Lower Grand River Watershed Project

Information and Education Guidebook

September, 2004

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About the Guidebook

Introduction

The Lower Grand River watershed covers 3,020 square miles and includes all or part of ten counties in west Michigan. These counties include Allegan, Barry, Eaton, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Ionia, and Ottawa. This watershed has vast rural areas and fast growing urban areas, specifically the Greater Grand Rapids area. The watershed is made up of coldwater and warmwater tributaries, all feeding the Grand River.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) awarded a Section 319 Nonpoint Source Watershed Planning Grant to the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC). GVMC has contracted with the Annis Water Resources Institute (AWRI) at Grand Valley State University and Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber (FTC&H) to develop the management plan including this Information and Education (I/E) Guidebook. This I/E Guidebook is designed to help motivate the watershed's stakeholders, residents, and other decision makers to take actions necessary to protect the water quality and environmental conditions in the watershed.

What's Inside

This I/E Guidebook will serve as a working document that outlines the major steps and actions needed to successfully develop a sustainable I/E Strategy for nonpoint source watershed management plans, specifically those in the Lower Grand River Watershed. The guidebook outlines major areas to be discussed and researched in order to develop a great strategy. In addition you will find at the end of the guidebook a list of references for more information.

Included on the back cover of this guidebook, in digital format, is detailed contact information for various partners and target audiences. The CD also includes an Excel™ macro outlining potential I/E products, which includes a breakdown of activities, related pollutants, target audiences, proposed timeline, cost estimates, and methods of evaluation.

One of the greatest challenges of any strategy is ensuring that the document is referred to frequently and does not sit on a shelf after it is completed. To help coordinate and focus your watershed's I/E efforts, worksheets are provided in appendices in the back of the guidebook. These worksheets are referenced throughout the guidebook as *Helpful Tools*. Project team members should review the worksheets each meeting to determine if activities are being implemented on schedule or if changes to the overall strategy are necessary.

Coordinating with the Lower Grand River Watershed Project

In order to coordinate efforts with the Lower Grand River Watershed (LGRW) Project you will need to know what that project is about. Here is some basic background information that will help your watershed be in sync with the larger project.

Lower Grand River Watershed Project Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Vision Statement: Connecting water with life: swimming, drinking, fishing, and enjoying all the waters of our Grand River Watershed.

Mission Statement: Discover and value all water resources and celebrate our shared water legacy throughout our entire Grand River watershed community.

Implementation Project Goal: To continue momentum of 319 planning project and help provide support to generate future watershed projects that will sustain success and have greater water quality benefits.

Core Values for Public Awareness:

- LGRW activities are diverse, inclusive, and collaborative
- LGRW efforts are sustainable and high quality
- LGRW images and messages create a widely shared sense of legacy and heritage
- LGRW methods and products are holistic and employ a systems approach
- LGRW organization and program offers incentives, evaluates progress, and rewards success

Information and Education Strategy Goal for the Lower Grand River Watershed Project

The I/E strategy will help to fulfill the vision and mission of the Lower Grand River Project. The I/E efforts will achieve the watershed management goal by increasing the involvement of the community in watershed protection activities through awareness, education, and action. Below are strategic components for public awareness developed by project partners during the planning phase of the Lower Grand River Watershed 319 Project.

Lower Grand River I/E Strategic Components-Public Awareness Must:

- Be relevant and tied directly to general public interests. Should be on a very personal, interactive level. To as great a degree as possible, attach “water connectedness” to daily personal work, play, and living of people.

Coordinating with the Lower Grand River Watershed Project

- Involve LGRW activities directly into existing, well-attended, locally appreciated (cherished) events. Use this as a chance to establish both a local visibility and connection between watershed and general public.
- Where there are sub-basin groups, help them establish the Information and Education activity with support from LGRW governing body.
- Be responsive to a generational imperative. Awareness must occur over a broad spectrum of population segments recognizing real differences between generations.
- Establish series of events or programs, which physically connect people to water, i.e. raft race, bridge walk, watershed festivals, movie previews, etc. "Connection" should evoke all the senses including memories.
- Develop ongoing interactive educational institutions, i.e., mobile water workshops, water center or museum, the AWRI research vessels.
- Ensure that the information base is made accessible and understandable over a wide range of learning styles and a wide range of ages.
- Establish effective LGRW image development tying water to home, heritage, and health. Must have consistency in messaging.
- Design campaigns for continual interactions with image/message, particularly emphasizing the place of LGRW in our own prominent world feature (Great Lakes) and connecting your own sub-basins through the LGRW to that globally significant feature.

Getting Started

Defining Driving Forces

Each individual has their own driving forces which push them to act. To create a successful outreach strategy, individual driving forces need to be identified. Working together as a group to identify these forces will help give focus and scope to your strategy.

The driving force of a strategy often focuses on a specific issue such as development pressure, a violation of state or federal water quality standards, or declining fisheries. Driving forces will vary from watershed to watershed, but will accomplish the same goal: to provide focus to your outreach strategy. A well focused strategy will be effective in attaining your goals.

Goals

Once your driving forces have been identified, the next step is to develop goals for your strategy. Keep in mind driving forces when developing these goals. Think of strategy goals as general statements that express the broad focus of your effort. As an example, if the driving force of your strategy is declining fisheries the goal may be to protect and restore a local trout fishery.

Objectives

To support your goals, specific measurable objectives need to be developed and implemented. The objectives developed should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction-oriented, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-focused. This is referred to as the **SMART** process. It is very important to make your objectives as specific as possible and to include a time element as well as a result. Several objectives may need to be defined for each goal you are trying to attain. The SMART approach will make it easier to identify specific tasks and will enable you to evaluate whether you've achieved the objective.

For example, one of the driving forces of your strategy may be a declining fishery. As stated above, the goal is to protect and restore a local trout fishery. One objective might be to start a citizen volunteer monitoring program by next year.

Once your objectives are defined, you will need to prioritize them. You should evaluate which objectives are most important to help meet your overall goal. This prioritization isn't meant to be set in stone. Revisit your priorities because your focus might change due to political, economic, or other influences.

Helpful Tools:

Use the Building Blocks worksheet in Appendix A to help you define the driving forces, goals, and objectives for your strategy.

Investigating Strategy Targets

Identifying Key Target Audiences

To achieve your objectives, target audiences need to be identified. The target audience is the group of people you want to reach with your message. Target audiences can be identified based on the pollutants, sources, and causes identified in your management plan and the active stakeholders participating in your project. Some target audience groups can be very broad while others will be very specific. In some cases the audiences may be obvious, but often research is required in identifying appropriate target audiences.

In all cases, break down the target audience into the smallest segments possible that will still retain the characteristics of the audience. Think of the audience as your customer. You're selling a message. You want the audience to "buy" behaviors and attitudes that will achieve your goal. If the audience is too broad, chances are you won't be able to develop a message that engages and resonates with the entire target audience.

Determining Audience Characteristics

Remember that the target audience is your customer. You want to sell your customer a product (e.g., environmental awareness, participation in a stream monitoring program). You will need to find out what will make the customer buy the product.

To be effective, you must evaluate the target audiences who will receive the information about your watershed's issues. The level of watershed management understanding, the types of values and concerns, and the level of enthusiasm that people have for participation in watershed management activities are expected to differ across the diverse groups that make up the community. Understanding these differences is critical to targeting appropriate audiences, developing effective messages and means of participation for them, and motivating them to become involved in the watershed management process.

Helpful Tools:

Use the Target Audience Profile worksheet in Appendix B to help determine the makeup of your target audience.

For each key audience, project team members should research their characteristics and answer questions about the audience. This information is critical to developing and distributing effective messages on watershed issues. During the project, information will continually be collected on the audiences and should be used to refine the I/E strategy.

Investigating Strategy Targets (cont.)

To get information on your target audience there are several different tools available. Basic demographic information can be gathered from public sources such as the United State Census (factfinder.census.gov). Specific details about your audience can also be obtained through interviews and focus groups. A list of resources to get information on target audiences can be found in the *Getting In Step* guide developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). For information on this document please refer to the References and Programs section of this guidebook (page 20).

Prioritizing Audience Characteristics

Just as pollutants have to be prioritized in a watershed management plan, so do target audiences. They can be prioritized by a number of factors. In some cases those audiences directly related to pollutants impairing designated uses are given the highest priority. In other examples, audiences who use the most cost effective outreach method for a pollutant are selected. Table 1 is adapted from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's *Developing a Watershed Management Plan for Water Quality, An Introductory Guide.*

Table 1 - Prioritizing Your Target Audience

Sources of Pollution	Target Audience	Specific Target Audience	Priority
Failing septic system	Homeowners	Riparian homeowners with septic systems: homeowners with sandy soils	?
Residential fertilizer use	Homeowners	All non-agricultural homeowners in the critical area who use fertilizers or commercial lawn care companies	?
Livestock in stream	Agricultural landowners	Riparian agricultural landowners who own livestock	?
Storm drains	Homeowners	Urban residents, individuals who change oil in their cars	?
Eroding streambanks	Recreational groups	Canoeists, canoe livery owners, anglers	?

Creating a Strategy for Change

Create Change

To create change in target audiences, messages must be understood and appeal to people on their own terms. The message should be clear, specific, and tied directly to something that the target audience values. Messages are designed to first make the target audience aware of the issue, then become educated about an issue, followed by taking action concerning the issue.

- Objective 1 (Awareness): Make the target audience aware that they live in a watershed with unique resources and that their day-to-day activities affect the quality of those resources.
- Objective 2 (Education): Educate target audiences on the link between urban development and water quality impacts, and highlight what actions can be taken to reduce impacts.
- Objective 3 (Action): Motivate the audience to adopt and implement practices that will result in water quality improvements. These practices may include homeowner activities such as reducing fertilizer application, maintaining septic systems, purchasing properties with low-impact design elements, maintaining stream buffers on their properties or supporting land use planning practices for improving or protecting water quality in the watershed.

Developing Effective Messages

A careful analysis of your overall goal (e.g., improve water quality) and supporting objectives (e.g., reduce nutrient loadings, control sedimentation) will help you determine the best way to craft a message for the target audience. Messages can appeal to the audience's hopes, fears, sense of responsibility, or personal benefits. Exploring the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of the audience regarding the overall goals of the project can help you uncover messages that will resonate with the audience members. This information will be obtained when you are gathering information on your target audiences.

Helpful Tools:

Appendix C contains summary information on target audiences in the Lower Grand River Watershed. Be sure to check out this information to create your own watershed specific messages.

Keep in mind that your message will need to compete with the clutter of the daily news, school schedules, and work commitments. The message will need to capture the attention of your target audience. You need a way to make the message both lively and personal. Humorous messages also can attract attention. An example of a message for a stakeholder meeting might be making it a backyard barbeque with the message "Come Grill Us About Your Watershed!"

Creating a Strategy for Change (cont.)

Vivid descriptions of the scope of a problem, compelling questions, and appeals that stress rewards or threats all can help grab the attention of the target audience. For example, consider the following set of approaches in Table 2 for presenting similar information.

Table 2 - Comparison of Less Vivid vs. More Vivid Messages

Less Vivid Message	**More Vivid Message**
There are about 26 million septic systems in the United States.	Septic systems treat and release about 4 billion gallons of wastewater per day.
Hog production in the five-county area generates approximately 750 tons of manure per day.	Hogs in our counties produce more manure each day than a city of a half-million people.

If your message is focused on getting people to take a specific action, they will be more likely to take part if the message also has a component that helps to build awareness. A message like "Don't dump used motor oil down the storm drain" is much more effective if you add "because our storm drains drain directly into the river."

Getting a Response

It is not only important to get messages across to make audiences aware, but also to take some action. When asking people to take action, be very clear about what they should do, and make it easy to remember. Make sure your message includes achievable personal goals and let them know why it's important. Below are some action steps your strategy may want to promote:

- Recycle your motor oil at any auto parts store in town.
- Have your car inspected for leaks every 3 months.
- Have your septic system inspected every 3 years and pumped as necessary.

To create messages and encourage actions that will help you achieve your overall objectives, you need to decide which behavior changes will give you the most for your money. Which behavior shows the most direct link to the problem? Which will be the easiest to promote both financially and technically? Thinking about these questions will help you choose the behaviors you should target in your campaign.

What Kind of Products/Activities Work for You?

Helpful Tools:

Use the Product Development worksheet in Appendix D to help you develop products for your target audience. The Excel™ macro in the back of this document can also assist you in determining products.

Product Development—Awareness to Action

You've defined objectives, assessed the target audience, and crafted the message. Now it's time to determine the best package or format for the message for delivery to the target audience. The information you collected about your target audience will assist you in determining the most appropriate format.

At the beginning of the project, awareness tasks are usually done first. If you have a very involved stakeholder group, watershed group, or council, you may want to get moving with some action items to keep your volunteers active. Each format has advantages and disadvantages, and you need to weigh these as you decide which format will resonate most and is most appropriate for the target audience. Below is an overview of some popular formats, but it is not meant to be comprehensive. Some of these products/activities are described in more detail in the *Getting In Step* guidebook developed by the EPA. You can find examples of these products at the Lower Grand River Watershed web page at www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowgrand.

Project Logo

A unique project logo should be prepared for your project. This logo should appear on all materials relating to the project. This will give the project consistency and an identity throughout the watershed. Keep in mind that the LGRW Project also has a logo. It might be worthwhile when communicating with subwatersheds to include the LGRW logo as a reminder that their individual efforts contribute to the success of water quality goals for this larger basin and ultimately Lake Michigan.

General Brochure

One of the first products to be developed should be a general brochure. This brochure will include a map of the watershed with county boundaries, educational information regarding the water quality issues facing the watershed, and information showing why citizens need to be involved and what they can do to help. Project partners can promote the project by distributing the brochure. The brochure will be distributed at events such as stream cleanups, township meetings, and handed out whenever watershed-related presentations are made. Again, remember that such information tools have already been developed for the LGRW Project and are available on the web site at www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowgrand.

Fact Sheets

Fact sheets may be produced similarly to the general brochure but targeted to specific audiences and specific topics as the I/E program progresses. Fact sheets allow for much more detailed information and are great for handing out at specific events.

What Kind of Products/Activities Work for You? (cont.)

"Did You Know" Questions or Watershed Factoids

A set of 10 or more characteristics that highlight the unique features of the watershed should be developed to be included in the brochure and fact sheets. Audiences respond very well to fun facts and tidbits about their community. This list will help to reinforce the concept that the watershed is worth protecting and improving. Once developed, this list can be disseminated through a variety of means: aired as public service announcements, printed in brochures and fact sheets, posted up on a display, printed in newspapers or news inserts, and reproduced on other materials.

Web Sites

A web site can be created to provide a means for interested municipalities, organizations, and others to find out more about the project. Materials should be converted into an HTML or PDF format and uploaded onto the site. In addition, the site should post schedules for upcoming meetings, publish project findings, and could include a feature that allows the viewer to submit comments or questions. The site should be updated at least monthly. The web site for your project within the Lower Grand River Watershed can be linked to www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowgrand.

Watershed Interactive Tool (WIT)

The WIT has been developed for the Lower Grand River Watershed Project but should be updated with information from your work every six months to a year. It is accessible through the Internet at www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowergrand/wit. The WIT contains interactive mapping, natural history, educational resources, resources to create watershed management plans, government resources, and information on typical nonpoint source pollutants. It is broad enough to cover general water concepts, yet specific enough to highlight the uniqueness of the Lower Grand River Watershed.

Media

The primary tool to be used to raise awareness is the media. These markets include newspapers such as the Grand Rapids Press, The Advance, and Grand Haven Tribune. Radio stations include WBCT-FM, WBFX-FM, WOOD-AM, WOOD-FM, WSNX-FM, WTKG-AM, WVTI-FM, WKLQ-FM, WMUS-FM, and WMRR-FM. Public access stations include GRTV and Rogueview TV; WGVU/WGVK TV is part of a public broadcast system. The more often the target audiences read articles on watershed issues or watch watershed-related information on television, the more likely they are to respond and participate in the process. Keeping the message in front of people is vital to keeping them interested.

For a prepared media campaign tool kit be sure to check out the Statewide Stormwater Media Education Campaign. The tool kit contains radio spots, brochures, fact sheets, TV commercials, etc. that can be used to raise awareness about stormwater pollution. Graphics, storyboards, and contact information are included in the kit. The *Getting In Step* guide is also included in the kit. Contact the Center for Environmental Studies for more information on the tool kit. They can be found online at www.cesmi.org.

What Kind of Products/Activities Work for You? (cont.)

Local Newspapers

Articles should appear on a regular basis in all sections of the paper—human interest, sports, editorials, and news features. If possible, a regular column in the local paper that highlights activities regarding the development of the watershed plan should be initiated. For example, quizzes can be developed for readers, and announcements can be inserted regarding field sampling days or field trips.

News stories can be written with a local angle, have wide appeal, or have a human-interest component. At a minimum, an article that mentions something about issues on the watershed project should appear monthly. Producing articles about other activities in the watershed provides an excellent opportunity for coordination with other watershed efforts.

Public Access and Broadcast Channels

As part of the initial awareness efforts, and throughout the watershed assessment process, information should be posted on both television and radio stations. This coverage can be accomplished in a variety of formats, such as public service announcements, a talk show, filming sampling events out in the field, showing examples of water quality degradation, or covering events such as a watershed fair or storm drain stenciling event. Television stations and newspapers should be contacted in advance whenever an event is planned.

Area Newsletters

In addition to submitting articles for publication in the local press, articles should be regularly submitted to newsletters in the watershed to which the target audiences subscribe. Each article should be tailored to the interests of the publication.

Newsletters/News Inserts

The watershed project can develop a periodic news insert; this can provide updates on the watershed project. The product should be distributed to a planned audience with a well-formed mechanism, either a selected mailing list or inserted into an existing mailing effort. Another efficient distribution method is to create inserts for local newspapers.

Bill Boards

Bill boards can be used to promote specific events (e.g. watershed festivals), products (e.g. web site), or specific messages (e.g. Protect your tomorrow, protect your water!). They can be placed in main thoroughfares that have multiple audiences from multiple watersheds.

What Kind of Products/Activities Work for You? (cont.)

Slide Show

A general slide show should be developed at the outset to encourage project team members to make presentations to local organizations. At a minimum, the slide show will include information on the boundaries of the watershed, its unique features, impending threats, and actions the audiences can take to protect resources.

Watershed Presentations

Presentations are a very effective means to reach a variety of audiences and allow the presenter to get immediate feedback. Project team members can make presentations using the slide show developed for specific audiences. Key opportunities for making presentations include local schools, neighborhood associations, planning commission meetings, homeowner association meetings, local business meetings, and regional business meetings. At each presentation, a brief "show what you know" survey could be handed out to determine the audience's level of understanding. A follow-up survey should be sent no later than one month after the event to assess any changes in the audience's knowledge.

Give-A-Ways

As part of the public education effort, several promotional items can be prepared for distribution at local events, school presentations, and community events. Examples of give-a-way items are static stickers with contact information and web site address, tote bags with a map of the watershed, or t-shirts with related slogans. Again check with Center for Environmental Studies for pre-made items, www.cesmi.org.

Traveling Display

A traveling display can be developed for project team members to use at fairs, schools, presentations, libraries, and other outlets to publicize watershed activities. At a minimum, a large format laminated map of the watershed should be produced. Using such a map, activities such as "Find your watershed address" can be completed. Other display graphics include pictures of interesting watershed locations, "Did You Know" factoids, pilot project area maps, sampling results, and easy to understand analysis summaries.

What Kind of Products/Activities Work for You? (cont.)

Watershed Fair

Watershed fairs provide an opportunity to promote the importance of the water resources in the watershed and to involve the citizens in a fun atmosphere. Activities could include demonstrations of fly-fishing, macroinvertebrate collections, stream walks, presentations by local environmental professionals, and environmental displays, as well as traditional festival activities such as face painting, crafts, and food.

Fairs also provide a means to leverage resources and to draw attention to the watershed effort. For example, prior to the event a poster contest might be held in the elementary school with the drain commissioner as judge for the best poster. The media should be contacted to cover the event and to film the activities. Depending on resources available, the project may coordinate activities with other events occurring in the watershed instead of hosting a stand-alone event.

Watershed Calendar

The LGRW Project has already generated a large amount of maps and pictures for the watershed. The maps show various features of the watershed such as land use, political boundaries, and water bodies. Pictures have been collected for use in the news inserts and web site. Depending on resources available, these color maps and pictures can be reproduced as an 8 ½" x 11" calendar for communities in the watershed. The calendar will help residents and local officials make the connection between land use activities and the quality of their water resources. Text boxes will appear on each page highlighting the issues and actions people can take to make a difference.

Stream Stewards

Volunteer monitoring programs build community constituencies for local waters and watersheds by providing an avenue for people who live, work, and play in watersheds to become active environmental stewards. Volunteer monitoring programs also yield valuable information on the ecological condition of watersheds and water bodies.

This is an opportunity to work with other groups in the watershed such as the West Michigan Environmental Action Council, Center for Environmental Studies, Conservation Districts, Michigan State University Extensions, Timberland RC & D, Natural Resources Conservation Service, sportsman and conservation clubs, and to involve local communities in watershed activities.

What Kind of Products/Activities Work for You? (cont.)

Computer Games or Informational CD's

Computer games that have previously been developed with a watershed theme can be distributed (e.g. *Save the Great Lakes,* by Center for Environmental Studies), or new games developed with a young audience in mind. Informational CD's can span multiple age groups and multiple audiences. CD's can be cost effective to produce as long as materials are already gathered at one source. CD's are good to use when handling large amounts of information that can't be presented easily in brochures or handouts. CD's also can be used for maps or other documents that are expensive to reproduce. An effective distribution plan is required.

Targeted Training Workshops

Topic–specific workshops can be held for local decision-makers, businesses, and other audiences in the watershed. These workshops will be scheduled once the project team members have initiated a dialogue with these audiences and determined the topics of greatest interest. The workshops may be presented as a stand-alone workshop or in conjunction with other activities sponsored by the target audiences.

Making It Happen!

Distribution

The products can be distributed through a variety of mechanisms. Common means of distribution are by direct mail, door-to-door, by phone, through targeted businesses, during presentations, as hand-outs at events, through media outlets, and by posting your message in public places. One of the most effective means of distributing information is to piggyback onto existing materials received by the target audience. This approach helps to leverage resources, and materials are more likely to be seen by the audience since they are already familiar with the format. In the attached Excel™ macro in the back of the guidebook you will find cost-driving factors and some estimated costs for distributing various products. Table 3 below helps you develop an organized approach to getting your products created and disseminated.

Table 3 - Organizing Dissemination of Products

Products/ Activities	**Tasks**	**Responsible Organization**	**Milestones**	**Timeline**	**Evaluation**	**Estimated Costs**
What is the actual product /activity being developed?	What needs to happen to make this work– who has to be met with, what types of materials are needed, what work groups need to meet.	This would be the entity responsible for overseeing this particular task, and maybe a listing of potential project partners related to this task.	Break up your tasks generally in chronological order. Have an outline here of what has to be done in what order.	Timelines can be very specific or a bit more general. It can be in quarters, or weeks or months. You will find that some timelines will be adapted to a seasonal schedule.	Evaluation provides a feedback mechanism for ongoing improvement of your outreach effort. Evaluating success is not difficult if you initially develop concrete, measurable objectives against which your achievements can be compared.	Estimated costs are better when detailed and accurate. At times this is hard to produce, so a list of cost driving factors or best estimates is used.
Example						
Create a flyer for homeowners outlining health risks associated with uncollected pet waste.	Hold focus groups to identify what information should be on flyer and the best public places to distribute them.	County and city parks, health departments, citizen groups, neighborhood associations.	Focus groups, identification of target areas, distribution plan, flyer to be reviewed by focus group for effectiveness, final flyer, distribution.	1st quarter— focus groups, identification of target areas 2nd quarter—distribution plan 3rd & 4th quarter—draft flyer 5th quarter— final flyer 6th—8th quarter—	Conduct focus sessions with representatives of the public to determine changes in amount of pet waste entering waterways. Mail follow-up survey to 20-33% of those who received materials.	Cost of printed materials, cost of mailing materials, staff time needed to conduct focus groups and establish distribution plan.

Making It Happen! (cont.)

Who Delivers the Message?

In addition to how you are going to deliver the message, you should decide who will deliver the message. Analysis of the target audience can help you determine who are the most trusted members of the community. Many groups select local celebrities, news reporters, or other respected members of the community to be their spokespersons.

Timing is Everything

Once you've figured out how to deliver the message, the next step is to figure out when to deliver it. For a major community event, give the community plenty of time to add it to their calendars. The response you are looking for from the target audience can affect when you distribute your message. For example, if you are promoting fall fertilizations, residents need to receive the flyers at the beginning of spring before they consider purchasing additional fertilizer.

Where Does All This Information Come From?

The information needed to fill in the tables and worksheets can come from your stakeholder group, project partners, and from the public. In writing a strategy you have to include what forms of public participation were used in your planning. If possible, get involved with local outreach groups, consultants, or even local professors from surrounding universities. Having these groups involved in writing the strategy gives you a lot of expertise and skill in the strategy development and heightens its chance of success.

Evaluating Your Strategy

Why Evaluate?

Outreach programs often involve a tremendous amount of effort and resources, and evaluation will help you build support for ongoing funding and save you time and money. The success of outreach programs depends on how well they're conceived, planned, implemented, and adapted. Evaluating success is not difficult if you initially develop concrete, measurable objectives against which your achievements can be compared.

When to Evaluate

Evaluation provides a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement of the Information and Education Program. Evaluation tools must be built into the program at the beginning to ensure that accurate feedback is generated. Indicators of success will be developed throughout the planning and implementation process to help the project team members determine whether the objectives have been achieved.

The indicators selected to evaluate your project must include several parameters, not just the number of brochures mailed out or how many people attended a meeting. To successfully determine if the objectives were met, a pre and post survey, focus groups, and questionnaires are useful. A type of survey that can be used to determine if the objectives were met may be a "show what you know" survey that can be conducted by mail, by telephone, or in person at events. The kind of information needed includes the following:

- Demographic information on the audience
- Knowledge of the message
- How they heard about the meeting, event, or product
- Current practices around their property
- Interest level in the issues
- Change in practices or behavior based on information received

You may want to involve an independent contractor to evaluate your products and activities. The contractor also can provide analysis of those evaluations so that you have an opportunity to change your strategy if needed.

Helpful Tools:

Use the Excel™ spreadsheet in the back for specific evaluation methods that can be used to evaluate products. The Product Development worksheet in Appendix D can help you set up your product development and your product evaluation

Getting Organized

Strategy Administration

In order to ensure success of your I/E strategy make sure that a sustainable administration will be overseeing efforts. There should be a designated person, either volunteer or paid staff, who will oversee creation, distribution, and evaluation of all products and activities. He or she will keep the strategy running smoothly and organized. They can also make sure that all requirements are being met concerning crediting partners and funding sources, that all products carry a project logo, and do not contradict each other. This also will allow for a project identity to come into view.

Your strategy should outline the roles and responsibilities of project partners in as much detail as possible. When all members of a collaboration know what is expected of them, timelines and budgets are easier to manage. Table 4 below is also from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's *Developing a Watershed Management Plan for Water Quality, An Introductory Guide.* This at-a-glance reference table summarizes what your strategy contains.

Table 4 - Getting Your Strategy Together

Pollutant	Source/ Cause	Target Audience	Messages	Delivery Mechanisms	Potential Evaluation
Pollutants identified in watershed management plan	Identified source of pollutant or action(s) causing pollutant to enter waterway	Specific audiences affecting pollutant and needed to meet plan goals for water quality	Messages can be developed for individual projects or through collaboration with LGRW or other water resource projects	This is the specific product or activity that is going to be done to resolve identified water quality issue	The product or action specific evaluation method that is going to be conducted and (or) potentially a large survey to monitor behavior change as a result of I/E strategy
Example					
sediment	stream bank erosion/ human access	anglers, canoeists, canoe livery owners	Protect your river; use stairs rather than the stream bank	Involve local angler groups and canoe liveries in stream bank stabilization activities, feature activities in local media ; post signs at stabilized sites; display posters at local bait shops of canoe liveries	Track the number of individuals participating; conduct focus group sessions with local livery owners

Getting Organized (cont.)

Overcoming Barriers to Success

What follows are several barriers that can keep your campaign from being successful. Understanding what they are, how to recognize them, and how to overcome them will give your strategy the strength it needs to be sustainable. As your project progresses, look for areas of concern and respond accordingly. Adapting your program during implementation to adjust to changing conditions is highly recommended.

Poor coordination and planning
This happens when you step forward with no clear strategy or plan on paper for how to conduct a watershed outreach program. You need to sit down with all of the key players in the beginning and define your goals, identify your target audience, determine your messages, decide on the formats and distribution mechanisms for those messages, and figure out how you intend to measure your success. A well-defined written strategy will ensure that everyone involved agrees on how the project will be conducted and who is responsible for doing what.

Lack of communication
Be sure to keep everyone involved in conducting the project informed about issues that arise during various stages, changes to the original strategy, and lessons learned along the way. In addition, be sure to let people know when you achieve successes.

Fear of the unknown
The fear of failing at watershed education and behavior change can cause delays in getting the job done. There will always be unknowns: people might resign from your staff, funding could dry up, and so on. Don't be so distracted by your fear of the unknown that you fail to pursue your objectives aggressively.

Helpful Tools:

Worksheets in Appendix E can help keep your I/E strategy in line. Fill out these worksheets at project meetings to track your progress.

Letting money drive the process
Although your budget may be limited, developing a plan that fits your budget can be a nearsighted approach. Don't skimp on your goals, but try to match your group's resources to their role in attaining those goals. Along the way you might develop partnerships that provide funding for planned activities you thought you could not afford.

Letting the process bog you down
Momentum is lost when too much time is spent on the process rather than the project. People don't mind attending meetings if they're necessary, short, and results-oriented. Involve people, communicate, and take time to meet occasionally, but beware of situations where your volunteers are spending more time in meetings than on watershed work. Most action occurs outside meetings. Keep up the momentum by making participation fun and exciting.

Other References and Programs to Review for I/E Strategies

Reference Materials:

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality , *Developing a Watershed Management Plan for Water Quality, An Introductory Guide*, February 2000. For a copy go to: http://www.deq.state.mi.us/documents/deq-swq-nps-Watershe.pdf

United State Environmental Protection Agency, *Getting in Step, A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns*. 2003. EPA 841-B-03-002. For a copy go to: National Service Center for Environmental Publication, 1-800-490-9198 or www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/outreach/documents

United States Environmental Protection Agency, *Getting in Step, Engaging and Involving Stakeholders in Your Watershed*. Prepared by Tetra Tech under contract 68-C-99-249. For a copy go to: National Service Center for Environmental Publication, 1-800-490-9198 or www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/outreach/documents/

United States Environmental Protection Agency, *Community Culture and the Environment, A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place*, 2002. U.S. EPA (EPA 842-B-01-003), Office of Water, Washington, DC. For a copy go to:National Center for Environmental Publications and Information, (513) 489-8190, or ncepiwo@one.net

Programs in the Area to Review

Center for Environmental Studies Statewide Stormwater Information and Education Campaign. www.cesmi.org

Phase I and Phase II National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permitting Programs. Contact your local unit of government to see if applicable.

West Michigan Environmental Action Council Rain Gardens program. www.raingardens.org.

Conservation Districts and Natural Resources Conservation Districts programming. Check your local listings for contact information.

Lower Grand River Watershed Project

Appendices

Appendix A

Worksheet 1:Building Blocks

Driving Force:					
Goal:					
Objective:					
Objective	**Target Audience**	**Message**	**Format**	**Distribution**	**Evaluation**

Building Blocks Sample Sheet

Driving Force:

Serious water quality problems, including phosphorus and nitrogen overloading due to urban runoff, sedimentation and erosion, bacterial contamination, and flooding due to impervious surfaces.

Goal:

Increase awareness of residential nutrient runoff and encourage behaviors that will reduce nutrient pollution in local streams and lakes.

Objective:

Reduce nutrient runoff from residential and commercial areas.

Objective	Target Audience	Message	Format	Distribution	Evaluation
Increase awareness of residential nutrient runoff by 25% within 1 year and encourage behaviors that will reduce nutrient pollution in local streams and lakes	Homeowners, and homeowners' associations and apartment/ landscape managers	Fertilize in the Fall. That's All! With slow-release or organic fertilizers, you need to fertilize only once in the fall to help your grass grow new roots and store nutrients for next year's growth	5 public transportation posters Full-size educational posters Water bill inserts	Public transportation system Bulk mail	Post-project, random-digit-dialing survey of county residents

Appendix B

Worksheet 2: Target Audience Profile

Target Audience:______________________________

1. What is the makeup of the target audience (answer if appropriate)? This can include basic demographic information such as: average age, dominating gender, place of residence, style of homes, level of education or income or any other pertinent facts. You may want to do some review of the United State Census data, which can be found at www.factfinder.census.gov or www.census.gov.
2. How do they communicate with each other?
3. How do they receive information on environmental issues?
4. To what level of detail is their existing knowledge of water quality problems in the watershed?
5. What are their perceptions about those problems?
6. Of what other community organizations are they members?
7. What are their major environmental concerns?
8. Who or what do they consider to be reliable sources of information?
9. Any other characteristics that are specific to a particular audience?
10. Any data that you cannot access easily or may need assistance with?

Appendix C

Appendix D

Worksheet 3:Product Development

Product Name:________________________________

Purpose:

Theme:

Target Audience:

Learning Objective:

Behavioral Objective:

Emotional Objective:

Distribution:

Date Completed: ____

Copies Budgeted:____

Product Evaluation

Quantitative:

External Qualitative:

Internal Qualitative:

Level of Success

Product Development Sample Sheet

Product Name: Brochure, Workshop, News Paper Insert

Purpose: What you want the product to accomplish.

Examples: Reader will be able to name three problems facing the Grand River after reading this brochure.

Theme: A complete sentence that defines the topic of the communications product.

Example of a theme: "Buck Creek is a beautiful stream that belongs to all of us and deserves to be protected and restored." (The following is NOT a theme, but instead is a slogan: "Buck Creek; here today, gone tomorrow.")

Target Audience: The specific people you want to get the product to.

Examples: Teachers, business owners, riparian landowners, people who listen to "Bob and Tom in the Morning".

Learning Objective: A fact you want people to know when they are done interacting with the product.

Example: Readers will know that Buck Creek is a tributary of the Grand River. Readers will know who to call for more information. Readers will identify two ways they can get involved.

Behavioral Objective: What you want a person to do after interacting with the product.

Example: The reader will visit the web site and fill out the survey after reading the brochure. The reader will call and join a committee. The reader will attend a meeting.

Emotional Objective: How you want a person to feel after interacting with the product.

Example: After reading the flyer, a person will be concerned about the health of Buck Creek and want to help with the project.

Distribution:

Date Completed:____

Copies Budgeted: ____

Product Evaluation

Quantitative: How many copies were sent out, how many evaluations sent out, how many responses received, how many hits on a web site?

External Qualitative: What were the comments on product, did audience understand content?

Internal Qualitative: How did this product work within the watershed management group?

Level of Success What is group considering a success for product?

Appendix E

Worksheet 4: Questions for Project Evaluation Meetings

Meeting Date:

1. Are the planned activities being developed and implemented according to the schedule?
2. Is additional support needed? Within or outside of current project staff?
3. Are additional activities needed? Has the developing process started for extra activities?
4. Do some activities need to be modified/eliminated?
5. Are the resources allocated sufficient to carry out the tasks?
6. Are all of the target audiences being reached?
7. Does the priority ranking of target audiences need to be altered?
8. Are evaluations of products being completed; do they have any affect on upcoming products/activities?
9. Are any of our upcoming activities coordinated with the LGRW project, Storm water Phase I and Phase II permitting processes, Statewide Stormwater Education Campaign, or other outreach efforts?
10. How is our product review process doing? Is it efficient? Are deadlines for printers and dissemination being met?

Worksheet 5: Checklist for Tracking Status of Tasks, Products and Activities

Date of Meeting:___________

Product/ Task/Activity	Details	Status	Team Lead/ Coordinator	Changes/Comments
Item at hand	What has to be done, give yourself notes to work from	In progress, on hold, finished	Entity or person responsible to see details through	Write in groups response and ultimate outcomes. These become the action steps for team leader.
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				