

Crafting Better Public Outreach Strategies and Materials

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Attendees

Amy Trujillo	Sharon Farrell
Cindy Roessler	Jennifer Naegele
Henry Gonzales	Charles Blair
Kim Hayes	Beth Keer
Alison Stanton	SaraJo Dickens
Jill Terp	Heather Schneider
Holly Warner	Kai Palenscar
Liana Lopez	Julie Horenstein
Emily Prud'homme	Roselynn Lwenya
Noreen Cabanting	Valerie Yep
Andrea Adams-Morden	Lisa Markovchick
Carrie Nazarchyk	Thaddeus Hunt
Michael Medina	Janice Lavalley
Phillip Roullard	Hillary Saunders
Darren Smith	Bruce Delgado
Tim Hyland	Jan Shriner
Jim Dempsey	Sara Grove
Pete Holloran	Chuck Kozac

Suggested Language:

- “Our” “We”
- Future Generations
- Stewardship
- Promote
- Protect
- 3 “W’s”: Water, Working Farms/Ranches?, Wildlife
- Conservation
- Natural Areas
- Health
- Safety

Introduction (Asha, Mary)

NPS work since 2000. Focus on native plants and weeds. Transition to realization that people are the most important part of the equation. Recognition of the value of communication and getting public buy-in to a project. We are hoping you invest the time in talking to people.

Question about “3% negative” what happens? Potential to stop project. We believe that communicators are the first to encounter the 3% and listen to them without letting the “negative” move on to a higher level. They may never agree with the project, but turns into project understanding and a “softer negative” (ie: no escalation).

Project Failures

Dog-walkers lawsuit due to trail closures. Highlighted importance of finding common ground to build community advocacy and stewardship prior to implementation of work plan.

From stopped projects came concept of putting project information coordinators in the field.

Case: Land’s End Coastal Trail Enhancements—tree maintenance. Started outreach 1 year before work. Out every week letting public know what project was about and to provide feedback to the project manager. The issue was hazardous trees, but people were very attached to the trees themselves—pretty straightforward.

But what happens when the project is tree removal for view improvement?

Following hazard tree removal we started weed removal and trees for habitat restoration.

- Getting people accustomed to the work
- Hosted “walks” to get people up to speed on work
- Passed out fliers
- Communicated to public that trees were planted way too densely and so NPS was working to restore health (opening up canopy/get under story started).
- Had research (UC Berkeley) and did neighborhood meetings and forest walks featuring the “experts” describing why work needed to be done.
- Very few negatives

Question: Was there a neighborhood? How did you contact the public?

1. Public affairs officers already established neighborhood groups.
2. Land’s End Lookout was a newsletter that went out to the zip code
3. Signs along trail
4. People on trail talking to public
5. Created buzz that resulted in people wanting to know what was going on

Information sheet:

1. Never fill it out when you are talking to the public
2. Information binder with photos of species then fill out sheets later
3. At the end of each week tally how many comments and transfer important comments back to managers. Example: “Why aren’t there restrooms on site?” Then next time we were out there it was possible to explain that restroom facilities were coming.

We were able to turn a negative into a positive. Example (Asha): A neighbor knew that a bird was still nesting (after nesting search). The irate neighbor said that birds were still present. Asha stopped the project and added a wildlife biologist to the crew-the neighbor was able to meet the biologist, and though was still unhappy, at least respected that NPS was doing-ongoing conservations. “We acted on a negative so they didn’t”

Unexpected Positives:

We thought everything would be against trees, but found that public was so happy to have someone talk to them-we formed almost a small “community” at the site.
“Lesson: You don’t have to have fear of public”

Question: If reports go back to managers-see the 3% negative, what happens when the 3% stays the same-are real decision makers able to accept the 3% negatives?

Answer: Yes, managers are able to accept the 3% negatives. Have more support based on data. Managers read comments and understand that in an urban environment not everyone will agree but that work is along the lines of what general public wants.

So the data is not used to support the position that you wanted all along.

Question: How do you fund?

Answer: It is a very small part of each project. Land’s End example: a \$45,000 project had about \$3,000 for public outreach (about 10% to public outreach).

Question: People you hire-how?

Answer: Typically are contact hires, usually of people known to the park. We now have a permanent position: Information Coordinator.

Question/Statement: I remember in past negative headlines “Plant Nazi’s” etc. but I see positive changes in your effect.

Take home message: Public outreach should be part of the planning process rather than a response to negative feedback experienced during a project.

LISTENING: Importance of how can you be an active listener.

Language used is important.

Lessons learned:

- Don’t be so “right”
- Sometimes people have legitimate concerns
- Listening and Caring
- “Them” is “Us”
- Have empathy for public-this helps you care more about the person’s concerns
- Smile-I hear what you’re saying
- We are almost “therapists” out there. People out there seeking solace. This was a great way for them to express something that was inside them (not necessarily about your project)

Question: At what stage are you engaging the public? (Person is dealing with native people but she is being ineffective in getting them to see her project as a positive. “This is our land” (Frustration)

How do we get them to move forest projects forward on tribal lands? When the tribal people do not want to change/undertake the problem?

(Break into Groups)

Negative words	Positive words
Environmentalist	Conservationist
Endangered	Imperiled

Study by Nature Conservancy and Trust for Public lands

- Way to connect people through language
- Use the three “W’s”
- Promote projects using words that strike cords/resonate
- Focus on language that promotes consensus. For example the words Health, Safety, Promote, Clean-up, Protect, We, Our, Diversity, Future Generations. These are powerful words that people can agree on.
- Accessibility- can have negative connotations. Joggers did not like hand-packed surfaces and wanted a trail with a wild look. The park knew about these concerns through a visitor use survey contracted out during the planning process. The trail is accessible for the first ¼ mile out to the great views and then the rest more wild. Public felt that the park had listened to their concern and responded.

Break into Groups to discuss the issues that people are most afraid to hear (20 min)

How would you speak to people that have that concern? How to frame the issues.

Issues:

1. Endangered species and landowners
2. Herbicides/Chemical use
3. Historic/Cultural Use
- 4. Weeds as Habitat (birds etc.)**
5. Lack of Action (Benign neglect)

Introduce yourself and take notes and present in 20 minutes

Group sessions:

Summary:

- This is an important part of what we do yet not enough time or money to do it.
- Commitment to take notes from these summaries/out to the public-share with the group.

- How to keep importance and values and find the right vocabulary to get support you need for a specific project.

Suggestion for list serve-Question poster to provide synopsis of the responses
Suggestion to post these tools on a website

Notes: Invasive Species as Habitat

- Yosemite—Bears and Blackberry
- Chico, Bidwell Park—Japanese Susan trees

The public does not differentiate nature as non-native. There is a “green is good” mentality.

East Bay Parks – Cape and Algerian Ivy, wants to encourage neighbors to become involved. Problem is that they like the ivy.

California Watershed Council - Arundo (*Arundo donax giant reed?*) as habitat for songbirds. Dealing with Audubon (dealing with our own.)

Trees for shade in public park as well as raptor roosting.

Open Space District-SOCA - Riparian Mexican fern? Palma-The community is upset about dead trees-A beauty issue.

Solutions

- Identify the concerns
- Show the concerned audience what the goals are and the long-term aesthetic benefits
- Use before and after photos/images
- Educate the public about how long the site will be a work site
- Identify limitations and concerns prior to any activity
- Public buy-in first
- Identify the concerns and questions that are going to arise
- Have a message that you know is going to work

More Issues:

Consultant in Ventura – Watershed level invasive plant problems. Issues with Arundo as habitat, locals did not respond to SEQIA outreach efforts but then after attempts

Elkhorn Slough – Eucalyptus removal in Agricultural area. Wonders what the outcry will be.

Parks Conservancy – Coastal bluff with historical hedgerows of tamarisks and Eucalyptus.

Conclusions:

- In advance, figure out the potential concerns and be prepared.
- “Fighting” with our own--other environmental groups.