

NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Outreach Strategic Plan







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NOAA Fisheries Service

FOUNDATIONS FOR STEWARDSHIP

Communication and Collaboration with Constituents

Accomplishment of NOAA Fisheries Service's stewardship mission requires an open and honest exchange with our constituents. Stewardship is an ethic which must be held not only by NOAA Fisheries Service, but also by everyone who interacts with living marine resources. Furthering this ethic among constituents is a vital part of our mission.

Strong and Productive Partnerships

NOAA Fisheries Service is committed to increasing its partnering activities with other federal agencies, state and local authorities, universities, the commercial and recreational fishing industries, environmental groups, and international organizations. NOAA Fisheries Service will reach out to others with similar mandates, both inside and outside of government, and seek new ways to work with them to achieve our mutual goals.

NOAA Fisheries Service Mission

Stewardship of
living marine
resources
through
science based
conservation
and management
and the
promotion of
healthy
ecosystems

Outreach Plan

NOAA Fisheries Service defines outreach as “two-way communication between the agency and the public to establish and foster mutual understanding, promote public involvement, and influence behaviors, attitudes and action with the goal of improving the foundations for stewardship”. This definition emphasizes two-way communication that involves listening to stakeholders, recognizing their concerns, and enhancing the way the agency provides service to its partners and constituents. In addition, the agency recognizes that outreach encompasses constituent, congressional, corporate, media, non-governmental and governmental relations and includes public involvement, public information activities, and informational products.

This National Outreach Plan for NOAA Fisheries Service was developed to help in the execution of a strategy identified in NOAA’s Strategic Plan. Specifically, the strategy is to “develop coordinated regional and national outreach and education efforts to improve public understanding and involvement in stewardship of coastal and marine ecosystems.” The successful implementation of this strategy will help achieve the desired outcome of “a well-informed public that acts as a steward of coastal and marine ecosystems.”

In support of this strategy, NOAA Fisheries Service is currently conducting outreach at the national and regional levels at six regional offices and science centers as well as at their headquarters. However, due to the nature of the agency’s diverse responsibilities and the number of controversial issues, outreach efforts are sometimes conducted on an ad hoc basis. The primary purpose of this plan is to create a more unified and strategic approach to outreach to help the agency carry out its mission.

This plan is a document designed for the agency’s outreach professionals and their managers. Specific national goals, objectives, strategies and action items are clearly identified in the plan. Not all of the strategies will be implemented each year and specific activities related to the identified strategies will be tied to available resources and agency priorities. In addition, this plan is a “living document” that will be reviewed and updated annually.



Strategic Goals

GOAL 1

Increase collaboration and communication efforts by building and maintaining effective partnerships

OBJECTIVE

Establish procedures and protocols for 2-way flow of information within NOAA Fisheries Service

OBJECTIVE

Increase partnering activities to maximize results

STRATEGIES

Identify leads in each RO/SC/HQ office

Develop online handbook of all NOAA outreach points of contact, products and programs

Establish a communication channel that allows for continual input from leads

Provide training for this method

Seek out training opportunities across NOAA

Establish effective dialog with constituents to assess how they want to be engaged

Share outreach procedures/protocols with all personnel

STRATEGIES

Inventory current partners

Incorporate the expertise of other NOAA or federal agencies (e.g., Sea Grant, NOS, USGS, etc.)

Identify possible partners to facilitate achieving common outreach goals

Develop partnerships with national, private, and government aquaria to develop suite of outreach products

Develop National Partnership Program (oversee coordination)

Partnership Training Program

Share partnership "training tools"

GOALS:

OBJECTIVE

Increase collaboration to create synergy between partners

OBJECTIVE

Use partnerships to further common goals and communicate consistent messages

OBJECTIVE

Strengthen current partnerships between NOAA Fisheries, Councils, Commissions, States, and Tribes

STRATEGIES

- Identify liaison/contacts with partners
- Conduct regular meetings with partners
- Disseminate joint press releases
- Collaborate on implementing joint outreach strategies/activities

STRATEGIES

- Establish a National level OCA that hits all 50 states (start with regions)
- Continue to develop programs/projects that involve multiple partnerships
- Serve on various outreach committees
- Pool fiscal resources to conduct outreach activities

STRATEGIES

- Establish a clearinghouse list of organizations that share or influence NOAA's missions and goals
- Produce external newsletter of NOAA Fisheries activities
- Provide staff booths at major conventions, shows, festivals, etc. that showcase NOAA Fisheries activities
- Create partnership website (highlight partnerships throughout NOAA Fisheries)
- Cooperative training sessions from the NOAA Coastal Services Center
- Conference calls or e-mail updates that discuss current issues

Strategic Goals

GOAL 2

Inform public to improve stewardship of coastal and marine ecosystems

OBJECTIVE

Increase the understanding of the role of science in conservation and fisheries management

OBJECTIVE

Develop materials with clear and consistent messages

STRATEGIES

Develop and maintain websites

Content Management Systems to help streamline Website maintenance and upgrade

Develop and update fact sheets and brochures; establish networks for distribution

Develop and distribute press releases for events and announcements

Conduct NOAA Science Camps in all regions

Enhance outreach to ocean and fisheries based industries, organizations and individual

STRATEGIES

HQ lead for overarching NOAA Fisheries Service messages

Local lead for regional messages (Region & Science Center collaboration)

Determine messages and consistent NOAA Fisheries Service graphical “look”- develop “branding”

Maintain consistent imagery for NOAA Fisheries Service products

Establish list of acceptable universal vocabulary and acronyms

Work with partners to ensure everyone is delivering consistent messages about critical issues

OBJECTIVE

Publish national materials that can be used by all Regions and Science Centers

OBJECTIVE

Increase the quality of interactions with constituents

OBJECTIVE

Develop, enhance, and use communication tools to reach the public

STRATEGIES

Develop brochure and fact sheets for NOAA Fisheries Service as a whole

Develop National NOAA Fisheries Service newsletter

Assess the needs of each region prior to printing to account for the printing needs

Create intranet page that lists materials available and includes a contact to order and send materials

STRATEGIES

Develop materials targeted at different constituent groups and that meet their needs

Develop and maintain constituent network

Hold regional conferences/forums that focus on Hot Topics (informational meetings)

STRATEGIES

Identify needs of the public on an ongoing basis

Create websites

Develop fact sheets

Establish media campaigns – radio, TV, bus billboards



Strategic Goals

GOAL 3

Develop coordinated campaigns within NOAA and with partners to improve NOAA Fisheries Service image and increase national recognition

OBJECTIVE

Produce outreach materials that recognize "One NOAA"

OBJECTIVE

Develop materials that convey consistent messages that are continually repeated and reinforced

STRATEGIES

Work with HQ/local NOAA outreach networks to ensure that content represents all offices

Work with all NOAA line offices in developing products of wide-ranging appeal/effectiveness

Produce NOAA video suitable for all audiences

Produce NOAA folder with information about all of NOAA's programs

Continue the purchase/distribution of NOAA promotional handout items that have mass appeal

Ensure consistency in imagery

STRATEGIES

HQ lead for national messages

Determine messages to be used -craft list of key messages to guide education and outreach content

Review materials to assess usefulness, effectiveness, and accuracy every couple years

OBJECTIVE

Seek opportunities to share resources and activities in reaching common goals

STRATEGIES

Develop outreach teams of partners to address relevant issues

OBJECTIVE

Consolidate effort by coordinating with other entities and within NOAA

STRATEGIES

Create networks (HQ/local) of NOAA personnel (different line offices) who share outreach goals



Strategic Goals

GOAL 4

Anticipate and respond proactively to emerging issues and policies

OBJECTIVE

Inform constituents of emerging issues and policies prior to implementation

OBJECTIVE

Disseminate informational materials regarding policies and programs

STRATEGIES

Develop communications plans for impending decisions, natural disasters etc.

Produce "Hot Issues" Website(s)

Disseminate email advisories to constituents

Distribute NOAA Weather Radio announcements

STRATEGIES

Develop Congressional briefing documents regarding controversial policies

Develop information sheets on major actions/issues/programs

Disseminate articles in newsletter(s) regarding upcoming policies

Coordinate outreach/public affairs messages/campaigns

Develop protocol to expedite the approval process.

OBJECTIVE

Promote timely communication between leadership and communicators

OBJECTIVE

Develop issue-specific outreach strategies

OBJECTIVE

Coordinate crisis communication efforts between HQ, Regions, SC, Councils, Commissions, States

STRATEGIES

Keep Public Affairs/Outreach representatives informed of policies in advance

Develop outreach materials prior to implementation

STRATEGIES

Develop toolkit for communicating with the public about specific issues

Develop outreach roll-out plans regarding upcoming issues and policies

STRATEGIES

Develop internet-database to boost awareness about specific response protocols

Produce joint press releases when appropriate

Develop media informational packets

Keep others informed of pending actions and policies

Coordinate with other agencies/ organizations if issues/policies cross agency lines

Develop protocols to work with Public Affairs on how to disseminate information on "Hot Issues"



Strategic Goals

GOAL 5

Enhance national and regional infrastructure to support communications and outreach

OBJECTIVE

Seek opportunities to use technology to deliver information and messages

OBJECTIVE

Create website “warehouses” of information regarding campaigns and specific issues/policies

STRATEGIES

Create list of current technology used to disseminate information (e.g., podcasts) and post list on intranet

Television commercials

NOAA Weather Radio to disseminate specific messages

Distribute messages on phone cards

Provide training for outreach professionals

STRATEGIES

Establish warehouse website with the Councils

Establish National “Hot News” website(s)

GOALS:

OBJECTIVE

Promote and advertise current inventory of technology-based resources

OBJECTIVE

Create consistency and ensure timeliness of information throughout all NOAA Fisheries Service websites

OBJECTIVE

Identify most effective outreach tools to reach target audiences and deliver specific messages

STRATEGIES

Establish and maintain NOAA Fisheries Service Photo/Video Library

STRATEGIES

Ensure that each region/center has a dedicated Web developer/manager

Ensure web sites have consistent look and feel

Routinely review information to assess usefulness, effectiveness, and accuracy

STRATEGIES

Conduct human dimension studies to identify user groups

Use feedback as a tool to measure what works and what doesn't



Strategic Goals

GOAL 6
Evaluate the effectiveness
of outreach activities

OBJECTIVE

Develop methodologies to measure NOAA Fisheries Service success in conducting outreach

OBJECTIVE

Identify mechanisms that can be used to measure the effects of outreach activities

STRATEGIES

HQ lead on central surveys/techniques;
local lead on regional websites

Develop a before-and-after survey to measure effectiveness of particular outreach campaigns

Track website hits on pages that have specific outreach information

Track current outreach activity

Establish a feedback forum or email box for constituents or audience members to provide feedback; advertise this email address on all websites, fact sheets etc.

STRATEGIES

Research methods of evaluation

Develop questionnaires and/or interviews targeted at specific user groups

OBJECTIVE

Establish a baseline to gauge the success of future outreach activities

STRATEGIES

Develop outreach tracking method(s)

Establish a standard baseline survey or create an on-line survey to assess the user's view of website



GOAL 1

Increase collaboration and communication efforts by building and maintaining effective partnerships

The management and conservation of U.S. living marine resources is a complex undertaking, one that requires partnerships and collaboration between NOAA and a broad and diverse set of individuals, communities, organizations and other agencies. Success in fulfilling our role as the Nation's steward of living marine resources depends on the quality of our partnerships and collaborations.

Partnerships are both formal and informal. Formal partnerships are those where roles, responsibilities, objectives and goals of various parties are clearly defined by treaties, interagency agreements, and memorandums of understanding, contracts, cooperative research agreements, or grants. For example, formal partnerships exist between NOAA and the Regional Fisheries Management Councils and the Interstate

Marine Fisheries Commissions. Informal partnerships are harder to define, but important to our mission. Informal partnerships exist wherever the mission of NOAA's Fisheries Service intersects or overlaps with that of any individual or organization. Informal partnerships acknowledge our relationship with organizations or individuals who have historically been defined as "users", "stakeholders", or more appropriately "constituents."

Key elements of successful partnerships include, but are not limited to, building consensus, setting clear goals and objectives, engaging in positive dialogue, establishing excellent rapport, professionalism and mutual respect. In addition, processes to create and sustain partnerships should be inclusive and treat all participants fairly, provide incentives to participate, allow partners to represent their constituencies, and ensure equal opportunities to access relevant information.

The ability to create and maintain responsive, long-term relationships is a critical trait

shared by all successful organizations. NOAA Fisheries Service is committed to strengthening relationships with state, and local governments, as well as with the recreational and commercial fishing communities, environmental groups, universities, and international organizations. Mutual understanding and two-way communication are the foundation of these partnerships. By working together in this way, NOAA Fisheries Service can successfully achieve our mission at lower cost, with greater voluntary compliance, and more public support.

GOAL 2

Inform public to improve stewardship of coastal and marine ecosystems

Stewardship is an ethic held proudly at NOAA Fisheries Service, and by everyone who interacts with living marine resources. Furthering this ethic, for the sake of healthy and productive oceans and coasts, through improved communication with the public is a vital part of the NOAA Fisheries Service mission. Ensuring an informed public

requires making the right information available. NOAA Fisheries Service invests in environmental education that brings scientists and technicians into the communications process to better explain the complicated facets of coastal and marine ecosystems. Informing the public as to the best methods to improve the condition of these systems requires a fundamental understanding of what these systems are and how they function. This communication provides excellent opportunities for NOAA Fisheries Service scientists and managers to share their impressive scientific results and management tools with the public and link these activities with our successful marine conservation efforts.

NOAA Fisheries Service strives to increase public understanding so citizens may make more informed decisions about America's ocean and coastal resource management. This is a challenge, given the constant bombardment of advertising, news, and sometimes conflicting messages. NOAA Fisheries Service communicators can tailor messages to specific audiences to increase acceptance of our conservation and stewardship messages.

GOAL 3

Develop coordinated campaigns within NOAA and with partners to improve NOAA Fisheries Service image and increase national recognition

NOAA is continually improving its ability to coordinate communications activities throughout the agency. Changes in communication management and increasing the agency's priorities for outreach are a challenge for NOAA Fisheries Service Outreach Coordinators. The challenge is to better leverage investments in outreach that are already being undertaken around the agency, and increase opportunities for other line offices to participate in communications venues that have been limited to fisheries activities in the past.

NOAA Fisheries Service is a proud steward of our Nation's living marine resources. Accomplishing this mission requires the dedication and hard work of scientists and managers throughout the world. Communications efforts can increase the visibility for our science and management activities, promoting the Agency's image, and developing productive partnerships.

Coordinated campaigns to deliver NOAA Fisheries Service messages can be led by either headquarters or regional staff. These activities distinguish themselves by appealing to our partners and public with messages that include national and regional themes.

GOAL 4

Anticipate and respond proactively to emerging issues and policies

NOAA's demanding and varied workload makes effective communication extremely important. Communication becomes especially challenging when unforeseen events arise. However, it is often through these difficult circumstances that an organization's true character is revealed. In an agency as large and as complex as NOAA Fisheries Service, we need to maintain the

flexibility to be responsive to these unforeseen challenges.

NOAA Fisheries Service can improve the way it deals with critical issues through protocols and policies that enhance communications efficiencies and effectiveness. Protocols or guides can be developed to improve the way individuals within and outside the agency are notified of emerging issues. These protocols can also detail how individuals or groups are used in the creation of communications plans that appropriately address emerging issue for a variety of target audiences.

Planning and coordination can help NOAA anticipate and respond effectively to emerging issues and policies. The key to addressing both expected and unanticipated problems is to prioritize, identify what can go wrong, assess risks, assign responsibilities, and plan what to do and what to say given likely scenarios. In many cases, how an organization responds is as important as what is actually said. Communications should always be straightforward, responsive, and helpful. Successful crisis communication

offers a valuable opportunity to continue to build trust and credibility for NOAA Fisheries Service with its partners and constituents.

GOAL 5

Enhance national and regional infrastructure to support communications and outreach

Communications within NOAA Fisheries takes many forms including media relations, issue management, graphic design, and relationship building. NOAA Fisheries communications professionals conduct trade shows, design brochures and websites and offer strategic advice to leadership throughout the nation. A strong infrastructure to unify these efforts can improve efficiency and ensure consistent messaging.

The primary role of the outreach coordinators in the Partnerships and Communications Division at NOAA Fishery Service Headquarters Outreach Office is to support the work of outreach coordinators in regional offices, science centers and headquarters program offices. Developing tools and products to support their work is

an important component of the Division's function. Infrastructure pertains to:

- Capital investments that satisfy the requirements of both headquarters and regions.
- Processes or Policies that support coordination between the regions and headquarters.

Capital investments may be internet based, computer hardware, field operations kits for outreach coordinators, or publications. Finding ways to streamline and reduce duplicative effort in regions and headquarters by creating products that can be tailored to address the needs of both headquarters and regional staff. In addition, processes or policies can make coordination between regional offices and headquarters a high priority.

GOAL 6

Evaluate the effectiveness of outreach activities

Communications efforts must be measured to be effective. In the absence of specific,

quantitative measures it's impossible to determine the effectiveness of communication or find ways to improve it over time. Pairing communications activities with appropriate metrics can ensure NOAA communications are effective and responsive.

Communications can be measured quantitatively. The most effective communications are designed to solve specific problems, for example, improving compliance with a particular regulation. A good communication plan will include a clear goal (e.g., achieve a compliance rate of 80 percent within two years) and a series of specific objectives or steps designed to elicit a particular response. A variety of evaluation tools such as public opinion surveys, focus groups, and media coverage evaluations can be used to measure changes in knowledge, opinions or behavior.

It is critical that as communications plans are developed, all available means of measuring effectiveness be considered. In order to best facilitate this, training for all NOAA Fisheries Outreach Coordinators in communications evaluation techniques, methods, and practices should occur.

OUTREACH PLANNING

The agency's significant outreach efforts should include a pre-strategic planning process, which links to the national goals and objectives identified in this Plan. In order to embark in this planning process, an outreach template should be filled out and submitted to supervisors. As part of the planning process, each template should

identify the desired outcome, situation, or partnership. The template should also include a clear and concise message, specific outreach tools to implement the effort, schedule or timeline, required funds and resources, and a method of evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the outreach effort.

POTENTIAL ACTION ITEMS 2007

1. Produce a NOAA Fisheries Service National Brochure—that can also be regionalized.
2. Publish the 2006 NOAA Fisheries Service Business Report
3. Partner with the NOAA Sanctuaries and the Ocean Etiquette program and other existing programs such as the California Coastal Campaign to develop workshops and print collateral.
4. Conduct market analysis of what NOAA Fisheries Service constituents (audience) know and think about the organization. (Contract)
5. Build and maintain a calendar of regional and national outreach events for the agency.
6. Implement the Digital Asset Management System for NOAA Fisheries Service photos
7. Develop protocol to get outreach material posted to NOAA Fisheries Service website more quickly.
8. Enhance networking of outreach team through e-mails, periodic conference calls, and intranet.
9. Develop a "brand" for NOAA Fisheries Service (Team and contractor)

OUTREACH PLAN TEMPLATE

Title: Outreach Plan for (list specific activity).

Issue: Clearly state the issue in one or two sentences.

Target Audience: Determine individuals or groups that will most likely implement change or achieve the desired outcome.

Message: Keep message focused and consistent.

Contacts: List parties responsible for delivering the message.

Desired Outcome: Identify why the message is being communicated.

Implementation of Results: Identify who will be responsible for implementing the results of the outreach activity.

Outreach Tools: List the outreach tools that will most effectively carry the message.

Print:

Brochures
Factsheets
News Releases
Feature Articles
Inserts
Flyers
Newsletters
Educational Curricula
Letters to Editor
Direct Mailing

Electronic:

PSAs
Videos
E-mails
Documentaries
Radio Interviews
Television
Community Access Cable TV
Internet
Websites
Bulletin Boards

Visuals:

Slides
Photos
Displays
Exhibits
Posters/Billboards
Signs
Flash Cards
Stickers
Bulletin Boards
Magnets, pens, etc.

Personal Contact:

Workshops
Presentations
Lectures
Demonstrations
Meetings
Interviews
Surveys
Press Events
Conferences
Face-to-Face Encounters

Other:

Partnerships
Cooperative Agreements
Volunteers

Resources: List personnel, funds, and supplies that are needed to implement the outreach effort.

Distribution: Identify distribution of outreach materials.

Deadline Date: Include associated timeline needed to complete the outreach effort (also include level of urgency).