Tools for Effective Outreach

University of Rhode Island   University of Wisconsin

Elizabeth Herron, Kris Stepenuck, and Linda Green

Getting the Word Out

Communicating watershed information to, and getting feedback from, the local community is critical for monitoring program success. This is especially true for volunteer monitoring, which uniquely contributes to watershed science and management by promoting active participation of the community in gathering, understanding and using data to restore and protect water resources. Thus creating and implementing an effective outreach and education program is essential for volunteer monitoring program success. This factsheet provides information to help you get your message received, understood and used by your community. It supplements **Factsheet X: From the Trenches – Tips and Tools for Effective Presentations**, (http://www.usawaterquality.org/ Outreach/Tips&Tools.pdf) which highlights various ways of presenting monitoring data and on the mechanics of creating better presentations and outreach materials.

Extension and Empowerment

Outreach mechanisms can be generally classified into two basic approaches: *extension* and *empowerment*. In fact, the two approaches typically overlap and successful outreach combines elements of both. The extension approach is characterized by dissemination of information, promotion of specific actions (e.g. installation of rain gardens , adoption of ordinances, etc.) and delivery of particular services or technical assistance. With the empowerment approach, the main goal is to encourage local groups or create local capacity to address particular issues through involvement in decision-making. The key challenge is to match the outreach approach to the desired outcomes to be achieved at the community level (Lutz and Binswanger 1998).

Steps for Choosing Effective Outreach Techniques

1) Describe the environmental concern or opportunity.
   a. What is your management goal (what are you trying to get the community to do, or become involved with)
   b. Why is this environmental concern important to the community?
2) Identify preliminary target audience(s).
3) Determine specific actions citizens need to take to accomplish the management goal.
4) Collect audience information relevant to the environmental practices and specific behaviors desired.
   a. What are the obstacles for getting involved with your project or adopting specific actions?
   b. What incentives would most likely encourage an audience to overcome those obstacles?
5) Apply what you've learned to design a strategy to produce the result you hope to achieve.
(Adapted from http://wateroutreach.uwex.edu/CPBenvsignbeh.cfm.)

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Cooperative Extension Resources

There are a number of excellent Extension-based resources for guiding you through the process of identifying the best outreach strategy for getting your message out. In fact, since effective outreach is such a cornerstone of Extension water quality efforts, two national facilitation projects have focused on various aspects of outreach.

The *National Extension Water Outreach Education* web site (http://wateroutreach.uwex.edu/index.cfm) provides resources to help you incorporate best education practices into your water management outreach strategies. Website resources help educators to:
- Connect the situation with their intended audience
- Choose achievable goals
- Select relevant outreach techniques
- Obtain measurable results

The **Changing Public Behavior National Facilitation Project: Increase Citizen Involvement Using Target Audience Information** project (http://wateroutreach.uwex.edu/CPBhomepage1.cfm) helps scientists, educators and natural resource professionals to apply education tools and techniques to develop and use audience information to improve citizen involvement in community decision-making for water resources. The website provides information on:
- What questions to ask
- What tools to use to gather social science information
- How to use the tools and analyze results
- How to use results to select outreach techniques that satisfy audience needs

Ohio Watershed Network Reference Library: Outreach Resources (http://ohiowatersheds.osu.edu/library/11.html) Ohio State University Extension - recommended websites with outreach materials and resources.

United States Environmental Protection Agency Resources

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) also recognizes the value of effective outreach for meeting watershed and water resource protection goals. The US EPA helps build the capacity of local agencies and community groups in crafting effective conservation messages with of a number of outreach tools.

Nonpoint Source (NPS) Outreach Toolbox (http://www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox/) is for use by agencies and groups interested in educating the public on nonpoint source pollution or stormwater runoff. The Toolbox contains a variety of resources to help develop an effective and targeted outreach campaign.

Getting in Step: A Guide for Conducting Watersehd Outreach Campaigns (http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/outreach/documents/getnstep.pdf) pulls together principles, techniques, and information for effective watershed outreach. This guide offers advice on how watershed groups, local governments, and others can maximize the effectiveness of public outreach campaigns. It incorporates new information from the growing field of community-based social marketing.

US EPA Watershed Academy (http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/gettinginstep/)
Two part web training module based on *Getting in Step* (above).
- Part I (http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/gettinginstep/03set.htm) provides the overall framework for developing an outreach campaign plan using a step-by-step approach.
- Part II (http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/gettinginstep/27set.htm) provides tips on implementing the campaign plan.

US EPA Resources (continued)

Developing and Implementing an Estuarine Water Quality Monitoring, Assessment, and Outreach Program: The MYSound Project (http://mysound.uconn.edu/mys_techtxfr.html) presents the experience of the US EPA's multi-state Long Island Sound Program in organizing and maintaining the communications and outreach component of the MYSound Project . It provides tips on developing outreach plans, with a focus on working with partners, and determining target audiences, messages, and outreach tools, as well as lessons learned.

Other Outreach Resources

Using Rainwater to Grow Livable Communities - Sustainable Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) - Water Environment Research Foundation's website (http://www.werf.org/livablecommunities/tool_comm.htm) helps craft an outreach strategy to communicate the right message to the right group at the right time.
Titles within this series include:
- Bring Your Ideas to the Community (58K, pdf)
- Building Local Partnerships (55K, pdf)
- Drivers and Motivating Factors (51K, pdf)
- Reframing Water Resources: Planning and Practice (57K, pdf)

Tool 21 Stakeholder Education Resources - Maryland Department of Natural Resources (http://www.dnr.state.md.us/watersheds/pubs/planninguserguide/tools/Tool21StakeholderEducationResources.pdf) is essentially an annotated bibliography which includes resources on how to create and distribute watershed messages to stakeholders, as well as links to materials that explain why watershed protection is important and what stakeholders can do to help. Resources were selected based on ease of access (most are free for download), applicability to watershed planning, and how often they were referenced in other documents on working with stakeholders.

Toolkit for Urban Rivers: Public Education and Outreach Programs and Strategies. (http://www.nricd.org/ToolKit/ToolKit.pdf) highlights the lessons learned by the creators of the "Woonasquatucket River (RI) Do's & Don'ts" Education and Outreach Campaign. This is both a guide and a workbook for other programs to use in developing education programs. Eight steps for creating a program are presented, with questions that can be helpful in defining the process as well as pointers on setting goals and objectives.

Words Matter

Framing your message in terms that your target audience understands and responds to is essential for creating an effective outreach strategy. In surveys (such as the Gallup poll - http://www.gallup.com/poll/104932/Polluted-Drinking-Water-No-Concern-Before-Report.aspx) people state that water and the environment are very important issues, yet they often make choices that adversely impact their local resources. Conservation marketers tell us that for most people, professional terms like "riparian," "watershed," and impervious surface" amount to a foreign language, and that the use of this type of vocabulary – even while explaining what it means, often turns an otherwise receptive audience into an ambivalent one. There are many good resources for helping us to drop the jargon and use more public-friendly language.

Photo credits:
Aquidneck Christian Academy - pages 1 & 5,   US EPA website - page 2
WERF website - page 3 Top   Northern RI Conservation District website - page 4
Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association - page 3 bottom
Coal Creek Watershed Coalition - page 6

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Words Matter (continued)

Water Words That Work
(http://waterwordsthatwork.com/) is a blog that re-orients those working to protect nature and control pollution to the vocabulary and perspective of laypeople. It helps you to translate jargon or shoptalk into messages that are clear and compelling to the public, and to succeed at tasks such as:

- Working with reporters and bloggers
- Overseeing behavior change campaigns
- Preparing websites and print publications
- Fundraising
- Speaking at public meetings and hearings
- Lobbying public officials

From Water Words the Works - Words to Avoid
(http://waterwordsthatwork.com/the-method/words-that-dont/)

Instead of using...	Try substituting...
Nonpoint source pollution	Polluted runoff
Open space	Natural area
Sprawl	Overdevelopment, runaway development
Stormwater	Polluted runoff
Undeveloped land	Natural areas
Water conservation	Waste prevention, efficiency measures
Watershed protection	Land and water conservation, upstream, downstream

Living by Water – Conservation Marketing Tools
(http://www.livingbywater.ca/ConservationMarketingTools.pdf) was developed for conservation organizations and agencies. It outlines some of the tools and techniques that make up Living by Water's unique marketing approach focusing on positive actions citizens can take to improve their environment. This approach incorporates modern business and community-based social marketing, with environmental education principles. It's emphasis is positive - the Do's, rather than the Don'ts.

Fostering Sustainable Behavior Community-based Social Marketing (http://www.cbsm.com/) McKenzie-Mohr & Associates created this site, which requires free registration to access many of the materials, to provide information on the use of community-based social marketing to design and evaluate conservation programs. It includes searchable databases of articles, cases, and downloadable reports, and discussion forums for sharing information and asking questions of others.

Lessons Learned Regarding the "Language of Conservation" from the National Research Program (http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer/pdf/GuideBook/conservationlanguage.pdf) a memorandum written for The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land that provides some easy-to-follow, broad "rules" for communication - words to avoid and others to emphasize - to make your conservation message more effective.

Water - Use It Wisely campaign (http://parkandco.com/work/case_study2.php) this case study demonstrates 12 steps to successful social marketing as it explains how this Mesa, Arizona-based campaign became a nationally comprehensive water conservation program.

Quick Reference: Community-Based Social Marketing
(http://www.epa.nt.gov.au/pdf/comm_based_social_mktg.pdf)

Community-based social marketing is based on research that has shown that getting people to "do the right thing" is more effective with efforts delivered at the local or community level. It focuses on removing barriers to an activity while simultaneously highlighting benefits to both the individual and to the community.

Community-based social marketing involves four steps:
1. Identifying the barriers and benefits to an activity,
2. Developing a strategy that utilizes "tools" that have been shown to be effective in changing behavior,
3. Piloting the strategy, and
4. Evaluating it once it has been implemented.

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Watersheds do not adhere to manmade boundaries such as those of towns, counties or even states. Thus ensuring that your watershed outreach efforts reach everyone that needs to be involved will mean having to reach out to "non-traditional" audiences. Which audiences your program considers "non-traditional" will be relative to your usual program activities, area and issues. The important idea is that you need to take into account your personal perspectives and biases, as well as those of the diverse cultures and groups within your watershed, when considering how to craft your message for each audience.

Language or technology barriers may negate the value of your favorite outreach tools for certain audiences. For example, in cases where you may have traditionally distributed brochures or developed a website, you may need to consider a different approach, such as hiring an intern to meet face-to-face with community members. Even how and where you set up community meetings may need to be viewed in a different light. Insisting on formalized agendas or strict timelines without allowing for adequate social interaction, or hosting a meeting in an area without adequate public transportation or in a "government" building may alienate your audience (Berkman and Harmer 1998).

People in your community may adhere to vastly different values and behaviors in terms of meeting processes, decision-making, and communication styles. Developing innovative partnerships and thinking creatively to connect with those audiences is essential for success. Respecting and responding to differences, rather than assuming all groups interact in the same way, is key for effective outreach, and can lead to unexpected and positive outcomes.

Additionally, reaching out to groups that may not seem to have much in common with your environmental goals can be a very effective way of broadening your impact. In **Not Preaching to the Choir: Communicating the Importance of Forest Conservation to Nontraditional Audiences** (http://academic.evergreen.edu/n/nadkarnn/cv/pdfs_new/nadkarni_choir_04.pdf) Dr. Nalinin Nadkarni stresses the importance of reaching non-traditional audiences by framing your message in way that relates to the audiences' interests. For example, when Dr. Nadkarni speaks to church groups, she presents her forest conservation message through Biblical references to trees. When speaking with urban youth, she includes a rap song about a forest canopy composed by a student .

Resources for Reaching Non-traditional Audiences:

Increasing the Participation of Latino(a) youth and families in Oregon 4-H programs

(http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/oregonoutreach/successful_practices/why%20latino%20outreach.html) explains why Latino outreach program may differ from traditional programs, explains cultural values and highlights successful practices for working with the Latino community.

Tips for Teaching Non-Traditional Audiences

(http://www.joe.org/joe/2002december/tt1.shtml) from the Journal of Extension, this article defines factors influencing program success and provides tips for designing programs for new audiences.

Branching Out: Outreach and ATB's New Mission on Conservation

(http://www.atbio.org/tnv13n4.pdf) in the Association of Tropical Biology (ATB) newsletter, ATB president Nadkarni describes how to get people interested in often abstract concepts like conservation through connections to sports, the arts and spirituality, etc.

Demystifying Outreach to Reservation Communities: Communication Processes and Decision Making in Tribal /Rural Communities (http://www.docstoc.com/docs/612630/Demystifying-Outreach-to-Reservation-Communities---Communication-Processes-and-Decision-Making-in-TribalRural-Communities) this presentation highlights things to consider when working in tribal communities and how to overcome barriers.
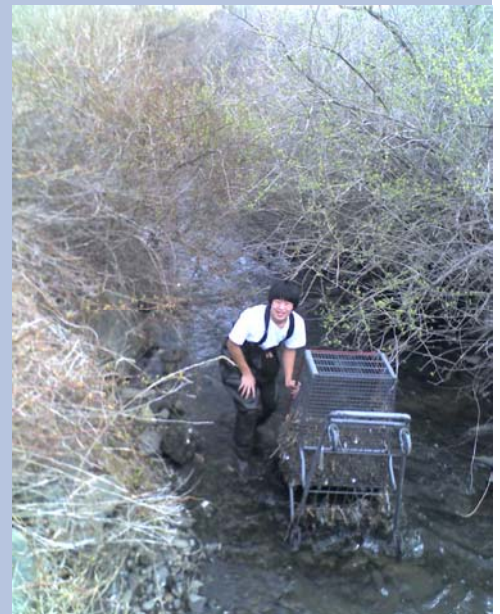
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Other Outreach Resources:

Environmental Media Fund
(http://www.environmentalmediafund.org/Page.aspx?PageID=137)
this website includes information for creating multi-media outreach
products, as well as links for producers, distributors and other resources

Association for Institutional Research
(http://www.airweb.org/?page=309) Online Resources on a wide range
of education, outreach and institution support tools

Final Thoughts on Reaching Out Effectively:

Tell me . . . I will forget.
Understand me . . . I will listen.
Show me . . . I will remember.
Involve me . . . I will understand.
Respond to my needs . . . I will act.
Remind and support me . . . I will keep going.

Remembering and incorporating the simple ideas from this Native American proverb into your outreach strategy will keep you rooted in your ultimate goal – of providing information that will encourage your community to better protect, preserve and restore local water resources.

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CONTACTS

Linda Green
    Phone: 401-874-2905, lgreen@uri.edu
Elizabeth Herron
    Phone: 401-874-4552, emh@uri.edu
Arthur Gold
    Phone: 401-874-2903, agold@uri.edu
University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension
Coastal Institute in Kingston, Rm 105
Kingston, RI 02881

Kris Stepenuck
    Phone: 608-265-3887,
kris.stepenuck@ces.uwex.edu
Robin Shepard
    Phone: 608-262-1843, rlshepar@wisc.edu
University of Wisconsin Extension Service
445 Henry Mall, Room 202
Madison WI 53706