

Developing the Mid-Atlantic Water Program: Breaking Boundaries and Build Capacity and Collaboration

introduction

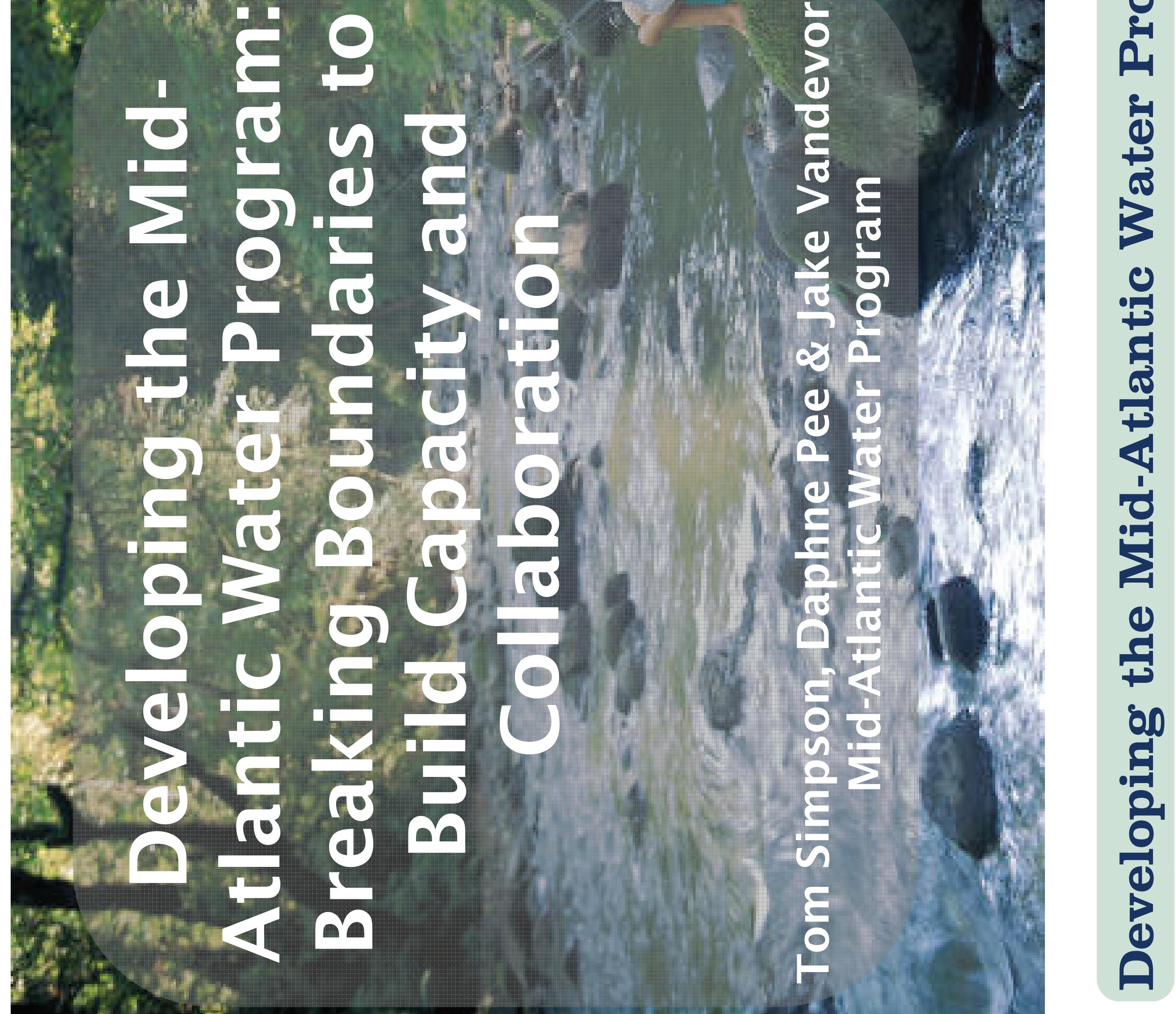
Since late 2002, the Mid-Atlantic Water Program (MAWP) has addressed the area's major water quality issues in a uniquely regional way.

By developing a cohesive network of extension and research faculty from six 1862 and three 1890 land grant universities, the MAWP has promoted a structure of interstate collaboration founded upon the dissemination of water quality science for practical applications in the field and on "the Hill."

Such a coordinated effort to incorporate the best available land-based science in both policy and on-the-ground operations was not formerly available or pursued in the region.

The success of the program, however, is reflected by the difficulties in building an organizational culture, developing a regional presence, managing members who can only commit a small portion of their time, identifying and strategically addressing needs, and measuring impacts.

This poster discusses how four core values—unity, vision, leadership, and commitment—factored into the development of the Mid-Atlantic Water Program and how they influence the organization's growth, accountability, and future impacts.



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Mid-Atlantic Water Program

Developing the Mid-Atlantic Water Program

How we did it...

Uniting more than 30 busy scientists (representing nine universities across five states and the District of Columbia) under the premise of collaborating across state lines required some initial incentive: base funding. In order to garner support from institutions and encourage participation amongst scientists, each school and representative received funding to use towards regional coordination, travel, project delivery, and other needs. The funds have decreased slightly over the years, but currently, each member receives \$5000 and each school receives \$15,000.

Once program members joined the table, getting them to break their state emphases and develop a truly regional perspective proved a little more difficult. The MAWP worked diligently to transition the state/institutional mindset into a regional ethic. With time approximately two years), and considerable discussion, the regional perspective became the norm, creating a stronger collective effort that has yielded tools and resources appreciated and used by key stakeholders.

The success of these products have helped build cohesion in the group as well as raised the presence of the MAWP as a leader in land-based water quality science. In the past four years, the MAWP has partnered with over 70 government, non-government, academic, and industrial organizations, even formalizing partnerships with the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program and USDA-AERS Beltsville Agricultural Research Center through a Memorandum of Understanding.

While the success of the program has garnered great dedication amongst members, the problem of time commitment amongst program members has raised concerns about accountability for base funding. Approximately 25% of all program funds has gone towards membership, but there was little accounting for how funds advanced the projects. To ensure more return on these funds in the future, the regional program will discontinue base funding to members and rely on project proposals to fund participation.

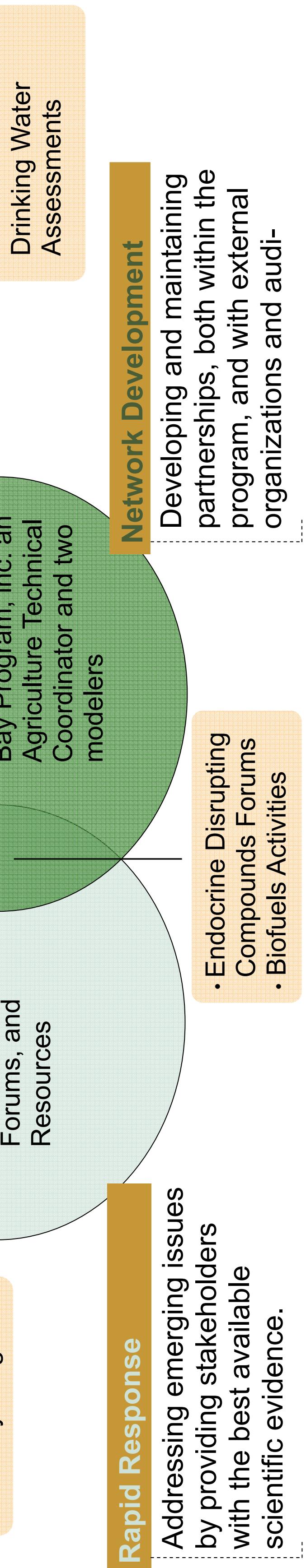
About the Mid-Atlantic Water Program

Program Themes

- Nutrient Management
- Watershed Management, Public Policy, and Economics
- Small Farms and Underserved Audiences
- Residential Environment and Landscape Management

Participating Schools

- Delaware State University
- Pennsylvania State University
- University of Delaware
- University of the District of Columbia
- University of Maryland, College Park
- University of Maryland, Eastern Shore
- Virginia Tech
- West Virginia University
- Virginia State University



building a network that produces results

During the first few years, the MAWP concentrated on refining the program's focus, building a cohesive network of scientists, and cultivating partnerships. Today, the diversity of scientists — and growing unification among them — is reflected by the range of projects they have delivered and the great success with which these projects were received.

This flexibility is one of the reasons why the Mid-Atlantic Water Program has been so effective in producing impacts in its three program goals. Along with addressing the four thematic areas, responding to emerging issues, and building partnerships and regional capacity, the MAWP has successfully leveraged millions of dollars in external funds. The success of the Mid-Atlantic Water Program is founded upon the commitment of its members, their leadership in the water quality community, and their vision in designing projects that address the needs of various audiences. As the MAWP completes this funding cycle, Program members look towards taking the successes and lessons learned from the past to develop a stronger program built on regional coordination, accountability, and evaluation.

...Where we're going

In order to continue growing the MAWP, program leaders will need to better define the program's goals. In the past, program goals were too broad to capture the main limitations to future growth. Understandably, members must prioritize the demands of their institutions, so finding the time to work with the regional program can be difficult. In order to continue advancing the program's reach and impacts, program leadership must find a means of introducing new people to help address regional needs.

unity

Even though the program has an established and cohesive group of scientists that appreciate the need to work at a regional scale, it is also critical to recognize that the membership within this group has also provided many issues that tracking the program's ultimate impact proved very challenging. By narrowing the goals for the future, the program can provide more specific guidelines for project delivery and establish a more practical framework for evaluating impacts.

vision

As recognition for the regional program has grown, so too have the opportunities offered by the wider community of partners. For members, however, the struggle to fulfill the needs of their institutions and their established obligations to the regional program greatly constrains their ability to accept any new opportunities. As the MAWP looks to the future, program leadership must find a way to meet the needs of both the members and partners before the opportunities are simply no longer offered.

leadership

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