

Outreach Recommendations

Chapter

6

Outreach Recommendations

Introduction

Outreach is critical to the successful implementation of other watershed management tools. Without community involvement, support, or even knowledge of water quality issues facing Lake Wingra, little can be accomplished. Community residents are some of the most important stakeholders in the watershed, yet they are the most difficult to reach.

Resource management issues often revolve around the challenges of changing individual behavior. The discussion in this chapter focuses on the premise that awareness building and education are key for cultivating behavior changes. Once interest in watershed issues is sparked and momentum develops, groups of individuals can begin to work together on problem solving.

In researching effective outreach strategies, Water Resources Management (WRM) students spoke with several education and outreach specialists, and reviewed written materials on effective public outreach. This chapter is a synthesis of findings and recommendations, and includes both outreach materials and strategies for their effective use. The Friends of Lake Wingra (FOLW) were provided with an expanded outreach notebook which included the material in this chapter as well as detailed outreach possibilities, materials, contacts, and resources.

Outreach activities and their importance have been discussed briefly in *Chapter 5 – Stakeholders*.

Foundations for Outreach

One of the most important components of a successful outreach campaign is a strong organizational structure. Based on recommendations from diverse sources, there are seven distinct but overlapping components necessary for effective outreach.

1. Clear Vision, Goals, and Objectives

As stated by the EPA, a clear vision helps watershed groups to understand, relate to, and support protection and restoration efforts. When framed well, they can also help the general public, elected officials, business, the press, and community leaders to understand watershed issues (EPA, 1997).

The FOLW have begun to envision a plan for outreach in the Lake Wingra watershed. Their mission statement, “To promote a healthy Lake Wingra through an active watershed community,” acknowledges the importance of working with the community to develop a clear and inclusive vision of what Lake Wingra could and should be.

Goals and objectives also should be developed for each aspect of the overall vision. These form the foundation for developing programs for action. Goals state the desired results of outreach activities, while objectives state the methods of attaining these goals. Clear goals and objectives include a measure of the expected outcome, supply guidance for planning, and provide the basis for developing strategies and specific tasks (Beech and Dake, 1992). Goals and objectives should be consistent with the overall vision and mission statement. Outreach goals and objectives for the Friends of Lake Wingra are discussed further on page 95 and following, and in **Figures 6-1** and **6-2**.

2. Leadership and Initiative

Strong leadership was identified as being a key component of an effective watershed organization in a survey of Dane County watershed organizations (Born *et al.*, 1998). Not only do leaders organize, garner funds, and take action, but they motivate others to be involved and encourage leadership within the organization (Born *et al.*, 1998). For community education plans to be effective, someone needs to take responsibility for managing or leading the process, such as an outreach coordinator.

3. Funding and Resources

Consistent and adequate funding is essential for a successful watershed organization. Even more foundational are resources such as outreach materials, experts, contacts, and the support of the watershed community. The outreach notebook given to the FOLW provides links to many of these resources.

4. Relationships

Watershed work is about relationships (EPA, 1997). Networking among organizations provides support and enables groups to learn from each other through the sharing of ideas and resources (Born *et al.*, 1998). Sharing planning time, energy, and funding can lead to greater successes for all involved. Relationships between groups and individuals strengthen individual and community knowledge bases.

As relationships develop between interested community members, these people become personally involved in the work of the organization. Relationships build an organization’s foundation, and keep its momentum going. Perhaps even more significantly, relationships build consensus and trust, which are vital for an organization to take on new and long-term challenges.

5. Planning

A plan is essential; the most important aspects of any plan are its scale, timeline and evaluation (see page 99). Outreach plans should be broken down into manageable activities, and should consider available time, personnel, and resources. Plans should be revisited and evaluated on a regular basis.

6. Action-Based Education

Education and involvement drive action (EPA, 1997). Environmental education resources emphasize the process of learning. Awareness leads to understanding, understanding leads to interest, interest leads to action, and action leads to commitment. An effective outreach program must address all of these attitude levels, and encourage each step. Community education activities should be active and interesting. Examples include involving citizens in gathering data, encouraging service projects, and rewarding local initiatives (see **Box 6-1**).

Community participation models stress the involvement continuum of “know, care, and do.” To keep interested people involved, relationship building must be combined with result-based action. As people become involved, they gain more knowledge on issues and become committed to activities and relationships within the group. Once people are personally committed, they will become committed to the issues that captured their interest in the first place. Lower the barriers to participation, and give people activities that show immediate results.

7. Membership

Diverse membership, member commitment, and achievement recognition are essential to effective watershed organizations. It is important to target the diverse communities that make up the Lake Wingra watershed when planning outreach strategies, and to invite diverse audiences to join the FOLW. Utilizing member strengths and recognizing successes will be ongoing challenges for leaders, but in the long run these will strengthen both the FOLW and its outreach mission.

Goals and Objectives for Outreach

Mission of the Friends of Lake Wingra (FOLW)

To promote a healthy Lake Wingra through an active watershed community.

“The best plans have clear visions, goals, and action items” (EPA, 1997).

In *Top 10 Watershed Lessons Learned* (1997), the EPA defines visions as general statements of where a group or effort wants to go and what it will accomplish over a given time span. Visions can motivate individuals to take action and can help people focus their efforts on specific goals.

► **Box 6-1**

Community education: models that work.

A successful community education program uses one or more of the following to complement a local process:

1. Personal Action

Individuals or small groups can assess and evaluate personal practices that affect environmental quality.

2. Community Service Projects

These activities respond to citizen interest by providing an opportunity to learn about environmental management through active involvement.

3. Community Environmental Monitoring

Environmental monitoring provides citizens with a hands-on opportunity to learn how environmental management decisions are made. Data is often, but not always, compiled and analyzed by natural resource or pollution prevention specialists.

4. Community Vision Planning

This process develops community vision and sets goals to address environmental, economic, and social interests. Goals are then linked to specific measures chosen by the community to indicate progress. A community identifies its goals and measures of success based on its own history and sense of identity. Once relevant goals and indicators have been chosen, community groups can make plans to meet priority goals.

5. Community Participatory Research

Participatory research involves local people summarizing their experience and knowledge about environmental management, selecting target conservation behaviors, and carrying these through.

6. Group Activities for Taking Responsibility for Impacts

Businesses, organizations, and community councils can take the lead. Individual groups can analyze their own activities and determine their own plan of action. Groups can act on their own but are more effective if their actions provide leadership in the community.

7. Community Recognition

Public recognition of successful results is a great education method.

8. Advocacy Activities

The boundary between advocacy and education is sometimes blurred. In the process of advocating environmental policy or management choices, group members often gather, summarize, and interpret information about a specific environmental issue and its relationship to the community. Not only do group members educate themselves, they often educate their community.

Modified from Elaine Andrews, UW Cooperative Education, April 1999

Adapted from "An EPA/ USDA Partnership to Support Community-based Education, Discussion Paper," 1999

Goals refer to components of the overall vision or effort. Goals are usually developed for different functional areas of a vision or mission, such as outreach, political involvement or group organization. These goals are usually somewhat general, but they should include the very essence of the program’s purpose.

In contrast to goals, objectives should be specific about what will be done. They narrow down the very broad vision of the goal to something that can be accomplished through organizational resources (Beech and Dake, 1992). Objectives can be made more specific by including a single outcome and a date of completion for tasks.

Everyone in the organization should have input into goals and objectives, or at least buy into the ideas before they can be successfully implemented (Beech and Dake, 1992). Involvement from the beginning gives community members ownership and responsibility. With this principle in mind, goals and objectives should be periodically re-evaluated for purpose and relevance.

In the 1999 WRM Workshop planning for outreach, we referred to preliminary goals and objectives as defined by the FOLW for their purposes. All products were created with these and the FOLW vision in mind. Future planning and evaluation should consider these goals and objectives, and include re-evaluation.

Figure 6-1 and **Figure 6-2** are preliminary goals and objectives developed by the FOLW for their outreach program.

Figure 6-1

Friends Of Lake Wingra Preliminary Outreach Goals

Increase citizen awareness of the Lake Wingra watershed’s ecological, economic, and cultural attributes.

Enhance citizen ability to understand, evaluate, and support policies and practices that protect and enhance the water and habitat quality and quantity in and around Lake Wingra.

Support citizen involvement, especially of students, in accessing and interpreting existing information and conducting new research and special projects.

Support the development of community resources and events to build a “sense of place” around Lake Wingra and its watershed.

Connect outreach for the Lake Wingra watershed to outreach work throughout the Madison lakes and Rock River basins.

Figure 6-2

Friends Of Lake Wingra Preliminary Outreach Objectives

Learning objectives:

Understand what a watershed is, and understand the significance of the Lake Wingra watershed.

Identify what affects water and habitat quality and quantity in Lake Wingra.

Identify practices that individuals can apply and practices that require collective action in the community to improve water and habitat quality and quantity in Lake Wingra.

Action objectives:

Support citizen activities that increase the individual implementation of water quality practices, and provide support to groups to implement practices that require collective actions.

Recognize and celebrate success as a means to attract more attention to, and involvement in, the Lake Wingra watershed.

Outreach Planning

Short- and long-term planning is essential for any outreach campaign. Planning should be a group process, and should be consistent with the goals, objectives, and other foundations for outreach. Brainstorming and evaluation are critical elements of planning.

Based on discussion with the Friends of Lake Wingra, the following are general planning recommendations specific to this organization. These planning components should be established for each general objective, product, or project.

Target Audience

Target audiences are groups that have common characteristics, such as education levels, attitudes, behaviors, or needs. They should be broken down into specific groups, so that they can be targeted with specific messages and strategies (Beech and Dake, 1992). Here are a few possible target audiences:

1. Homeowners of the Lake Wingra watershed

These include homeowners involved in the Dudgeon-Monroe Neighborhood Association, homeowners who live within a half-mile radius of Lake Wingra, and homeowners on the far side of the watershed who may not realize they are part of the Wingra watershed.

2. Recreational users of Lake Wingra and its watershed

These include people who swim, boat, and fish in Lake Wingra, as well as those who hike and enjoy the natural areas and parks surrounding the lake.

"In a sense, the target audience is the consumer of your message and program." (Beech and Dake, 1992)

3. Civic groups

These include neighborhood associations, church groups, scout troops, business associations, and schools.

Specific Objectives

Specific objectives for each product should be developed. Objectives can be theoretically broken down into two categories: learning (or product) objectives, and action (or process) objectives. Learning objectives are lessons we want the audience to learn; their success can be measured through tests of knowledge. Action objectives are practices we want the audience to do; these are not easily quantifiable.

Messages

What messages should the Friends of Lake Wingra convey? Messages should be specifically defined for different goals of FOLW outreach efforts. Some of these messages should lead to action. Action messages should specifically target activities that involve minimal time, energy, money, and materials. In short, activities should be easily accomplished by the average citizen (EPA/USDA, 1998).

Messages should be useful and relevant, and use concrete and vivid language. To effectively communicate to the target audiences, messages should also be used repeatedly, in a variety of formats and media channels.

The following are a few general messages that have been used in some of the WRM outreach materials prepared for the Friends of Lake Wingra:

1. Lake Wingra is a valuable natural area.
2. The Lake Wingra watershed is mostly urban residential.
3. Lake Wingra is being threatened by non-point source pollution from its watershed.
4. Individuals and the community can protect Lake Wingra by disconnecting home rain gutters from impervious surfaces, avoiding overfertilization of lawns, and getting involved in lake restoration efforts.

Media Formats and Channels

Media format refers to the type of outreach material produced, such as newsletter articles, signs, slide shows, or bike maps. Media channels are the channels of distribution for outreach materials, such as presentations at civic group meetings, or delivery of maps to local bike shops. The best media formats and channels for your materials depend on the message, target audience, and resources available (Beech and Dake, 1992). Examples of suggested media formats and channels can be found in the outreach notebook given to the FOLW.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential tool for any education or outreach. It shows you where you've been, and points you in the right direction.

When you evaluate a program, you systematically collect information about how the program operates, and the effects it may (or may not) be having on the actions of target audiences (Shepard, 1997).

Evaluation is as critical as the goals and objectives of your program. You should begin formulating your evaluation when the program begins; it is part of the planning process. Without evaluation, you will be wasting precious time and money (Beech and Dake, 1992).

Collecting data is a major part of any evaluation, but keep in mind that method follows purpose.

Before going into the details of evaluating, look at the big picture of evaluation. Collecting data is a major part of any evaluation, but keep in mind that *method follows purpose* (Taylor-Powell and Steele, 1996). To begin, use this four-question checklist:

1. *What are you evaluating?*
What are the goals and objectives your program is trying to achieve?
2. *Why are you evaluating?*
What are you trying to find out? Information about refining the program? Evidence of behavior change? Accountability within your program? Keep in mind that every detail will not need to be evaluated.
3. *What are you going to do with the information?*
Who is going to use this information? Whose needs will it serve?
4. *What kind of evaluation would then be most appropriate?*
Method follows purpose.

The following moves through steps in evaluation, continually revisiting these four questions. We will address these concepts in a way relevant to the Friends of Lake Wingra and their mission statement.

Purpose of Evaluation

An evaluation effort can have one or more specific purposes (Shepard, 1997). For the FOLW, evaluation could discover whether audience needs are being met, look for evidence of behavior change, or understand the costs and benefits of the current outreach program. As the FOLW outreach program develops, the purposes of evaluation in light of their outreach goals and objectives should be developed. One of the reasons for creating quantifiable objectives is for the purpose of evaluation.

Qualities of the program to be evaluated should be specifically identified. These may include effectiveness (achievement of desired outcomes), efficiency (outcomes compared to costs), equity (access and value for all), appropriateness (fit of program with situation), relevance (critical problem or need addressed), and utility (usefulness for users) (Shepard, 1997).

Beech and Dake (1992) describe a hierarchy of steps in the outreach process, based on *Bennett's Hierarchy of Evidence for Program Evaluation*. These seven steps increase in complexity and difficulty in terms of quantification and evaluation. A more in-depth discussion is found in the outreach notebook given to the FOLW.

1. Inputs
2. Activities
3. Target Audience Involvement
4. Reactions
5. KASA change (Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, Aspirations)
6. Changes in Behavior
7. End Results

Internal and External Constraints

Many factors can influence how an evaluation will be conducted, and these should be identified early on. Constraints can affect the stage of the program in which the evaluation occurs, as well as the techniques possible for the evaluation (Beech and Dake, 1992).

The focus of the evaluation process should be on finding the most effective method of evaluation.

The two major constraints for most programs are the time and energy of the evaluators. This may limit the extent and depth of evaluation, but should not be a discouraging factor. Instead, the focus of the evaluation process should be on finding the most effective method of evaluation.

Evaluation Techniques

Evaluations can be done at the beginning, middle, or end of a program. Effectiveness depends on the purpose of the evaluation and the constraints for the evaluator. Four basic types of evaluation are presented below. Since they are to be used at different points in the outreach program, they have different purposes.

1. *Formative or Developmental Evaluation: before the program begins*

A formative evaluation serves to test materials and ideas, and to understand target audiences before a project is started. It provides information during the program planning phase. Often this is a more non-formal type of evaluation, involving discussion, review, and step-by-step feedback.

2. *Process Evaluation: during program activities*

Using process evaluation, activities can be monitored through participation and feedback throughout the course of the outreach program. Examples of process evaluations include informal discussion with participants, monitoring the number of participants or monitoring the number of requests for more information.

3. *Program Monitoring / Outcome Evaluation: immediately after activities*

Short-term results can be measured using outcome evaluation (Beech and Dake, 1992). Program monitoring usually occurs after activities as follow up, and can be very effective at getting audience response. Questionnaires or surveys can be used to learn changes in participant knowledge, attitudes, skills, or behaviors.

4. *Impact Evaluation: long after activities*

Impact evaluation is intended to discover long-term results of an outreach program. Impact evaluations can be very difficult to do, often requiring a pretest and post-test design to compare “before and after” circumstances of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors.

Collecting Evidence

By turning objectives into questions, you can decide upon the types of evidence that are available (Beech and Dake, 1992). Evidence can include changes in knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors. Evaluations can include hard data (numerical) or soft data (observation based) that may or may not truly reflect the attitudes or opinions of the target audience. Evaluations are best if they are based upon valid information that represents the target audiences, but often this can be difficult and time consuming. Again, revisit the idea of con-

straints and effectiveness – find evaluation techniques that will answer your questions. Remember: method follows purpose.

There are many resources for evaluation techniques. Some can be found in the document source list, or through agencies such as local extension offices. In choosing a method of evaluation, think about the advantages and disadvantages of different methods, or consider combining methods to reveal different aspects of the outreach program (Taylor-Powell and Steele, 1996). Some basic methods for collecting evaluation information include expert or peer review, questionnaires, case studies, observation, surveys, and interviews.

FOLW Evaluation

Several components of the outreach program suggested for the FOLW can be evaluated. For each of the outreach materials provided by the 1999 WRM Workshop students, an evaluation summary is included; these are intended to be examples of product or material evaluation, not evaluations of the entire FOLW outreach program. The entire program itself, as well as the status of the FOLW in the public eye, could be evaluated using very different methods for different purposes and points in time.

For example, one of the preliminary outreach objectives of the FOLW is to help watershed residents identify what affects water and habitat quality and quantity in Lake Wingra. This objective can be evaluated from the perspective of watershed residents through asking whether people can identify water quality problems. This question can be answered and evaluated using a survey (as done for the 1999 WRM Workshop; see *Appendix 6*), doing informal interviews with visitors to a FOLW booth, or asking questions of an audience before giving an informative presentation on Lake Wingra.

Outreach Materials

The following outreach materials were specifically prepared for the Friends of Lake Wingra. In addition to the creation of these materials, strategies for their use, distribution, and improvement were developed. A general timeline for each describes the strategy steps as phases in the outreach process. **Box 6-2** shows a visual flowchart timeline.

Phase 1: implemented as soon as possible or within the next 6 months

Phase 2: implemented within the next 12 months

Phase 3: implemented over a longer timespan, as determined necessary by the FOLW

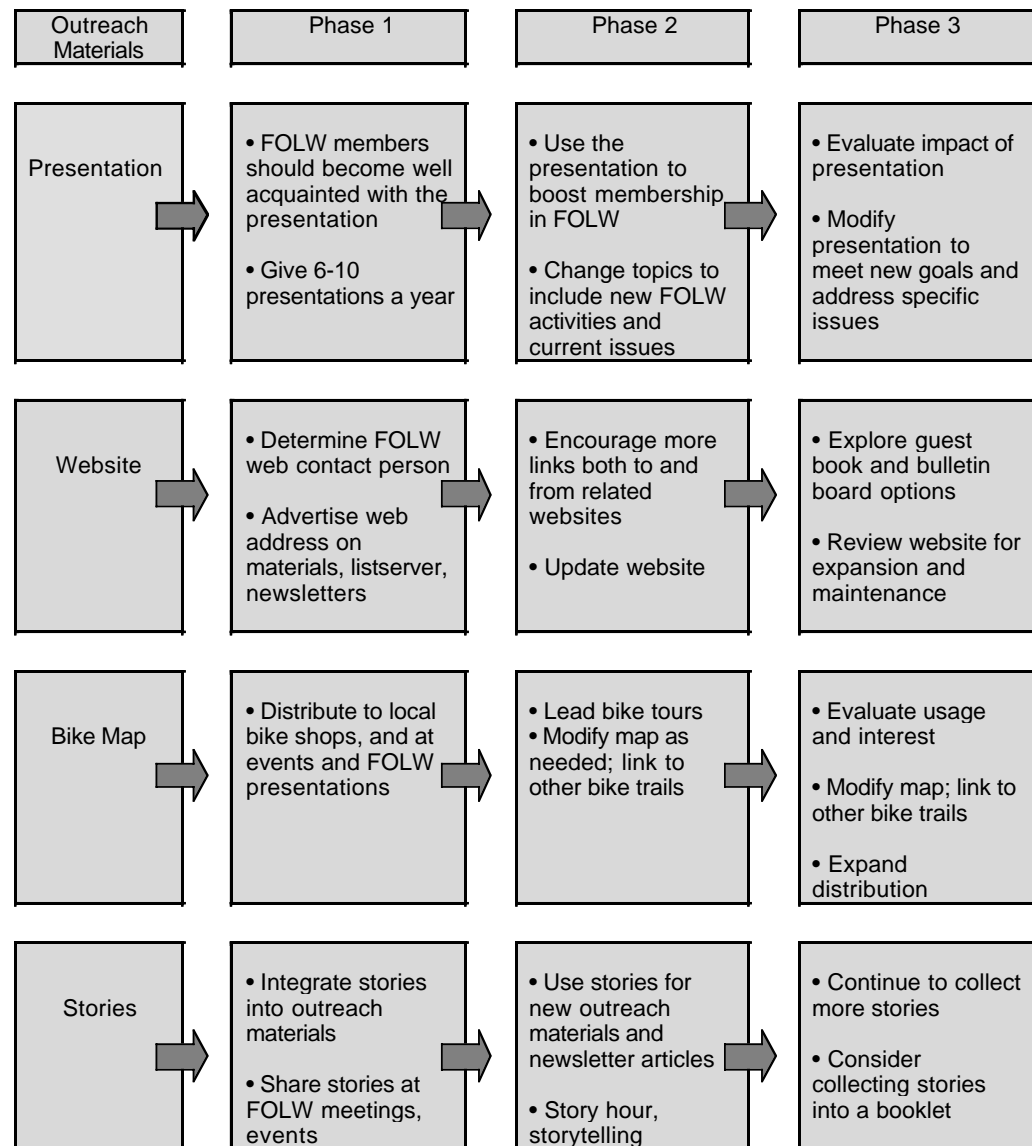
Slide Presentation

This slide show was developed for general audiences to spark interest and encourage involvement in both the Lake Wingra watershed and the Friends of Lake Wingra. It visually and orally describes Lake Wingra and its surroundings, defines the watershed concept, identifies problems in the watershed affecting water quality and quantity, and identifies individual solutions to Lake Wingra problems. The slide show's flexible format allows for changes in message, topics, and use.

► **Box 6-2**

Flowchart of outreach material strategies.

This flowchart shows the phases for each of the outreach materials developed for the FOLW. Phases in the usage of outreach materials include expanded use, evaluation, revision, and connection to other outreach activities.



Phase 1: Members of FOLW should see and be familiar with the messages of the presentation. Some members should learn to give the presentation. The FOLW should give 6-10 presentations per year to neighborhood, church, and civic groups.

Phase 2: Use the presentation to encourage membership in FOLW. The ending can include FOLW activities or current issues. Change topics to include new activities and current issues.

Phase 3: Evaluate impact of presentation. Modify presentation to meet new goals and address specific issues.

Webpage

This website was designed to provide information on Lake Wingra and area water quality practices, and to provide links to existing information on watersheds and water quality. It could easily be appended to include recent information, and could announce FOLW and watershed events. The FOLW webpage address is <http://danenet.wicip.org/fowingra/>.

Phase 1: Transfer web files to FOLW website and determine a contact person. Use the web address on outreach materials, neighborhood association newsletters, and event fliers. Advertise on FOLW listserver.

Phase 2: Encourage more links both to and from other related websites. Update the website to include more calendars and current events to encourage people to visit regularly.

Phase 3: Explore the possibility of using a guest book or bulletin board to monitor usage and get feedback. Review the website for maintenance and expansion.

Bicycle Tour

This bicycle map was created to encourage the exploration of the Lake Wingra watershed. Stops are labeled and described with stories and observations, and the brochure format includes an explanation of the watershed concept. The map can be distributed both in bicycle shops and at FOLW events.

Phase 1: Distribute to local bike shops, at FOLW presentations, and at watershed events like Jazz in the Park.

Phase 2: Lead bike tours.

Phase 3: Explore expansion of distribution through business sponsors. Evaluate usage and interest; modify map as needed. Connect watershed bike routes to surrounding bicycle trails.

Stories

This short collection of stories about Lake Wingra is intended to be a resource for outreach. The stories can be incorporated into newsletter articles, presentations, or storytelling events. They serve as a means of sparking interest in the history of Lake Wingra and its watershed.

Phase 1: Collect stories on Lake Wingra. Integrate stories with other materials, such as the presentation and website. Share stories at FOLW meetings and events.

Phase 2: Story hour presentation of Lake Wingra stories at local libraries, bookstores, and events. Use stories for new outreach materials and newsletter articles.

Phase 3: Consider collecting stories into a booklet for distribution. Continue story collection.

Checklist for Outreach

As an outreach program is implemented, the FOLW will need to continue to re-evaluate all of the steps in the planning process. These steps are listed below as a checklist, to ensure that the outreach program meets their needs.

- 1 Are the FOLW vision, outreach goals, and objectives consistent with the FOLW mission statement?
- 2 Is a structure set up for the re-evaluation of goals and objectives?
- 3 Has the FOLW identified an outreach coordinator? Responsibilities include keeping track of outreach materials, and coordinating the members involved in updating the webpage and giving presentations.
- 4 Are there adequate outreach materials and supplies?
- 5 Is the funding adequate to support and increase outreach activities?
- 6 Have relevant potential relationships been identified, contacted, and involved in outreach events and activities?
- 7 Has there been communication and sharing of materials with local organizations?
- 8 Is there diverse representation within outreach audiences and FOLW?
- 9 Have under-represented watershed stakeholders been identified and involved?
- 10 Have outreach endeavors used creative approaches?
- 11 Have planned outreach activities actively involved participants?
- 12 Are a variety of media channels and formats being utilized in outreach?
- 13 Have follow-up activities been implemented for outreach events?
- 14 Does the current outreach program need to be evaluated and updated?

Lessons Learned by Outreach Experts

The following list is a compilation of lessons from outreach experts of diverse fields (see document source list). These have been chosen due to their repeated discussion in the outreach literature and in interviews with outreach professionals. The lessons are organized into a potential timeline for outreach priorities.

1. Relate objectives and activities to each other, and to long-term vision.
2. Communicate concrete and clear messages.
3. Build watershed recognition through regular events and activities.
4. Link outreach events to other established events.
5. Be flexible with time, energy, and message. Tailor your focus to audience and objectives.
6. Provide opportunities for feedback and evaluation.
7. Build community by allowing time for discussion, socializing, networking, and working on hands-on projects.
8. Become a part of the community. Develop FOLW recognition and cultivate diverse membership.
9. Recognize and celebrate successes.

The Future of Outreach

As the Friends of Lake Wingra develop new initiatives, their outreach program will also need to be adapted. Issues such as the city's proposal of a stormwater utility will need to be addressed in outreach material, as well as issues related to stormwater management and water quality advocacy. New messages and objectives will depend on decisions made by the Friends of Lake Wingra based on their vision for Lake Wingra and their members' stance on political issues. No matter what the FOLW goals and objectives become in the future, outreach must be incorporated into all FOLW activities. Outreach is an integral aspect of watershed management.

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