Communication Plan Step 3: Identify Stakeholders and Constraints

Target Audience: For use by the communication team to layout, track, and update stakeholder roles and relationships.

Relevance/Importance to PFAS Site: Due to the persistent nature of PFAS and its presence in the public drinking water supply, numerous and variant federal, state, private, and public stakeholders can be impacted. Actor mapping is a tool to assist practitioners in learning who is most affected by site information and decisions, as well as their level of interest and influence. The outcome of the tool will assist in identification of unengaged/disinterested stakeholder populations, identify needs for relationship and/or capacity building, develop a site-specific communication team, and target outreach resources toward affected and unengaged/disinterested stakeholder populations. In the context of PFAS, it is particularly important to identify and address affected groups that may not be participating in preventative and mitigation measures (such as an interim drinking water supply and a fishing ban) and/or at sites for which stakeholder groups are facing conflict resolution.

Community Identification and Mapping Tools

Social science methodologies can help practitioners to understand and identify (1) the social factors that may work in favor of or against risk management strategies, and (2) the social factors and stakeholders that are affected by cleanup actions. Actor mapping tools aid in understanding roles and relationships among stakeholders by defining the stakeholder network and measuring relational ties. A more comprehensive understanding of stakeholder roles and relationships can help practitioners:

- *characterize stakeholder populations*, including those that are and are not engaged, disinterested parties, and sensitive populations (such as disenfranchised communities, non-English speakers, and end users), that may need a more refined, focused engagement strategy;
- *facilitate relationship/capacity building*, such as restoring disconnected relationships, reestablishing trust, and moving toward consensus
- *identify and develop the communication team* to coordinate actions within and between stakeholders and ensure consistent messaging
- *target communication strategy resources* to stakeholder groups that play a role and/or are affected by individual SMART goals (see Step 2); affected groups include those impacted by preventative and mitigation measures (such as an interim drinking water supply and a fishing ban), those responsible for communicating preventative and mitigation measures, and/or those involved in conflict resolution.

The overall objective is to aid practitioners in audience/stakeholder assessment under Step 4 of the communication plan template. Simplified **examples** of an actor-linkage matrix and interest-influence matrix are presented below (Figures C-1 and C-2), followed by resources to perform complex actor mapping, such as social network analysis. The examples provided are not representative of an existing project; stakeholder roles and relationships vary on a project-specific basis.

Example Context: A PFAS site with a groundwater plume that has impacted drinking water supply wells and has identified contaminants in the local fish population.

Example 1: Actor-Linkage Matrix: A tool that assists practitioners in describing relationships among stakeholders through codes (Reed et al. 2009).

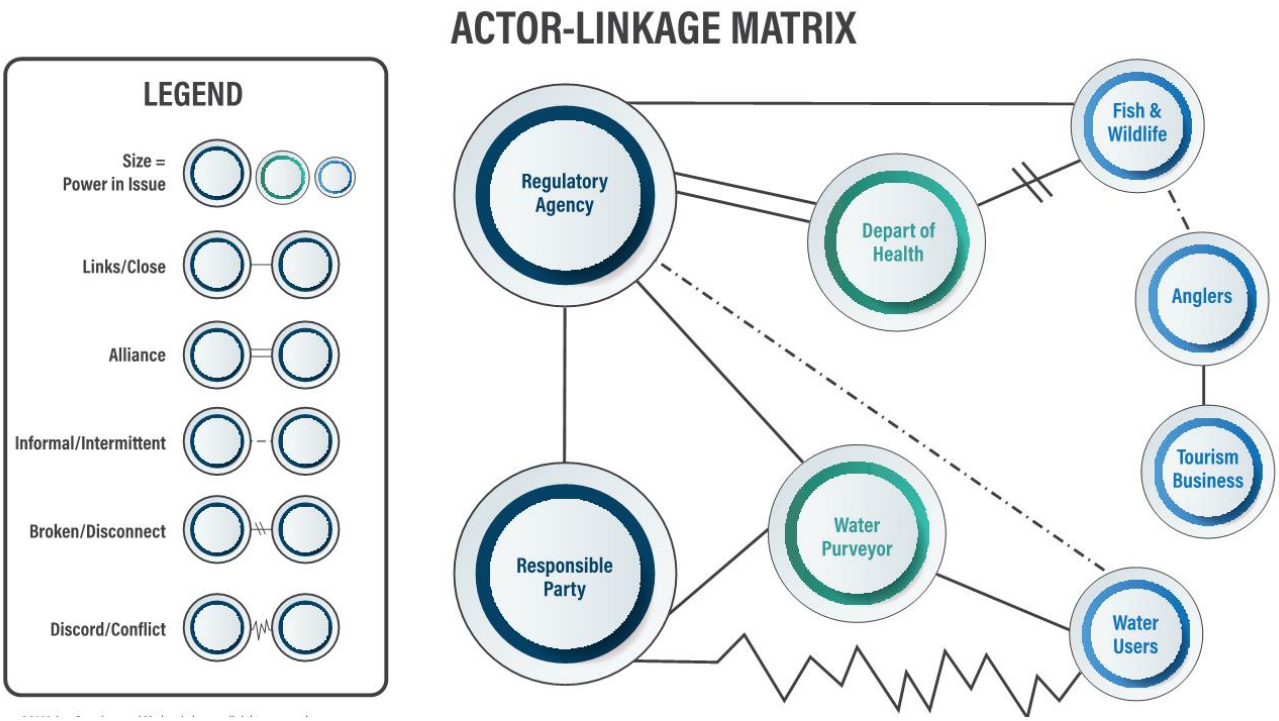

Figure C-1. Example actor-linkage matrix.

Example 1: Actor-Linkage Matrix Evaluation

- *Identify unengaged stakeholder populations*: potentially anglers and tourism business operators
- *Facilitate relationship/capacity building*: use the relationship between the responsible party and water purveyor to restore relationship between the responsible party and water users
- *Identify and develop the communication team*: team consisting of a representative of each regulatory agency, responsible party, water purveyor, and a representative of each low-power stakeholder group
- *Target communication strategy resources*: increase information transfer to unengaged stakeholder populations and rebuild intermittent and conflicted relationships with water users in alignment with risk communication strategy SMART goals

Example Context: A PFAS site with a groundwater plume that has impacted drinking water supply wells and has identified contaminants in the local fish population.

Example 2: Interest-Influence Matrix: A tool that assists practitioners in identifying the stakes that social actors (stakeholders) have in a cleanup project. Identified stakeholders are placed in a matrix according to their relative interest and influence (Reed et al. 2009).

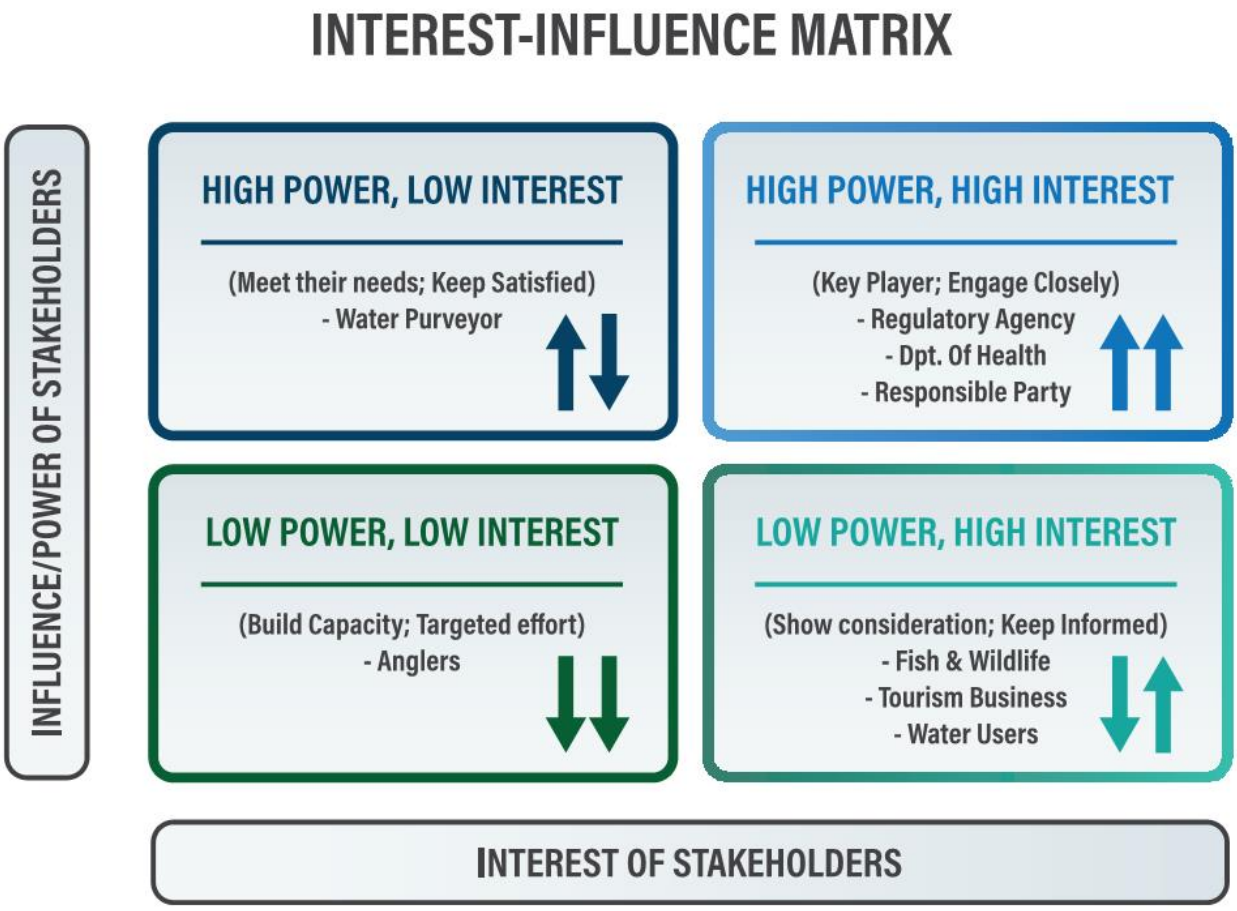

Figure C-2. Example interest-influence matrix.

Example 2: Interest-Influence Matrix Evaluation

- *Identify unengaged stakeholder populations:* agency and responsible party (high power) stakeholders have the role to engage lower power stakeholders that may not be currently engaged or are disengaged
- *Facilitate relationship/capacity building:* use high interest stakeholders to build relationships with lower interest stakeholder, particularly ones with low power (such as the anglers)
- *Identify and develop the communication team:* team consisting of a representative of each regulatory agency, responsible party, water purveyor, and low-power stakeholder group
- *Target communication strategy resources:* increase information transfer to unengaged stakeholder populations and rebuild relationships with low-interest stakeholders in alignment with risk communication strategy SMART goals.

Additional information and resources are available from Alexandrescu et al. (2015); Bodin and Prell (2011); (Bodin et al. 2011); Harclerode et al. (2015); Prell (2011); Prell, Hubacek, and Reed (2009) and Reed et al. (2009).