Getting in Step:
A Guide to Effective Outreach
in Your Watershed

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Introduction

Outreach and education are powerful tools that can be used in watershed protection efforts. Both can help develop an awareness of the value of our water resources, educate people on what's threatening the resources, and encourage protective action. Because polluted runoff is the major source of contamination in our nation's waters, there is a need to educate individuals on pollutant sources and show them how their daily activities degrade water quality. For example, runoff from suburban areas can contain fertilizer and pesticides leached from lawns, oil and antifreeze washed off driveways, bacteria and organic matter from pet wastes, and sediment from construction sites. Runoff from farms, homes, or factories in rural areas can contain many of the same pollutants. Outreach can educate individuals about the causes of water pollution and provide solutions to these problems. Outreach and education can also help change behaviors and promote responsible attitudes in the watershed. The purpose of this training module is to provide the tools you will need to develop and implement an effective watershed outreach plan. The module is divided into 3 parts.

Part I provides the overall framework for developing an outreach plan using a step-by-step approach.

Part II provides tips and examples for developing and enhancing outreach materials.

Part III gives specific tips on working with the news media to get your message out to target audiences. Throughout the module sidebars provide specific examples, key concepts, and recommended resources for obtaining more information. Worksheets are also provided for you to download and use for planning purposes.

Developing Your Outreach Plan

To develop and implement an effective outreach program, you need a plan. The plan presented in this module includes six steps (Figure 1):

- **Step 1:** Define your goals and objectives

- **Step 2:** Identify your target audience

- **Step 3:** Create your message

- **Step 4:** Package your message

- **Step 5:** Distribute your message

- **Step 6:** Evaluate your outreach plan

Figure 1

PART I

DEVELOPING YOUR OUTREACH PLAN

STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

While outreach activities may be initiated before a coordinated watershed planning effort is underway, it is helpful to link your outreach to other activities occurring in the watershed (Figure 2). Outreach and education is an important component to watershed management. Watershed citizens must be informed about basic water quality problems. Stakeholders must be told about the process and encouraged to get involved. Elected officials will want to know what's happening and how they can support the initiative. And, finally, those who are contributing to water quality degradation by engaging in practices that increase polluted runoff will need to be informed, engaged, and motivated to adopt more appropriate behaviors.

Figure 2

Goals

Goals are general statements that express the broad focus of the entire watershed effort (Figure 3). For example, a goal for a river might be to restore recreational uses (fishing and swimming). This goal might be further defined as improving cold-water fisheries by reducing sediment in runoff and increasing dissolved oxygen concentrations, and reinstating swimming by lowering bacteria counts during the summer. A wide range of specific, measurable *objectives* will be developed and implemented to support each aspect of the goal.

Figure 3

Objectives

The objectives developed to achieve a goal are specific, measurable, action-oriented, and time focused. You will probably develop several objectives for each goal you're trying to achieve. Keep the desired outcome in mind when forming your objectives. Do you want to *create awareness* (Figure 4, next page)*, provide information* (Figure 5, next page)*, or encourage action* (Figure 6, next page) among your target audience? It is very important to make your objectives as specific as possible and to include a time element as well as a result.
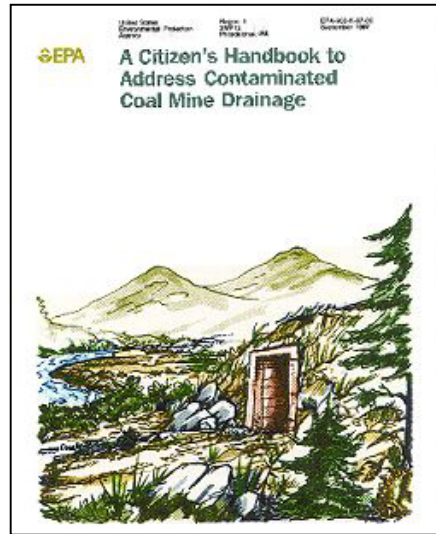
Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

This approach will make it easier to identify specific tasks and will enable you to evaluate whether you've achieved the objective (Figure 7).

It is important to remember that as you progress through your watershed management process your outreach objectives and activities will change. For example, during the early stages it might be necessary to generate basic awareness on watershed issues, but as problems are identified your objectives will focus on educating your target audiences on the causes of the problems. Finally, during the implementation phase of your watershed planning and management process, your objectives will focus on action by your target audience to reduce adverse water quality impacts.

AN OBJECTIVE TAKES SHAPE

The Watershed Action Committee established a goal of eliminating unsightly algal blooms in Lake Townsend, which were hurting tourism and causing dissolved oxygen levels to drop during the late summer.

They developed several objectives to meet their goal:

■ During the next 12 months, recruit 20 new members to the Lake Townsend Volunteer Monitoring Association to participate in the upcoming sampling season (action).

■ During the next 12 months, prepare and distribute a fact sheet to inform residents in the watershed of algal bloom impacts on tourism (awareness).

■ Establish four demonstration lawns during the next 6 months using organic lawn practices to show the linkage between lawn fertilizer runoff and algae growth (education).

■ Increase the number of linear feet of vegetated buffers along the lake by a factor of 10 within 3 years (action).

Figure 7

DEVELOPING YOUR OUTREACH PLAN

STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Your target audience is the group of people you want to reach with your message (Figure 8). You must break down your target audience into the smallest segments possible that still retain the characteristics of the audience. If your audience is too broad, chances are you won't be able to develop a message that engages and resonates with your entire target audience. Be creative in defining and developing perspectives on target audiences and in finding out what makes them tick.

Figure 8

Segmenting your audience
Target audiences can be grouped several different ways depending on the objective being pursued. Some common groupings include the following:

- Geographic location (Figure 9)
- Demographics (Figure 10)
- Occupation (Figure 11)
- Behavior patterns (Figure 12)

AUDIENCES ARE SEGMENTED BASED ON SPECIFIC GEOGRAPHIC AREAS WITHIN THE WATERSHED SUCH AS SCHOOL DISTRICTS, RESIDENCES ALONG A SPECIFIC STREAM CORRIDOR, OR ZIP CODES.

Figure 9

AUDIENCES ARE SEGMENTED BASED ON DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS SUCH AS ETHNICITY, GENDER, AGE, INCOME, RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS, OR OWNERSHIP OF SPECIFIC TYPES OF PROPERTY (FOREST LAND, UNDEVELOPED WATERFRONT, ETC.).

Figure 10

AUDIENCES ARE SEGMENTED BASED ON THE PRIMARY OCCUPATION OF THE TARGET AUDIENCE WITHIN THE WATERSHED SUCH AS OWNERS OF LAWN CARE COMPANIES, DEVELOPERS, COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, AUTOMOBILE SERVICE STATION MANAGERS, LOGGERS, OR LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS.

Figure 11

AUDIENCES ARE SEGMENTED BASED ON CURRENT PRACTICES, E.G., RESIDENTS WHO DON'T RECYCLE, HOMEOWNERS WHO DISPOSE OF LEAVES AND GRASS CLIPPINGS ON STREAM BANKS, FARMERS WHO PLOW AND PLANT RIPARIAN CORRIDORS.

Figure 12

Your target audience will likely incorporate more than one of the above groupings. For example, if you want to generate awareness among students about the impairment of Lake Townsend, you might want to target your audience based on demographics and geography; e.g., schoolchildren aged 12 to 17 within the Lake Townsend watershed. Once you've identified your target audience, you'll need to gather information on them before proceeding to the next step (Figure 13).

Conducting at least a rudimentary analysis of the target audience is a task that's often ignored, but such an oversight can make the rest of the outreach plan useless. To develop an effective message that reaches your audience, you need to find out what *they* think about the issues and what messages might engage and motivate them.

BUILDING YOUR PLAN... STEP BY STEP

GOAL:
Eliminate unsightly algal in Lake Townsend, which hurting tourism and causing dissolved oxygen levels to drop during the late summer.

OBJECTIVE:
During the next 12 months, recruit 20 new members to the Lake Townsend Volunteer Monitoring Association to participate in the upcoming sampling season (action).

TARGET AUDIENCE:
Senior citizens and high-school students who live within 15 miles of Lake Townsend.

Figure 13

What information do I need about my target audience?

First, think of the target audience as your customer (Figure 14). What are the needs of your customer? You want to sell your customer a product (e.g., environmental awareness, membership in an organization, participation in a stream restoration project, or some voluntary behavior change), so you need to find out information about your customer.

Four types of information are needed to characterize and assess the target audience/customer.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Figure 14

- Demographics -- collecting demographic information will help define the socioeconomic structure of your target audience, the appropriate educational level for proposed messages, and types of organizations that could be engaged to implement outreach activities.

- Knowledge of the issue -- Determining baseline knowledge of watershed issues among members of the target audience will establish where you need to begin to define your issue. For example, does your target audience know what a watershed is or understand what causes polluted runoff? If not, you are going to have to define those terms before you use them in your message.

- Attitudes/beliefs/perceptions -- Exploring what people in the target audience think about an issue or problem and what they value and believe will help you link watershed issues with things they care about. If they don't feel a problem exists or don't understand how it affects environmental resources they value, you'll need to educate them before expecting them to take action. Remember: *perception is reality*.

- Communication channels -- Finding out how the target audience gets its information will help you to develop, format, and distribute your messages. What newspapers, magazines, or newsletters do they read? To what organizations do they belong? Do they watch local news or cable television? Do they receive information in other forms such as community radio programs? Who are the opinion leaders, and how can you reach them?

How do I get information on my target audience?

You can use several different tools depending on the makeup of the target audience and your available resources (time and money). Any information you collect will make your plan stronger, so don't worry if you don't have access to a Census Bureau database or can't make your survey results statistically significant. The following tools will help you gather information on your target audience:

- **Surveys by mail (Figure 15)**

  Mail surveys are an excellent way to get baseline information about a target audience and measure changes in attitudes or behavior. Keep in mind what information you want to collect, how you are going to use that information, and who is going to tabulate the data. From a respondent's perspective, make the survey is relatively short (and explain up.front how long it will take the respondent to fill it out).

  Figure 15

  You should try to shoot for at least a ten percent return rate to make your results meaningful (Table 1). To increase your chances of getting your surveys filled out and returned, make the directions very clear, prepare an easy-to-read format, and include a self-addressed, stamped, return envelope.

Table 1: Pros and Cons of Surveys by Mail	
Pros	Cons
- Allow participants to think about their answers before responding - Can reach large numbers of people - Can gather data from people who might not be accessible in person	- Printing and mailing costs - Staff time for tabulation of results - Potential for low response rate

- **Surveys by phone (Figure 16)**
  Surveys by phone can also provide good baseline (and post.project) information on your target audience. The success of phone surveys tends to vary geographically; rural audiences are more willing to take the time to answer questions than urban audiences (Table 2).

Figure 16

| Table 2: Pros and Cons of Surveys by Mail ||
Pros	Cons
- Allow data gathering from people who might not be accessible in person - Elicit immediate responses - Can accommodate many participants	- The need to access correct phone numbers for participants - Lack of time for participants to think about their responses - The level of resources involved - Exclusion of those who will not respond to unsolicited calls

- **Focus groups (Figure 17)**
  Focus groups provide an opportunity to meet with several members of the target audience at once and allow them the chance to expand on comments and ideas. This is an opportunity to collect information and start building a network of people you might want to use later to deliver your message (Table 3).

Figure 17

| Table 3: Pros and Cons of Focus Groups ||
Pros	Cons
- Provide insights about the target audience's composition, perceptions, and beliefs - Provide interaction among participants - Build support for further actions or outreach communication	- Success depends largely on the moderator - Can accommodate only a few participants - Time demand on participants is considerable - Might not be suitable for certain cultures where peer pressure or deference to others might inhibit discussion.

- **Public agencies (Figure 18)**
  Local public agencies such as planning departments and property tax evaluation agencies can be tremendous sources of information on the makeup of your target audience. Information collected in this manner should be held in confidence: circulating perceptions and other information provided in private can seriously harm your credibility and effectiveness (Table 4).

Figure 18

Table 4: Pros and Cons of Surveys by Phone	
Pros	Cons
- Might have access to large populations and have information on the target audiences collected over a long period of time	- Might not have information in a readily available format - Agency personnel might not be forthcoming with personal information on the composition, perceptions, or values of the target group

- **Trade associations (Figure 19)**
  Trade associations keep track of marketing research and other information on their members. If your target audience is associated with a trade group, contact the organization to see what's available. Your local chamber of commerce can also provide information on local businesses and the demographic makeup of the community (Table 5).

Figure 19

Table 5: Pros and Cons of Trade Associations	
Pros	Cons
- Might have information specific to your target audience - Could possibly serve as a distribution mechanism for your message	- Data might be biased toward their constituency - Data might not be available for outside use

- **Demographic databases (Figure 20)**
  All sorts of databases that contain information on the demographic makeup of potential target audiences are available. Census data is available through the Internet from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (http://www.census.gov) and from local libraries. If you do not have access to these files consider asking a college marketing class for assistance (Table 6).

Figure 20

Table 6: Pros and Cons of Demographic Databases	
Pros	Cons
- Can provide consolidated demographic data - Can sort data by different parameters	- Data might not be current - You might not have the staff or equipment to manipulate the data

DEVELOPING YOUR OUTREACH PLAN

STEP 3: CREATE YOUR MESSAGE

After gathering information on the target audience, you are ready to craft a message that will engage them and help achieve your objective (Figure 21). To be effective, messages must be understood by the target audience and appeal to them on their own terms. The message should be specific and tied directly to something your target audience values. Some benefits you might want to include in your message include:

Figure 21

- Money savings

- Time savings

- Convenience

- Free of charge

- Health improvements

- Efficiency

- Awards

- It's the law

Awards are a great way to recognize people who are "doing the right thing." It's free and everyone likes to be recognized (Figure 22). Some groups to target include developers, the media, elected officials, farmers, and businesses. In addition to attracting attention, being understandable, and providing a link to something of value, effective messages should also state specific actions required to achieve the desired results. Instructions should be clear, nontechnical, and familiar to the audience. Providing a means for the target audience to become more involved or to receive additional information through a toll-free telephone number, Internet web site, or other means always helps (Figure 23). Focus on making everything -- the behavior change requested, the involvement needed, or the support required -- "user-friendly." After engaging your audience and exposing them to your message, you can provide more information on environmental benefits on their actions. It's advisable, however, to let them know first what their *direct benefits* will be. A word to the wise: studies show that positive messages tend to be more effective in changing people's habits than negative ones.

Message ≠ Objective
Remember that your message is not simply a restatement of your objective. Your message will help achieve your objective, but the two are not the same. Objectives describe final results; messages prompt the actions, knowledge, and attitudes needed to obtain them.
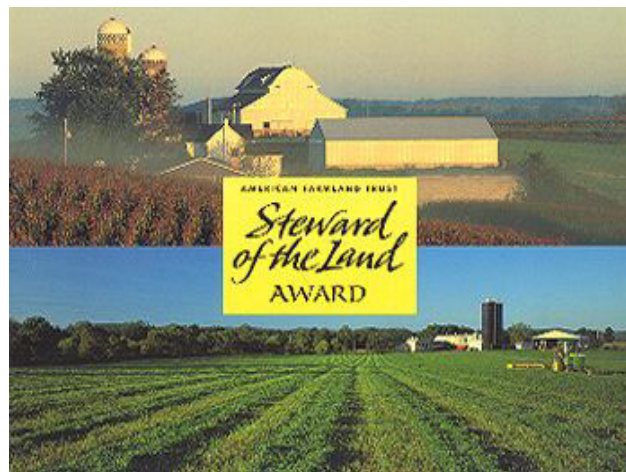

Figure 22

BUILDING YOUR PLAN... STEP BY STEP

GOAL:

Eliminate unsightly algal blooms in Lake Townsend, which are hurting tourism and causing dissolved oxygen levels to drop during the late summer.

OBJECTIVE:

During the next 12 months, recruit 20 new members to the Lake Townsend Volunteer Monitoring Association to participate in the upcoming sampling season (action).

TARGET AUDIENCE:

Senior citizens and high-school students who live within 15 miles of Lake Townsend.

MESSAGES:

Senior citizens
Find out what's going on in your own backyard.
Have some free time? Make a difference.
No training necessary.
Work with your community to preserve Lake Townsend.

Students
What's bugging Lake Townsend?
Skip school and have your teachers thank you.
Earn high school credit and get a tan at the same time.

Figure 23

Does your audience get the message?

The language and style of your message sh ould match those of your target audience. If you are unsure about the reading level of your target audience, pretest the message with representatives of the target audience to determine its appropriateness. Consider displaying your message graphically if your target audience is not fully literate. If your target audience's primary language is not English, lead off with their native language first and include an English version underneath, if needed. Always seek to understand and to be understood.

DEVELOPING YOUR OUTREACH PLAN

STEP 4: PACKAGE YOUR MESSAGE

You've defined your objective, assessed the target audience, and crafted your message. Now it's time to determine the best package or format for the message for eventual delivery to the target audience (Figures 24 and 25).

Figure 24

Format considerations

In some cases the format will define the distribution mechanism (newspaper articles, radio spots, public events). When choosing alternative formats, consider the following:

Figure 25

- Will the package be delivered to the target audience?

- Is it "user-friendly?"

- Can the target audience decipher it?

- Does it accomplish the objective and promote the message?

- How will the target audience access and use the information?

- Is it something they will see once and discard or refer to often?

- Can it be produced in-house, with existing resources?

- How much will it cost, and who will pay for it?

Remember that even if your message is the same for a variety of audiences, you must package it separately for each audience.

Repeating your message

In addition to being promotional vehicles for messages, formats often dictate the frequency of message presentation. Frequency is important because it determines how well the message will
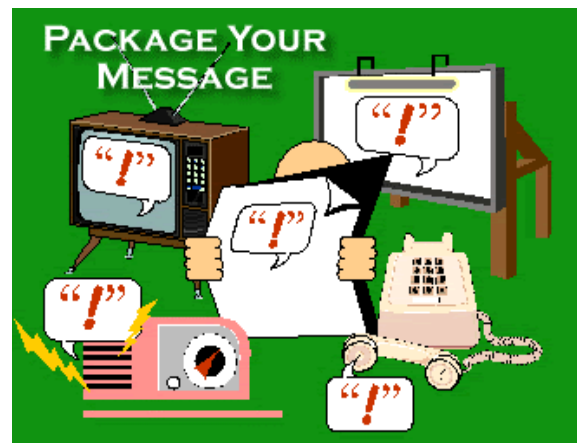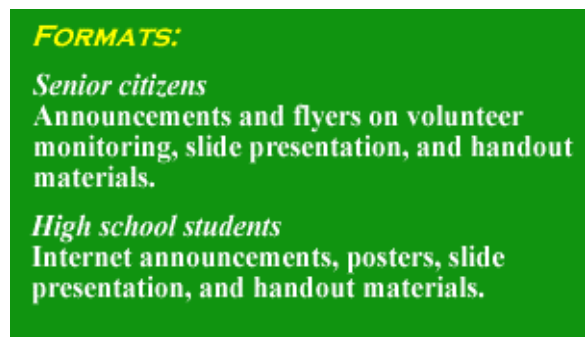
be remembered. Professional marketers know that the more times you see their advertisement for a product, the more likely you'll remember it and the more likely you'll buy it. The same holds true for education. Educating stakeholders and citizens on watershed or polluted runoff issues is no different: people remember what resonates with them and what is in front of them. As the saying goes, "out of sight...." So if your message is short, you might want to display it on a refrigerator magnet and keep it in front of the audience for months or even years. Other packages -- rain gauges, calendars, Frisbees, news media pieces, printed materials, and so forth -- all have their own pluses and minuses (Figure 26). Take time to explore them to see if they fit your program of linking objective, audience, and message.

Figure 26: Examples of Good Messages

Package options

The following is an overview of some popular message packages. Choose one (or more) that helps achieve the desired result with the available resources. For example, promoting environmentally friendly agricultural practices through newspaper articles, farm field days, and "conserve our soil" ball caps creates interest in and support for such practices. Keep the target audience in mind while considering various formats and whenever possible, indicate on your materials the intended audience (Figure 27).
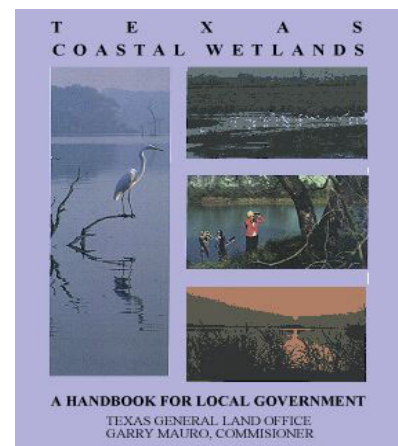

Figure 27

Print

By far the most popular format is print. Printed materials include fact sheets, brochures, flyers, magazines and newspaper articles, booklets, posters, bus placards, billboards, and doorknob hangers. They can be easily created and can be referred to again and again by the target audience. When preparing printed material, be aware of how the information will be used. If it is to be faxed or photocopied, you will want to use a standard paper size and limit any artwork to line drawings. Dark-colored backgrounds can seriously limit photocopying, as you have probably discovered. Keep in mind that your message will be competing with lots of other printed material out there. Costs for high-quality color materials can be considerable, and the information can quickly become dated. Don't forget these issues during the planning phase (Figure 28).
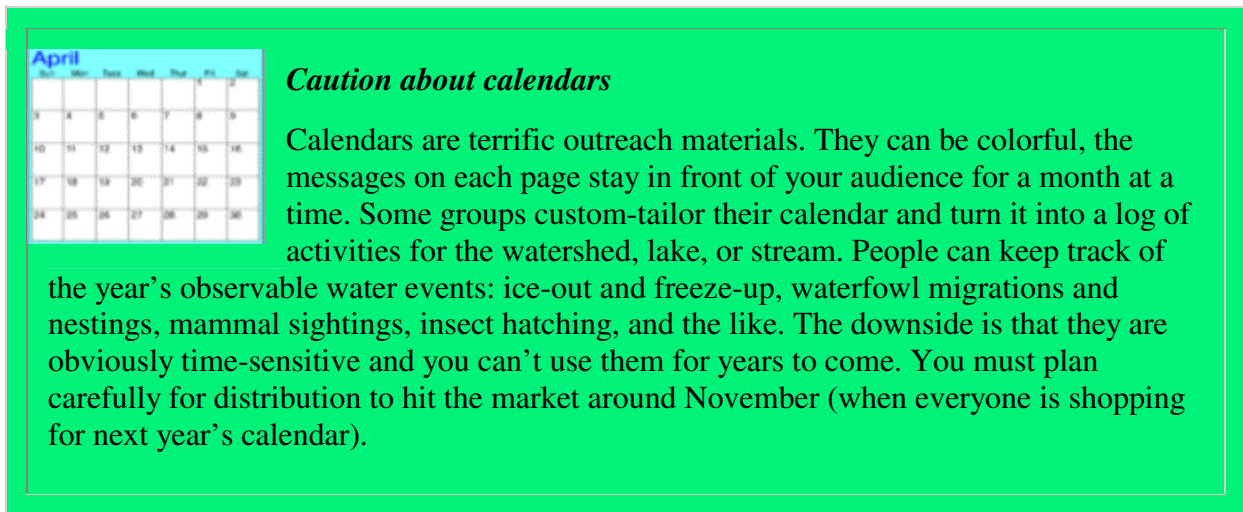

Caution about calendars

Calendars are terrific outreach materials. They can be colorful, the messages on each page stay in front of your audience for a month at a time. Some groups custom-tailor their calendar and turn it into a log of activities for the watershed, lake, or stream. People can keep track of the year's observable water events: ice-out and freeze-up, waterfowl migrations and nestings, mammal sightings, insect hatching, and the like. The downside is that they are obviously time-sensitive and you can't use them for years to come. You must plan carefully for distribution to hit the market around November (when everyone is shopping for next year's calendar).

Figure 28

Stuff

"Stuff" refers to promotional items or "give-aways." These include frisbees, magnets, key chains, tote bags, coffee mugs, bumper stickers, and so forth. Give-aways represent a good format to promote watershed organizations, simple actions, and general awareness. When choosing a give-away item, keep in mind the alternative message it might send -- for example, too much plastic being used -- which could counteract the environmental benefit of the message (Figure 29).

GOOD STUFF

Refrigerator magnets are an excellent format for keeping messages in front of the target audience. For example, hotlines for people to call when they see conditions that contribute to water quality problems are easily promoted on magnets. The business-card size runs about $0.23 each for a two-color combination on 1,000 magnets
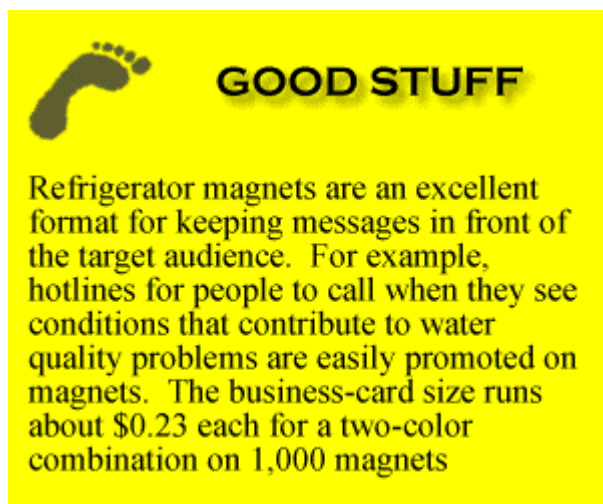
Figure 29

Media

Using the professional media -- newspapers, television, magazines, radio -- is not difficult, but requires some orientation and basic training on how to involve them in your outreach effort. Opportunities to place your message in the media include informational news stories, people features, issue analyses, public service announcements, interview programs, call-in shows, editorial columns, and feature items related to sports, recreation, or outdoor living. The news media are always seeking interesting topics to fill their pages and broadcasts.

Internet

Increasingly, the Internet is becoming a powerful means of communication. It provides worldwide access to hundreds of thousands of sites containing millions of documents, chat rooms for special interest groups, and database/mapping features that are almost mind-boggling. Although the World Wide Web is used regularly and extensively by agency personnel, environmental group leaders, and the business community and can be a valuable format, average citizens still get the great bulk of their environmental messages from more traditional venues. Remember, too, that a Web-based approach is geared to a certain target audience -- one that is very much "plugged in" and perhaps already attuned to your objectives.

There are opportunities to reach other audiences via the Internet through interest group Web sites (e.g., off-highway vehicle users, fishers, farmers). However, you will probably reach national audiences through their Web sites, not necessarily citizens of the watershed you're working with. Explore these sites before deciding to use your program. The Internet will likely become more important to local watershed outreach efforts in the future. For now, its primary value lies in providing access to general water science information, databases like EPA's *Surf Your Watershed* (http://www.epa.gov/surf) and other public agency information, and environmental news from state and national groups, like the Conservation Technology Center's Web site (http://www.ctic.purdue.edu). Nevertheless, if you believe you have a local Internet audience for your message, by all means start a website for you watershed (Figure 30)!

Establish an e-mail listserver

Active watershed projects often find it useful to establish e-mail listservers to keep participants updated on meetings, policy discussions, and other matters. Implementing this communication link is simple and allows stakeholders to keep abreast of developments at their leisure. E-mail is the preferred communication medium among many citizens, business people, and agency officials because it can be accessed at convenient times and provides a written record of the communication.

Figure 30

DEVELOPING YOUR OUTREACH PLAN

STEP 5: DISTRIBUTE YOUR MESSAGE

Figure 31

Once the message has been packaged in the desired format, your team can proceed with distribution (Figure 31). Your fabulous three-dimensional four-color poster of the city's waterfront park won't amount to a hill of BMPs if it isn't distributed to the target audience. Fortunately, you've already considered distribution mechanisms somewhat during the process of researching the target audience and selecting a format. Further activity during Step 5 includes taking a close look at the level of time, resources, and work required for distributing the message. Are you going to mail all those posters? Do you need to buy mailing tubes? Do you have the addresses?

Common distribution mechanisms include direct mail, door-to-door, by phone, through media outlets, and posting the message in public places (Figure 32).

BUILDING YOUR PLAN... STEP BY STEP

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Students
What's bugging Lake Townsend? Skip school and have your teachers thank you. Earn high school credit and get a tan at the same time.

FORMATS:

Senior citizens
Announcements and flyers on volunteer monitoring, slide presentation, and handout materials.

High school students
Internet announcements, posters, slide presentation, and handout materials.

DISTRIBUTION:

Senior citizens
Announcements in AARP newsletter, announcement in local section of newpaper under volunteers, flyer posted in retirement living condominiums, presentation on volunteer monitoring to local clubs.

High school students
Announcements posted on school web page, poster posted in science classrooms, presentation on volunteer monitoring made to high schools.

Figure 32

Mail

The mail delivery system can be the best distribution vehicle if your target audience can be defined geographically, or if you have access to a mailing list that encompasses your audience (e.g., developers, farmers). The U.S. Postal Service has established procedures for bulk mailings, and it is advisable to contact the post office early to discuss the pros and cons of this delivery approach (Figure 33).

The basics of bulk rate

Third-Class bulk mail is used to mail advertising and other materials, such as newsletters and bulletins, that weigh less than 1 pound. Bulk mail rates are substantially less than First-Class rates, but have strict mail preparation requirements. Bulk mail must be presorted by ZIP code, state, or carrier route, arranged into packages or bundles, and placed into labeled sacks. The level of presorting determines the rate you pay, so it is always a good idea to sort your mail to the highest level possible.

The Basic Presort rate applies to pieces sorted into groups by state. The 3/5 Presort rate applies to pieces sorted into groups by the same three or five digits of the ZIP code. The 3/5 Presort offers the greater discount. To qualify for either of these rates, you need a total of 200 mailpieces or 50 pounds. The Carrier Route Presort rate applies to mail grouped by individual carrier routes (the actual routes covered by a specific mail carrier). This is the highest level of presorting and therefore the least expensive. To qualify for this rate, you must mail 10 or more pieces per Carrier Route and have at least 200 mail pieces or 50 pounds sorted in this manner. The cost difference between Basic Presort rate and standard First-Class mail can be as much as $0.10 per mailpiece. An additional $0.08 to $0.10 per mailpiece can be saved by using the carrier route presort.

Many charities and public service organizations, large and small, use bulk mail to raise funds, promote a message, or increase awareness about a particular issue. Qualified nonprofit organizations are eligible to mail third-class mail at special, lower bulk rates.

Figure 33

Door-to-door

Studies show that going door to door with your message is very effective, but also resource-intensive. Try using a printed doorknob hanger with a message that can be distributed without disturbing the occupants. Having your door hanger delivered by other civic groups during their activities (e.g., cookie or calendar sales) can save time and money in delivery.

Target businesses

Using selected businesses to deliver the message can increase the likelihood of reaching the target audience and save money on postage. For example, if you develop a brochure on oil recycling, ask to display the brochure at auto parts supply outlets. Keep in mind that businesses will be more likely to distribute your materials if there is an added benefit to them. So if you ask septic tank pumpers to distribute refrigerator magnets containing information on what should and should not go into a septic system, include a space on the magnet for the customer to write down the hauler's name and phone number.

Presentations

Delivering your message in person through a presentation is extremely effective because you can be certain that your target audience is hearing your message, and your audience has a chance to respond to your message immediately. Schools, local clubs, and associations are always looking for speakers at their gatherings.

Piggybacking your message

Remember that you don't always have to distribute the message yourself. If your target audience subscribes to an existing periodical, it may be more effective to include your message in that publication. It will certainly save you the hassle of dealing with mailing lists, postage costs, or news media releases. It will also increase the likelihood that your message will actually be read by members of the target audience since they are already familiar with the publication.

DEVELOPING YOUR OUTREACH PLAN

STEP 6: EVALUATE YOUR OUTREACH PLAN

Evaluation provides a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement of your outreach effort (Figure 34). Many people don't think about how they're going to evaluate the success of their outreach program until after it has been implemented. Building an evaluation component into the plan from the beginning, however, will ensure that at least some accurate feedback on outreach program impact is generated.

Figure 34

The success of outreach programs depends on how well they are planned and implemented. Evaluating that success in not difficult if you initially develop concrete, measurable objectives that can be compared against what was actually achieved. Moreover, focusing the outreach effort on discrete target audiences provides a manageable approach for both implementing the outreach program and measuring its success (Figure 35, next page).

Why evaluate?
You have just expended a tremendous amount of effort and resources, and you need to know what worked and why so you can make adjustments in the future. Perhaps you used foundation funds and are subject to requirements calling for demonstrable improvements in water quality or other measurable progress. When soliciting private foundations for funding, you will be in a much stronger position if you can show them that your program did work.

EVALUATION:

Does my objective have a direct measurable result?
Have I collected enough data on my target audience?
Do I have enough resources to prepare all of my materials?
Did I prepare my materials within the proposed budget?
How did the participants find out about the volunteer monitoring trainig?
How many members of my target audience participated in the volunteer monitoring training?

Figure 35

Types of evaluation
The degree to which you evaluate your outreach program will be determined by your time and available resources. Evaluation doesn't have to be an all-consuming task, and it should definitely avoid the "paralysis by analysis" condition that afflicts the assessment processes conducted by many organizations. At a minimum, you will review the outreach plan with the staff or watershed team to determine whether the objectives were attained or supported, the target audience reached, and so forth. Outreach programs ideally feature pre- and post-tests of randomly selected individuals that measure what knowledge or behaviors existed before the program was implemented and after it ended. This approach is used mainly for large-scale, high-level efforts because of the resources involved.

You will probably use three types of evaluation at different phases in your outreach planning process.

Planning evaluation
Planning evaluations assess the *likelihood that outreach programs will achieve their objectives*. This type of qualitative evaluation is conducted during development of the outreach plan. It resembles a sort of "continuous monitoring, continuous focus" approach. Planning evaluations help determine whether sound objectives were developed, target audiences were properly analyzed, and appropriate messages were crafted. Continuous evaluation during the planning process helps clarify program objectives and keep activities sharply defined. Planning evaluations can also occur after completion of each step in the process by reviewing the proposed plan with staff and analyzing decisions at each phase of the planning process. Conducting cursory pre-tests of materials on representative samples of the target audience and convening focus groups on selected outreach components also provides valuable planning evaluation information.

Process evaluation
Process evaluations *focus on implementation of activities as they relate to budget requirements, schedules, and staff resources*. Process evaluation occurs as the program is being implemented, early enough in the outreach delivery process to allow modifications before too many resources

have been expended. This sort of "early warning system" can include logging the costs of specific activities, checking the frequency of material distribution, making contact with distribution outlets to see if materials were received in a timely manner, reviewing media clippings to determine how news releases and articles are being published, monitoring the number of responses to messages (attendees at an event, responses to surveys, callers to toll-free numbers), and gathering information through focus groups or surveys to determine distribution effectiveness.

Impact evaluations

Impact evaluations assess *the outcome or impacts produced by the outreach program* and are directly tied to the original objectives. This type of evaluation measures the effect of an outreach program on the target audience by asking, "To what extent did we achieve our objective?" Typical performance measures under impact evaluations include increased awareness, knowledge of an issue, change in behavior, repeat participation in an activity, and changes in perceptions and beliefs. Unintended outcomes can be generated by an outreach program, and if there is evidence such outcomes are prevalent, an impact evaluation can attempt to capture and define them.

Assessment tools for impact evaluations can consist of focus groups, surveys, interviews, and, of course, actual measurement of improvements in water quality. A common impact evaluation tool is to compare behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs of the target audience before and after the outreach program is implemented. If you intend to use the pre-/post-test approach, it is critical to obtain target audience baseline information on the issues linked to the program objectives before the outreach program is implemented so comparisons can be made. Design your pre-test with the end result -- the objective -- in mind.

When planning an impact evaluation, it is important to clearly identify the time frame for measuring results since the true impact of a number of programs is realized long after the activities have ceased. For water quality improvements, it can take 7 to 10 years for improvements associated with the implementation of BMPs to be detected.

Another impact evaluation approach includes the direct measure of actions taken by the target audience. For example, if your outreach program encouraged residents to leave grass clippings on their lawns, you could measure the amount of yard waste going to the landfill before and after the program is implemented. Oil recycling can be measured by tracking recycled oil return trends at area collection centers. Care must be taken when designing evaluation tools to ensure that targeted variables are being accurately assessed. It is often difficult to trace water quality improvements directly to a specific program or action, just as it is difficult to attribute purchasing behavior to a specific advertisement or product attribute. A little creativity, some insight, and a lot of different perspectives are important ingredients for designing evaluation programs (Figure 36, next page).

Where do we go from here?

Congratulations! You have just completed all of the steps necessary to develop an effective, executable outreach plan. Use the 7 Building Block Worksheets (on pages 22 to 28) to help organize your plan and identify possible gaps. Then move on to Part II (page 29) to get specific tips on developing and enhancing outreach materials.

Evaluation questions

Possible evaluation questions regarding each step include the following. The types of evaluation used is indicated in parentheses: *planning evaluation (1), process evaluation (2), and impact evaluation (3).*

Step 1: Define your goals and objectives

- Are the objectives consistent with the planning team's goals? (1)
- Are the objectives specific, with time limits and measurable components? (1)
- Will I be able to evaluate whether the objectives were accomplished? (1)
- Do I have the resources to accomplish the identified objectives? (2)

Step 2: Identify your target audience

- Are there barriers to accessing the target audience that can hinder the plan? (1)
- Is the target audience for each objective sufficiently defined? (1)
- Have I collected enough data on the target audience? (1)
- How long will it take to collect survey data on the target audience? (2)

Step 3: Create your message

- Is the message relevant and accessible to the target audience? (1)
- Is the language appropriate to the target audience? (1)
- Is the message specific for each audience, and will it resonate with each? (1)
- Can the target audience respond to the message in an easy, convenient way? (3)

Step 4: Package your message

- Is the format selected appropriate for the message? (1)
- Do I have the resources necessary to prepare and use the selected format? (2)
- Will I be able to distribute messages in this format efficiently? (2)
- Am I going to have enough materials for the entire target audience? (2)

Step 5: Distribute your message

- Will the planned distribution mechanism reach all of the target audience? (1)
- Do I have the resources to distribute the format under the existing budget? (2)
- Have I factored in enough lead time to get the materials published and distributed? (2)

Step 6: Evaluate your outreach plan

- What tools will be used to assess the impact of the outreach program? (3)
- Who will be responsible for tracking budgets and schedules? (2)
- Do I have a baseline on target audience behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes? (3)
- Do I have the resources to conduct pre/post survey or other assessments? (1)

Figure 36

Building Blocks Worksheets

Use the following building blocks worksheets to help shape your outreach plan. There is a worksheet for each step as well as a summary worksheet to outline your activities. For each step, the left column of the worksheet provides information for you to consider when gathering information (Worksheets 1 – 7).

Worksheet 1--Summary Sheet					
Goal					
Objective	**Target Audience**	**Message**	**Formats**	**Distribution**	**Evaluation**

Worksheet 2—Objectives			
Goal			
Objective			**Evaluation Questions**

Worksheet 3—Target Audience			
Goal			
Objective			**Evaluation Questions**
Target Audience *Information needed:* Attitudes/Perceptions Demographics Communication channels Knowledge *How to get information:* Focus groups Trade associations Phone surveys Community leaders Other			

Worksheet 4—Message

Goal

Objective   **Evaluation Questions**

Target Audience

Message

Worksheet 5—Formats			
Goal			
Objective			**Evaluation Questions**
Target Audience			
Message			
Formats: Print Stuff Media Events Presentations			

Worksheet 6—Distribution			
Goal			
Objective			**Evaluation Questions**
Target Audience			
Message			
Formats			
Distribution Mail Presentations Piggybacking Members of target audience			

Worksheet 7—Evaluation			
Steps	**Planning**	**Process**	**Impact**
Objective			
Target Audience			
Message			
Formats			
Distribution			

CREATING OUTREACH MATERIALS

ELEMENTS OF COMPOSITION AND LAYOUT

When designing the layout of your brochure, flyer, or how-to guide, use restraint, consistency, and quality materials. Restraint should be used in choosing typefaces or fonts, consistency should be used with the kinds of graphics or artwork selected, and quality materials should be used for photographs and artwork. Invite readers into your material with appealing, user-friendly layouts (Figure 37).
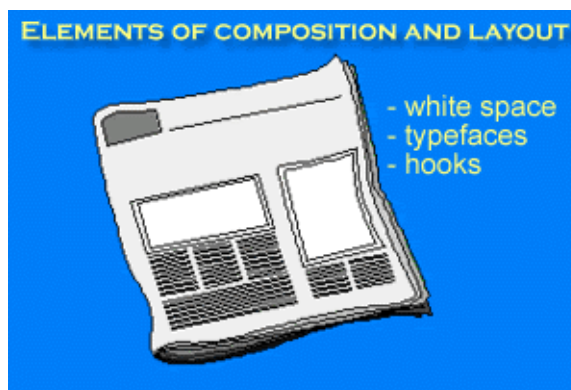

Figure 37

White space
White space refers to the amount of space on the page that is left blank. White space should be treated as a graphic and used liberally. To immediately create white space, try expanding the margins on your brochure or flyer. Make your headline wrap onto several lines so white space is created on the right side of the page. Do not justify your text: this creates more white space at the end of each line and also makes text easier to read since your brain "remembers" the last word in the line above the one you're reading (Figure 38).

Figure 38

Typefaces
Design your materials so the layout draws the eye into and around the entire work. Select typefaces for readability. Provide variety, but don't use them all. A good typeface calls attention to the message, not to itself. Choose no more than two to three different typefaces for your piece. DO NOT USE ALL CAPS BECAUSE IT IS TOO HARD TO READ THE TEXT. San serif fonts (fonts that don't have the "feet" on the letters) are good choices for headlines and sub-heads. Arial and helvetica are popular sans serif fonts. Serif fonts, such as Times Roman, should be used for large blocks of text because your eye can read the words more easily. Hundreds of fonts are available, but resist the urge to use them all in one publication just because they are loaded on your computer. Experiment with the fonts to get the look you want.

Layout or text
Always remember that the ultimate purpose of your materials is to be read, so make your text readable. Don't organize text into clever shapes (like a circle or Christmas tree) if it is going to make it difficult to read. Be careful about "burning" graphic images over the text, since this can make the text virtually unreadable. A general rule of thumb is that the narrower the column of text, the smaller the font size. For example, using 8 1/2-by 11 inch paper, if the text goes across 6 inches of the page, the font size should be 12 point. If you choose a 2-column format, the font

size can be decreased to 10 point. Most desktop publishing software includes templates for various publication layouts (Figure 39).
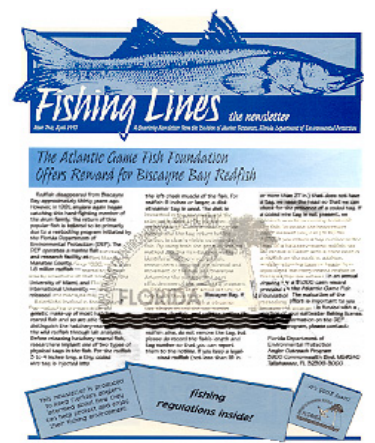

Figure 39

Making your text come alive
Make the text interesting for your readers. Keep the text to a minimum and use the active voice. You can use various formats to make your text more engaging. Consider telling a story or leading off with a letter from a concerned citizen. Always try to include a local angle, and keep the message simple.

Hooks
Hooks are devices that can be used to reinforce information in the text or to grab the reader initially. Your headline can be a significant hook to engage the reader. For example, a booklet on groundwater contamination leads off with "Is someone contaminating your drinking water (Figure 40)?" Consider including a quiz at the end of your text to test the reader's knowledge. Using games, humor, or contests can also encourage the reader to read all of the material (Figure 41).
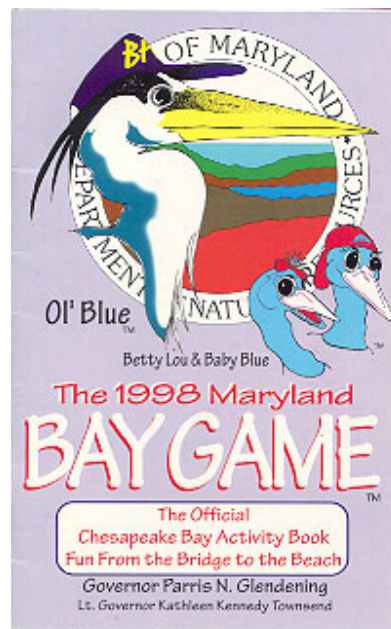

Figure 40

Figure 41

CREATING OUTREACH MATERIALS

USING ARTWORK AND PHOTOS

Graphics -- photos, logos or other artwork -- are great for breaking up long, gray blocks of text, allowing readers a visual break (Figure 42). Images of lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands, and other watershed features are "naturals" for dressing up your message format. The emotional appeal they elicit can be tremendous. This section presents ideas for incorporating artwork and photos in your watershed message material and presentations.

Figure 42

Incorporating clip art

The term *clip art* or *copy art* simply refers to a drawing or other graphic representation that is clipped from a booklet for use; this graphic could be saved in either hardcopy or digital format. You have no doubt seen many examples, most notably in newspaper advertisements during any holiday of the year. Clip art is produced specifically for the purpose of repeated use. It is available and "cleared" for copying -- it is not restricted by copyright (Figure 43).

If you have a limited number of clip art images, try repeating the image across the page or make the image different sizes. When using several graphic images on one page, vary the sizes of the graphics for interest.

Figure 43

Using mascots

An effective way to communicate your message to the younger set is through mascots. Mascots become familiar faces that can take on personalities, stories, and "lives" of their own. Consider adapting child-friendly people or critters into puppets, comics, posters, banners, displays, festivals, parades, calendars, contests, skits, student lessons, or activities.

Using photos effectively

Using photographs can reinforce your message dramatically. But, it is better not to use a photograph at all if it is poor quality. Taking effective photographs takes practice and patience. Photos of people, especially children, appeal to many audiences (Figure 44). Show action in your photographs, such as water quality

Figure 44

sampling, tree plantings, or festivals (Figure 45).

If you do not have access to a good photographer, consider using stock photos. These photos are available on CD-ROMs and can start as low as $25 for a set of 50 good-quality photographs. The Internet also stocks thousands of images that can be downloaded.

Using children's artwork
You don't have to go to a professional graphic artist to create the artwork for your brochure. Try a sixth-grade classroom. Children's artwork is fresh and free. Try starting with a poster contest about their watershed (Figure 46). "River of Words" (http://www.riverofwords.org) Environmental Poetry and Art Contest for Children on the Theme of "Watersheds" is a good example of children's artwork.

TIPS FOR BETTER PHOTOGRAPHS

- Keep the sun at your back to bring out the most color and detail.
- Look for diagonal lines or other elements that suggest movement.
- Dawn and dusk create soft, rosy, interesting light effects.
- Midday lighting produces flat, shadowless images.
- Take lots of pictures, then screen them out later.
- People are interested in people, so use human subjects frequently.
- Shoot people up close to avoid tiny, unrecognizable faces.
- Kids and animals are almost always good subjects for photos.

Figure 45

CREATING OUTREACH MATERIALS

ESTABLISHING YOUR WATERSHED IDENTITY

Getting the attention of the target audience and having them respond to your message will be easier if you are perceived as competent, professional, and linked to watershed issues (Figure 47, next page). You can link your image to your outreach messages visually by adopting a logo, symbol or other identifying element that helps your audience connect your group with its message. Well-designed outreach materials often feature such a graphic tied to the organization sponsoring the materials, since visual links like logos can provide an almost instantaneous connection. Attractive logos, letterheads, business cards, note cards, brochures, and other materials help you build a credible, professional image.

Logos
A logo is a visually distinctive treatment of your organization's name and image. It is the distilled, visual essence of who you are and what you stand for. Think of your logo as your graphic signature. Plan for it to appear on all your materials, including letterhead, business cards, brochures, newsletters, and meeting announcements.

The key to a good logo is simplicity -- clean, uncluttered lines and shapes. Ideally, people will
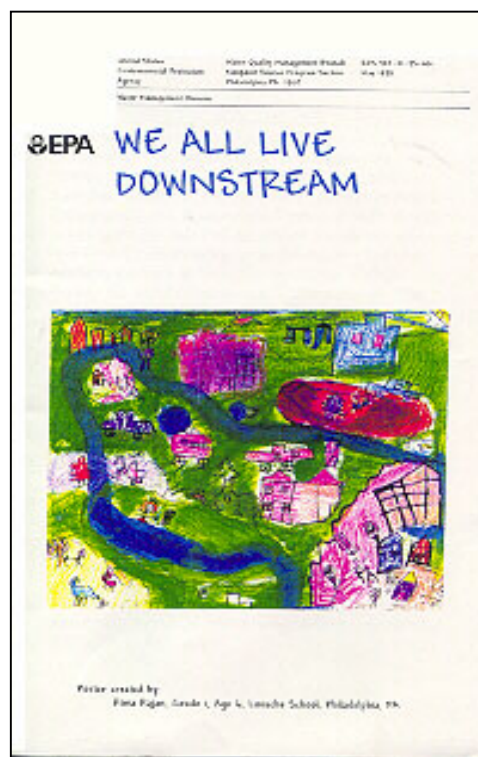

Figure 46

recognize your materials from the logo alone. Silhouettes of objects often work well as logos. No matter how straightforward or stylized, your logo should evoke an image of you. Keep in mind that a logo must look good no matter how large or small it appears. You might be using it on large posters as well as business cards.

Letterhead

Letterhead also communicates your image and identity to people. At a minimum your letterhead should contain your organization's logo, name, street address and mailing address, phone/fax numbers, e-mail address, and Web site address, if applicable. Some groups also choose to list the officers or board members of the organization. With all this information, the letterhead can become pretty congested if you're not careful. To avoid this problem, some people draw a box around the correspondence area of the letterhead. Others insert a vertical rule or "scholar's margin" down the left side of the page to separate organizational information from the written correspondence.
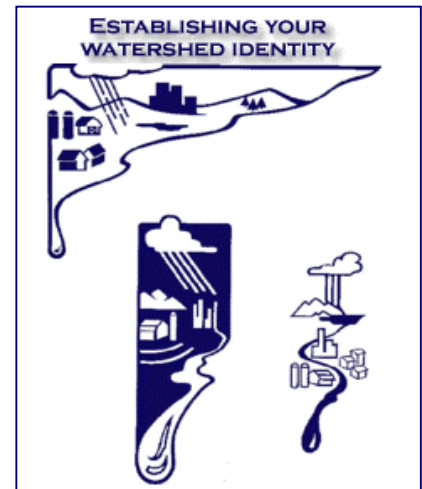

Figure 47

Business cards

Like letterhead, business cards help build your image. Even if you plan to include contact information in other material you send out, it is still a good idea to attach a business card. It makes it easy for someone to contact you in the future. A lot of important information is presented on the standard 31/2 - by 2- inch business card. Key elements include your logo, organization name, street and mailing addresses, phone/fax numbers, e-mail address, and Web site, if you have one. The name and position of the person holding the card should be prominently displayed.

Use the entire space to your advantage. Do not print tiny words and graphics and tuck them unobtrusively into the corners. Avoid using script typefaces unless they are large and bold.

CREATING OUTREACH MATERIALS

PACKAGING YOUR WATERSHED MESSAGE

Many different printed, broadcast, and other formats are available to convey your messages (Figure 48). This section discusses several options that might be right for you. Computer desktop publishing has made the production of many of these materials easy and fun. If money is tight or you do not have access to a computer, don't worry. You can still produce attractive and effective materials using basic resources such as a photocopy machine, scissors, and tape.

Figure 48

Brochures

Brochures are an effective way to present and explain your watershed message. Unlike many other communication vehicles, brochures can be distributed in many places. Racks can be set up at libraries, marinas, and fairs. You can pass brochures out at meetings. You can even organize a direct mail campaign. Think through the purpose of your brochure and its intended audience before you start. You might use it as a way to solicit interest and involvement, or to promote watershed education and positive behaviors. The purpose will significantly define the appearance and content (Figure 49).

Flyers

Flyers can be extremely effective if they are engaging, concise, and memorable. They are often used to impart brief, important messages or implore simple actions. Explore your options regarding paper and ink colors, typefaces, and type sizes. Keep the text brief, the letters fairly large, and the design attractive. Incorporate artwork or pictures either by photocopying or attaching with spray glue or double-sided tape. Don't forget to consider the target audience in design, composition, and distribution.

Posters

Posters can be an excellent option for message delivery, displayed widely for months or even years. Text, photos, slogans -- even graphs -- can be presented effectively on posters. Mostly, however, they are used to build awareness (*Save the Bay*) or deliver a simple message (*If you're not recycling, you're throwing it all away*). Beware: production and distribution costs can be considerable. Mailing tubes and postage cost as much as the poster itself. Folding and mailing in large envelopes causes creases that detract from appearance, but this does not necessarily mean abandoning the approach. Posters can pay for themselves through sales, but the poster design has to be really, *really* good (Figure 50, next page).
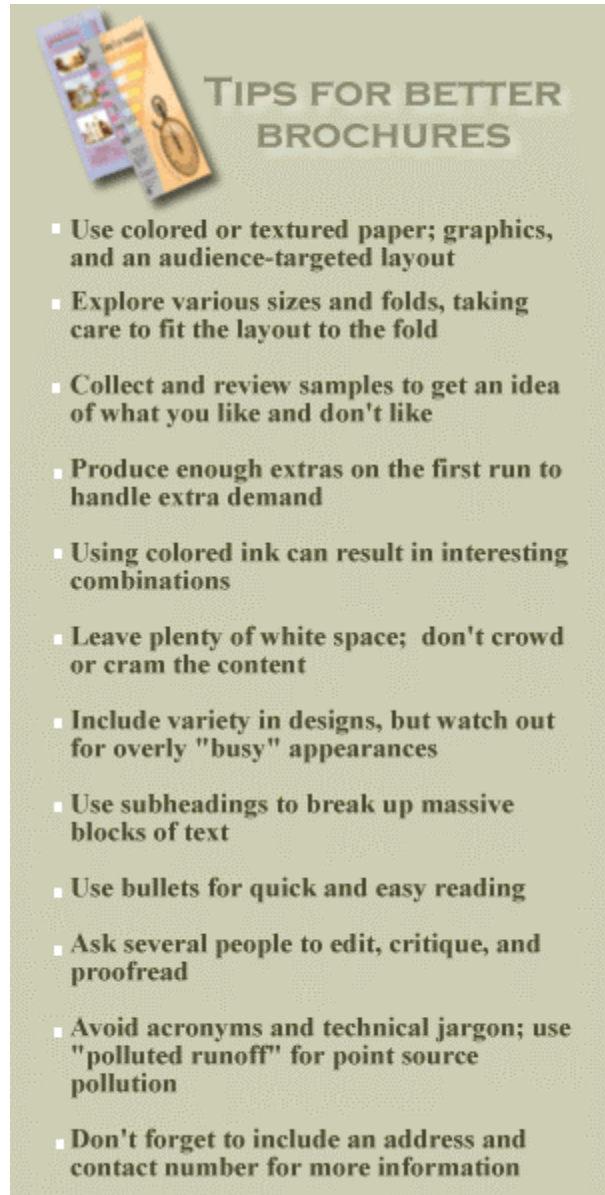

TIPS FOR BETTER BROCHURES

- Use colored or textured paper; graphics, and an audience-targeted layout
- Explore various sizes and folds, taking care to fit the layout to the fold
- Collect and review samples to get an idea of what you like and don't like
- Produce enough extras on the first run to handle extra demand
- Using colored ink can result in interesting combinations
- Leave plenty of white space; don't crowd or cram the content
- Include variety in designs, but watch out for overly "busy" appearances
- Use subheadings to break up massive blocks of text
- Use bullets for quick and easy reading
- Ask several people to edit, critique, and proofread
- Avoid acronyms and technical jargon; use "polluted runoff" for point source pollution
- Don't forget to include an address and contact number for more information
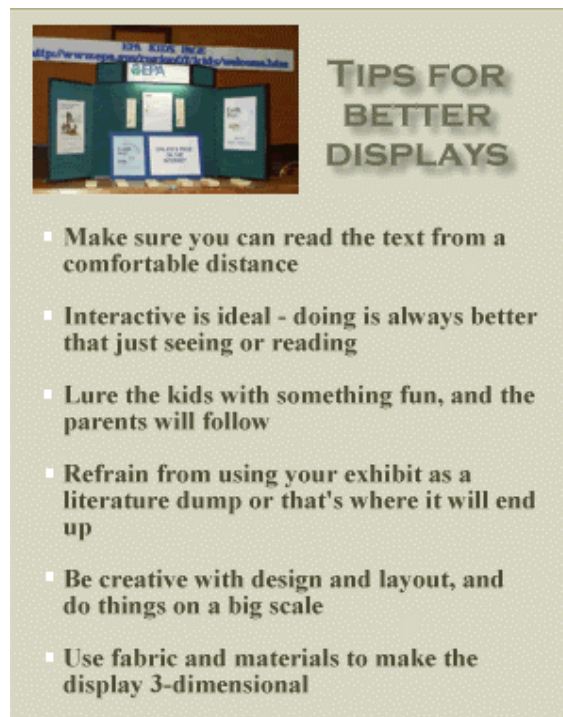
Figure 49

Figure 50

Figure 51

Displays

When composing any large-format display, treat your entire display space as if it were a page layout, a photograph, or a painting. The same basic elements of composition governing good design and flow apply. A common mistake in presenting material in a large format is the tendency to place lots of small items in a big space -- small photos, tiny text, little letters. You might consider producing an informative companion piece, such as an illustrated fact sheet or simple brochure to accompany the poster.

Avoid the common pitfall of pasting up dozens of 8- by 12-inch photographs with tiny captions underneath each one. Try blowing up a significant photograph to poster size and then use additional photographs to support the primary theme. Produce and distribute brochures or flyers to convey the details for your project. Focus on the objective -- why you're at the event, what message you hope to deliver to which audience, and what you want to accomplish (Figure 51).

Billboards

Billboards, like posters, can effectively present an outreach message or raise awareness if well designed and attractive. Remember to link the billboard location to your target audience. Outdoor advertising venues can expose tens of thousands of people to your message, but be aware that some people find them patently offensive—especially on scenic rural roads. Billboards offer a chance to present highly compelling, noncommercial messages that can be engaging, artistic and memorable. Positive aspects of using a billboard include high reach (numbers of people), immediacy, and high frequency (number of times seen). Negatives include the fact that you can convey only a short message to a relatively unspecified audience and it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the message. Costs can also be considerable and are based on how many you buy, how long they are up, and the location (Figure 52, next page).

Figure 52

Figure 53

Bumper stickers

Bumper stickers are highly individualized traveling billboards. Since so many Americans spend so much time on the road, chances for message exposure through bumper stickers are excellent. Keep messages positive and focused on the objective (e.g., *Save the Bay*). Composition is easy: combine a catchy message with a piece of art and you're in business. Production options include everything from print shops to silk-screening in a garage. Choose a design you can see from a distance and a color that will beckon from a bumper (Figure 53).

T-shirts and promotional items

T-shirts and caps are popular items and "really get around" to help spread your message. Use your imagination on how best to conceive, design, and distribute them. Be sure to carefully consider cost, and don't be overly optimistic on sales income because sales rarely achieve expectations (Figure 54).

You can also order any number of other customized items emblazoned with your logo and message. Prices naturally go down with

Figure 54

quantity, but make sure you will be able to distribute your supply within a reasonable amount of time (Figure 55).

What to give away:

•Matchbooks • Caps • Mugs • Beach towels • Beverage holders • Key chains • Barbecue aprons • Hot pads and mitts • Tablecloths • Tote bags • Salt & pepper shakers • Pennants or flags • Calendars • Frisbees • Magnets • Rulers • Car tag frames•

Presentations
If you have spent any time at all in conferences and meetings, chances are you've seen a few slides or overheads. Dropping slides into the projector and setting up the screen does not guarantee a show, however. It takes planning and practice to present your story as a beautifully wrapped package that creates a coherent, convincing, aesthetically pleasing visual journey.

Gear your presentation—its content and style—to the audience. Once you have a stock of photos to choose from it's a simple matter to go back in and add, switch, or delete slides as appropriate. You might want to number the slides and keep a running list of the different

TIPS FOR BETTER PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

- Check with a printer to see if your design can be reproduced effectively and inexpensively, or on a number of different materials

- If developing a two-color design, make sure it also reproduces well in black-and-white

- Allow plenty of time for design, production, printing, and distribution

- Carry the design theme or logo through all literature and/or accessory items

- For mugs, select a strong, clear design; specify dishwasher-safe

- Consider packaging method and costs for mailing or other distribution

- Check with an advertising specialties company for ordering in quantity

- Publicize your products!

- Conduct a program to market/distribute them

Figure 55

versions presented so they can be recreated. Avoid reading text slides during a presentation. Use the time to talk about the subject matter in the text. Focus your slide configuration and vocal presentation on telling a story based on your knowledge, experience, insight, and perspective. A rough outline is a good idea to make sure that your presentation has a central focus and a beginning, middle, and end. Self-directed humor is often effective, if used sparingly.

Use only visually pleasing, in-focus slides. Avoid slides requiring introductory apologies (e.g., "I know this is hard to see, but . . ."). Flow chart slides are notoriously indecipherable from a distance. Break down the chart items to several slides or summarize the process being depicted in a larger format. Monitoring data charts should also be summarized since they can look like computer chip close-ups from the back of a room. Always make sure text slides are readable, and don't be afraid to explore new color choices. Finally, consider using a rapid-fire photomontage at some point in the program. This technique simply presents a succession of photos with little or no commentary, reinforcing your message with a blend of photos that creates an interesting, memorable impression.

NEVER make a presentation overhead at standard font size (usually 10 or 12 pt). **Double it**, 20 to 24 point, and **bold it**, to be sure your message is visible. An added benefit is that you'll be forced to use fewer words, which is appropriate for presentation visuals.

Events

A watershed event can be the most energizing, exciting format for distributing messages targeted at awareness, education, or direct action. If resources are limited and the message is fairly focused, try to latch on to an existing event that involves your target audience. Trade shows and other events for farmers, developers, boaters, fishers, the automobile industry, and other groups can often be accessed with a little research and a few phone calls. If you're hosting your own event, be advised that nothing substitutes for planning. No detail is too small, no aspect is too insignificant to be thoroughly examined, reexamined, and subjected to contingency planning. Major events are much like military campaigns. You'll need plenty of advance time, information on the site, logistical plans, a force commensurate with the objective, and the capacity to accommodate plenty of action.

A major consideration in planning an event is how you intend to attract attention. As in all outreach, you can't deliver a message to the target audience if you don't have access to them. Approaches for generating interest and attention are limited only by your creativity. Watershed groups have used blues bands, balloons, face painting, water drop mascots, dunking contests, interactive displays, video games, give-aways, clowns, jugglers, and celebrities to draw in the crowds. Nearly any idea that works and does not detract from the message is acceptable.

PART III

CREATING OUTREACH MATERIALS

WHAT DOES IT COST?

The cost of producing outreach materials varies depending on several factors: number of colors used, size of paper, number to be printed, etc (Figure 56). To keep costs down, remember to always to get three quotes for a printing job. You'll be surprised at the price differences. Specify quantity, size, colors, paper stock, and other elements when asking for quotes. Allow plenty of time for production so you won't have to pay a rush charge. Some printers print certain colors on certain days with no extra set-up charge, so be sure to ask first. When deciding how many materials you want to print, remember the long term. Printing charges diminish considerably after the first 1,000 (Table 7, next page).

Figure 56

- **Reach x Frequency = Results**

Table 7: Costs for Various Outreach Materials*	
"Stuff"	
Magnets	$.23@/1000 (Two-color, business card size)
Canvas tote bags	$2.20@/1000 (One-color, two-sided)
Stickers	$.07@/1000 (One-color, 3-inch circle)
Frisbees	$.68@/1000 (8 inch)
Posters	$2.50@/5000(4-color, two-sided 11- by 17-inch folded
Lapel pins	$1.38@/1000
Printed materials	
Printed fact sheets	(1-sided)/1000
Black ink	$109
One-color	$139
Two-color	$226
4-color printing	$1286
Color copies	$900
Presentation Materials	
35-mm slides	$4.25/slide
Display booths	
Table-top	$500
10- by 10-foot	$1500-$2500
Bus transit cards	
Inside bus	$1.00/card, no limit for one month
Outside bus	$4.00/card, 50-card limit for one month
Other	
Billboards	$500-$1500/month, with 6 months, minimum
Subway diaramas	$10.00/diarama, 10-diarama limit
Phone directory of U.S. (CD-ROM)	$150
Stock photos on a CD-ROM	$20-$100/100 photos

*Note: These costs are only estimates. You should contact individual vendors when preparing your budget.

CREATING OUTREACH MATERIALS

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Why use the news media?

Most people are quite comfortable on the receiving end of the news media, but aren't very excited about the prospect of getting in front of a reporter, microphone, or television camera. But if your watershed management objectives include educating targeted or mass audiences about problems and solutions, building support for remediation projects, or generating awareness and interest, you need to consider the advantages offered by the media (Figure 57).

Figure 57

The news is free!
The news media are effective, available, and free. Surveys repeatedly show high interest among the public for environmental issues, and water quality - particularly as it relates to drinking water and recreation - rates very high. Reporters are always looking for "news" - informative articles, features, or columns - to fill their pages or broadcasts. Packaging your watershed messages as news stories can result in the distribution of your information to mass audiences at virtually no cost. You have to buy an ad, but placing your message in the news is free.

Who are the media?

Newspapers, magazines, television, and radio make up the news media. They share basic attributes, but each is distinctly different from the others. The three major formats are reviewed in this section, and more detailed information on each is provided later (Figure 58).
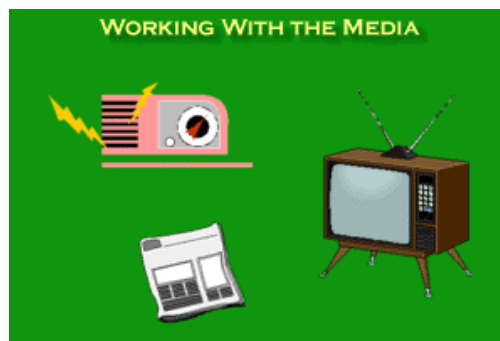

Figure 58

Television
Television serves as the primary source of news for more than 70 percent of the population. It is picture-oriented and action-driven. Television news stories, according to an industry publication, are always about people; need emotion, controversy, conflict, and great video; and are engaging and compelling. Be aware that these elements will be sought out by TV reporters, and be prepared to respond to their tendency to overemphasize them. Discuss the issue with them before the cameras roll.

Newspapers and Magazines
Newspapers are powerful vehicles for delivering educational information, policy analyses, public notices, and other messages. Many displays at watershed seminars proudly post newspaper articles on the projects being presented in recognition of the importance and impact of newspaper coverage. Published news articles are almost always longer and more analytical than television stories, and they can be read by several people at their own leisure without the "hit or miss" hazard of broadcasts. Public access to newspapers is usually excellent; no specialized equipment is required. In addition, the vast need for new "news" to fill the pages daily means newspaper reporters will be particularly interested in covering your issues. Magazines, like newspapers,

allow for greater length and analysis than television and provide the additional benefit of targeting specific audiences.

Radio

Local radio stations often have feature programs, but don't cover news in depth. Public stations may devote more time to news, analytical, or educational programs, but they might not reach your target audience. Targeting general audiences can be done through radio, matching your message with the type of format or station.

What Makes the News?

Certain key elements apply to what is covered as "news" (Figure 59). Good news stories have at least one of the following attributes:

Figure 59

- Involve local people or issues
- Focus on unique or unusual attributes
- Relate to significant matters or events
- Affect many people throughout a region
- Involve controversy or strong emotions

Your outreach or educational messages won't be required to have all these significant elements, but the more they have, the more likely they'll be covered by the media.

When you're crafting your messages for the media, remember that, according to recent polls, public health and drinking water issues are often viewed as the most important by many people; stewardship responsibilities and recreation/tourism are also highly valued. Research indicates that talking about a water resource in terms like "important aquatic ecosystem" or "endangered species habitat" is not nearly as important to the public as linking the water resource to drinking water, recreation, tourism, or general social responsibility. Avoid technical jargon in your coverage by remembering the "neighbor rule": If you can't explain an issue or problem to your neighbor, you probably won't be able to explain it to the public through the media.

How do I "do" the News?

Establishing a relationship with the media

After you have become oriented to the perspectives of the media and have packaged your outreach information accordingly, you'll be ready to discuss coverage with reporters or news editors (Figure 60). Establishing a relationship with reporters and editorial staff is just as important as developing the news elements of your message - perhaps even more so. In fact, it is highly recommended that you introduce yourself to the news staff and start developing that relationship before you submit

Figure 60

anything for coverage. Establishing a dialogue with reporters on what you're trying to accomplish with your outreach program will help both of you determine how to meet each other's needs.

It is important to realize that reporters are usually working under the pressure of a deadline and don't like runarounds. They become agitated and suspicious if you are slow to release information, especially if it is public information subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Also, remember that very few reporters are trained in the sciences. It will be your job to provide a rudimentary education on watershed science - why things like suspended solids, dissolved oxygen, phosphorus, bacteria, and riparian cover are important.

Developing a relationship with reporters and helping them with the logistics of covering your issues will pay off in increased reporting, better media relations, and fewer factual distortions. Providing reporters with appropriate background information (no more than three or four pages unless asked) and identifying interview subjects also helps. Be proactive, rather than reactive.

Levels of Doing the News (Figure 61)

News releases

The release consists of a headline followed by some background or other information that supports your outreach objective. In large and medium-sized news markets, editors and reporters are flooded with news releases. To make yours stand out, it must be interesting, relevant, and timely. Ask the media beforehand if they prefer to get releases by e-mail, which can save time in editing and preparing for use.

Figure 61

The most important information—the "news"—will go in the opening paragraph. Supporting and background information is provided in order of importance, with the most important items cited first. This style, called the "inverted pyramid, " allows editors to cut a story without losing the essentials. News release paragraphs are very short, usually only two or three sentences each.

Avoid overly technical terms and edit your release to remove the fluff.

If your release wasn't used, try to meet with the reporter or editor and find out why. Maybe it wouldn't fit this week and they're planning to use it next week.

If your release is unrecognizable after it appears in the paper or says the opposite of what you wanted it to say, don't despair. Call the reporter or editor and try to straighten things out. Maybe a correction notice is called for, maybe not.

News advisory

A news advisory is a notice sent in advance of a planned event. Every advisory should include a description of the event, when and where it will take place, who will participate, and a contact person and phone number for more information. Send the press advisory out one or two weeks before the event occurs, and make a call or send a fax the day before if possible. When you call, identify yourself, your organization, and the reason you are calling. Make sure you have all the facts about your event or activity at your fingertips. If reporters don't show up, send a follow-up

news release immediately afterwards so they can still "cover" the event. Reporters appreciate such consideration.

Query letter

A query letter is sent to the editorial staff to determine potential interest in a story idea. Prior contact with the staff is recommended before submitting a story or even writing it. Give the editor a chance to reject or redirect it before you expend any significant resources. Usually, the query is made through a letter, but it can be made by phone or in person. The inquiry should describe the general content of the proposed piece, state the title or working title if there is one, and address why the issue is relevant to your community. The topic should be well researched, and the letter should be no longer than one page.

News conferences

If you have some breaking information or an event that's too important for a news release, a news conference might be appropriate.

News conferences are important events that require thoughtful planning. A good moderator will be needed, one who will control the event without stifling the reporters. Usually a news conference opens by distributing a release that contains the reason for the conference, informative quotes from people involved in the issue, and the usual contact information. The moderator then makes a few welcoming/introductory remarks and introduces other speakers or makes a statement (which is often read). Remarks by all speakers should be carefully prepared. The floor is then opened for questions, which can usually be anticipated and prepared for beforehand. Make sure you invite all news outlets in the area to your conference, and send a news release immediately to those who don't show up.

News conferences can be held almost anywhere, but are usually indoors. After the press conference (usually a half-hour), invite reporters to accompany members of your group on a prearranged tour, if appropriate, to provide additional insight on the issue.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to newspaper editorial sections are a good way to raise awareness on issues, concerns, or other points that should be brought to the attention of the public. Debates on editorial pages of newspapers are a tradition as old as the republic itself.

Radio spots

Radio remains a strong media contender due to its affordable production cost and creative possibilities. Radio is everywhere and virtually everyone hears it sometime, somewhere, every day. Of course, those same universal qualities are what dilute its impact as well: it can become background noise. Your message must be repeated often to reach listeners at various times. To saturate whole markets, you must distribute your message to many stations. Get right to the central theme— the point you want to project—because you don't have much time.

To minimize production costs, prepare and send in scripts for live radio. Typed and double-spaced copy is required for community calendars and other public notice programs. Tying your release to a special day or event (such as Earth Day) and updating it with different angles later will make it more attractive. Take time to ensure scripts are written for the ear, and support your submissions with follow-up calls or letters, or even promotional items like posters. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are available for free, but sometimes air late at night or very

early in the morning. Avoid basing a significant part of an outreach campaign on PSAs unless they will actually reach the target audience.

Consider the target audience. Pay similar attention to other sounds that will be used since in radio sound provides the picture. Many sounds are now available on compact disk or the Internet. Make sure it's legal to use the sounds or music you are considering. When in doubt, cut it out.

It might pay off to contact a college or public radio station to help produce your outreach materials. College students are usually interested in watershed issues and are always looking for projects that can be listed on resumes for consideration by prospective employers. Your campaign can help students develop experience and professional skills while raising awareness and support for watershed issues.

A self test to assess your comprehension is included on the next page of this module.

SELF TEST FOR GETTING IN STEP MODULE

After you've completed the quiz, check your answers with the ones provided on page 49 of this document. A passing grade is 7 of 10 correct, or 70%.

1. According to this training module, what is the first step in developing an outreach plan?

☐ A. Identify target audience

☐ B. Create and package message

☐ C. Distribute message

☐ D. Define goals and objectives

☐ E. Evaluate outreach plan

☐ F. Research other watershed outreach plans

2. What tools does this module list to gather information about your target audience?

☐ A. Focus groups

☐ B. Telephone surveys

☐ C. Public and trade agencies

☐ D. Demographic databases

☐ E. Surveys by mail

☐ F. All of the above

3. Which of the following are elements of an effective outreach message?

☐ A. The message must be understood by the target audience

☐ B. The message must be understood by a broad audience

☐ C. The message must appeal to your target audience on their terms

☐ D. The message must appeal to a broad audience on their terms

☐ E. B and D

☐ F. A and C

4. Which of the following is something that should not be considered or assumed when packaging or formatting your outreach message?

☐ A. Can the target audience decipher the message?

☐ B. The message is the same for a variety of audiences; don't waste time packaging a separate one for each audience

☐ C. Who will pay for it?

☐ D. Can the message be packaged in-house with existing resources?

☐ E. How will the target audience access and use the information?

☐ F. How will the package be delivered to the target audience?

5. According to this training module, which of the following is/are a very popular format used to package your message?

☐ A. Newspaper

☐ B. Brochures

☐ C. Printed material

☐ D. Promotional items

☐ E. Magazines

☐ F. All of the above

6. Which of the following do this module list as the best vehicle for distributing an outreach message?

☐ A. Phone calls to target audience

☐ B. Presentation

☐ C. Targeting businesses

☐ D. Door-to-door

☐ E. Mail

☐ F. All of the above

7. When should you plan the evaluation you're going to use to measure feedback for continuous improvement of your outreach program?

☐ A. When the outreach program is completed

☐ B. It should be built into the outreach plan from the beginning

☐ C. Only when the outreach program appears to be experiencing unidentifiable problems

☐ D. A and B

☐ E. A and C

☐ F. All of the above

8. Which of the following outreach materials can help your program build a credible, professional image?

☐ A. Logos

☐ B. Letterhead

☐ C. Business cards

☐ D. Displays

☐ E. Billboards

☐ F. All of the above

9. Which of the following will help keep costs down when creating outreach materials?

☐ A. Getting three quotes for printing jobs

☐ B. Specifying quantity, size, colors, and paper stock

☐ C. Allowing plenty of time for production

☐ D. Keeping long-term goals in mind when deciding the number of copies

☐ E. A and D

☐ F. All of the above

10. Which of the following are elements of a good news story?

☐ A. The story should involve local people or issues

☐ B. The story should have unique or unusual attributes

☐ C. The story should relate to significant matters or events

☐ D. The story should be sensationalized

☐ E. A, B and C

☐ F. All of the above

ANSWERS FOR THE GETTING IN STEP MODULE SELF TEST

Q1: D   Q2: F   Q3: F   Q4: B   Q5: F   Q6: D   Q7: B   Q8: F

Q9: F   Q10: E