Three Strategies for Effectively Integrating Water into Sustainable Community Development

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As communities seek to integrate water considerations into their efforts to make their development and growth sustainable, they want to be sure to use strategies and methods that have a high potential of **long-term effectiveness**. Maximizing effectiveness is all the more critical in times of resource constraints, economic sluggishness, and public scrutiny.

Professor Arnold's presentation introduces three strategies that have a high potential of long-term effectiveness as over-arching principles and processes for integrating water into sustainable community development. The first is **"wet growth,"** which is a set of principles, methods, and tools to integrate sustainable water supplies, water quality protection, and overall watershed health into growth policies, plans, and practices. "Wet growth" has been said to be "smarter than smart growth," because it: a) is a "toolbox" approach that allows communities to select the tools most appropriate to their needs and goals, and b) addresses a resource that is essential to the economy, community vitality, the environment, and life itself: water. Professor Arnold, who first coined the term "wet growth" in 2001 to describe a then-emerging phenomenon nationwide, will give an overview of the concept and its usefulness, and a later presentation by Carol Norton and Ryan Fenwick will describe specific wet growth tools.

Second, integration of water infrastructure and issues into community planning and development should be a part of **watershed planning processes**. The emergence of watershed-scale institutions and processes in communities throughout the United States offers excellent opportunities for local units of government to leverage resources, expertise, and public engagement, particularly if undertaken on an ongoing basis (not one-time or single-issue). Moreover, integration of specific concerns about water and sustainable development with broader watershed planning processes can result in better coordination and integration, more innovative solutions, and increased overall long-term sustainability at both levels.

Third, any community planning involving water should use **adaptive planning methods**. In contrast to the development of fixed, linear plans, adaptive planning has structural features and iterative processes that allow for adaptation to changing and even unexpected conditions and periodic adjustment of the plan based on "feedback loops" that identify and utilize lessons learned from the implementation of the plan in the context of changing conditions. Adaptive planning reduces the risk of plan failure or plan abandonment, which in turn improves plan effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources.

About the speaker: **Professor Tony Arnold** is an internationally recognized interdisciplinary expert on the integration of land use, water resources, environmental conservation, and property. He is the author of *Wet Growth: Should Water Law Control Land Use?*, co-author of the EPA-

funded *Kentucky Wet Growth Tools for Sustainable Development: A Handbook on Land Use and Water for Kentucky Communities*, and co-author of the forthcoming *Environmental Sustainability Law and Policy*. He was chairman of the Planning Commission of the City of Anaheim, California, was an attorney for municipalities, water districts, and other governmental entities in Texas, and has served on numerous government commissions and nonprofit boards, including a land conservation trust, a local climate change task force, and an affordable housing nonprofit. He speaks to government officials, community groups, professional organizations, universities, and academic conferences nationwide, and has taught at universities in California, Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, Wyoming, and Kentucky.