Outreach Guidance for NPS Watershed Implementation Projects

The primary goal of the Maine NPS Grant Program is to restore or protect waterbodies. NPS Watershed Projects focus a significant portion of their efforts and budgets on implementing BMPs to achieve significant pollutant load reductions, and Watershed Surveys focus on documenting NPS sources in a given watershed. However, 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 NPS RFP users develop more effective outreach task(s) to help accomplish the objectives of a "NPS Watershed (implementation) Project". The objectives are described in MDEP's NPS RFP (Section 2.1)

How effective are your education & outreach efforts?

Why do we do outreach? If asked, most of us will say we do outreach to get people to use or install a BMP to protect water quality. We show them by installing BMPs, doing tours, holding meetings/workshops or making a brochure/factsheet. But how often have we stopped to evaluate if our outreach programs are meeting our goal of getting people to use or install a BMP? 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.

In the past we have all participated in outreach efforts which 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 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.

> 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.
>
> Alan R. Andreasen

Awareness ⇨ Interest ⇨ Desire ⇨ Action - AIDA

One of the simplest social marketing models available is ADIA - **A**wareness, **I**nterest, **D**esire and **A**ction. This model is helpful to 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 a BMP). AIDA is also useful in helping to develop an effective outreach task for NPS 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 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 (this was why and how the ThinkBlueMaine rubber duck commercial was developed).

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 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 **I**nterest and **D**esire to do the right thing, to helping them take **A**ction by eliminating the last barriers. If a project started by trying to raise awareness regarding the risk of lawn chemicals, it would be wasting time and money.

Action

Desire

Interest

Awareness

Nonpoint Source Watershed Projection Workplan 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 <u>outreach goal</u> is simply to make lakefront property owners aware of the project (project publicity). On the other hand, watershed groups that are relative newcomers to 319 projects may have an <u>outreach goal</u> of raising awareness of NPS issues among lake association members.

<u>1) Outreach efforts with a goal of **raising awareness of NPS pollution**</u>:
Task X. Awareness Education & Outreach. The task will target lake association members. As a result of this outreach effort #% will understand the role they play in protecting water quality and NPS pollution, as well as knowledge of this 319 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 & 2 of the project) and submit articles to the local paper. Evaluation will be done by subsampling shorefront property owners before and after the effort to determine level of awareness, interest, desire and BMP use.

<u>2) Outreach efforts with a goal of letting **the community know about the 319 project**</u> (Public Relations):
Task X. Project Promotion. This task will target municipal officials and lake association members. As a result of the efforts the majority of the municipal officials and #% 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 subsampling by phone both municipal officials and lake association members before and after the completion of the project to determine the effectiveness of the outreach project.

<u>3) For outreach efforts with a goal of **behavior change**</u> (BMP implementation):
Task X. BMP Education & 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 #% and #% 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 MDEP. Evaluation of awareness change will be accomplished using the DEP Intercept 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 workplan, proposing to collect data and develop a plan to be approved by DEP is an alternative.)*

Steps to Effective Outreach Effort (a.k.a social marketing)

For outreach to be effective the planning has to start with identifying Who the target audience is and What you would like then to do; rather than 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 NPS watershed (implementation) projects. (You should be able to identify these seven elements in the examples above.)

> All strategies begin with the target audience.
>
> Alan R. Andreasen

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.)*

2. What do you want them to do? *(Again be specific. 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, Watching wildlife is relaxing).*

5. Develop a message and in this message, 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. *(Barriers: "Never enough time to enjoy the lake? Reduce the time you spend mowing: reduce your lawn and instead add trees & shrubs or groundcover that keep water clean." Note: message looks to overcome a barrier and includes an incentive. Incentives: "Learn how to plant trees, shrubs and ground cover to attract wildlife." Note: message overcomes barrier of not knowing how and includes incentive of viewing wildlife. Messages must match the target audience.)*

6. Identify message delivery tools. *(Now pick the tool that matches your target audience. If they have no time, they most likely won't attend a meeting. So don't hold meetings or tours. Maybe outreach isn't what is needed but rather use the Youth Conservation Corps to plant the buffer. Or hold a demonstration in a place they go to anyway – library, boat launch, beach - Or sell bundles of appropriate plants at cost with a planting plan.)*

7. Evaluate! This really isn't the last step, 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 your BMP. Try out a few messages on some small groups. Pilot - piloting projects gives you a chance to tweak the elements in your plan before rolling out a big project and spending all 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. DEP has some examples from other states as well as the Intercept Survey developed here in Maine.

Social Marketing Resources

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

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

Fostering Sustainable Behavior by Doug McKenzie-Mohr & William Smith

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

Intercept Communication Survey. April 2007. This is an evaluation tool developed by Market Deicsions for Maine DEP. For a copy of the instructions, MSExcel Spreadsheet and survey contact Kathy Hoppe at Kathy.m.hoppe@maine.gov or 207-760-3134

Outreach Planning Model. Cooperative Extension has developed a logic model -based training. Laura Wilson is willing to provide training/facilitation for groups interested in using their model. Contact Laura at lwilson@umext.maine.edu or 581-2971.

Kathy Hoppe, Maine DEP 207-760-3134 or kathy.m.hoppe@maine.gov

Barb Welch, Maine DEP 207-287-7682 or barb.welch@maine.gov

Outreach Tool Resources

Examples of NPS outreach tools from around the country can be found at:
   http://www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox/#toolbox (Note always test materials on a subsample of your target audience, what worked in Texas may not work in Maine.)

Common tools and their uses*

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

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