

DOCUMENTING THE EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPATING

**Documenting the Experience of Participating  
in a Regionalization Effort to Control  
Stormwater Pollution in Southern Maine**

*A Qualitative Study of the Casco Bay  
Interlocal Stormwater Working Group*

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## Abstract

The Casco Bay Interlocal Stormwater Working Group is being held up as that model for regionalization efforts by officials outside the group. This study addresses two hypotheses: 1) Members of the ISWG believe that their participation on the ISWG has been beneficial to them and 2) Better understanding of the overall experience of being a member of the ISWG can provide insight into what makes regionalization efforts in Maine successful. The study used in-depth interviews, observation and historical information data collection techniques. Study findings indicate that the experience of being a municipal member on the ISWG board has been seen as beneficial to members in a diverse number of ways. There are both direct benefits and side benefits to members for participating in ISWG activities. There are also challenges to participating. The ISWG is poised at a pivotal moment of transformation that may affect its functionality in the future. Finally, because of its unique attributes, the ISWG has limited applicability as a model for other regionalization efforts. The study looks at each of these key points in detail.

### Background

The issue of regionalization is topical in the state of Maine. Regionalization can be seen as a policy trend in the education and healthcare service fields, both in the United States, but even more so, in Canada. Our latest Governor, John Baldacci, is politically outspoken in favor of regionalization and in many of his public addresses, he states that Maine should work towards a policy of regionalizing services to make the best use of resources, decrease the budget, cut taxes and make government more efficient (Cicco, 2003; Cohen, 2003; ). His plans encompass regionalization in many areas of government, including education (Task Force on Increasing Efficiency and Equity in the Use of K-12 Education Resources, 2003); urban and rural economic growth and land use planning (Nacelewicz, 2003), and sharing the burden of expensive services at the municipal level (Bell, 2003). An educational example from the Governor's fiscal reform plan "creates a system whereby 5 or more municipalities that encompass 2 or more school administrative districts and populations greater than 20,000 can merge into single Municipal Service Districts (MSDs) that are governed by District Councils" (Legislative Bulletin, 2003).

Regionalization touches the heart of the issue of local control, a deeply-rooted political idea in the State of Maine (Bouchard, 2003; Cover, 2003). It is seen that regionalization could be "a tough sell" (Cover, 2003). Local control originated in the State back in the 1600's when self-reliant coastal settlements were created. Through the 1700s and 1800s a number of new towns were created as a result of wanting more local control. Many Mainers believe that efforts to regionalize the state's 492 local governments will put at risk the individual character of Maine towns. Although the economic benefits have been shown to exist in some situations and the organizational coordination can be shown in a number of studies to reduce costs, the verdict is not in about either fact and more so how it affects the day-to-day work of municipal officials. Understanding the experience of the municipal official is an often-overlooked component, with studies being conducted at the government or upper administrative levels or in the form of surveys.

### Literature Review

*Regionalization in U.S. and Canadian Health Services.* Much of the research conducted to date on regionalization has been focused on reforming the health care system (Advisory Committee on Health Services, 1995; Aikman, P. et al, 1998; Bickerton, J., 1999; Blendon, 1989; Brunelle, F., 1998). Other, research also primarily focusing on the medical field and much of it done in Canada, has looked at the economic aspects of regionalization (Brodie, J, 1990; Casbeer, 2000; Davies, B., 1999; Hamilton, S. et al., 1997; House, D., 1999; Maioni, A., 2002; Naylor, D., 1986; Plamping, D., 2002; Solid Waste Association of America, 1999); State-Federal

relationships regarding regionalization (Cairns, A., 1986 and 1992; Church, J. & Barker, P., 1998; Hayes, K., Maas, G. & Stough, R., 1993); feasibility (Tomblin, S., 2003); the impacts of regionalization on organizational structures and functionality (Church, W. et al, 1995; Jackson, S., 2000; Leat, P & Leggat, S., 1997; Sampalis, J. et al, 1999); performance impacts (Phibbs, 2000); and political challenges and impacts (Dohler, M., 1991; Ferdinand, M., 1995; Gere, E., 1968; Kouri, D., 1999; Lewis, S., 1997). These studies represent primarily quantitative analyses in the form of surveys, document reviews and cost-benefit analyses. However, a few were qualitative. However, none looked at the “experience” of members participating in the regionalized effort itself.

*Regionalization of environmental management efforts.* Specific programs that looked at environmental issues include a number of Massport studies in Boston that looked at the cost-benefit relationship for regionalizing environmentally-related transportation issues (Massport, 2001). evaluative studies on programs of The Regional Planning Partnership in New Jersey focusing on the impacts of “smart growth” regionalization efforts in the areas of land and resource consumption, transportation, housing, and environmental quality on community development and environmental health (Regional Planning Partnership, 2003).

*Other pertinent studies.* Although not environmental, an extensive study of regionalization of local libraries throughout the state of Wisconsin conducted in 2000 provided a closer look at the feasibility of regionalization efforts (Wisconsin Public Library Legislation and Funding Task Force, 2000). Other in-depth, good quality non-medical studies of regionalization efforts have looked at cost reduction and community impacts of regionalization in the areas of education, municipal wastewater control and other areas in the Southern part of the United States (Stern, 2000; Atlantic County Regionalization of Government Services Policy Group, 2003; Plouffe, E., 2002). Additional studies include military studies on efficiency and management feasibility for their late 1990’s regionalization efforts (U.S. Navy, 2003) and a comprehensive evaluative summary by the Boston Regionalization Commission, addressing options for the abolishment of counties (Beacon Hill Institute for Public Policy Research, 1997).

*Looking at regionalization research from a biological perspective.* Regionalization efforts fit well into the biological systems that municipalities and other local government entities serve. Ecosystems seldom follow government boundaries. A number of natural resource management and biogeographic studies have much to lend to the study of regionalization for environmental policy making and management (Whiting, A., Lawler, S., Horwitz, P., and Krandall, K., 1999; Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, 2003). Directly relating to watersheds and water resource management, studies have been conducted on a regional effort to

manage water resources in the Central Delaware Area (The Regional Planning Partnership, 2003); a Kentucky regional water management council (Big Sandy Regional Water Management Council, 2002);

*Studying values and attitudes relating to regionalism.* Few research studies that looked at values and attitudes relating to regionalism, including a survey study conducted by the Conference Board of Canada in 2001 (Conference Board of Canada, 2001). One of the most useful was a research report on a qualitative study looking at whether or not regionalization efforts met the expectations of senior industry marketing executives (Bajaj, J. & Fernando, R., 2002). The study addressed the “experience” of the executives. The study addressed the dichotomy between the “conceptual benefits of regionalization.” Although the study looked at the cost-benefit relationship, it delved more deeply into internal issues that served as barriers, how they viewed regionalization, and addressed how regionalization worked from an internal perspective. Although the study looked at the change from nationally-based management to regional, the study’s structure was useful for looking at the attitudes and values of those who work at a local level moving to a regional level.

*Regional efforts in Maine.* Some regional systems that have been tried in Maine have been successful, but many (especially those receiving the most media attention) have not, including a collaboratively owned trash-to-energy system owned by 21 Portland-area communities, greatly disputed creation of Maine School Administrative Districts. Two successes of note have been the cost-saving, performance enhancing creation of regional dispatch offices for police and fire calls, the other a more recent effort of 11 municipalities working together to address new federal stormwater discharge regulations (Bouchard, 2003). However, no formal studies have been conducted to date to formally collect data on and analyze front-line municipal level administrative experience of regionalization in Maine.

*The Interlocal Stormwater Group.* The Casco Bay Interlocal Stormwater Working Group was formed in 2002 in an effort to address the issue of stormwater pollution in the area that drains into Casco Bay. A number of different issues were discussed. In response to new regulations issued federally by the US Environmental Protection Agency through the NPDES Stormwater Phase II mandate. This unfunded federal mandate requires municipalities meeting specific requirements of population and stormwater influence, to create 5-year implementation plans and undertake efforts to work towards improved stormwater quality, including education and outreach activities and implementation of the plans. Members from eleven municipalities, along with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection Stormwater II Coordinator, representatives from various pertinent nonprofit and government entities make up the membership of the ISWG. The

group is funded by combined support from the Casco Bay Estuary Project, the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District and the participating municipalities. The group meets, generally, on a monthly basis in the Portland, Maine area. There is excellent attendance at the meetings and the work of the group has been cited as exemplary. Their work has included working with Maine DEP to develop a new municipal permit in response to the new regulations, the design of a new 5-year plan template, the building of new resources, the design of new monitoring and reporting software for use by the municipalities as they implement their 5-year plans, and a new statewide outreach and education effort to reduce stormwater pollution.

#### Research Purpose

##### *Study Focus*

The purpose of this study was to create a better understanding of the experience of municipal officials participating in the Casco Bay Interlocal Stormwater Working Group. The program has been lauded a phenomenal success in regionalization by regional environmental organizations, municipal planning groups and state environmental government officials. The work of the Interlocal Stormwater Working Group has been acknowledged by the Governor of the State of Maine as representative of the trend he would like to see in municipal government cooperation. However, the question of whether the members of the group did truly find their collaborative work beneficial at a local level and whether or not their work was generalizable as a model for other potential regionalization efforts in the state needed to be answered.

##### *Hypotheses*

The study was designed to address two hypotheses: 1) Members of the ISWG believe that their participation on the ISWG has been beneficial to them and 2) Better understanding of the overall experience of being a member of the ISWG can provide insight into what makes regionalization efforts in Maine successful.

##### *Impetus and Funding Support*

A driving force behind conducting this research was to present preliminary results at the International Cold Climate Stormwater Management conference to be held in Portland, Maine on November 9, 2003 at the Holiday Inn by the Bay Conference Center as part of a session run by ISWG coordinators on challenges and benefits of developing a regional working group for stormwater management. Funding for this project was provided, in part, by graduate assistant support from the Casco Bay Estuary Project, a University of Southern Maine affiliate.

### Methods

To increase internal validity, methods triangulation was used by implementing three complementary sources data collection. The first was to develop background information for the study by holding four meetings with key leaders of the project. The second was in-depth interviews with a sample group of municipal members. The third was an observation of a meeting of the group where participation and information flows were documented.

#### *Developing the Background Information for the Study*

*Meetings with Key Leaders of the ISWG Initiative.* The researcher met in-person with the Director of the Casco Bay Estuary Project on September 24, 2003 to discuss the origins of the group, discuss what the goals and objectives of the group were and establish what role the Casco Bay Estuary Project had with the ISWG initiative. A phone meeting was held with the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District's liaison to the ISWG on October 9, 2003. This conversation provided additional information about who represented which of the sample requirements and provided the researcher with a list of contact emails, phone numbers and addresses.

The third meeting was with the Stormwater Phase II Implementation Coordinator from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection in Augusta, Maine on October 20, 2003. This meeting served as both a pilot test of the initial draft list of questions and as an opportunity to learn more about the technical aspects of the regulations and requirements that the group had been working to address as the focus of its work. In addition, the role of the coordinator's position on the ISWG had been noted as very important by all the members who had contacted me. An initial meeting to address the issues of Stormwater Phase II regulations had been held by the Coordinator. The meeting coincided with the work of a brand new effort to develop a group of interested municipalities to address common issues of stormwater. The work of the group soon solidified to focus on the issue of the working collaboratively to address the new regulation requirements. Following this interview, the questions were fine-tuned and were ready for use in the formal interview process.

The final leadership interview took place with the ISWG's facilitator at the Casco Bay Estuary Project's Law School-based office at the University of Southern Maine on October 23, 2003. Using the list of formal interview questions as a general guide, rather than a set process, the researcher held relatively free-flowing conversation with the facilitator. This conversation added information about how the organization evolved, what role the facilitator played in the group's development and ongoing functions and provided great depth of knowledge to the

researcher's understanding of the process that had taken place and the functioning of the organization.

*Recruitment.* Recruitment was based on purposeful sampling. To gather a sample group representative of the critical different roles held by the different members of the group, I selected a sample of nine municipal member interviewees. Sampling was constructed to meet specific diverse characteristics of the group membership. The sample represented a balance of the membership characteristics listed in Table 1. The total membership of the group is 69 members, of which 25 are the representatives required to attend. Of 25 regular members, 11 represent municipalities. Other members include stakeholder and supporting organizations, such as representatives of the Maine Department of Transportation, the Maine Turnpike Authority and Maine Department of Environmental Protection. Of the municipal members 3 represent large municipalities, 4 represent medium-sized municipalities and 4 represent small municipalities; 3 represent urban municipalities, 4 represent rural municipalities, 4 represent mixed rural-urban municipalities; 7 are engineers, 2 are planners and 1 is a community development director; 4 have been involved with the group since the beginning, 3 got involved after several months, 1 became involved later in the process, 3 have unknown start dates; 9 are male, and 2 are female.

Table 1. Categories of Characteristics Represented in Sample Selection

Municipality Size	Rural-Urban	Job Focus	When Joined	Gender
Large (3)	Urban (2)	Engineer (4)	From the Beginning (3)	Female (2)
Medium (2)	Rural (2)	Municipal Planner (1)	After several months (3)	Male (5)
Small (2)	Urban-Rural Mix (3)	Community Development (1)	Within the last six months (1)	

Note: Number of sample members fitting each characteristic is indicated by the number inside ().

*Creating the initial set of interview questions.* The facilitator of the group provided a set of questions to be conducted as phone interviews. Using this list as a guide, a significant number of questions were changed. Using Patton (2002), as a guide, the list was modified by the researcher, letting go of a number of singular questions and resulting in a list of 21 open-ended interview questions (Patton, p. 358). These questions addressed the issues of current personal involvement in the group, what was working well, changes that had resulted from their participation in the group, their plans for future involvement with the group. Their knowledge about regulations, their impressions of regionalization, where they through the work of the group was going, what challenges the group had experienced or that they had experiences being a

member of the group, issues of administrative functioning and group composition, and what advice they would share with others seeking to develop a regionalization effort.

In order to probe deeper into the question of challenges facing the group, the question about challenges was designed using an illustrative examples format to show that it was acknowledged that the general understanding the interviewer had was that the experience of the group had been very positive, but more in-depth information about what the group had experienced as challenges, no matter how big or small was important to the study. The question was worded as follows: "Although we both know that the work of the ISWG is being acknowledged as a potential success story for regionalization, tell me some of the things that have not worked so well as part of this process - barriers, complications, frustrations, miscommunications, or other anything else."

A final question was added to support the observation portion of the research. The question was designed as a "take me there" question (Patton, p. 368). Interviewees were asked "Suppose I was present with you at an ISWG meeting. What would I see going on? Take me there." Exhibit 1.0 lists the final set of questions that were used in the in-depth interviews.

*Review and pilot testing of the questions.* The list of questions was reviewed by a University of Maine professor. The facilitator of the group reviewed the revised list of questions. A pilot test of the questions was run using the coordinator of the DEP as the test subject. Based on feedback from these three sources, small modifications were made to the questions to create greater clarity for the interviewee and prompt the general content of responses intended by each of the questions. A final question was added after the pilot test, to gather information for the observation portion of the research. This was in the form of a "take me there" question about what I would see taking place if I attended a meeting of the group.

*Adding a question in preparation for the observation.* In preparation for the observation portion of the research, I asked a "take me there" question; in the form of "If I were to attend a meeting of the ISWG, what would I see?" This open-ended question allowed for me to get a range of impressions about how the group actually functions and who does what at meetings.

*Recruiting the study sample.* Based on the sample composition requirements set out in the study design, eight members of the preferred sample group were contacted first with an introductory email from the facilitator explaining the purpose of the study, followed by an email from the researcher with a preparatory description of the study, what was being asked of them and what potential risks would be for participating in the study.

The email outlined the in-depth the purpose of the study, the planned uses of the findings, and let the potential study participants know if they agreed to be a participant, that interview

would be tape recorded. They were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and that if, at any time during the process, they did not want to participate in that portion or the remainder of the interview, they were free to end their participation at any time. In follow-up phone conversations, in-person meetings were arranged for the interviews with seven out of the eight interview candidates.

Of the eight solicited for the study, seven agreed and one declined. The one declined saying that “we already know the group is good” and that he didn’t want to participate in the study. Meetings were set up with the remaining seven interviewees at their places of work. They were asked to provide a quiet space where they would not be interrupted for the interview to take place.

#### *Conducting the interviews*

*Interview sites.* All of the interviews took place during the work day for the interviewees, between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. Six of the interviews took place in municipal offices. Of these, two took place in conference rooms, two in municipal council chambers, and two in the interviewees’ offices. The final interview took place at the site of a meeting, after the interviewee had to cancel two previous interview dates due to work conflicts. The interview location was suboptimal, as it was at a table in a public place near restrooms and a soda machine during a conference break.

*Interview protocol.* In preparation for each interview, the tape recorder and batteries were checked. A test statement was made to ensure the recorder was functioning properly. At the site, the recorder was placed on the table in front of the interviewee and interviewees were asked to attach the lapel microphone. Following introductions and the completion of the formal consent process, the interviewee was informed that there would be a list of 22 questions that they would be asked to answer.

Once this process was complete, the tape recorded was turned on. Interviewees were asked to state their name, municipality and title. They were then asked to explain what their responsibilities were in the area of stormwater management. This was done to ensure that the information I had been given accurately reflected the sample representation for which they had been selected.

To ensure consistency, the interview questions were asked in the same order using the same list of questions for each interview. Interviews lasted 20-55 minutes. The average interview length was 40 minutes. The differences in length of interviews was the result of 1) different levels of talkativeness, 2) different levels of depth of information shared by the

participant, and 3) the number of additional prompts provided by the researcher to follow-up on comments made by the interviewee. During the interview, the researcher took extensive notes.

It was acknowledged by the researcher that note taking detracted from the connection between the interviewee and the researcher. It was also observed that questions asked early on in the interview were given shorter answers by interviewees and seemed to reflect a level of mild discomfort with the process of being interviewed and recorded. However, as each interview progressed, interviewees appeared to forget to some extent about the tape recorder and feel more comfortable talking more openly and in-depth about their experiences. With this in mind, the data collected provides more depth and insight for the questions posed in the second half of the interviews than the first. The researcher noted that future interviews, if conducted, should take into consideration the order in which questions are presented and perhaps place those questions requiring the most in-depth information sharing later in the list of interview questions.

In a number of cases, once the tape recorder was turned off, the interviewee added comments that were pertinent to the data collection process. The researcher noted that, in most cases, the final conversations about the project allowed them to think about something they had not included. Some of this information was captured in the notes, but some was not. In two cases, interviewees expressed a level of discomfort about some information they didn't want to share. In one case, the interviewee declined to complete the answer to a follow-up question the researcher asked. In another case, the off-the-record comment was made after the tape recorder was off and was not included in the research notes as a result of the interviewee's request.

*Insider-outsider perspective.* Second, as a new graduate assistant to the Casco Bay Estuary Project, I had attended one meeting prior to initiating the research project. At this meeting, I was provided the opportunity to interact on a limited basis with the members of the group, sharing with them my new role as grant writer for them. My work with the group has been supported funding from the Casco Bay Estuary Project. Consequently, the members of the group already had pre-conceived notions about my relationships and motivations, as well as value to them as a resource, prior to interacting with them in a research capacity. This can be addressed by acknowledging my combined insider and outsider roles as I conducted my research. Although I had assumed that since I had met only once and not personally with each research subject prior to the study and my knowledge of the group, its work and functioning was limited, I would be treated as an outsider, this was not the case. I was seen as a part of the team and most members acknowledged my ongoing and future relationship with the group as they worked with me.

*Observation*

*Observation site.* One field observation took place at a meeting of the Interlocal Stormwater Working Group (ISWG) on November 13, 2003. The meeting was held in its usual meeting place, the Air National Guard Offices in South Portland. The meeting room was a large rectangular room, with the meeting tables set up in a very large “U” facing the front of the room, where the facilitator sat. To his right, at the base of the “U” sat the Stormwater Phase II Coordinator from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (Maine DEP).

*Data collection design.* The researcher designed large sheets of paper with each of the seats around the room indicated as circles. As the meeting has a random seating arrangement, the researcher and one of the coordinators filled in each of the circles as the room filled up to make sure that the right name of each participant was in the corresponding circle, in an effort to allow the researcher to return to the data knowing which of the in-depth interview participants sat in what location and who the other members in attendance were. Sheets included a circle for both the facilitator and the DEP coordinator. A circle in the upper center of the page was marked with a “G”, indicating “Group”. Each time a member of the group spoke a line would be drawn from the speaker to the member they addressed. If a general comment or question was posed to the group, the line was drawn to the “G” in the center of the page. Arrow heads were put on the end of the line to indicate which direction to communication went. The end without the arrow was the initiator and the end with the arrow was the person the comment was directed to. If there was a response from the person it was directed to, an additional arrow was placed on the other side of the line, indicating that the communication had been one, two-way exchange. If the conversation continued, a new line was drawn for each new exchange. If a non-present member was discussed multiple times, a new circle was created for them with the words “mention of (name)’s work”. A different observation data sheet was used for each agenda topic at the meeting to capture the different involvement based on the issue being addressed.

*Topics covered in the meeting.* The three topics that were covered were a Maine DEP update, grants and a statewide stormwater public education campaign. The Maine DEP update was a report of the latest regulation updates, requirements and plans by the Maine DEP. Some discussion was around plans the groups had submitted, some about funding that was coming available and some technical issues. This was an information sharing session for the DEP and an opportunity for members to ask clarifying questions. The second topic was about grants, a topic that affects the long-term functioning of the group. The third, and final, topic was about a new public education and outreach initiative that, if implemented, can meet the majority of the

requirements for the municipalities to meet the new federal requirements, but that requires each municipality to contribute thousands of dollars of funds.

*Role of the novice researcher.* First, I acknowledge that I am a novice researcher. During this research, I was implementing a new set of tools and methods that I had learned about in an instructional setting, both through readings and class work. Using some of these tools and practicing these skills for the first time provided a significant learning opportunity for me and a provided a steep learning curve. I made an effort to use tried-and-true techniques, but, of course, learned much about the individuality of each situation and the lack of universality in what works, even within a set methodology. Some of the primary issues that arose came about as a result of trying to take notes at the same time I was conducting interviews and the challenge of getting the key individuals to participate that fulfilled my purposeful sampling group.

#### Analysis

*Analysis of in-depth interview data.* Review of the notes from an initial review of the notes were used to develop a set of themes that were common throughout the conversations. A list of themes was created for each question, based on the frequency with which they were mentioned across the interviewees. This was translated into a code book (Figure 4.0). Using the list and code book, the researcher listened to the full tapes and documented each time one of the themes was mentioned as a way to make sure the initial findings from the notes were valid. Next, the researcher captured most of the recorded information by personally transcribing the tapes. Using these transcribed notes, the researcher identified key quotes that helped capture or summarize the themes that had been expressed by a large number of the interviewees. This data was compiled and used to develop the written synthesis of the theme-based findings.

*Analysis of observation data.* All data was looked at initially broken down by the three different discussion topics. Each observation sheet was reviewed in three ways. First, the number of lines was counted to determine the total number of communications per agenda topic. Next, the number of communications per member was counted and the percentage of the total number of communications per member was calculated. Thirdly, the number of times that comments were addressed to the group as a whole were calculated. The observation notes were used to look for additional patterns in initiating, responding to, or the use of meeting facilitation to run the meeting. This including noting how often ideas were revisiting, reframed, given to someone to work on, or referred to another forum for discussion. This work was designed to add depth to the review of the general information collected on the observation sheets.

## Results

*Defining the Work of the Group*

Members of the ISWG define their regionalization effort as a successful collaborative group process in which the members from a geographically-distinct area that does not adhere to political boundaries address the issue of stormwater pollution prevention in a combined effort to in the short-run meet the federal EPA NPDES Stormwater II unfunded regulatory mandate requirements and in the long-run improve water quality.

*“On any map or visual aid that we would use, there would be no line that separates one from another. It’s a watershed line.” – C*

*Direct Benefits of Participating in the Group*

Study results show that ISWG members feel they receive numerous and valued benefits from the work they do as part of the group. These include cost and time savings, access to more resources, assistance working through complex regulations, and higher quality products.

*Cost and time savings.* Members of the group believe that a primary benefit of participating in the group is savings in financial and time costs. These include actual reductions in the amount of money it would cost to implement the regulations from efforts to do so individually to reduced staff time learning the regulations independently. The actual dollar savings were not calculated, but the general perceptions of the members was that there were meaningful savings in both money and time from their participation. A number of members also indicated that the current financial restraints and budget cuts their municipalities were experiencing increased the perceived benefits of collaboration and allowed for the normal fear of letting go of local control be outweighed by the benefits of potential cost savings and reduced work time.

*“Saves us money, saves us time. I could go on and on about how it has been beneficial” F*  
*“We got the job done. We did it on time and it cost us a whole lot less money than it would have taken otherwise” - E*

*“Meant a whole lot of things I didn’t have to do – read those lengthy documents and become very familiar with them” – A*

*“It freed me up, in the city’s eyes, to focus on more appropriate things” - B*

*“We’re not going to get anywhere providing a good environment unless we do it at a reasonable cost. Everybody complains about taxes” – G*

*“Cost-efficiency is definitely a goal of the group” - A*

*Access to more resources.* Members of the group cite access to the skills of others, the use of a facilitator, the power of pooled funds and time, a direct relationship with the Maine

Department of Environmental Protection and the ability to develop and share the new plan template, ASSIST software and expertise of guest speakers as significant additions to the resources that they have access to independent of the group. In addition, access to grants, political avenues of support and other external resources have been leveraged by cooperating.

*“For me, for instance, I don’t have expertise on water pollution control. That’s where Soil and Water Conservation comes in with information on soil filtration and crops. That’s expertise I don’t have. Expertise I am not having to develop in-house.” – A*  
*“DEP has changed bond issues to include this work and come up with money for education and outreach. There has been lots of interest with the Governor’s office with this. Soon it will become something we start talking to legislators about” – E*

*Assistance working through complex regulations.* Members value the assistance of both the experts in the room (facilitator-leader and Maine DEP coordinator) as well as the working relationship with the other municipal and organizational members of the group as they work through the complex SWII regulations. Most members find the regulations complex and confusing. The ability to work with the regulations as part of the group has provided some members with a psychological helping hand and for all a sounding board and diversity of viewpoints and opinions that have helped avert more possible pitfalls down the road by addressing a wide range of potential problems in the plans before they occur.

*“It seemed like this big, huge, hard-to-get your arms-around problem” – D*  
*“It’s very complicated, these rules and regulations. The implementation’s mind-boggling for the average person” – F*  
*Knowing what we were doing was the same as everyone else was like a crutch. If there’s a question, there’s help” – B*  
*“Probably better off than had I done it strictly on my own...running around like a chicken with my head cut off, trying to get answers, trying to make sense of it” –G*

*Higher quality products.* Members across the board perceived that the quality of the 5-year plan, the educational and outreach materials, the ASSIST software, the process itself, and the technical detail and accuracy that was achieved was higher than if the activities had been undertaken independently. Although the savings of costs and time were cited by all members, the opportunity to create better products was consistently cited as the greatest benefit. Local municipalities would have been able to do the work, participation in the ISWG allowed them to do the work better and more fully meet the intentions of the regulations to improve stormwater quality in an effort to enhance water quality.

*“We never would have had a good plan. It would have been one interpretation instead of the whole group’s” – B*  
*“We ended up submitting our plan that is more than the minimum” – D*  
*“There seems to be a strong desire to make sure our work is effective. That we do, when we are done, have cleaner water. That is very important to the group. – G*  
*“With this regional effort, any outreach and education materials we create...will be effective and eye-catching. We will have done a better job...and for less money” – C*  
*“This translates into the same standards for everyone” - A*  
*“The more consistent everyone can be with their implementation, the less political this will become. And therefore it will have great momentum behind it” – C*

#### *Side Benefits of ISWG Involvement*

The more important benefits of participation to the members of the group were what can be referred to as “side benefits” of the group’s work.

*Valuing the group process.* ISWG members value the group’s process as a tool to accomplish their work and believe that access to it is a benefit. Although most mentioned that many other groups they have been part of did not work well, the work of this group is effective and productive.

*“The process has kept me involved more than the product. The whole process is working well”. – E*  
*“(The process) will be a benefit to the state as we implement all these changes” – C*  
*“Having been a watchdog and having been able to oversee the writing of those rules, we were able to change some items that would have been politically very difficult to comply with or enforce” - F*

#### *Opportunities to pool knowledge, share resources, create linkages and have dialog.*

Members feel that, though the group, they are able to create more than they could individually. Most cited specific resources that they felt they brought to the table and resources they needed that they got from the group. Resources included technical expertise, different perspectives, skills, and knowledge about who could do what. The ability to have conversations about different concerns also led to the creation of resources and results that would not otherwise have existed. These benefits differ from member to member, but all cited at least one.

*“It’s more about having contact with your peers, getting to know them... that continuous contact and working relationships with others” – F*  
*“It keeps you informed. Gives you a conduit for other issues. Maybe related, maybe not related” - F*  
*“I think the dialog is real good. It’s been positive” – G*

*Creating a reason and opportunity to think globally and cooperatively.* Members believe that the group has enabled them to look at the issue of stormwater and municipal activities

through a wider lens of watershed management. Realizing that stormwater is not restricted by any political boundaries allowed members to not only think beyond border lines but also start planning in ways that reached beyond those borders as well. Cooperation was a key theme in this effort, with members evolving their work plans, expectations and goals to include possibilities of doing work with other members and other individuals beyond their local municipality.

*“Dealing with stormwater expands everything. This isn’t just wastewater. (Participating in the ISWG) coalesces our involvement with water quality – it creates a more holistic approach” – A*

*“Stormwater has no relationship to municipal boundaries – it’s all topo. I would say the municipal boundaries, in a real sense, have dissolved” – G*

*Access to a forum of learning.* Members value the learning opportunities that come from participating in the ISWG. The topics that are discussed inform their work on a regular basis. In addition, the group is able to tackle in-depth problems and work together to learn about them and share solutions with each other. The ability to work in a learning process with the Maine DEP coordinator was cited as a primary benefit as well as the opportunity to work through the regulations step-by-step were cited as key benefits.

*“I am learning as I go, to be honest with you. We’re learning together” - F*

*“It was a learning process for all of us” – E*

*“We Bounced things off each other” – A*

*Creation of new opportunities to do things cooperatively (both within the group setting and external to the group).* In addition to the work implementing the SWII regulations, members of the group are starting to use the relationships that they have built to start other collaborative efforts, as well as think about doing other portions of their work collaborating with other stakeholders external to their municipality. Most of the initial collaborations cited were small, but most said they thought these collaborative efforts would likely grow in quantity and scope in the future as a result of the work of the ISWG and their new understanding of global issues. A second part of collaboration is the overall effort by the group to engage other municipalities from elsewhere in the state in a statewide outreach and education effort.

*“We bounce things off each other and get ideas” – E*

*“It has provided us with a really good format for doing other things cooperatively, like hazard mitigation” – E*

*“These cooperative efforts are water quality control at its highest level” -A*

*Potential to do more in the future.* Members believe that the work of the group

has great potential for the future. Although the ideas of what can be done are not uniform between the members, a general sense of the momentum and potential for the group is pervasive.

*“This success will breed other successes” – A*  
*“(The group is) just short of forming a watershed organization” – A*

*Emergence of a model for regionalization.* A final side benefit was the emergence of a regionalization model. Many members had not come to the table to participate in “a regionalization effort” or expected to have an end-result be to have the group serve as a model for regionalization efforts. Most members of the group came together to solve a complex problem and felt that working together would get the job done faster, more efficiently and better than it would have been done at the individual municipal level. Most members do believe that the group could serve as a model for other regionalization efforts; however, indicate that this model and the issue of “regionalization” were never the goal of the group, but instead a product of a process designed to solve specific problems.

*“The interest we have had with the other communities because of our success, I think, is very powerful” – E*  
*“Anybody can look at the result as beneficial to others. They can use it as a model. They could pattern after what we have done over the past year or two” - F*  
*“We set a standard for other cities and towns to use” – G*

#### *Challenges to the Work of the Group*

Members had a difficult time identifying challenges to the work of the group or to their personal involvement in the group’s activities. Upon further probing, a few challenges became apparent. Most of the challenges, once identified, were followed up with a justification for why the challenges were an acceptable tradeoff for the more significant benefits they received from participating.

*Increased workload.* Members struggle with balancing their other work obligations with the work of the implementing the SWII regulations. A part of this challenge is setting aside the time for monthly meetings. However, all members felt that this allocation of time was an investment for greater benefits.

*“All these meetings take time away from things we should be doing. The money would be better spent on a coordinator” – F*  
*“(There is an) added workload. Just to be able to participate, review all the various submittals from (the facilitator), so that you can reasonably function in the group” – G*

*Division of financial burden an increasing challenge.* The group requires a commitment of funds to run the group and create the resources for it. Some initial funding was provided by

external funding sources, but a large portion was obtained from the municipalities themselves. Figuring out how the funding was to be split between the various member municipalities and organizations has been relatively simple up to the current point in the group's work. This was the result of the split being made according to population, with the larger municipalities providing the majority of the funding needed. However, there are new challenges to finding the funding, as the group's work changes and the perceived benefits for different members changes with it. Getting local support from municipal governments has been an ongoing challenge, but has been successful.

*"When we start talking about whose going to pay what, that's when things get sticky"- E*

*Group process can be slow.* Some members noted that the group process was slower than if they had done the work independently. However, all thought that the product was better and provided a plan that would not need as much future revision.

*"I may have a focus or idea. (But) I don't want to jump ahead of the group. I'm not going to be bringing people along. The process may be somewhat slower" – A*

*Formal organizational structure and the role of the facilitator-Leader.* An overwhelmingly positive response to having a neutral facilitator as part of the process was evident in every interview. However, the special role of the facilitator-leader position led to a few concerns about how the group "should" be operating, in contrast with the way it is operating. A number of members acknowledged the lack of organizational structures such as a formal mission statement, organizational roles, bylaws and a formal division between facilitator and group chair were all mentioned by different members. However, there was a general sense that the reason the group worked was because of its more informal structure and focus on work rather than governing policies. As the work of the group moves forwards, several of the members mentioned the role of the facilitator-leader. There was a question about whether or not the facilitator-leader role should split into two separate positions with clearly divided task responsibilities. Others wanted the role to stay the same, but noted that the current facilitator would need to remain in that role if it was to continue in the same manner, due to its special set of skills and knowledge. The general feeling was not to fix something that isn't broken.

*"(It is an) absolute necessity to have the facilitator involved. The facilitator is the person who keeps in mind staying on task, (making sure that) everyone talks, watching the clock, and that you are getting consensus decision-making. Making sure the process is working*

*well, so that your end decisions are good decisions and people aren't going away mad" – D*

*A Unique Situation: Factors that Make the ISWG Work*

The work of the group has been built on a unique set of circumstances that members have identified as key components to its success. While a solid meeting structure, involvement of a facilitator and the involvement of the regulatory coordinator could be seen as simply implementation of "good practice", other conditions, such as rallying around a critical new single-focus unfunded mandate, having a non-political group of people at the table, having funding and a facilitator in place before the group started, and the work of the group being a result of a call to complete a specific piece of challenging work rather than to develop a regional collaboration were both key to its success and unique in their unfolding. Additional factors that have resulted from this unique situation that continue to make the group run well include the unusually high level of commitment from members to participating and engaging in the work of the group, a high level of commitment to the group's process, a desire to keep working together, and an overt commitment to reciprocity within the group.

*Solid meeting structure.* Members of the group value the meeting frequency, timing, structure and continuity from one to the next. They attribute this to good planning work and coordination by the facilitator-leader and the commitment of the members to participate actively during the meeting and in subgroups between meetings. They believe that everyone is provided an opportunity to speak at meetings and that the meetings have been designed to provide a safe, respectful and open environment where members are able to speak their minds and share ideas. The observation confirmed that the meeting structure was well developed. An agenda was sent out in advance, the meeting held to an established agenda, all members were asked for their input and, depending on topic, a significant number of the dialog initiations were addressed to the group as a whole, rather than any individual (Figure 3.0), indicating the structure of the meeting valued the commitment to group discussion and consideration of concerns.

*"Sometimes it's clean or sometimes it's messy. But with that group not very often did it really get messy" – D*

*"They say if you want to stop something, form a committee, but I think we've been real successful at staying on task and moving forward. There's times maybe we've been bogged down with details or created large issues out of small issues, but I think it's been kept to a minimum – B*

*"What we have done over the last year or so is we have broken down into threes and fours to accomplish something. And that has worked well. There are times you have to break it down" - F*

*“(The meetings) work out well. There’s time in between, gives us time to do business and prepare. If there was a critical issue, we could meet weekly, bi-weekly” – A*

*Role of a neutral coordinating facilitator-leader.* Members of the group believe that a key ingredient to the success of the group has been the involvement of a facilitator who has no personal stake in the outcomes of the meetings. This neutral individual makes it possible for the meetings to stay on time and topic focused, avoid off-task personal issues to detract time from the group’s planned work, and manage the meeting agenda to ensure that it is well-planned in terms of time usage, having the needed people in attendance and flow.

*“There’s a lot of emotion around the table...a lot of different investment in what that process is. If you have someone that is neutral that can help guide you through that process, you’re going to be more successful at it” – C*  
*“There’s a lot of money in that room. You don’t want meetings top be dragged out. Want people communicating, to keep the pace,...and bring back issues to the table (from previous meetings)” – A*

The unique role of the facilitator-leader is key to the success of the group. The facilitator works beyond the traditional role of facilitator, including agenda content setting, working between meetings to make progress on work items, coming up with ideas for the group to discuss, researching and reporting. The facilitator decides when the work requires outside experts to be brought in and coordinates the different subgroups. The facilitator serves as the point person for the group. The facilitator also completes a significant amount of the work for the group.

*“He really filled two functions – as facilitator and the other was leader of the group” – C*  
*“(He has) that kind of role – club president”- some kind of leadership role” - A*  
*“We went through line by line...one person showing you this is this and that is that and this is what it is asking for. He helped us figure out where we were going and what we needed to do” - B*  
*“(The facilitator is) someone to keep the ball in the air” – F*

This non-traditional facilitative role provides a sense of the work continuing when they are not able to commit time, to an ongoing process, and that each meeting will be beneficial, as the process is assured of moving forwards. In addition, the personal skills and knowledge of the group’s facilitator make it possible for the individual to conduct certain pieces of the work that another individual in that role might not have been able to conduct. These include inside professional knowledge and certification in stormwater management, familiarity and pre-existing relationships with ISWG members, and a positive pre-existing reputation in the eyes of the group’s members, combined with advanced facilitation and coordination skills.

*“You have to have someone with that skill set” - A*

*“I think he (the facilitator) is what has kept us on track. I’ll do whatever it takes to keep him on and working with us” – B*

The observation indicated that the facilitator did manage the agenda and took on a significant amount of the work of the group to be completed by the group between the meeting observed and the next meeting. In addition, the facilitator posed solutions to the group, in addition to asking the group to come up with solutions. The facilitator initiated 27% of total dialog during the meeting (Figure 2.0). These combined observations confirmed that the meetings rely on the role of facilitator leader to a great extent and that in the absence of this role; the meetings would be very different.

*“I think it is really important that we have a facilitator that can work behind the scenes in that time we are not meeting to prepare for the next meeting – preparing, collecting information. That’s something we couldn’t do” – F*

*Involvement of the DEP Coordinator.* Members strongly value the ongoing involvement of the DEP Coordinator in the process. Having the opportunity to work face-to-face with the regulatory agency to help develop the permit, review the regulations, discuss expectations and provide advice about what will and won’t work were all cited repeatedly as key to the success of the process. The observation indicated that the DEP produced 16% of the dialog initiations (Figure 2.0). The DEP coordinator also had reciprocal dialog with a number of the members of the group, demonstrating that the representative was more than a regular member or observer, but served a major information provision role as well.

*“We were actually formulating DEP, if not policy, practice in how it was going to implement Stormwater Phase II. The DEP coordinator relied very strongly on the ISWG as a sounding board for comment and input in helping him draft the state permit. He was able to put together something that was going to be accepted at best, tolerated at worst by the municipalities that were to be regulated by the program. It was a cooperative process, rather than an adversarial one” – D*

*“(The DEP Coordinator’s) involvement was key. It was a good kinda check. Good for the group. Good learning for him. Got him ahead of the eight ball. Got more compliance on plans. Good on both ends” - B*

*“The incredible dedication of DEP (makes the work of the ISWG successful)” - C*

*“DEP was accepting of our plans. We were minimalists. He understood. That was very, very critical” – A*

*A new, single-focus, unfunded mandate.* The purpose of the group, as seen through the eyes of most of its members, has been to work to address the new EPA NPDES Stormwater II regulations. This is an unfunded federal mandate that affects the activities of a specific group of

municipalities within Maine that have certain population and drainage specifications. This mandate required municipalities to scramble to meet them by a rapidly-approaching deadline. The regulations were new and addressed issues that were not familiar to many of the municipal staff. In addition, the work transcended municipal boundaries. The immediate and serious need to meet the requirements at the local level, combined with a willingness of DEP to work with a group to address these issues provided a unique task-oriented opportunity for this group of individuals to get together to meet their mutual needs. This was not an effort to create a regional entity, to cross political borders or, even necessarily to reduce costs. It was a need to “get this done” that provided the strong cohesion of the group.

*“Because it is an unfunded mandate...I don’t think anyone was willing to step in the way of us working on it. It’s a very different situation than other regionalization efforts” – E*  
*“This is a great opportunity because it is something that is new, that we haven’t had to do before. Something that we can take a regional approach to from the start, rather than something we have all been doing individually and make it regional” - E*  
*“None of us like to have to do it. But it’s a requirement. We all have to do it, so we just go ahead and start to it” - F*  
*“Up until now we have had one major agenda issue” – D*  
*“A regional approach with something as ubiquitous as stormwater is a real opportunity” - A*

*The right people at the table.* Members believe that the people at the table are the “right” people to be there. The members of the group are primarily engineers. These are the people who work on technical solutions at the municipal level. Although there are a couple of planners and a number of organizational representatives that attend the meetings, the solution-focused attitude of the primary ISWG members provide a different tone and set of goals than if the members at the table were more politically-focused. There is a perception that the group would not have been as successful if the members had been in positions that required them to make more politically-focused decisions. The members of the group also represent the direct watershed municipalities. This was seen as key to the development of similar goals and usefulness of the networking opportunities.

*“Something that is very different is that this is not a group of people who deal in the political realm. This is a group of people that deal with much more tangible things. The snow is on the road, we get the snow off the road. It’s very work-oriented. And so, the political piece didn’t become part of it.” - E*  
*“Get the people who are going to implement the actual plans or actions involved from the start. I hate to say it this way, but don’t involve the politicians, involve the people who will actively be doing the work that you are hoping to end up with. They are going to have the most investment, the most knowledge around the table. They are going to be*

*able to craft the best solutions. Trust that they are going to be able to get the necessary buy-in” – C*

*Funding and facilitator in place from the start.* Funding for the group was, in part, available prior to the assembly of the group in the form of external support from the Casco Bay Estuary Project, the Cumberland County Soil and Conservation District and Maine DEP. This allowed for the creation of a regular meeting space, the hiring of the support help, and a facilitator in place from the start. Rather than struggling through the initial phases trying to get together enough money to have a place to meet, trying to figure out who would lead the efforts and keep the ball rolling, and trying to run meetings with a stakeholder in the meeting management position, this starting status made a tremendous difference.

*“Having external funds there seems to be more willingness not to have the municipalities paying for the bulk of it.”*

*Regionalization as a result of the group, not the goal.* From the start of the group’s work, the effort was designed to help the members develop plans that would meet the requirements. It was not designed to develop a regional process. It did not take a set of existing services and processes and reorganize them to work in a coordinated regional effort. Instead, the creation of a wholly new system to address a wholly new set of needs resulted in the creation of a collaboration.

*“The SWII process, having resulted in something that has now been held up as a model for something that is a regional effort is, frankly, a surprise...I don’t think any of us...assumed that this would be our end result. I just wanted a good five year plan it that (our municipality) could be proud of and that would be consistent with the law” – C*

*Voluntary participation.* Members of the group the came to the table voluntarily. There was no requirement to participate, only an offer to join.

*“It’s easier to choose to go into a process than be told that you have to do it.” – C*

*Commitment to the group and its process.* Members of the group have an unusually high level of commitment to the group. Members attend the meetings on a regular basis, making their commitment to the monthly meeting a top priority. Most members have only missed up to one meeting in the past year. If members miss a meeting, they usually send a representative of their municipality to cover for them. This commitment is cumulative. Members say that they are more likely to make the time because they know everyone else is equally committed to the group.

*"I'm involved at every level" – A*

*"I have attended all but one of the meetings. I was out of the country, otherwise I would have been there" – D*

*"Over the last year, I think I have missed one. The Town Manager has asked that we have coverage at the meetings. It's our intent to cover, to participate" - G*

*"What makes this group work is the willingness and commitment from everyone around the table to keep working on this topic" – C*

There is also a belief that the learning group and collaborative process is the best approach to the work. The process itself is valued enough to keep people at the table.

*"The integrity of the process is important" – A*

*"More of the process than the product (kept me involved) – E*

*An overt commitment to reciprocity.* One of the most common threads throughout the interviews was reference to reciprocity. Members believe that the group is committed to and based on a give and take exchange between members. This reciprocity is critical to the success of the group. As long as each member gives as much as they take, the group will continue to function in the future as it does now.

*"As long as everyone who comes to the table is willing to work for consensus. Have to give a little to get and be willing to discuss" – A*

*"We're just able to help each other out. We make sacrifices, everyone helps" – B*

*A desire to keep working together.* Members believe that the work of the group should continue. They believe that the work of the group is beneficial to them and the other members. They believe that the work is making a difference that legitimizes its continuation. The one caveat was that the group should not continue if the work becomes no longer useful. The group should not continue just for the sake of being a regional group that works on stormwater issues. It needs to continue to have meaningful benefits to the members to warrant its continuation.

*"I hope that, if the need is there, it continues. But I also hope that if it turns out that the need isn't there, that we don't just keep meeting for the sake of keeping meeting" – C*

#### *The Group is at a Pivotal Moment*

The ISWG has reached a point in its organizational life where it has achieved its initial tasks, which members identified as developing a 5-year plan template and working with DEP to develop a state permit for the federal mandated SWII regulations.

*From planning to implementation.* Municipalities have submitted their plans and are getting ready to implement them. Implementation documentation will be done using ASSIST software, another product of the group. Now that the group is moving to implementation of the plans at the local level, the needs for the group are changing. They are moving from a focused, single task to a more diffuse set of objectives and next level activities.

*“How the group will move forward is somewhat in flux in terms of what issues the group tries to take on” – G*

*“Now that we don’t have the large single-focus task...it may be harder to keep the group focused, to stay on task. We’re almost into phase II with the group, which is a very important one” -D*

*“The group is pretty infantile. It hasn’t been challenged as a group yet. We all agree. I’m sure there’ll be issues in the future...I hope people understand this is an evolutionary process; it’s going to look different soon” – A*

*“We’re getting our feet wet this year, but come the second year, there’s a lot of training that needs to be put in place” – B*

*“The group needs to call themselves something. We need to figure something. We need to figure out what we stand for. What we want to be in five years” – A*

*Want to Hire a Coordinator.* In order to move forwards, the group wants to hire a coordinator to manage the day-to-day work of the group, but more importantly, to coordinate the group’s planned trainings, mapping plans, and serve as a technical resource and administrator for regional SWII compliance activities.

*“The coordinator would be the same for all the cities and towns, the reporting, the hiring of people, the contracts could be through a bid” – F*

*“I would like to see a coordinator take over” – E*

*“Money would be better spent on a coordinator” - B*

*New outreach and education efforts.* The group is now leading a new statewide effort to create outreach and education in the area of stormwater pollution prevention. This work will benefit each member of the group; however, deviates from their areas of expertise (non-engineering) and benefits municipalities that are not represented in the group as well as those in the group. Additional directions include the possibility of working with the Emergency Management Agency to undertake coordinated flood control efforts. This new post-plan work has not been well coordinated, nor has the group engaged in much discussion of next steps.

*“Outreach and education efforts have been spawned by this” – A*

*“We will be working together to hire someone who makes very effective and eye-catching materials” – E*

*Locating the funding to move forwards.* As the group moves forwards, issues of how money to support the work with be contributed are at the forefront of members' minds. For the first part of the Group's work, the division of funds was by population, with the region's largest cities taking on the majority of the financial burden. Now, as the group changes its focus, the larger cities, whose infrastructure and knowledge of the work is greater than those in smaller municipalities, have less need for the services of the group, and especially the services of a potential coordinator. The funding strategy is being changed to represent a more even distribution of financial burden. The ability to sell this plan to municipalities and future requests are of some concern for members.

*"Everyone bought into the funding scheme up until this point, primarily because of the good graces of the larger communities. Having the large communities step up to the plate was very good. The benefit was proportional. But now, as we move forwards, I think it is going to be harder to continue with proportional distribution. The 80-20 rule is probably going to come into play. 80% of the work is going to be required for 20% of the population. And that 20% of the population is going to be the smaller communities...there will have to be a certain baseline that each community is going to have to give to stay in and then there would be an as-needed fee to municipalities proportional to their need" – D*

*"Now it becomes a fairness issue. I don't need all of the service. The cost coming from me should reflect that" - A*

*"We have agreed on is that the smaller towns have different needs than the larger towns...not more or less expensive" – E*

*"Differences between members include the differences between systems, urban versus rural, more or less technical expertise, existence or not of hard piping, level of relationships with regulatory agencies, different processes. It's a matter of scale and timing. Some of this is all new for them. It's just perspective really" – A*

*Concerns about future loss of interest.* Many members of the group expressed concern about how to keep the members of the group engaged as the goals and work of the group evolves. Now that the work is less directly tied to their own positions and different groups have different levels of commitment to the next steps of the group's work, there are concerns that some members of the group will attend less, have less commitment and that ownership of the products will decrease as members lose interest. Questions were raised about whether the group will be able to survive this new phase of work. All members wanted it to, as long as the work was of value.

*"One of the largest barriers is that people still have their own agenda. I don't mean agenda in a negative way, either. It's just that different communities have different atmospheres, different purchasing policies, and because of that, some municipalities have more flexibility in what they can and can't do" - A*

*“The more complicated the formula gets, I think the less effective it gets. The temptation to go it alone gets much stronger” – E*

*“It can be frustrating to go to three-hour meetings once a month and sometimes not come away with a product or an accomplishment. I have to remind myself that this is a process of getting to an end result” – C*

*The effects of expanding membership.* Additional members are being added to the group from the Saco Bay area. There are mixed responses to this change. Some think that the added resources, ideas and hands to help with the work will enhance the group. Others worry that the group is becoming too diffuse and that members are starting to have increasingly different needs and goals. The addition of these new members could either enhance or detract from the group. No members wanted to keep them from joining the group.

*“I don’t have a problem with them (Saco, etc) participating, but there are going to be different issues for them” – D*

#### ISWG as a Model for other Regionalization Efforts.

The ISWG is being considered as a possible model for regionalization of local government functions in the State of Maine. While the group has been successful and serves as a regional effort to address a specific issue, the generalizability of the structure and impacts of the group may be limited. The external validity of this study is limited by a number of unique factors that have led to this specific group’s success. These include the unique role of the knowledgeable facilitator-leader, the specific group of individuals participating in the group, the new nature of the issue to be solved, and the funding and facilitator being in place before the group met for the first time. While the work circumstances of the ISWG are unique, there may be some applicability to other stormwater planning groups that are able to operate under many of the same conditions. This report can provide some guidance to groups seeking to organize around unfunded mandates in areas that are not addressed by existing systems, are addressing technically-focused issues and are seeking to operate within a specific geographic area. For other groups, the information about what engaged this group of people and what they value can serve as a backdrop for investigating the motivations of their own current or potential members. Most importantly, this study presents a snapshot in time of what has led up to and continued to support the success of the ISWG and captured the value members have derived from their participation.

#### Opportunities for Future Research

In order to better understand the components of what makes a successful regionalization effort in Maine, further research into the key components of the ISWG may be useful. To gain an understanding of characteristics and circumstances common to successful regionalization efforts

in Maine, similar in-depth interview and observation research should be conducted for other regionalized groups in Maine. A meta-analysis of these studies should be conducted to find commonalities and trends. A more experimental approach could be selected if a large enough sample size could be found. This could include looking at what variables (in their existence and absence) impact the success of the group. An important factor to look at would be the role or absence of a facilitator. Looking at groups that have more political actors, how do they differ in role, outcomes and engagement? Among a multitude of other possible areas for research, to enhance the results of this study, a cost-benefit analysis could be conducted to see whether there are true cost savings.

Exhibit 1.0 Questions for Interlocal Stormwater Working Group In-Depth Interviews

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Please tell me about what led you to become involved in the work of the ISWG.

What is your current level of involvement with the group?

What has worked well for you being a member of the groups?

What has kept you involved?

How has your work changed as a result of being part of the working group?

What new opportunities have arisen as a result of the group?

How do you plan to continue to be involved in the group?

What needs to be in place for you to sustain this level of involvement?

How well do you understand the NPDES Stormwater II regulations?

How has this group affected your understanding and ability to implement the regulations?

How do you feel about this regionalization effort?

How do you define regionalization as it relates to the work of the group?

What do you believe are the goals of the group?

What do you believe are the end products of the group?

Although both of us know that the work of the ISWG is being acknowledged as a potential success story for regionalization, tell me some of the things that have not worked so well as part of this process (barriers, complications, frustrations, miscommunications).

Now let's talk about some specifics around the organizational structure of the group. Please give me your impressions of how well or poorly each of the following have worked:

- o Level of personnel involvement (who is at the table, size of the group, stakeholders that need or don't need to be there)
- o Funding strategy and resources
- o Use of meeting time and agenda
- o Facilitator involvement
- o Satisfaction with the end-products

This is a "take-me-there" question: Suppose I was present with you at an ISWG meeting. What would you see going on? Take me there.

What advice would you share with others who might be considering starting a regionalization effort like this one?

One final question. We have covered a lot in this interview. Before we end, is there anything else that you would like to add, that you feel we did not capture in the course of this interview that would relate to the effectiveness of the group, sharing with me the experience of being a member of the group, or about the issue of regionalization in general?

Figure 1.0 Code Book for ISWG Research Analysis

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- 100 Direct Benefits of the Work
    - 102 Time and cost savings
    - 103 Feeling of not being alone
    - 104 High quality products
    - 105 A feeling of personal benefit
    - 106 Formulating DEP policy
    - 107 Allows focus on SWII work
    - 108 Sorts out confusing regulations
    - 110 The work was easier
    - 111 Got the job done
    - 112 Got more done than would have alone individually
    - 113 Surprisingly successful
  
  - 200 Side Benefits of the Work
    - 200 Emergence of a model
    - 201 Thinking globally and cooperatively
    - 202 A forum for learning
    - 203 Opportunities to do things cooperatively
    - 204 Ability to share resources, network and have dialog
    - 205 See potential to expand the work
    - 206 Value of the process to the members and community
  
  - 300 What Makes the Group Work
    - 301 A unique opportunity
    - 302 A different experience than in the past
    - 303 The right people at the table
    - 304 The role of DEP
    - 305 Commitment to the group and the process by members
    - 306 Commitment to high quality work by members
    - 307 A desire to keep the group working
    - 308 Good meeting structure
    - 309 Facilitator-leader role
    - 310 Reciprocity between members
    - 311 Voluntary participation
    - 312 Necessity of the work/unfunded mandate
    - 313 Contacted personally as invitation to join group
    - 314 Funding breakdown
    - 315 Some major funding was already in place
    - 316 Support from local governments
    - 317 Not sure how the group started or why
  
  - 400 Group Challenges
    - 401 Future funding breakdown
    - 402 Group process can be slow
    - 403 Facilitation issues
    - 404 Group members need to take control
    - 405 Workload-Need a lot of time to participate actively
    - 406 Need more funds

407 Different members have different needs  
Figure 1.1 Code Book for ISWG Research Analysis, Continued

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- 408 Not sure if the group can do the new work
  - 409 Will need to secure local municipal support for funds and continuing involvement
  - 410 Not sure what the challenges are – everything working well
- 500 The Group is Changing
- 501 Want a coordinator
  - 502 Starting education and outreach efforts
  - 503 Post-plan work now the focus
  - 504 Need to start planning own agendas
  - 505 New ways to split the money
  - 506 Implementation instead of planning
  - 507 Expanding membership
  - 508 Divergence in goals
- 600 Regionalization and the ISWG
- 601 A group, collaboration
  - 602 Regionalization as a success, positive
  - 603 Common goals and interests
  - 604 A core group most engaged
  - 605 Everyone free to contribute
  - 606 Everyone contributes
  - 607 Glad it took place
  - 608 Geographic rather than municipal boundaries
  - 609 Issue-based

Figure 2.0 Number of Conversation Initiations per Participant by Topic

Participant	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Total	% Total
Facilitator	7	13	16	36	27%
DEP	4	8	9	21	16%
In-Depth F	2	2	9	13	10%
S	3	2	5	10	8%
In-Depth G	3	2	4	9	7%
In-Depth D	0	2	6	8	6%
In-Depth B	0	2	4	6	5%
L	0	1	6	7	5%
T	0	3	2	5	4%
O	1	1	2	4	3%
In-Depth C	0	2	1	3	2%
R	0	0	2	2	2%
I	0	3	0	3	2%
N	0	1	0	1	1%
M	0	1	0	1	1%
J	0	2	0	2	1%
K	0	0	0	0	0%
P	0	0	0	0	0%
Q	0	0	0	0	0%
H	0	0	0	0	0%
TOTAL	20	45	66	131	100%

## Analysis Results:

- The facilitator or the DEP Coordinator initiated 43% of the interactions
- Top 7 other members contributed 45% of the interactions
- 7 other members contributed the remaining 12%.
- 4 out of 20 people did not contribute

Figure 3.0 Number of comments addressed to the group as a whole

Topic	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3
Total Initiations	20	45	66
Initiations to Group	5	20	22
% of total of all initiations	25%	55%	33%
% of total group initiations	10.6%	42.6%	46.8%

## Analysis Results:

- 47% of all initiations were made to the group.
- Just under half of all comments were addressed to the group during the second two conversations.
- Topic two had the most direction to the group as a whole.

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