

Outreach Guidance for Watershed Restoration and Watershed Assistance Grant Projects

The primary goals of the New Hampshire Watershed Restoration Grants for Impaired Waters and Watershed Assistance Grants for High Quality Waters are to protect or restore waterbodies. Both types of projects include some activities to help promote the project, raise public awareness and/or change behavior.

This guidance is intended to help Watershed Restoration and Assistance Grant RFP users develop more effective outreach task(s) to help accomplish the objectives of their project.

How effective are your education and outreach efforts?

Why do we do outreach? If asked, most of us will say we do outreach to get people to promote, use or install a best management practice (BMP) to protect water quality or to support a watershed planning effort. We show them by installing BMPs, doing tours, holding meetings/workshops or making a brochure/fact sheet. But how often have we stopped to evaluate if our outreach programs are meeting our goals? Can we say as a result of a project we have increased the use of erosion control BMPs by shorefront property owners by some percentage or this number of residents support our efforts?

In the past we have all participated in outreach efforts that were conducted with the best of intentions, but fell short of being as focused and strategic as possible.

The difference between education and social marketing.

It is said education ends when the target audience knows the information. Social marketing ends when the target audience changes their behavior and takes action.

There are numerous examples of people knowing information, but failing to act on it. A perfect example is smoking. Many smokers know that smoking is bad for their health, yet they continue to smoke. Knowledge does not equal behavior change.

Awareness → Interest → Desire → Action - AIDA

One of the simplest social marketing models available is AIDA - **A**wareness, **I**nterest, **D**esire and **A**ction. This model is helpful for figuring out a strategy that will encourage your audience to move from being aware of an issue, to having an interest, to a desire for action, to action (use of a BMP). AIDA is also useful in helping to develop an effective outreach task for watershed projects. Knowing where you are starting (awareness, interest, or desire) helps direct limited resource dollars and staff time to the most effective outreach tools.

For example, a study conducted in Maine in 2003 regarding stormwater pollution showed there was very little awareness of the path stormwater took, how it became polluted and who was polluting it, and even less about BMPs. So in order to get people to start using BMPs, the starting point for the outreach campaign was to raise awareness.

On the other hand, focus groups in 2007 showed that many people are aware that lawn chemicals pose a health and environmental risk. Many had an interest to use less or no chemicals and many had a

Social marketing is the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society.

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Action
Desire
Interest
Awareness

desire to use alternatives, but did not know what the alternatives were (barrier to action). Hence, an outreach effort should aim to move people from an interest and desire to do the right thing, to helping them take action by eliminating the last barriers. Consequently, if a project began with raising awareness of the risk of lawn chemicals, the effort would be a waste of time and money.

Watershed Grant Work Plan Task Examples

The amount of time and funds invested in these outreach tasks depends on your project and outreach goals, familiarity with the watershed, and track record with past watershed efforts. If you have an engaged community with most candidate project sites identified and a high level of confidence that identified landowners will participate in the project, you might decide your outreach goal is simply to make lakefront property owners aware of the project (project publicity). On the other hand, watershed groups that are relative newcomers to watershed assistance or restoration projects may have an outreach goal of raising awareness of nonpoint source pollution (NPS) issues or what they can do in their own backyard to prevent NPS among lake association members.

1) Outreach efforts with a goal of **raising awareness of NPS pollution**:

Example: *Task X. Awareness Education and Outreach.* The task will target lake association members. As a result of this outreach effort, X percentage will understand the role they play in protecting water quality and NPS pollution, as well as knowledge of this watershed grant project. To raise the awareness, the district will write articles that will be published in the lake association newsletter, present at the annual lake association meeting (year 1 and 2 of the project) and submit articles to the local paper. Evaluation will be done by sampling a small group of shorefront property owners before and after the effort to determine level of awareness, interest, desire and BMP use.

2) Outreach efforts with a goal of letting **the community know about and support the grant project** (Public Relations):

Example: *Task X. Project Promotion.* This task will target municipal officials and lake association members. As a result of the effort, the majority of the municipal officials and X percentage of lake association members will be aware of the district's BMP projects around the lake. Staff will attend and present the project at both the start and end of the project to the municipal officials. Staff will also present the project at the annual lake association meeting, write updates for the lake association newsletter and articles for the local paper all with the goal of making people aware of the project. Evaluation will be done by sampling a small group of municipal officials and lake association members by phone before and after the completion of the project to determine the effectiveness of the outreach project.

3) For outreach efforts with a goal of **behavior change** (BMP implementation):

Example: *Task X. BMP Education and Outreach.* This task will target year round shorefront property owners with lawns to the edge of the lake. As a result of this effort, the district will increase the level of awareness regarding vegetative buffers by X percentage, and Y percentage will take action to establish a 25-foot buffer where there had been lawn. Staff will survey a subset of our target audience to determine barriers and incentives and then develop the message and an outreach program to be approved by DES. Evaluation of awareness change will be accomplished using a written survey, and a visual survey will be used to track the number of buffer installations. *(Note: It is not always possible to identify the outreach tool to be used without baseline knowledge. In order to overcome this barrier but still include an outreach task in the work plan, proposing to collect data and develop a plan to be approved by DES is an alternative.)*

Steps to Effective Outreach Effort (social marketing)

For outreach to be effective, the planning has to start with identifying who the target audience is and what you would like them to do, rather than just choosing the tool ("we will hold meetings," "we will do a brochure").

There are many excellent resources available to help you develop an outreach plan, some of which are listed in the resources at the end of this document. However, the following is a minimum planning tool to help develop outreach task(s) for watershed assistance and restoration projects. These steps are given for a BMP implementation project but can be adapted to other outreach efforts.

1. Who is your target audience? Be specific! "General Public" is not specific, even "shorefront property owners" may not be specific enough. "Year-round lake front property owners who have lawn to the edge of the lake" is specific.

2. What do you want them to do? Again be specific, e.g., "want them to plant at least a 25-foot mixed vegetative buffer."

3. Determine what they know, what they are presently doing, and how big your target population is. This often requires talking to your target audience. Be sure to listen closely to what they say, and you will gain valuable information including what the barriers and incentives are to the action you want them to take.

4. Determine the barriers for your target audience (Why don't they have a buffer: could it be they don't know what a buffer is? Lack time? Lack of money? Believe they won't be able to see the lake? Don't know how?) and incentives (desire privacy, want to watch wildlife).

5. Develop a message and be specific. Tell them EXACTLY what you want them to do in the simplest terms possible. Other information can be included, but you must work to overcome barriers and to highlight incentives, while keeping it as simple as possible. (Message: "Never enough time to enjoy the lake? Reduce the time you spend mowing. Reduce your lawn and add trees, shrubs or groundcover, which help to keep water clean." Note: message looks to overcome a barrier and includes an incentive. Message: "Learn what native trees, shrubs and ground cover to plant to attract wildlife." Note: message overcomes barrier of not knowing what native plants to use, and includes the incentive of viewing wildlife.) Messages must match the target audience.

6. Identify message delivery tools. Pick the delivery tool that matches your target audience. If people are busy, they most likely won't attend a meeting, but maybe they will attend a demonstration in a location they go to anyway – library, boat launch, beach. Maybe they have the time but not the knowledge; sell bundles of appropriate plants at cost with a planting plan. If homeowners can't or won't do the work themselves, use the Youth Conservation Corps to plant a buffer.

7. Evaluate! This really isn't the last step, because evaluation is continuous. Think of it as a feedback loop. You evaluate where your target audience is (step 3) at the start of the project (pretest/survey). You evaluate why they are doing what they are doing instead of what you'd like them to do. Try out a few messages on some small groups. Pilot a project to give you a chance to tweak the elements in your plan before rolling out a big project and spending all of the outreach budget on something that may not work. And once you have implemented the outreach project, you need to determine if you achieved your goal (post test/survey). There are a number of ways to evaluate depending on your goal and project.

All strategies begin
with the target
audience.

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Social Marketing Resources

Getting Your Feet Wet with Social Marketing by Jack Wilbur.
www.ag.utah.gov/pressrel/GettingYourFeetWet.html

Getting In Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns by EPA. (EPA 841-B-03-002) www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/outreach/documents/getnstep.pdf

Fostering Sustainable Behavior by Doug McKenzie-Mohr and William Smith

Tools of Change web site (excellent source of information) www.toolsofchange.com

Intercept Communication Survey. April 2007. This is an evaluation tool developed by Market Decisions for Maine DEP. For a copy of the instructions, MS Excel spreadsheet and survey contact Barbara McMillan, bmcmillan@des.state.nh.us or (603) 271-7889.

Outreach Planning Model. Cooperative Extension has developed a logic model -based training.

Barbara McMillan is willing to provide training/facilitation for groups interested in using their model. Contact Barbara at bmcmillan@des.state.nh.us or (603) 271-7889.

Outreach Tool Resources

Examples of NPS outreach tools from around the country can be found at www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox/#toolbox (Note always test materials on a sub group of your target audience; what worked in Texas may not work in New Hampshire.)

Common tools and their uses*

Promotion/PR tools (<i>just let them know about the project. You expect nothing of them but to be aware of the project</i>)	Letter, postcard, news stories, newsletter article, event calendar, web site
NPS Awareness tools (<i>you want them to be aware of NPS pollution issues, but don't expect them to do anything as a result</i>)	Mass media ads, newsletter articles, presentation, letter, postcard, web site
Behavior change tools (<i>you expect them to do something—install a BMP, stop using fertilizer</i>)	Technical assistance, promotions/ incentives (coupons, discounts, free items, money, cost share), demonstrations
Maintenance tools (<i>they are doing the new behavior but you want them to keep doing it.</i>)	Prompts, ads, news stories, newsletter articles.

*Remember the barrier may have nothing to do with knowledge or desire, rather there may be a physical barrier such as a product availability, hours of operation, or poor logistics, that is getting in the way.

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