



Drivers and Motivating Factors

Understanding the reasons why a community or organization makes the transition from more traditional stormwater best management practices (BMPs) to sustainable stormwater BMPs requires an understanding of the underlying motivating factors or catalysts of change. This knowledge can help you make the case for better BMP implementation or facilitate communication with other stakeholders.

Characteristics of change

In many communities, sustainable stormwater practices are not the default choice for site design, though these practices can be applied almost anywhere. The regulatory environment can mandate a particular approach or use of specific practices, such as water quality impairments or local development regulations. Alternatively, sustainable practices are more likely to be adopted voluntarily when incentives are provided, such as tax incentives for developments that include innovative BMPs. Along the same lines, when the community as a whole desires a “green aesthetic,” a demand is created for natural, functional community amenities.

In any case, change may come about gradually or may occur quickly, depending on the particular regulatory and cultural environment in which you are working. Changes that occur quickly are often driven by a catalytic event or “tipping point” that prompts a change. Gradual changes are often driven by less urgent but persistent pressure from an individual or group within the community.

Some drivers for BMP implementation are listed below:

Environmental

- Reduce pollution (improve water quality).
- Reduce runoff (regulate water quantity).
- Reduce or eliminate water quality problems caused by CSOs.
- Increase habitat for wildlife.
- Promote watershed health.

Market- or value-driven

- Respond to market forces. Many communities now desire “green” living spaces or environmentally friendly amenities. Adding aesthetically pleasing BMPs may increase property values and improve sales.
- Increase tourism potential of an area by creating a “green aesthetic”
- Add amenity to sites with stormwater management concerns to increase support from community
- Establish a competitive advantage in the marketplace by developing an expertise in stormwater BMP implementation
- Recognition for innovative design through development of sustainable, artful stormwater BMPs.

Regulatory

- Receive tax breaks or other regulatory incentives by implementing sustainable or green practices.
- Comply with federal, state, or local regulations, such as stormwater permit requirements.
- Meet water pollution control requirements associated with impaired water bodies.

Additional

- Respond to the needs or desires of a client.
- Practical considerations related to site conditions that make certain practices more appropriate than others
- Pressure from an elected official to implement more 'eco-friendly' stormwater management practices
- Campaigns to develop new public amenities with integrated stormwater control measures

This is not an exhaustive list and there are sure to be other factors at work in your community. Identifying the underlying motivating factors can help determine the best course of action to take when promoting change.

Motivating change

Because each community faces different pressures and challenges, understanding the local situation can be helpful in tailoring an implementation strategy. Understanding local drivers and factors that impact the community and learning how to leverage those drivers can be the key to motivating change. It is important to note that changes in practice are often easiest to motivate when there is an immediate problem or crisis to address and the consequences of inaction are concrete and significant.

Change may be driven by the actions and arguments of a single individual or small group of people, the needs or desires of the general public, mandates (or incentives) from a regulatory organization, or intrinsic motivators from within an organization. It is often a driven individual or group that champions innovation and better BMP implementation in their community. The person might be a citizen, an elected official, a municipal staff, a designer, or an engineer; the group could be a watershed organization, garden club, environmental group, etc. With the right support from the rest of the community, these forces can bring about significant shifts in perspective and can become motivating factors of change.

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