

ASWM Hot Topics Webinar



How to Connect with the Public to Protect Wetlands:

Findings from ASWM's Wetland Communications Case Study Project

July 11, 2017 from 3-5 pm Eastern

Presenters:

Brenda Zollitsch, ASWM Policy Analyst

Ted LaGrange, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Communications Challenges

Wetland Professionals...

- Tasked with communicating sound science, policy information and engagement
- Need to garner support for lesser known issues and programs
- Need clear, compelling messages about complex issues
- In states and tribes --- often limited, if any, budget and staff time allocated to communications
- Lack of communications expertise
- Not trained how to evaluate communications efforts

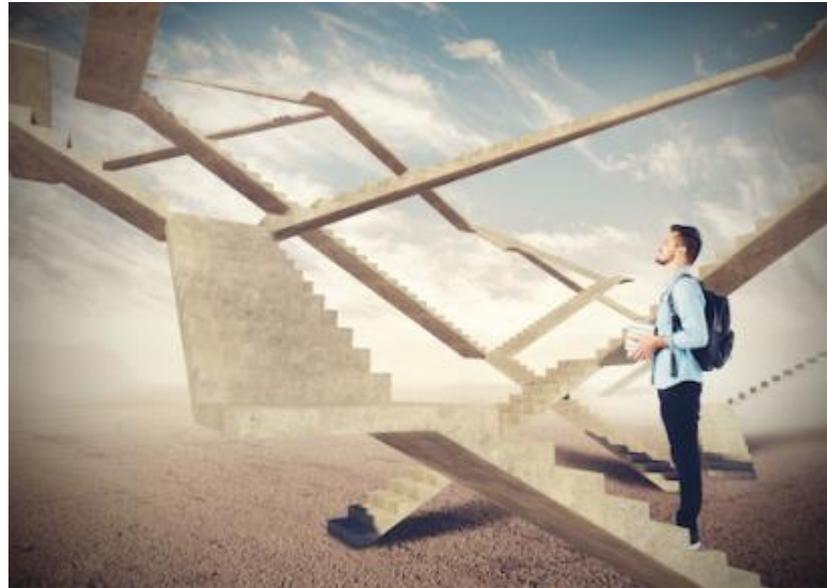


Image Credit: evolutionnews.org

Wetlands are often poorly understood and complicated in terms of science, regulation and social value.

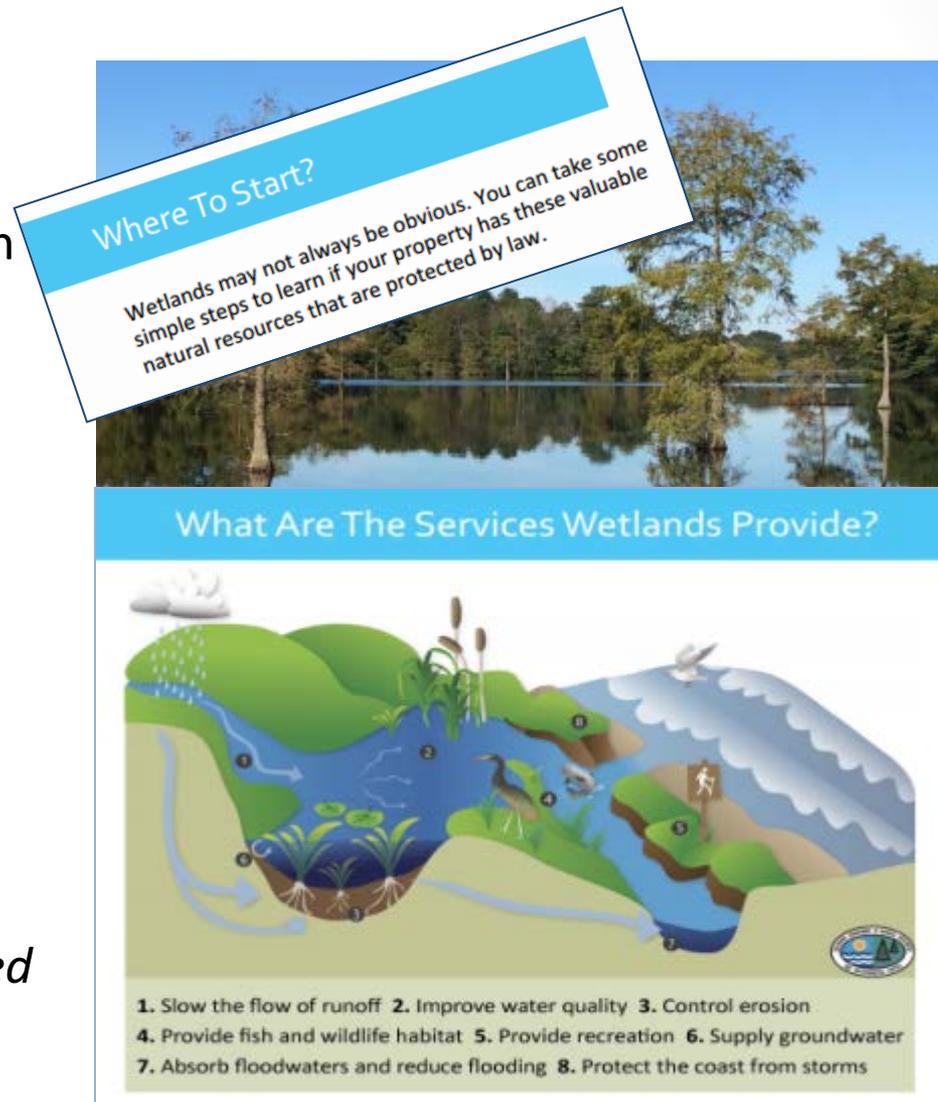
ASWM Communications Project

Conducted between January-April 2017

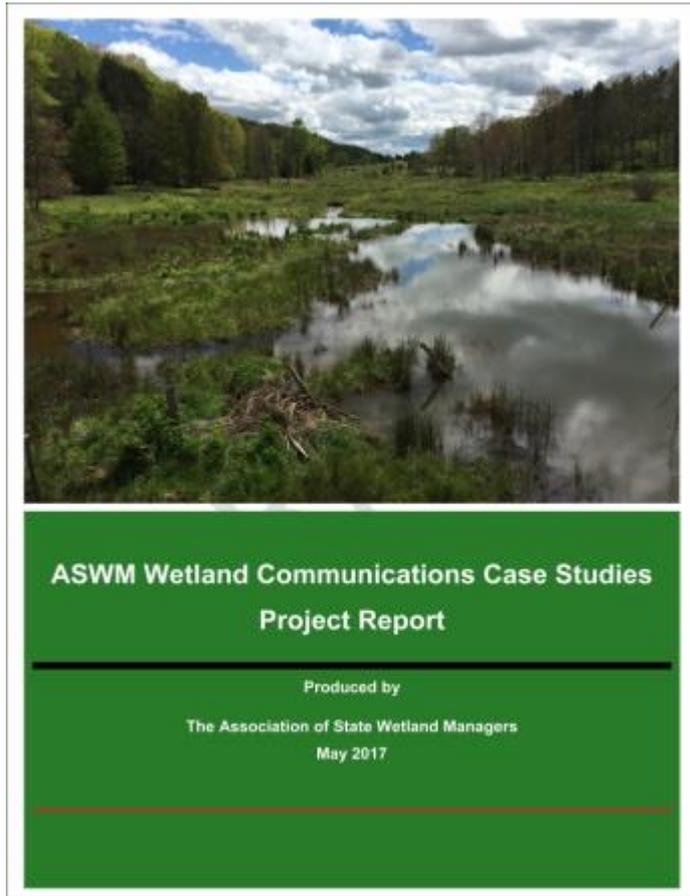
Short-term goal: To inform communications planning and future research through targeted strategies and products.

Long-term goal: To improve wetland protection and support for state and tribal wetland programs

- *through improved understanding by key stakeholders and the general public of wetland values, threats and needed actions.*



ASWM Communications Project Products



- Project Report
- Case Studies
- Searchable Matrix
- Recommendations for development of future case studies
- Suggestions for next steps

<http://www.aswm.org>

Finding Case Studies that Can Help YOU

Searchable Case Studies Matrix



Photo credit: Matrix Wikia

- Project scale
- Communications focus
- Target audience
- Key messages
- Outreach tools
- Use of communications experts
- Evaluation
- Timeline
- Budget
- Outreach continuum

Ten Communication Case Studies



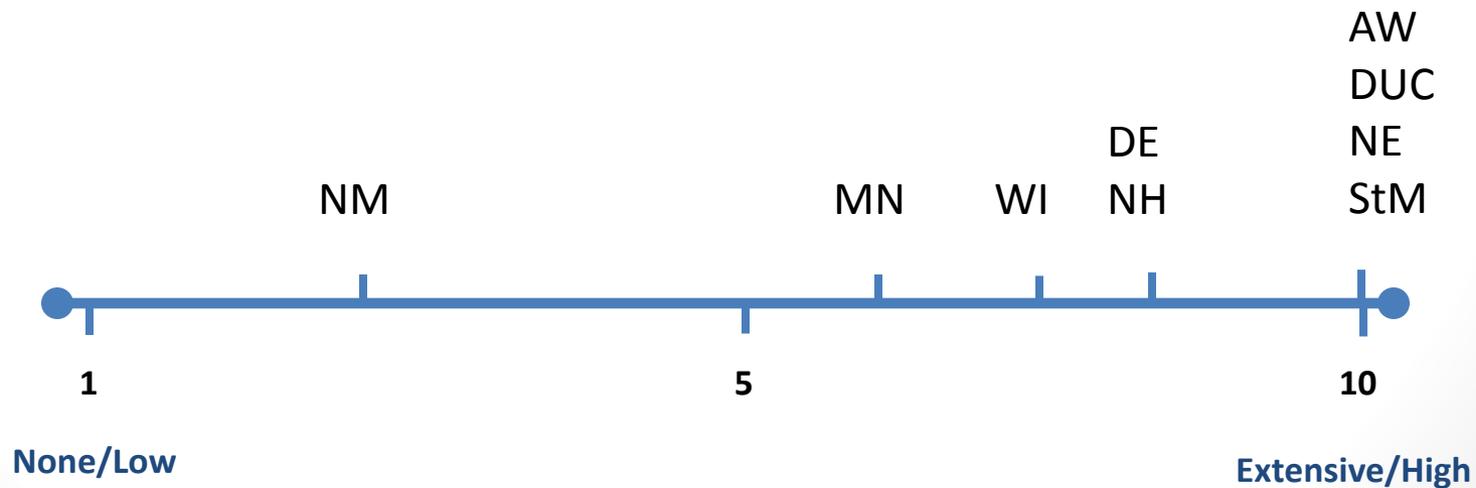
Wetland Communications Case Studies

- 1. America's WETLAND Foundation**
"Branding a Disaster" to Raise Wetland Loss Awareness
- 2. Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control**
Freshwater Wetland Outreach Toolbox
- 3. Ducks Unlimited**
Reaching Out to the Public
- 4. Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources**
Outreach on Buffer Initiative and Landowner Implementation
- 5. Nebraska Game and Parks Commission**
"Wetlands of Nebraska" Campaign
- 6. New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services**
Culvert Outreach to Local Government and the Public
- 7. New Mexico Environment Department**
Stakeholder Forums
- 8. St. Mary's University**
Communicating Using GIS Wetland Mapping
- 9. The Nature Conservancy**
Floodplains by Design
- 10. Wisconsin Wetlands Association**
Messaging to Local Government



Project Findings: Communications Development Continuum

A Qualitative Measure (Quantity/Sophistication)



Which Audiences are Being Targeted?



Most Common:

- Landowners
- Citizens with wetlands on their land
- Specific stakeholder groups
- Local government officials
- Professional associations
- Media



Also Targeted:

- NGOs
- Development community
- In lieu fee program managers
- Regional planning commissions
- State/provincial government officials
- Natural resource professionals
- Land managers
- Educators
- Forestry companies
- Hunters
- Anglers
- Park users
- Students (4th and 5th graders)

What Communications Tools are Being Used?

- Face-to-Face
- Websites
- Story maps
- Videos
- PSAs
- Handbooks
- Postcards
- Stakeholder meetings
- Special events
- Media interviews
- Checklists
- Factsheets
- Reports
- Notification letters
- Invitations
- Emails



- Brochures
- Newsletters (print/e)
- Billboards
- Social Media
- Press releases
- Letters to the editor
- Adaptable PowerPoints

Case Studies: Messaging and Calls to Action



America's WETLAND Foundation

Voting public in Mississippi Delta and Professional Stakeholder Groups

- Louisiana's wetlands have global ecological significance
- Critical to energy and economic security of the region
- It's a huge problem and you need to know and care about it

Actions:

- Get them to support wetland restoration and preservation work
- Get them to vote in ways that protect wetlands

Delaware DNREC

Landowners in two pilot counties where likely to be freshwater wetlands

- There may be wetlands on your property
- Encourage landowners to identify if they have freshwater wetlands on their land

Actions:

- Get them to use a new DENREC Interactive Mapper Tool
- Secondary: Learn other facts, find resources, take an online pledge

Case Studies:

Messaging and Calls to Action



Ducks Unlimited

Provincial governments on the prairies and Media

- Losses are continuing to happen
- Impacts are affected by other circumstances
- Functions and economic value of wetlands

Actions:

- Protect 3-5 wetlands
- Mitigate for any further losses

Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources

Local governments and SWCDs

- The value of making local choices (enforcement by local government instead of state)
- What they need to be ready to implement and enforce
- Many farmers practice good conservation; SWCDs are there to help you; buffers make a difference; landowners have to be in compliance with the new law; options on how to achieve compliance

Actions:

- Select local implementation and enforcement
- Select buffer options in compliance with the law

Case Studies: Messaging and Calls to Action



New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

Primary: Municipalities and DOT

Secondary: New Hampshire Taxpayers

- Critical nature of improving public health, safety and environmental conditions through replacement of priority culverts
- Do you know how much this will cost?
- Volunteer recruitment for inventory

Actions:

- Volunteer to assist in culvert inventory
- Prioritize culverts (incl. changes in precipitation)

New Mexico Environment Department

Land managers, NGOs, private landowners, and educators

- NM Wetlands are the 5th largest and 3rd driest in the states
- Water has dried up/been used up in many locations
- They are our wetlands and have important functions
- We need to protect them

Actions:

- Share needs
- Networking
- Create shared messaging and actions

Case Studies:

Messaging and Calls to Action



St. Mary's University

Citizens, property owners, development community, ILF managers, planners, officials

- Better wetland data leads to enhanced decision support and management
- Local/stakeholder engagement increases understanding and support
- Utility of science-based, community-supported information in planning decisions

Actions:

- Increase the use of wetland functional assessments in watershed planning processes
 - Mitigation banking proposals
 - Developing watershed-based ILF Program

The Nature Conservancy

Primary - Floodplain managers, restoration practitioners, private landowners and other stakeholders. Secondary – legislators and funders; general public

- Integrated approaches to floodplain management maximize the benefits our rivers provide while minimizing costs
- Focus on specific economic values

Actions:

- Build momentum for integrated approaches amongst floodplain managers for floodplain projects
- Build funding/political support for these integrated projects

Case Studies: Messaging and Calls to Action

Wisconsin Wetlands Association

*Private wetland landowners in
Northeast Wisconsin – own wetlands
and want to take care of them*

- Wetlands matter (attract wildlife and benefit your land and water)
- You matter to wetlands (private landowners own 75% of WI's remaining wetlands; vital role in caring for wetlands)
- We help you help wetlands (WWA can provide guidance, resources and support)



Actions:

- Getting people to understand their wetland
 - Where it is on the landscape
 - How it functioned historically
 - What has changes that affects its health
 - What they can do to bring back natural functions



Hand Over Presentation Controls to
Ted LaGrange, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission “Wetlands of Nebraska” Campaign

Timeframe:

2002 – 2005 initial development

Need:

Constant inquiries regarding
Nebraska’s wetlands

Goal:

To educate the public about Nebraska’s
wetland resources, the benefits they
provide and available conservation
options

Target audience:

1. 4th and 5th graders
2. General public



Messages

1. Variety and diversity of wetlands in Nebraska
2. Nebraska’s wetland resources have been altered
3. Wetlands provide services/benefits
4. People are part of the landscape
5. Conservation options to help protect and restore wetlands

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

“Wetlands of Nebraska” Campaign, Continued

Communication Tools

- Educational video
- Trail Tales Magazine -Wetlands Edition
- Guide to Nebraska’s Wetlands & Their Conservation Needs
- NebraskaWetlands.com webpage
- News releases, radio spots, TV appearances, social media, newsletters, publications



Partnerships

- US EPA Wetlands Division – WPDG
- State of Nebraska
- Ducks Unlimited
- Migratory Bird Joint Ventures
- LCCs
- The Sandhills Task Force
- Saline Wetland Conservation Partnership
- Platte River Recovery and Implementation Program
- Missouri River Ecosystem Coordinating Work Group.

Project Findings:

What Did the Cases have in Common?

- Shared specific information *to help others make informed decisions*
- Had a compelling need
- Communicated with a specific target audience
- Employed multiple communication tools
- Capitalized on partnerships
- Worked to identify and use a credible messenger
- Delivered at least part of the communication effort using face-to-face communications



Project Findings: Big Picture

Why Do Communications Projects?



- Build understanding
 - What is the issue?
- Make issues relevant to stakeholders
 - Why is this important?
- Help stakeholders make a personal connections to an issue
 - Why should I care?
- Garner support for programs and projects
 - What can I do about it?
- Learn what is important to your target audience
 - This is what matters to me
- Build political will for specific actions
 - I am willing to give up one thing for another
- Change opinions
 - I used to believe X, but now I believe Y
- Stimulate behavior change
 - I used to do X, but now I do Y
- Garner support
 - I will vote, approve, allocate

Project Findings: On-the-Ground Planning

How Do I Plan with Success in Mind?

- Have **specific communications goals** and planned outcomes
- Bring partners in to enhance communications capacity
- Identify and **plan based on specifics of target audience**
- Learn about and listen to your target audience (e.g. focus groups)
- Chose tool selection, format, language, and images based on target audience
- Focus on **building trust**
- **Pre-test** or do a slow rollout
- Build in **adaptive management**
- Include **evaluation plans from the beginning**



- Use simple, not simplistic language
- Employ storytelling
- Positive v. negative images
- Appeal to emotions
- Don't "talk regulations"
- Utilize metaphors and icons
- Select timeless messages
- Don't rely on one tool only
- Work with communications professionals if possible

Project Findings: The Critical Role of Partnerships

Bringing Something to the Table



co-branding



- Provide broader reach and depth for messaging (dissemination opportunities; co-sponsoring, co-branding; cross-connections)
- Offer access to key target audience(s) (e.g. associations, members, points of contact)
- Contribute financial and/or in-kind support to the project
- Serve as fiscal agent/assist with grants management
- Provide technical assistance to support messages (e.g. SWCDs)
- Share information critical to project
- Bring external expertise to the project (ex. design and communications skills)

Project Findings: The Critical Role of Partnerships

Joint Creation, Legitimacy and Neutrality

Partnering to create something together

- Enhance staffing capacity
- Review and vet outreach plans and materials
- Serve in advisory capacity



Partnering to add legitimacy

- The partner endorsement increases receptiveness
- A more trusted messenger
- Deliver on behalf of the state



Partnering to provide neutral assistance

- Research
- Analysis
- Data management
- Quality control monitoring



Project Findings: Implementation

How do I Carry it Out?



- Provide consistency in delivery of message (across project, partners and media)
- Engage opinion leaders
- Continue to identify new ways to get messages out
- Capitalize on opportunities that arise
- Keep the delivery process iterative
- Troubleshoot delivery issues
- Make mid-course corrections
- Conduct ongoing and project-end evaluation

ASWM Wetland Program Plans Handbook
Chapter 3: Developing Strategic Communications Plans
(www.aswm.org)

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Project Findings: Evaluation

How is Success being Measured?



- Numbers participating
- Numbers distributed
- Funding/support secured
- Website/social media analytics
- Meetings with political representatives
- Presentations made
- Completion of a plan/doc
- Number of partners
- Op Eds printed
- Opportunities to speak with the media
- PSA reach and frequency
- Tracking of map use
- Changes in opinion/behavior
- Pre-post compliance measures
- Pledges made
- *Repeat of phrases or statistics*
- *Value statements are shared*
- *Calls/emails received*
- *Requests for technical assistance*
- *Increased engagement*
- *Political will (variety of measures)*
- *Poll results*
- *Voting outcomes*
- *Expressions of support by government officials*
- *Became a “known quantity”*

A scenic landscape featuring a river or stream flowing through a lush green valley. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery. The banks are covered in dense vegetation, including tall grasses and small shrubs. In the background, a dense forest of trees lines the hillsides under a bright blue sky filled with large, white, fluffy clouds. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Questions?

For More Information



Project Contact:

Brenda Zollitsch

ASWM Policy Analyst

brenda@aswm.org

(207) 892-3399

ASWM Project Team:

Jeanne Christie

Jeanne.christie@aswm.org

Jim Pendergast

penderjim@aol.com

Marla Stelk

marla@aswm.org

Brenda Zollitsch

brenda@aswm.org

Case Study Contacts

See case study docs