

## Action Agenda

### Section E.4 - Social Strategies

27 May 2009

#### **E.4 Use outreach and education to foster long-term changes in public attitudes and behavior.**

Public support, engagement, and a broad shift in public behavior is critical and central to achieving the long-term, multiple objectives of the Action Agenda. Puget Sound recovery is ultimately a social challenge, with virtually every impact and recovery strategy rooted in the interaction between the Sound's natural resources and its human residents. It is necessary to build and maintain a cohesive, Soundwide public constituency supporting Puget Sound recovery on all levels. The elements described below will foster coordination, advance persuasive and consistent messages, disseminate effective strategies, and support the many partners engaged in this important work.

The Partnership recommends a three-pronged approach, grounded in social science and supported by the broad range of stakeholders engaged in this work. First, a social and institutional infrastructure needs to be in place to support this cultural shift. Appropriate, functional, informed networks need to exist, and have sufficient capacity to connect with citizens and serve as change agents. These networks include government, scientists, educators, stormwater permittees, non-governmental organizations, universities, business groups, watershed councils, recreational groups, community organizations, homeowner associations, and other forms of social capital.

Second, a broad, deep, shared understanding and engagement must be fostered on the issues facing Puget Sound. Social research has shown repeatedly that the majority of Puget Sound residents care deeply about the health of the Sound and see it as one of the most prominent features of our regional culture. Yet, only about one-fifth of Puget Sound residents are aware that the Sound is in jeopardy, and/or how their activities and choices directly and cumulatively impact its health.

Third, beneficial practices and behaviors must be cultivated across the population of Puget Sound residents. This will be through centralized initiatives and volunteer efforts as well as by stimulating individual actions. Using social marketing concepts, targeted behaviors will be promoted within the broader population and with smaller audiences.

The Puget Sound region is well-positioned to implement this approach through existing watershed groups, non-governmental organizations, stewardship organizations such as WSU Beachwaters and Northwest Strait's marine resource committees, and government agency programs.

- E.4.1 *Build a social and institutional infrastructure to support broad-scale public engagement, foster stewardship and advance specific beneficial practices and behaviors.*

- E.4.1.1 Identify targeted actions, audiences, opportunities, strategies, and evaluation metrics by integrating appropriate social science relative to Puget Sound recovery.
  - E.4.1.2 Develop and maintain the infrastructure for efficient, effective communications and coordination. Manage the Education, Communication, and Outreach Network (ECO Net) to increase collaboration, focus efforts, improve strategic messaging, and share results of ongoing work.
  - E.4.1.3 Provide an easy-to-access public information conduit to connect individuals to local activities and resources related to education, volunteerism, and stewardship.
  - E.4.1.4 Establish the capacity for a sustained, comprehensive, regional public communication effort to Puget Sound residents. Work with key partners such as Stormwater Outreach for Regional Municipalities (STORM), potential funding partners such as the Foundation for Puget Sound, and other regional organizations and efforts.
  - E.4.1.5 Build the capacity of stakeholders/change agents to foster awareness, engagement, and the public's shared stewardship of the Sound. Provide technical support and training to outreach practitioners to aid program effectiveness, evaluation, and connection to Action Agenda priorities.
  - E.4.1.6 Increase resources to support stewardship actions on the part of residents, communities, and targeted groups. Evaluate social drivers, remove barriers, and provide incentives and technical guidance.
- E.4.2 *Significantly advance public awareness and understanding of the issues facing Puget Sound, individual and cumulative impacts on the Sound's resources, and the public's ability to contribute to a sustained recovery effort.*
- E.4.2.1 Implement a long-term, highly-visible, coordinated regional communications effort to increase public understanding of Puget Sound's health, status and threats, with individual and collective actions to advance recovery and protection efforts.
  - E.4.2.2 Foster the incorporation of Sound-related stewardship messages and actions into existing social frameworks (e.g., educational institutions, outreach organizations, neighborhood and community groups, professional associations, watershed councils, and households).
  - E.4.2.3 Sustain and expand local volunteer, stewardship, and education programs that target Action Agenda priorities. Enhance participation, engagement, and outcomes from these efforts.
  - E.4.2.4 Strengthen K-12 environmental programs to improve long-term understanding of Puget Sound issues and solutions, including curriculum development, teacher training and place-based, inquiry-driven learning opportunities for students.

- E.4.2.5 Engage the communications and outreach processes necessary to implement specific actions listed elsewhere in the Action Agenda.
- E.4.3 *Cultivate broad-scale practices and behaviors among Puget Sound residents that benefit Puget Sound.*
  - E.4.3.1 Provide a science-based foundation for targeted communications and practices. Cultivate change in detrimental actions through social marketing, diffusion, and other proven behavior-change approaches.
  - E.4.3.2 Develop and implement comprehensive social marketing strategies targeted to priority actions and audiences.
  - E.4.3.3 Focus resources to enable and encourage landowners to take informed stewardship actions beneficial to Puget Sound, related to such issues as infiltration, pollution reduction, habitat improvement, forest cover, soil development, critical areas, bank armoring, and other impacts.
  - E.4.3.4 Stimulate broad-scale individual stewardship behaviors by integrating messages and technical assistance into existing youth education, adult education, volunteer opportunities, and related programs.

#### **E.4 Near-term Actions**

1. Develop a science-based, prioritized menu of best management practices for residents to be targeted through various outreach strategies.
2. Identify and develop solutions for barriers (individual and institutional) to the adoption of targeted practices and behaviors.
3. Create a prioritized list of potential audiences according to issue and best management practices. Conduct formative research and message development work for priority audiences for use by local practitioners. Implement identified communication strategies at regional and local levels, through both centralized and de-centralized means.
4. Maintain and enhance ECO Net (Education, Communication, and Outreach Network), a Soundwide network that builds and strengthens relationships among Puget Sound organizations working on public awareness, involvement, and environmental education. Utilize the broad ECO Net, as well as local and regional networks, to align and enhance participant efforts in support of Action Agenda goals.
5. Assess regional dissemination opportunities. Identify gaps, and prioritize mechanisms by their ability to reach targeted audiences, incorporate new messages/elements into appropriate existing programs.
6. Develop and support regional multi-media awareness campaigns related to Puget Sound health.
7. Develop and maintain the technology/social media infrastructure necessary to coordinate implementers and connect the public to local activities and resources related to education, volunteerism, and stewardship.
8. Expand regional coordination of communication efforts and behavior change programs. Support regional coalitions, such as the STORM coalition (STormwater Outreach for

Regional Municipalities), a Sound-wide consortium of municipalities collaborating on a Sound-focused campaign, and effectiveness enhancement of respective local programs.

9. Develop a coordinated regional system of place-based K-12 education programs, and adult education and stewardship programs, such as WSU Beachwatchers, restoration/volunteer programs, and related efforts.
10. Promote the inclusion of Puget Sound environmental, social, and economic issues in K-12 curricula and work to increase Puget Sound environmental service projects.
11. Develop and implement a coordinated citizen science program. This will connect citizens and scientists to not only increase engagement opportunities but provide cost-effective data collection in support of Action Agenda priorities.
12. Coordinate with the Pacific Northwest NOAA B-WET grant provider to increase the “Meaningful Watershed Education Experience” model for students in Puget Sound.
13. Conduct a pilot program with the Washington State Ferries to inform and engage riders in Puget Sound recovery.
14. Develop a “toolbox” program of awareness, education, and stewardship programs. Include program strategies, materials, information, templates, evaluation metrics, etc. to be used by a range of implementers. Highlight and disseminate effective programs and models from around the region and beyond.
15. Procure funding for and implement a grant program to support local and regional organizations engaged in outreach. Use funding to stimulate innovation, collaboration, implementation of targeted strategies, and/or reaching new audiences to advance recovery efforts.