

CHAPTER 13

PUBLIC OUTREACH STUDY TEAM

Objective

“How do we get the public involved in understanding and participating in the enhancement and protection of the Las Vegas Wash?”

Introduction

Because stabilization and management of the Las Vegas Wash (Wash) is important for many entities with interests in the Wash, public involvement was identified early on as a critical component of the Las Vegas Wash Comprehensive Management Plan (LVWCAMP) process. Public involvement begins with public awareness, and awareness is best accomplished through an ongoing program of outreach and education to all segments of the public.

Recognizing this, and the significant role that community participation and support play in long-term success of the Wash, the public outreach strategy outlined below was developed, and includes a suite of tactics designed to foster environmental stewardship in the local community.

The Process

Public outreach issues for the Wash are being addressed by the Public Outreach Study Team (Team), comprised of professionals specializing in public information. Team members have broad backgrounds in educational program development and coordination, cultural resources, media relations and political strategy. The Team serves to provide the expertise necessary to ensure the various public outreach issues in the Wash are being adequately addressed.

Understanding that community involvement is an essential part in successfully managing the Wash and its resources, the Team posed the question, “How do we get the public involved in understanding and participating in the enhancement and protection of the Las Vegas Wash?”



With this question in mind, goals were defined according to target audiences, considering both the community as a whole as well as public officials. The two goals the Team identified are listed below.

- Goal One -** Strengthen community participation in and awareness of the Las Vegas Wash as an environmental resource, and of ongoing efforts of the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee.
- Goal Two -** Strengthen public official participation in and awareness of the efforts of the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee.

Stakeholder Interviews

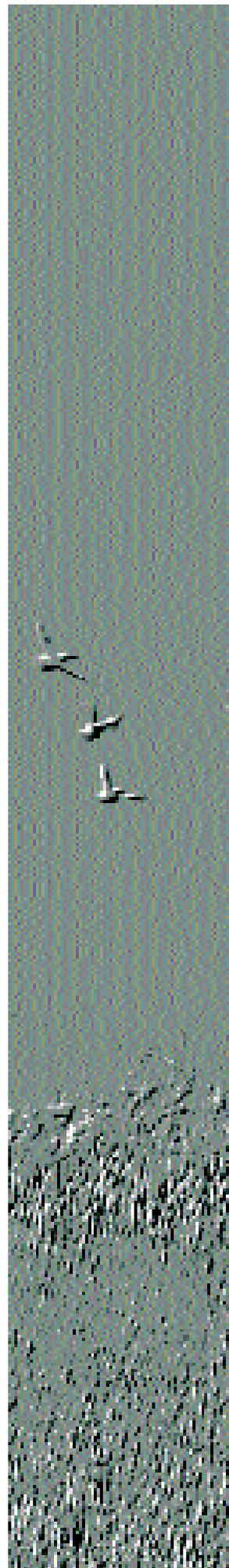
Before the Team could proceed with the established goals, it first had to determine the community's current knowledge of the Wash issues. During the months of December 1998 and January 1999, a total of 80 comprehensive stakeholder interviews were conducted. The interviews are summarized in Appendix 13.1. The focus of the interviews was to evaluate the opinions of representatives of the coordination committee, as well as those of elected or appointed local and state public officials.

Information gathered from these interviews was used and analyzed by the Team to identify the community's perception of issues and concerns surrounding the Wash. This analysis was then used to develop a public outreach program. The stakeholder interviews may also serve as a benchmark from which to measure the success of restoration and management efforts in the Wash by the coordination committee.

The Public Outreach Program

The public outreach program was developed by the Team to engage community interest and participation in coordination committee and activities within the Las Vegas Wash. The program, Appendix 13.2, defines core messages, target audiences, strategies and tactics designed to provide the guidelines necessary for implementation of the public outreach component of the Las Vegas Wash Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan.

At the heart of the program are a series of 13 tactics identified by the Team, which serve as the implementation component of the public outreach program. These tactics, summarized in Table 13.1, incorporate a variety of public outreach mechanisms including news releases, an Internet Web site, media briefings, education programs, presentations, volunteer opportunities and several others, as described below.



News Releases, Reports, and Displays

The public needs more than just accurate information; they need it be conveyed to them in a timely manner. With this in mind, information should be updated as needed and presented to a broad spectrum of the community by various methods. Some of these methods include news releases about project milestones, water quality reports, the coordination committee newsletter (The Current) and lobby displays. In fact, one of the most important functions of the Team is to facilitate communication among the nine coordination committee study teams. This can be accomplished through an internal newsletter, whereby the study teams are able to remain abreast of discussions and activities.

Internet Web Site

Additionally, the coordination committee Web site, www.lvwash.org, offers an interactive forum through which users can browse the topics that interest them specifically about the Wash, and ask questions and make comments via the Internet (Figure 13.1). The Web site provides access to current information on Wash issues such as erosion, water quality and habitat; project updates, materials for teachers and more than 900 photos are also available.



Figure 13.1 - The Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee Web site, www.lvwash.org, offers access to information about the coordination committee and issues surrounding the Wash.

Public Scoping Meetings

Public scoping meetings help facilitate open dialogue between coordination committee members and the community, allowing participants to voice their concerns and directly provide input to the process. The public scoping meetings that were held during the comment period of the Las Vegas Wash Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan are discussed later in the chapter.

Media Briefings

Whereas the working media will be inundated with information about the Las Vegas Wash Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan and associated activities, editorial board representatives are frequently placed in the unenviable position of adopting a stance on an issue without full knowledge of all relevant factors. These briefings serve to impart an understand-

ing of the issues at stake and a general knowledge of how implementation of the comprehensive adaptive management plan will affect those issues.

Stakeholder Awareness Briefings

Word of mouth is often a common vehicle for delivering news of accomplishments, but it also is an effective way to deliver misinformation. To ensure each member of a stakeholder entity is updated on Wash issues and coordination committee progress, the Team promotes a uniform and accurate picture of the comprehensive management effort through stakeholder awareness briefings.

Volunteer Opportunities

Another important element of public outreach is encouraging public participation through grassroots-level volunteer activities and information fairs. The coordination committee co-hosts the Las Vegas Wash & Wetlands Clean-Up

(Figure 13.2) and participates in numerous information fairs throughout the year.



Figure 13.2 – The second annual Las Vegas Wash & Wetlands Clean-Up drew more than 1,400 volunteers that collected more than 100 tons of trash.

Speakers' Bureau

A mechanism for maintaining support for the coordination committee effort is to provide topic specific presentations to the community, thus allowing for their input. For this purpose, the Team developed a speakers' bureau. A special presentation has been developed which will provide audiences an overview of the issues related to the Las Vegas Wash and the scope of the management plan. This affords the coordination committee an opportunity to hold an open discourse with members of the community to determine their concerns and provide timely information. During the development of the speakers' bureau, a public outreach workshop was conducted to survey the existing public outreach programs already established by the stakeholder entities (Appendix 13.3). This workshop revealed that each entity has some piece of information that may be incorporated into the outreach program and that opportunities are available to incorporate the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee's efforts into their programs.



PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAM TACTICS		
Tactic	Purpose	Frequency
News Releases	The public, and even to some extent the media, will be patient with the management plan's development as long as they sense progress is being made.	As Needed
"The Current" Newsletter	Stakeholder Interviews have indicated that people interested in the Wash and the management plan's development would like to be apprised of Coordination Committee progress through a newsletter.	Quarterly
Water Quality Reports	Water purveyors responsible for distributing a Consumer Confidence Report will include information about efforts being undertaken by the Coordination Committee.	Annual
Lobby Displays	Lobby Displays provide an easy mechanism to maximize exposure with limited resources.	Ongoing
Internet Web site	Increasingly popular Internet technology will allow interested citizens access to the most current information available, and provide a forum for feedback and/or discussion of key issues.	Ongoing
Public Scoping Meetings	It is essential that the public have a voice in matters relating to the Wash. Public scoping meetings will allow for an open dialogue between the community and Coordination Committee in an effective, efficient manner.	Ongoing
Children's Educational Program	The goal of the Children's Educational Program is to teach children about the significance of the Wash as natural resource, water quality, and the monitoring process.	Ongoing
Media Briefings	Media Briefings serve to impart an understanding of the issues at stake and a general knowledge of how implementation of the management plan will affect those issues.	Annual
Stakeholder Awareness Briefings	If the Coordination Committee is to establish a united position on the Wash, it is imperative that employees of participant entities have a general understanding of the Wash and the issues surrounding it.	Annual
Speakers Bureau	Implementation of a Speakers Bureau will serve as a tool to enable the Team to hold an open discourse with members of the community, to determine their concerns and provide timely, accurate information.	Ongoing
Las Vegas Wash & Wetlands Clean-Up	This event creates a positive visual presence, raises public awareness of the Wash, improves the Wash from a pollution standpoint, and helps foster environmental stewardship within the community.	Annual
Water Information Fairs	Water Information Fairs offer a special opportunity to promote the Wash and the efforts of the Coordination Committee directly with the public through staff interaction, print materials, and displays.	As Needed
Las Vegas Wash "Familiarization Tours"	Key constituents should be led on tours of the Wash early in the process to establish 'before and after' visuals that will help underscore the project's urgency and develop a baseline perspective for its progress.	Ongoing
Interested Regional Stakeholder Outreach	Because water from the Colorado River is a shared resource, there is considerable interest outside Southern Nevada that requires regional outreach efforts.	As Needed

Table 13.1 - Public Outreach Program Tactics



Wash “Familiarization Tours”

The Team recognized the importance of the general public’s participation, but it also understood the significance of involving community leaders early in the process. Familiarization tours help garner support for the project from decision-makers by establishing striking visuals of the Wash throughout time.

Personalized tours show the viewer firsthand, the key issues and concerns surrounding the Wash, and underscore the sense of urgency for comprehensive management.



Figure 13.3 – As part of an educational program, fifth grade students from Mabel Hoggard Elementary School receive hands-on experience monitoring water quality in the Wash.

Children’s Educational Program

The Team has developed a children’s educational program that teaches children about the significance of the Wash as a natural resource, its importance to the Valley and the water quality monitoring process (Figure 13.3).

Interested Regional Stakeholder Outreach

Because water from the Colorado River is a shared resource, there is considerable interest in the Wash from regional stakeholders outside southern Nevada. A regional stakeholder outreach program will help keep regional parties informed of the coordination committee’s activities.

A Proactive Approach

In an effort to take a proactive approach, the Team has already implemented many tactics of the public outreach program. The items listed below have already begun, and have received positive feedback from the community.

- Children’s Educational Program
- Lobby Displays
- Las Vegas Wash & Wetlands Clean-Up
- “The Current” Newsletter



- Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee Web site (www.lvwash.org)
- Information Fairs
- Speakers' Bureau
- Las Vegas Wash Familiarization Tours
- Public Scoping Meetings

Update

Public Participation in Document Development

As part of the development of the Las Vegas Wash Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan, public participation was sought through numerous ways. Five scoping meetings were conducted throughout the Las Vegas Valley and Boulder City to both educate the public and seek input during the approval process. In addition to being distributed for public comment, the DRAFT LVWCAMP document was presented at several public meetings, including the Water Quality Citizen's Advisory Committee and the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee. The document was also made available on the coordination committee Web site. In total, nearly 250 comments were received from more than one dozen entities during the 35-day comment period. All comments received during the comment period are included in Appendix 15. Each comment was considered separately and a response is listed with each comment. Of the comments received, 90 percent were either directly incorporated, determined that no action was required or taken under advisement for future consideration.

Recommended Actions

Based on the objective and goals set forth by the Public Outreach Study Team with consideration given to the information gathered from stakeholder interviews, the Team developed the following recommended actions.

Action 1: Establish a Method to Continue Implementation of the Public Outreach Program

Entities: Las Vegas Wash Management Entity

The Team has developed the public outreach program to effectively facilitate outreach efforts to the community and public officials in a timely manner. This program is not meant to be exhaustive, but instead serves as an outline for an open dialogue between stakeholders and the community, both of which are involved, in this dynamic process. It is recommended that the Las Vegas Wash Management Entity take the lead in the continuation of the implementation of the public outreach program and amend it as deemed necessary to address the future communication needs for the restoration and management of the Las Vegas Wash.



Action 2: Continue Implementation of Feedback Mechanisms and Measurements of Progress and Results

Entities: Las Vegas Wash Management Entity

Because an important function of the public outreach program is to facilitate communication between the coordination committee and the public, various stakeholders and other interested parties, development of a method to provide feedback to the coordination committee is recommended. Numerous mechanisms have been set in place to enlist participation and feedback from the community. The Team recommends that the Las Vegas Wash Management Entity gauge the success of the public outreach program through such measurements as Web site activity from both the public and members' Web sites, perceptions conveyed from public scoping meetings, follow-up stakeholder interviews and requests for presentations from the speakers' bureau.

Action 3: Provide Updates to Elected Officials

Entities: All Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee members, Las Vegas Wash Management Entity

An invaluable aspect of public support stems from elected officials. For this purpose, the Team has utilized the speakers' bureau to target elected officials and community leaders such as local councils and commissions, foundations and trustee boards, local chambers and civic groups. The Team recommends that this be an ongoing program and, as such, provide personalized updates in a one-on-one communication forum throughout the Wash restoration and management process.

Appendices

- 13.1 Summary of Stakeholder Interview Results
- 13.2 Public Outreach Program
- 13.3 Stakeholder Outreach Activities

