

Report as of FY2006 for 2005ME81B: "Enhancing Lakefront Buffer Adoption through Social Marketing (pilot project)"

Publications

Project 2005ME81B has resulted in no reported publications as of FY2006.

Report Follows

Enhancing Lakefront Buffer Adoption Through Social Marketing

Background

The leading causes of water pollution in the state of Maine include nutrient overloading (phosphorus and nitrogen), as well as silt and suspended solids. This project is designed to address these causes by encouraging the use of vegetative buffers on lakefront property. The goals are to identify barriers to developing lakefront buffers and to develop marketing tools to effect behavior concerning installation and maintenance of lakefront buffers.

Project Staff

In addition to Principal Investigators Wilson and Jemison, two undergraduate Research Assistants (Theodore Smyth and Kate Gaudet) worked on this project in year one.

Target Audience Information

In order to investigate landowner perceptions of water quality and the possible perceived benefits to buffer installation, two focus groups were conducted by undergraduate research assistant Theodore Smyth on July 17th and July 19th with Pushaw Lake residents. Protection of Human Subjects Review approval was obtained prior to the focus groups and the survey. Focus group participants indicated their interest in gardening and landscaping, and their lack of knowledge about what plants would be suitable for landscapes surrounding the lake. Using information from the focus groups, a survey was generated to be mailed to Pushaw Lake residents. The survey focused on

investigating residents' knowledge of water quality and the benefits of vegetated buffers as well as to assess the willingness of residents to participate in a water quality program. Participants were asked to respond to each statement by choosing one of the following: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, or Totally disagree. Of approximately 300 surveys mailed, 74 responses were received, for a 25 percent response rate. The survey questions and associated responses were as follows:

General questions about Pushaw and water quality:

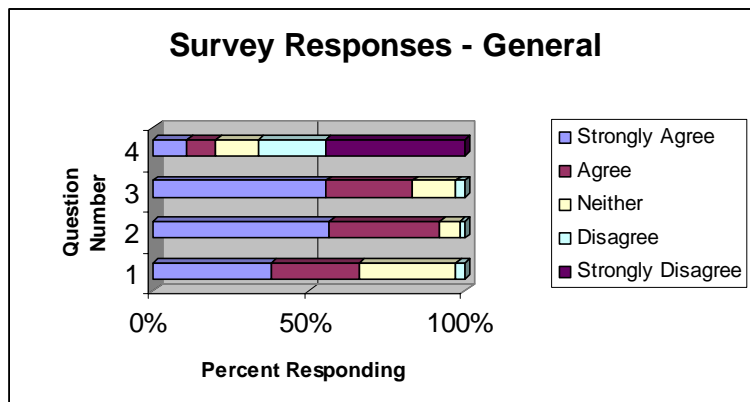


Figure 1: Responses to general survey questions:

1. The phosphorus and nitrogen levels in Pushaw Lake are too high.
2. I am concerned about the water quality of Pushaw Lake.
3. I am willing to take action/make changes on my lake property to protect the water quality of Pushaw.
4. What I do on my lakefront property has little or no effect on Pushaw Lake water quality.

From these answers, we determined that the lakefront landowners who responded to the survey do have concerns about the water quality of Pushaw, have some knowledge of nutrient and water quality issues, and realize that their lakefront property may be contributing to the rising levels of phosphorus in Pushaw. A large percentage of respondents indicated a willingness to make changes on their property in order to protect the lake.

Landscaping questions:

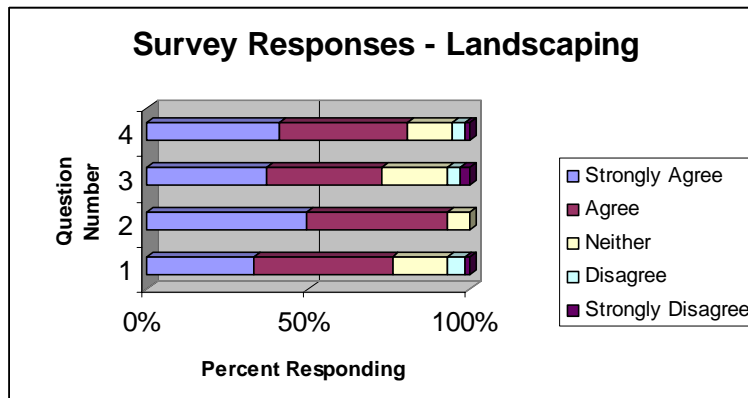


Figure 2: Responses to survey questions about landscaping:

1. I enjoy landscaping and working around my lakefront property.
2. I am interested in lake-friendly landscaping.
3. I would like to purchase a package of pre-selected plants for landscaping if it was available locally/specific to my area.
4. I would likely do lake-friendly landscaping if there were a list of helpful plants for my area.

As indicated initially by our focus group participants, the survey respondents are interested in landscaping, and they indicated an interest in either purchasing pre-selected groups of plants, or in being provided a list of plants suitable for their growing conditions.

The focus group participants also suggested that rewards programs such as the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's "LakeSmart" program may act as an incentive to landowners, or that landowners would participate in informational meetings or workshops. They suggested that incentives such as food or entertainment could be used to increase participation in informational workshops. These suggestions were also tested with the survey:

Additional Survey Questions:

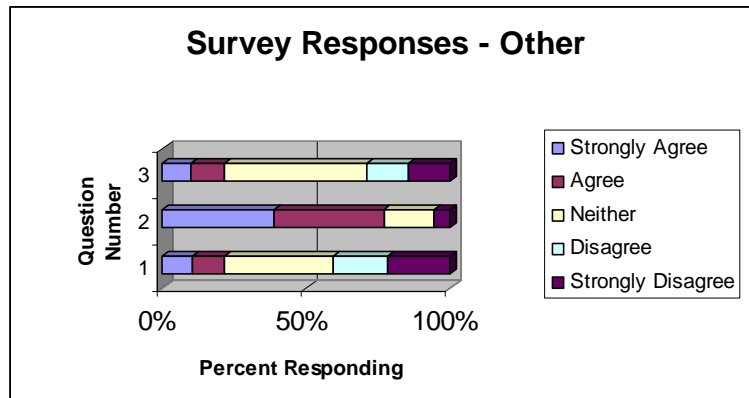


Figure 3: Responses to additional survey questions:

1. Being recognized with a plaque or having my name appear on a local list for having a lake-friendly landscape is important to me, and would motivate me to change my current practices and improve my property.
2. I would likely attend an informational meeting on how I could help protect Pushaw Lake.
3. I would be more likely to attend such a meeting if food and entertainment would be provided.

From these responses, we determined that using the Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s “LakeSmart” program was not a suitable marketing approach with these residents. It is interesting that so high a percentage of respondents indicated willingness to attend an information meeting; historically such meetings generate poor turnouts.

Marketing Approach #1: Lakeside Landscapes

The results of the survey then contributed to the design of a vegetated buffer program entitled “Lakeside Landscapes.” Lakeside Landscapes is a program designed to encourage landscaping of lakefront property in order to improve water quality. Incentives include the choice of two, discounted, pre-designed landscapes; Shady Scenery and

Sunburst. Layout designs resulted from consultation with a professional landscaper so as to ensure the best plants for the Pushaw Lake area. The Shady Scenery package includes shade tolerant plants. In contrast, the Sunburst package includes plants that require at least 6 hours of sunlight daily. Residents can choose the package that best suits their needs.

Two target mailings including brochure detailing the project and ordering information were sent to residents of Pushaw Lake. The first mailing targeted the Cedar Breeze area of Glenburn and the second mailing targeted residents of Perk O Rock Landing, Gould Road, Lucky Landing, and Hemlock Point Road in Glenburn and Orono.

Mailing number one consisted simply of the brochure, and a suggested layout scheme for each landscape package. Mailing number two included the brochure and layout schemes, and also a letter detailing water quality benefits. Along with the letter, a flyer advertising master gardener assistance for planting was included as well.

Approach number one focuses on consumer wants (packaged landscapes) and uses discount packages as incentives. Approach number two attempts to address consumer wants as well as desire to participate in water quality improvement projects.

Marketing Approach #2: Perennial Party

Given the results of the survey, a logical marketing technique to use would be an informational meeting to discuss water quality issues on Pushaw. However, with the low turnout in similar meetings held by PI Wilson, the decision was made to use the successful examples of “Pampered Chef®” or “Tupperware®” parties and hold a Perennial Party in the spring of 2007 for targeted residents on a neighborhood scale.

Evaluation

Evaluation will take place in the late summer/fall of 2007.