on? How can we coordinate our efforts to avoid duplication of effort or competition for funds? How will we decide what projects to support? What projects can we suggest that will dovetail in with what organizations are currently doing? What strategies can we create for basin-wide projects? How can we as a network impact the progress of the various RAPs in the Basin, the Niagara River/ Lake Ontario Toxics Management Plan as well as the other State, Provincial and Federal programs that affect the Lake?

### **Proposed agreements about Project Development:**

We agree to recognize a Lead Agency or Agencies for each LOON project. The Lead Agency will serve as the primary contact for the project.

Assisting organizations are those that commit resources of some sort (time, funding, expertise) to a project.

Supporting organizations are those that sign on to a project. That is, they support the project by lending the use of their name and influence to be used in connection with its promotion. The Lead Agency may decide whether it needs a Project Advisory Group or not, but is strongly advised to form one, especially if the project involves more than one organization.

Organizations make commitments to follow through on projects and individual tasks

Communication and expectations on project tasks should be very clear with agreements on specific results and deadlines.

Organizations will make available all information concerning joint LOON projects to involved LOON members.

Names of involved organizations will be included in all public literature on that project.

A project is a LOON project by agreement of the organizations involved in that project.

LOON projects will be open to any LOON member to become involved during the development phase. Once the actual work has begun, however, the Project Advisory Group and/or the Lead Agency should have some control over additional participants.

We might want some agreement about how LOON projects will be promoted. They should be promoted under the LOON logo. Should LOON be promote before the lead organization? Assisting organizations (those who contribute resources in some form - should also get credit, as well as those who sign on in support. For example, one way of putting together the LOON directory would be to have the cover be just the title and the LOON logo. The next page would be a short explanation of the project and why it is an important part of the network. Next would be devoted to those who did the actual work (the lead group(s)) perhaps with assisting organizations listed also. After all this would come the list of organizations who agree with the project and wish to formally sign on but who did not contribute materially to the project. This will give a clear picture of the players involved and their relative activity.

Each project should be marketed within the network in some way so that ALL members have the chance to participate. The value of this is in the development of the image of an active constituency knowledgeable of what is going on throughout the basin. In addition organizations who are involved at any level will benefit from the public marketing of the project around the basin. Most of us look for media opportunities to promote our issues and organizations. Cooperative projects will increase the number of opportunities to get public exposure.

Organizations should be encouraged to designate as many projects as possible as LOON projects.

Projects should strive to have participation from American and Canadian groups and the east and west ends of the basin.

Each time a project constellation is formed, the participating groups develop their own agreements about how they will work together. Working issues include -

- Role of the lead group - especially in terms of fundraising
- Role of the project staff
- Role of the project advisors drawn from LOON affiliates
- Role of non LOON advisors

Projects acknowledge the groups that are participating - x, y,

and z of the LOON network. This leaves other members of the LOON network free from association with the project.

The Project Advisory Group acts as a board to the project with the project staff primarily responsible for the work of the project. Non-LOON advisors act as advisors to the project board. Realistically speaking, the non-LOON advisors will also assist the project staff directly on issues where their specific expertise is useful.

**CRITERIA FOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT:**

- Applicability across the basin
- Results can be useful to local groups in their own efforts
- Demonstration project at one site, the results of which can be transferred to other centres
- Benefits from interaction across the US/CAN border
- Builds on the highest level of knowledge that exists in the basin (not reinventing the wheel)
- Builds a sense of community among organizations with different orientations
- Meets a shared need of a variety of groups around the basin where no one of the groups could pull it off by themselves.
- Enhance working relationships among active environmentalists - foster face to face contact among environmentally active people
- Multiply effectiveness of existing resources

**PROJECT FUNDRAISING:** No group could fundraise in the name of LOON. However, groups which have participated in projects could refer to their role in their fundraising material. The issue of who and how to use project related activities in reports to funders needs some thought in these situations where groups are cooperating on joint projects.

**The Bigger Picture**

How do we fit in with what is happening in the Great Lakes Basin? How does what we do here impact the rest of the Basin? Since LOON seems to have more history than other regional networks, how can we promote the concept of networking or help other networks as they develop? How will we communicate with them?

## A Definition of Network

A network is a tool. It is a conceptual model for communication. Like any tool, it takes a bit of know-how and practice to use efficiently and effectively. One of the characteristics of the network as a tool is that it must be used cooperatively. Communication always involves more than one entity. There must be a speaker and a listener for any communication to work. Most of the time, we communicate in both of those roles simultaneously. In a network, the communication usually has limitations and structure. As participants in LOON, we agree to talk to each other about what is going on environmentally in the Lake Ontario Basin. Information exchange is tailored to support ongoing projects. We use the tool to develop and refine a series of goals and objectives. Through continued communication, we make joint decisions about actions needed to accomplish those goals.

This is the point at which networks and organizations diverge. The network, being a tool, has no responsibility or authority to see that things get done. It cannot decide which person or organization should be doing what particular thing. It cannot tell anyone to do anything. It is not accountable.

The organization makes decisions about its activities. Organizations usually have leaders or directors who have the responsibility to assign, encourage or persuade the staff or members to do what must be done. An organization is accountable to its members, its board of directors, its funders or its clients.

An organization, being accountable to various bodies, must make decisions accordingly. It wants to use its resources in the most efficient way possible to get the most accomplished within its limitations. One of the most frequently used ways of stretching resources is by trading expertise or help. This avoids the cost of hiring consultants or extra staff and usually has the added benefit of trading moral support also.

Through the network as a tool, an organization has a means of finding the resources and help it needs. Not only can the resources of the organization be expanded, but frequently a new resource is created that didn't exist before. That resource is the think tank of creative minds that are now in contact with each other.