

Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program Public Communications Plan 2014 - 2019

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Indian River Lagoon (IRL) is one of 28 Estuaries of National Significance and was designated as a National Estuary Program (NEP) by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1990. The IRL NEP is sponsored locally by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), which has supported implementation of the IRL NEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) through the creation of the IRL Advisory Board. This board includes representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP); South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), the counties of Volusia, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin; Sebastian Inlet District (chair of the Citizen's Action Committee), Florida Institute of Technology (chair of the Technical Advisory Committee); U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA/NRCS); Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC); Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND); The Nature Conservancy (TNC); Florida Atlantic University/Harbor Branch and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS).

OBJECTIVES

This communications plan shall guide outreach and education (both formal and informal) efforts undertaken by the IRL NEP in conjunction with partner organizations, and will assist in efforts to:

- Improve the visibility of the IRL NEP and its ability to provide timely information and communication to stakeholder groups via the development of website and use of social media platforms;
- Assist stakeholders in making the connection between personal behaviors and household habits and the impacts these behaviors and habits have on water quality in the IRL;
- Enhance education efforts explaining the unique and important ecological diversity and economic importance of the IRL estuarine system to communities and quality of life;
- More widely engage residents, particularly homeowners, in best management practices that can reduce stormwater runoff pollution in the lagoon;
- Expand opportunities for citizen involvement in restoration and protection efforts;
- Continue to foster a sense of stewardship for the lagoon and support for its protection and restoration among stakeholders.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Research

Previous analysis of stakeholder opinion (2007 IRL Listening Meetings, 2007 IRL Public Awareness Survey) identified a set of priority issues that affect the health of the IRL as well as preferred methods and effective outlets for stakeholder communications. Key findings from this research were:

1. Three issues were identified near the top of nearly every priority ranking among all stakeholder groups:
 - a. Water quality (and associated issues such as stormwater runoff, discharges, nutrients, non-point pollution, etc.)
 - b. Habitat loss and its effect on species
 - c. Uncontrolled growth (and associated issues such as growth management, over-development, population growth, planning and oversight, etc.)
2. Respondents generally felt that most residents in the region were only somewhat aware of issues facing the lagoon and were generally unaware of how personal behaviors affect the lagoon.
3. Most respondents felt that users of the lagoon (boaters, anglers, and other recreational users) and those living closer to its shores were more aware of lagoon-related issues than other residents were.
4. Newspapers were, by far, the most mentioned means of mass communication. However, television, radio, Web sites, newsletters, festivals, businesses along the lagoon, word of mouth, electronic mail, and a variety of other responses were also mentioned as effective, and sometimes preferred, modes of communication.
5. Suggestions for communicating information about the lagoon centered around three main themes: message repetition, coordination of efforts to improve awareness, and the need for agencies and groups to be proactive in delivering lagoon information.

Survey Research

In late 2012, the IRL NEP developed the *Peer Assessment of IRL NEP Outreach, Communication and Partnering Efforts Survey* to assess partner satisfaction with current outreach, education, communications and partnership efforts, and to gather information from partners about topic areas they felt were important for the IRL NEP to focus its outreach and educational efforts. A total of 98 requests for participation were distributed, with 40 responses (41% response rate) received. Survey questions appear in Appendix A of this document. Key findings from this survey are discussed below.

Seventy-seven percent of respondents were satisfied with the role the IRL NEP takes in protection and restoration efforts around the lagoon region. This includes thirty-seven percent who were 'very satisfied' and forty percent who were 'satisfied'. The remaining respondents were either 'somewhat satisfied' (18%) or 'somewhat dissatisfied' (7%). There were zero responses in the "dissatisfied" category. Of those expressing some level of dissatisfaction,

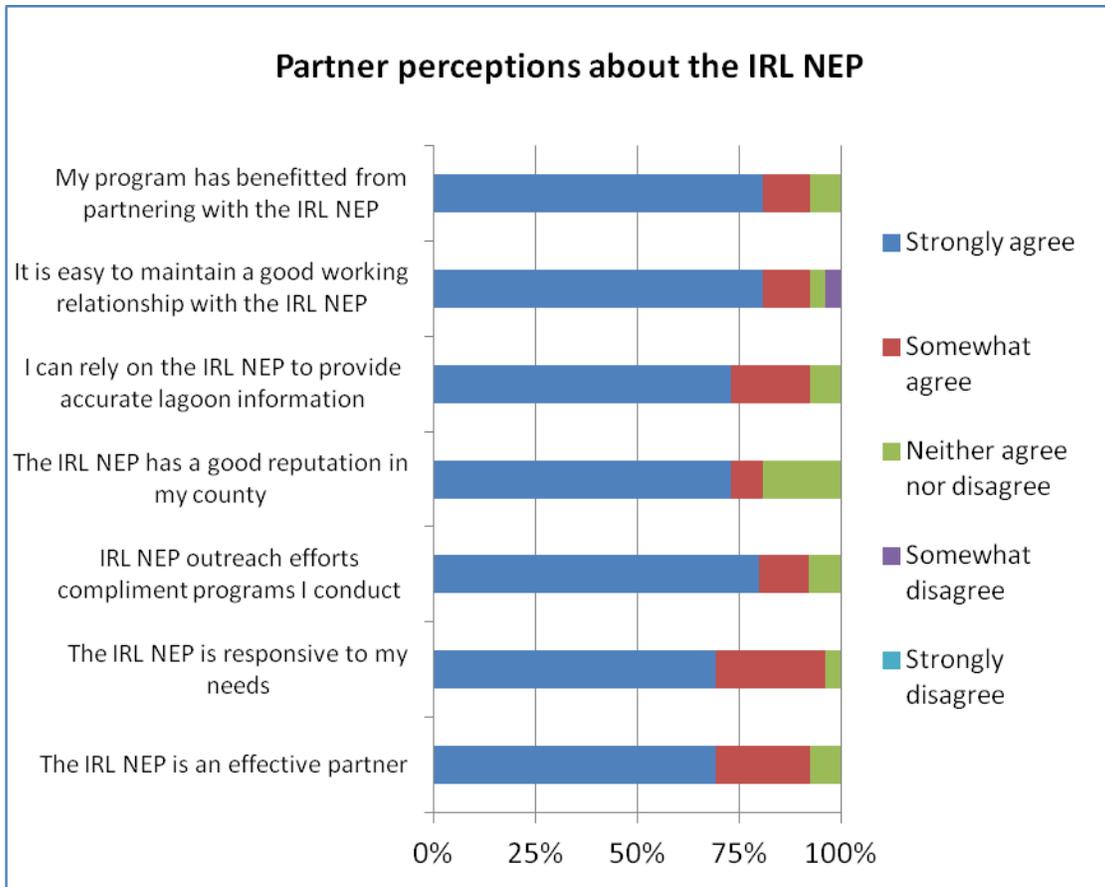


Figure 1: Peer perceptions about partnering with the IRL NEP.

suggestions for how the IRL NEP could increase their level of satisfaction were focused on increasing the visibility of the IRL NEP on the Internet and in the media, providing more frequent updates about current issues in the IRL, and providing additional funding for seagrass protection efforts.

Overall peer perceptions of IRL NEP partnering efforts are shown in Figure 1. There was generally strong agreement that partnering with the IRL NEP provides synergy to existing outreach and education efforts. Respondents reported that the IRL NEP was an effective, responsive partner that provided accurate information about the IRL. Further, partners felt that IRL NEP programs complimented their own, and that working with the IRL NEP was a net benefit to them.

Several areas rise to the top in terms of the particular programmatic strength of IRL NEP outreach and education efforts. Respondents were asked to list what they perceived to be the program’s greatest strength first, thus in analyzing the results, quality points were assigned to responses based on the order in which the response was listed. First responses were assigned 5 quality points, second responses received 3 points, and third responses received 1 point. All responses were then combined into broad categories with the results shown in Figure 2 below:

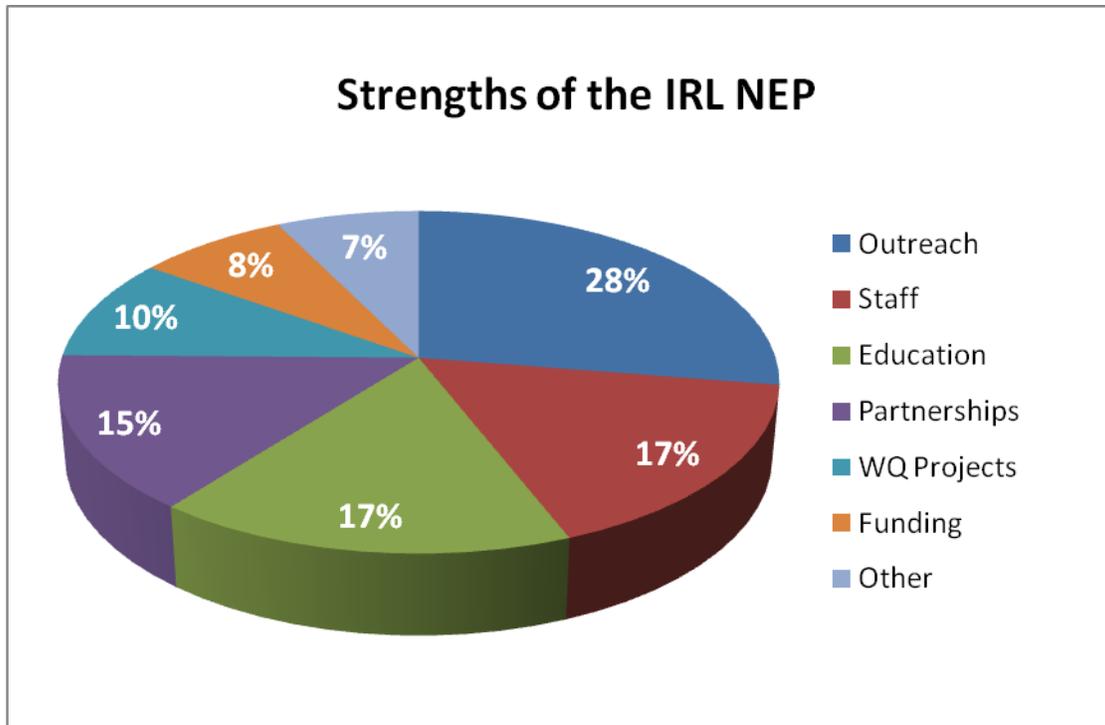


Figure 2: Peer assessment of the particular strengths of the IRL NEP.

The three most significant strengths of the IRL NEP were listed as outreach (28%), staff (17%), and education (17%). Of particular note in the Outreach category were undertakings that included the IRL NEP’s community involvement efforts as well as the quality of the program’s public communications, talks, and efforts to make scientific findings accessible to non-scientists.

In the Staff category, partners noted the personal involvement shown by the staff in the projects they supported; their professionalism, excellent communication skills, depth of knowledge, cooperation, dedication to the IRL, and their accessibility, flexibility, and responsiveness to partners.

Education strengths listed by partners included both formal and informal educational outreach and programs. With respect to classroom education, partners noted the IRL NEP’s willingness to work with teachers and students, participation in field programs, distribution of resources, the annual summer teachers’ workshop, the program’s leadership of the five-county IRL Envirothon and efforts to communicate science to the region’s students. Outreach to adults via talks and events was the main focus of comments with respect to informal education efforts.

In considering areas where the IRL NEP could improve its outreach and educational efforts, partners were primarily concerned with the IRL NEP developing educational curricula that could be widely distributed to schools or via the Internet. Other areas of consideration included improving efforts to engage the public about non-point pollution and how they can assist in preventing it; involving more residents in volunteer programs and community projects; initiating more adult programs and public meetings; overcoming budget challenges by applying for grants; having the program take on more of an advocacy role to champion IRL-related issues

and environmental concerns; improving program visibility by expanding its Web presence and initiating efforts to utilize social media.

Partner suggestions for developing additional products that could be distributed by the IRL NEP focused on the use of media, particularly video, to enhance messaging about the IRL. Suggestions included the production of short documentaries focused on IRL topics such as an overview of the IRL's unique ecology and biodiversity, seagrasses, mangroves, stormwater pollution, etc. These could be distributed to the region's nature and educational facilities as well as uploaded to You Tube, the program website, local government websites, government television, etc. to make them easily accessible to anyone with interest. Other suggestions included the development of topic-specific videos that could accompany lesson plans or other curriculum elements and be distributed to teachers; video and radio public service announcements addressing stormwater and other current environmental issues; posters that could be distributed to teachers; distribution of pet waste bag dispensers to partner organizations, apps for use on mobile devices; and program branding and promotional items such as yard signs, reusable bags, water bottles, bumper stickers, key chains, temporary tattoos with environmental messaging for children, etc.

Current Condition of the Lagoon

From early spring through late fall 2011, two phytoplankton blooms caused a massive loss of seagrass throughout much of the Indian River Lagoon system, erasing years of progress in increasing seagrass coverage. Compared to overall seagrass coverage in 2009, grassbeds affected by these blooms were reduced by 60 percent – 47,000 acres overall (see Figure 3 below).

In spring 2011, a devastating algae bloom began in March in the Banana River Lagoon, later spreading into the northern Indian River and Mosquito Lagoons. This bloom, unprecedented in terms of size, intensity and duration, was dubbed a 'superbloom' by researchers. The bloom persisted more than eight months and covered approximately 130,000 acres at its height. Cell counts were in the billions per liter, which reduced water quality and clarity throughout the region. Concurrently, a secondary algae bloom extended from just north of Melbourne south to the Vero Beach-Fort Pierce area. This bloom, while less intense than the superbloom, was also unprecedented in terms of its duration, and, in the limited region around southern Brevard County, its intensity. Both the superbloom and secondary bloom regions experienced *Chlorophyll a* concentrations of sufficient magnitude and duration to cause significant attenuation of light, resulting in severe seagrass losses. However, seagrasses south of Ft. Pierce Inlet in St. Lucie County were largely unaffected by the blooms, with seagrasses in this region actually expanding their coverages during this period.

Seagrasses in the superbloom region had little opportunity to recover in 2012. Since the end of 2011 and crash of the superbloom, the lagoon system throughout has settled into a persistent weak to moderate bloom condition with intermittent strong blooms occurring in the fall of 2012. A brown tide bloom, a first for the region, began in August of 2012 in the Mosquito Lagoon and later spread to the northern Indian River Lagoon near Titusville. This particular bloom was highly intense but never moved any further south than Titusville. It dissipated with the onset of Tropical Storm Isaac in mid-September of 2012, but has re-emerged in spring of 2013 with a series of less intense, localized blooms.

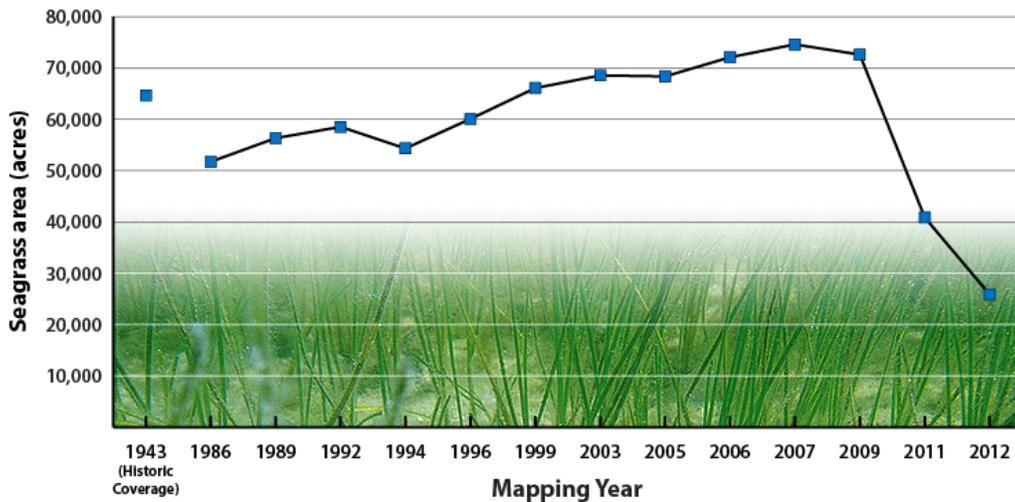


Figure 3: Seagrass losses in the Indian River Lagoon system beginning in 2011 and continuing into 2012 have resulted in a 60% loss overall.

Compounding concerns about seagrass loss are a series of unexplained wildlife deaths that occurred from approximately January 2012 through the summer of 2013 and were centered on north-central Brevard County. Approximately 170 manatees, over 350 brown pelicans and 71 bottlenose dolphins were documented to have died due to unknown reasons during this period, causing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to recognize Unusual Mortality Events (UMEs) for both lagoon manatees and dolphins.

The magnitude of seagrass loss is alarming because seagrass has historically been used as an ecological indicator of water quality in the lagoon. Seagrasses grow well when water quality is good, and they reflect environmental stressors quickly via changes in their growth habit or condition. Further, seagrasses provide critical nursery habitat for many fish and invertebrate species and are a primary food source for the lagoon’s populations of manatees and sea turtles.

While several factors, both natural and man-made, appear to have combined in causing the 2011 and 2012 algae blooms and subsequent widespread loss of seagrasses, stormwater runoff continues to contribute as much as 70 – 80 percent of all nutrient loadings to the lagoon, and it is here that focused public education and outreach can perhaps have the most effect in assisting lagoon stakeholders to understand the direct connection between personal behaviors and water quality in the lagoon and its tributaries.

Analysis of Program Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

Based on analysis of results from the *Peer Assessment of IRL NEP Outreach, Communication and Partnering Efforts Survey*, and from consequent internal discussions, the IRL NEP undertook a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis of its outreach, education and communications efforts. SWOT analysis is a commonly used strategic planning tool that consists of a 2 X 2 matrix organized into internal and external considerations. Internal considerations were arranged into *strengths* — those resources and capabilities advantageous to IRL NEP outreach and education efforts; and *weaknesses* — those elements that the IRL NEP has control over, but which it may not perform optimally. External factors were similarly

organized into *opportunities* — areas of unfilled need where new approaches or new technologies could be utilized to fill programmatic gaps; and *threats* — those factors not under IRL NEP control that nevertheless could impede or potentially impede the program from achieving its outreach, education and communications goals. The ultimate objective of utilizing a SWOT analysis is for the program to be able to capitalize on each strength; correct each weakness; exploit each opportunity; and defend against, or where possible, eliminate each threat.

Primary areas identified are shown in Figure 4 below:

INTERNAL		
P O S I T I V E	Strengths	Weaknesses
	Outreach and community involvement	No dedicated internal budget for outreach/education, PSAs, or advertising
	Strong staff (knowledgeable, responsive, professional)	Little 2-way communication with stakeholder groups
	Policy leadership in protection and restoration efforts	Reduced program visibility in Volusia and Martin Cos.
	Strong partnerships with agencies, local governments, institutions and NGOs	
	Program reach, relationships, standing in the community	
	Quality of educational materials and programs	
	Opportunities	Threats
	Underutilized use of the Internet to communicate with stakeholders and distribute resources	Budget instability
	No use of social media platforms	Constraints placed on communications, program activities and partnerships by sponsor agency
	Irregular updates about current environmental issues made available to the public	Inability to seek sponsors, grants, or donors
	No IRL-focused curricula that can be distributed to schools via the web or in programs	
	Few opportunities for volunteers and community involvement in projects and programs	
	CAC lacks an active role in NEP programs	
EXTERNAL		

Figure 4: SWOT Analysis of IRL NEP outreach and education efforts

Review of Existing Print Materials:

The IRL NEP and its sponsor agency, SJRWMD, have developed a core set of print publications that are made available to stakeholders and at community events, talks, information displays and upon request. These materials were reviewed for relevance and to determine where informational gaps existed.

Programmatic review of currently offered print materials found all to be useful and relevant in providing information about the IRL with the exception of the *IRL Update*, a print publication mailed to subscribers and posted to the District website. This publication had traditionally been issued quarterly, but beginning in 2011, began to be issued only biannually. While informative, this publication is both hopelessly out of date upon publication and expensive to print and mail. For these reasons, and to improve the timeliness aspect of communicating with stakeholders, it is recommended that this publication be transitioned to digital format and be issued on a monthly basis to better update stakeholders on current lagoon conditions, partner and IRL NEP events and activities, project updates, and other timely information.

Changes are also recommended for the *Introduction to a Natural Treasure* booklet and the *IRL Owner's Manual* brochure. The *Introduction to a Natural Treasure* booklet provides an excellent primer of IRL basics, but is currently out of date in terms of the usefulness of seagrass status information. Production of a fact sheet showing current seagrass status is recommended. This can be distributed with *Natural Treasure* booklets to keep the publication current. The *IRL Owner's Manual* brochure was printed before local fertilizer ordinances went into effect throughout the region. While most information remains relevant, the brochure recommends lawn fertilizing only during the growing season, which is in conflict with many current ordinances. It is recommended that this language be updated to reflect current information before the brochure is reprinted.

In addition to core publications, the IRL NEP distributes print materials developed by partner organizations. Some of these materials include fishing regulations, shoreline restoration information, promotional materials for upcoming events, and information about sea turtles, manatees, native plants, boating, spoil islands, and other topics. The IRL NEP will continue to support these partner efforts as part of normal outreach efforts and will continue to reach out to our partners to encourage them to reciprocally distribute IRL NEP outreach materials.

Results from the *Peer Assessment of IRL NEP Outreach, Communication and Partnering Efforts Survey* showed that IRL NEP partners are overwhelmingly satisfied (44% 'very satisfied', 36% 'satisfied') with existing print publications. However, they did provide suggestions as to additional topic areas they want the IRL NEP to lead on as new materials are developed. Two topics in particular were mentioned most often: stormwater and its effect on the IRL; and things residents could do to help alleviate stormwater pollution. Other suggestions included providing more information about the ecology and importance of seagrasses; outlining the causes and effects of algae blooms; ecologically responsible boating practices; Florida-friendly lawn and yard care practices (including information on how to fertilize properly); and fact sheets regarding current issues (i.e., research results, algal blooms, animal disease, lionfish invasion, etc.); biodiversity in the IRL; and invasive species and how they spread. Table 1 below summarizes the core publications currently in use:

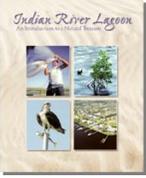
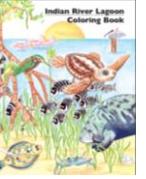
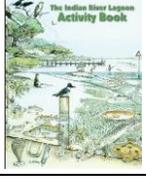
<i>For High School Through Adult Audiences:</i>	
	<p>IRL Update</p> <p>Features various new and ongoing projects and programs that are supported by the IRL NEP. Published bi-annually. Information is of general interest; however, the biannual format insures that information is out of date upon publication.</p>
	<p>Indian River Lagoon: Introduction to a Natural Treasure</p> <p>Overview of the history, status, and issues ongoing throughout the IRL. Information is useful and relevant; however, a fact sheet should be developed to augment the published seagrass information, which has changed significantly.</p>
	<p>Indian River Lagoon Owner's Manual</p> <p>The owner's manual is designed to introduce some of the main problems associated with stormwater runoff, and help stakeholders to understand their role in preventing stormwater pollution. Fertilizer language should be updated to reflect complying with local ordinances before reprinting.</p>
	<p>Indian River Lagoon License Plate Brochure</p> <p>Provides an overview of the IRL NEP specialty license plate and features projects funded through this program.</p>
<i>For Children:</i>	
	<p>IRL Coloring Book</p> <p>Appropriate for Grades K-2. Provides A to Z coloring pages of lagoon inhabitants and age-appropriate information for reading practice.</p>
	<p>Indian River Lagoon Activity Book</p> <p>Appropriate for Grades 4 – 5. Provides ecological information about estuaries, food webs, lagoon plants and animals, as well as a variety of puzzles and games.</p>
	<p>Snook's Cove Web Activities</p> <p>Snook's Cove, for children, is hosted on the <i>itsyourlagoon.com</i> website. It contains a variety of activities and information geared toward children and teaches them about several ecological aspects of lagoon health.</p>

Table 1: IRL-focused publications currently provided to stakeholder groups

Review of available presentations:

A number of PowerPoint presentations are available that are offered to benefit community groups, clubs, homeowners' associations, and others upon request. Topics covered include the following:

- Overview of the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program
- Restoration/protection efforts for the IRL
- IRL seagrasses and their status
- Biodiversity in the IRL
- Principles of Florida-friendly landscaping
- IRL mangroves
- Invasive species in the IRL
- Stormwater overview, effects on the IRL
- Pet waste and its effect on the IRL

In addition to these topic areas, other presentations are developed or customized on an as-needed basis to assist stakeholder groups in better understanding particular areas of interest.

Identification of Target Audiences

The IRL NEP has identified a number of target audiences among lagoon-region stakeholders. These include:

- Homeowners (year-round and seasonal)
- New residents of the lagoon region
- People living near the lagoon (within 5 miles)
- Power boat owners
- Kayakers and canoeists
- Anglers
- Ecotour operators and ecotourists
- Passive recreational users of the lagoon (festival-goers, photographers, walkers, etc.)
- School children
- Educators
- College students
- News media
- Newspaper readers
- Radio listeners
- TV viewers
- Internet users
- Policy makers at the local, statewide and federal levels

AREAS OF FOCUS IN COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Public Concerns and Suggestions

In reviewing accomplishments since development the last IRL NEP Communications Plan in 2008, a number of public concerns were found to remain relevant to IRL NEP strategic communications for the next five years. Among these are:

- To improve focus on water quality and the role of individual behaviors that affect stormwater runoff;
- To continue to discuss the lagoon's vast biodiversity and connect biodiversity to issues such as water quality, habitat loss and overdevelopment;
- To initiate and augment discussions regarding seagrass health as a key factor in overall health of the lagoon;
- To assist stakeholders in understanding growth management as a factor that affects health of the lagoon; to promote green building and low impact development and,
- To act as the clearinghouse for any IRL-focused education information, print materials, videos, etc. This would include information developed by the IRL NEP as well as that developed by partnering organizations.

Peer Concerns and Suggestions

Peer review provided similar insights as to where partners felt the IRL NEP should best focus its outreach and education programming efforts, particularly regarding stormwater runoff and its importance to lagoon water quality:

- Developing grade-specific curricula that will teach students about stormwater runoff seagrass health, lagoon ecology, water quality and non-point pollution;
- Coordinating communications among partnering entities to develop regional messaging that addresses IRL water quality issues and the Best Management Practices that residents can undertake to alleviate them;
- Increasing program visibility and stakeholder communication via development of a web and social media presence;
- Increasing opportunities for interaction with community groups via workshops and public talks, either in person or via webinar;
- Assisting in coordination of volunteer efforts throughout the region, and developing opportunities for people to volunteer with the IRL NEP.

Internal Concerns and Suggestions

SWOT analysis of IRL NEP activities showed that staff perceptions for areas where programs could be improved were in tight agreement with peer perceptions. A particular area of concern for both peers and staff was the IRL NEP's inability to communicate timely information directly to stakeholder groups via the Internet or social media. This is due primarily to constraints placed upon IRL NEP outreach and communications avenues and activities by the program sponsor. Currently, the IRL NEP has only a perfunctory Internet presence and makes no use of social media, seriously hampering opportunities to provide updates about current lagoon conditions or to share relevant information with stakeholder groups, and eliminates valuable opportunities for two-way communication with the lagoon community.

Other areas of agreement between the peer review and SWOT analysis included:

- The need to develop additional teacher resources and grade-specific curricula that educate about the IRL, water quality, biodiversity and ecology;
- The need to focus outreach efforts on stormwater and its adverse impacts, as well as behavior changes that can assist in preventing stormwater pollution;
- Increasing the level of volunteerism for stewardship and restoration activities throughout the region; and,
- Developing a more vibrant role for the Citizen’s Action Committee, which has lacked an active role in IRL NEP programming in recent years.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN COMPONENTS

Electronic Communications

Websites and social media outlets offer relatively inexpensive and instantaneous means of direct communication with stakeholder groups. The advancement and immense popularity of various social media platforms also offers the capability of two-way communication. The IRL NEP will embark on development of a website and will begin making use of social media in an effort to capitalize on the use of web and social media communication to provide relevant and timely information about the state of the lagoon while simultaneously offering stakeholders a variety of opportunities to broaden their knowledge about the lagoon and its issues, directly communicate with the IRL NEP and learn more about upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, workshops, talks, etc.

- Website.** The program will seek a web developer to design a website with functionality that includes a content management system, contact management, newsletter editor, social networking tools (multipost), e-mail list-serv, event calendar and event registration system. In addition to providing current information about lagoon conditions and offering IRL NEP print products for download, the website will provide an overview of the IRL system and its general ecology; an overview of the IRL NEP and its programmatic efforts; highlight selected projects and programs accomplished through the annual workplan process; provide links to partners and their programs, and feature current scientific and research findings. The site could also be utilized as a depository for lagoon-focused information and school curricula developed by the IRL NEP and partnering organizations, thus creating the long envisioned one-stop-shop for stakeholders seeking lagoon-focused information on any number of topics. Additionally, the IRL NEP could utilize the website to collect contact information from stakeholders wishing to be kept abreast of program information as it becomes available. This would be helpful in transitioning the *IRL Update* publication (see below under ‘Newsletter’) from print to a digital publication.
- Face Book.** The launch of the Indian River Lagoon News and Events page on Face Book, which the IRL NEP contributes information and photos to, illustrates the strong need for timely information about events and issues in the lagoon. Within 5 months of launch, the page garnered over 1,700 followers and has a reach of 50,000 viewers with popular posts. The IRL NEP is late in joining the social media revolution but can quickly gain ground

by working among established communications avenues to promote its presence, target relevant conservation issues, announce upcoming meetings, workshops and events, and work among its many partners to promote issues of lagoon health and restoration.

- c. **Twitter.** Regular updates about upcoming meetings, events, lagoon happenings and website updates will be shared as appropriate via Twitter. The 140-character format of this platform is particularly useful for short messages and updates relevant to IRL NEP activities and programs as well as those of partnering organizations. It is also useful for seeking information, gathering instant feedback, sharing photos, and other communications between the program and stakeholder groups. The Program's Twitter account will be monitored for spam and profanity, and postings of these types will be deleted, with record of them kept in accordance with Florida public records laws. Negative but not profane comments will be allowed to remain and can be addressed, as appropriate, by program staff.
- d. **Instagram, Flickr, or other photo-sharing sites.** The IRL NEP has the opportunity to promote lagoon issues via photo-sharing sites such as Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. These platforms may also prove useful to organizations funded through the annual workplan process, as they will be able to share photos of their events and volunteers as documentation of their activities and deliverables. Photo-sharing can be useful in illustrating algae blooms, fish kills, restoration activities, volunteerism, events, promoting the annual calendar contest, and a variety of other useful applications.
- e. **Newsletter.** In order to address the timeliness aspect of the newsletter and bring stakeholder communication to the forefront, the IRL NEP will transition the *IRL Update* to a digital format published once per month, with special editions issued on an as-needed basis. Those stakeholders who currently receive the newsletter in print will be provided opportunities to subscribe digitally and will receive an e-mail notice when new electronic postings are available. The digital format of the newsletter will allow for both longer and shorter items to be included and can contain partner updates and announcements as well.
- f. **Webinar Services.** The IRL NEP will begin making use of periodic webinars for meetings and presentations in order to expand the reach of its communications efforts to wider audiences. By 2015, a webinar services provider will be engaged and several trial runs performed in order to fine-tune presentation approaches. Once program staff is comfortable with webinar technology and presentation, the applications for use of this technology are far-reaching, with webinar services potentially used for meetings, workshops, classroom presentations, media relations, policy-maker outreach, and a variety of other applications. Webinar services could also be offered to partnering organizations for their use as well. The IRL NEP would technically have to host events of this type, but could turn control of the webinar over to a local host and simply monitor for functionality.

Potential topics for routine webinars might include algae bloom status, wildlife issues, significant project updates, announcements, study findings, etc. Webinar services could be particularly useful during periods when the need for public information is greatest, as

occurred during the 2011 and 2012 algae blooms. Utilizing webinar services, multiple agencies could collaborate to keep the public informed of current issues in the IRL and what efforts are being employed to address them. The availability of webinars of this type may prove to be particularly useful to media organizations, which could, in turn, assist in providing information to the public.

- g. **Web Videos.** Peer review and public input have suggested that the IRL NEP should undertake production of a series of short web videos that introduce topics of interest focused on the IRL (seagrass health, seagrass species, mangroves, invasive species, water quality, what's in stormwater runoff, how does runoff reach the lagoon, BMPs for homeowners, Florida-friendly lawns and gardens, etc.). These videos could be produced relatively inexpensively and made available on the program website for viewing or download by anyone with interest. Teachers, students and homeowners would be natural audiences for programming of this type.

Stakeholder engagement can also be accomplished by means of Web 2.0 techniques that allow web users to create their own content. For example, the IRL NEP could provide selected stakeholders (i.e., ecotour guide, recreational angler, nature center interpreter, etc.) with GoPro video cameras and ask them to record their day on the lagoon. Editing and posting these videos to the program website would highlight any number of potential recreational and commercial uses for the lagoon and could engage stakeholders of many types across all demographics.

Traditional media

The IRL NEP will continue to engage with stakeholders by traditional means and will continue to work with print, radio and television news organizations to promote program activities and provide information that can be disseminated to wider audiences. In addition to providing press releases for program activities, the IRL NEP will strive to enhance its media relations by providing opportunities for media to tour newsworthy projects and lagoon locations by offering land and boat tours on an as-needed basis. Beyond engagement with news organizations, the IRL NEP, in conjunction with messaging partners, will also begin purchasing radio and print advertising that will focus on reducing non-point source loadings to the IRL and its tributaries.

- a. **News releases.** The IRL NEP will endeavor to increase the visibility of the program by increasing its interactions with media outlets via news releases. This may include meeting announcements, notices of project initiations or completions, and the promotion of volunteer opportunities, events, workshops, and other activities.
- b. **Article submissions.** As opportunities arise, the IRL NEP and members of the NEP committee structure may wish to submit articles to media outlets that explain or augment current understanding of IRL issues. These will be designed as informative pieces that outline the current issue, discuss the science or management activities being undertaken to address an issue, and offer the program's perspective on the need for public support for continued stewardship of the lagoon.

- c. **Enhanced media relations.** As lagoon issues arise (i.e., project completions, notable algae blooms, large volunteer activities, Advisory Board meetings, tours, events, etc.) media will be offered the opportunity to attend, be briefed by IRL NEP staff and have access to partners and event participants. Enhancing media relations is expected to increase public awareness of current lagoon issues while dampening public perception that little is being done to address lagoon health issues. It is also expected to increase the visibility of the IRL NEP and its partner organizations, and will assist in keeping public focus on the lagoon and the continued need for protective and restorative actions.
- h. **Paid messaging.** The IRL NEP, working with its partners, plans to produce paid messages for radio and print that inform residents about their personal contributions to lagoon health. These messages will focus on stormwater runoff and how everyone can make small changes in personal behaviors and household habits that will keep runoff cleaner, and thus reduce loadings to the lagoon. Messaging of this type has been successfully used in raising awareness and changing behaviors in other large watershed regions of the U.S. and it is expected to enjoy equal success in the IRL region. Given the current state of the lagoon, the need is urgent for wider mass communication efforts focused on influencing behavioral change.
- i. **Newsletter.** As described above (see newsletter item under Digital Communications above), the current IRL update will be transitioned to a monthly digital format, with the biannual print edition eliminated.

Partnership development

Over its twenty one years of operation, the IRL NEP has been fortunate in forging a number of valuable partnerships, not only through Management Committee members, but also from among the many regional education, agency, local government and non-profit organizations that have interests in the IRL. Though a strong need exists for a structured, coordinated effort that better educates residents about their connections to water quality in the IRL, there have been relatively few attempts among organizations to collaborate in developing regional messaging, avoiding duplication of effort, and pooling financial resources to produce informational and educational products for regional distribution rather than solely in local areas.

As has been demonstrated throughout the United States (Chesapeake Bay “Reclaim the Bay” program, Superior Watershed Partnership, Massachusetts Drinking Water Education Partnership, New England Environmental Education Alliance, etc.), a robust framework that includes many partners is ideal for developing synergies that can enhance the reach of individual organizations, develop and distribute informational and education resources to stakeholders and leverage financial resources, all while reducing duplicative efforts. The IRL NEP is ideally placed to provide this framework and will work to bring potential message partners together in order to develop and refine a regional communications, education and outreach strategy that will address stormwater runoff issues and assist stakeholders in understanding how their behaviors contribute to poor water quality in the IRL. Given the current state of the IRL and the current economic realities of budget and staff cuts, it is incumbent on organizations having interests in the IRL to

maximize resources and capitalize on the multiplier effects of common messaging to advance citizen education about environmental issues challenging the IRL.

It is envisioned that message partners would contribute funding towards the purchase of paid advertising focused on stormwater runoff, pollution reduction and personal behavior changes that would benefit the IRL. Paid messaging would involve primarily radio announcements, with some advertising in newspapers. Ad buys would occur each quarter, with messaging running for approximately a two-week period. Advertising on two public radio stations and several FM stations within the IRL region, with ¼ page ads run in local print media is expected to cost approximately \$16,000 per quarter, for a total of \$62,500 each year. In addition, message partners may also wish to contribute toward a print budget that will allow materials to be printed and distributed among all partners in the messaging effort. It is expected that this regional messaging effort will effect changes in public awareness, behaviors and actions that will have a long-term benefit on water quality in the lagoon.

During the first year of this communications plan, the IRL NEP committee structure will be reorganized as follows:

a. Formation of an Education and Outreach committee (EOC)

In order to begin working on a regional partnership among organizations with similar outreach and educational goals while also expanding IRL NEP reach to the public, the current Citizens' Action Committee (CAC), which consists primarily of education and outreach staff from a variety of organizations, will be reorganized as the IRL NEP Education and Outreach Committee (EOC), while the CAC will be restructured and revitalized as a true citizen's committee that can assist in expanding the reach of the program into the wider lagoon community.

To kick off formation of the EOC, and partnership development opportunities offered through this new structure, the IRL NEP will invite EOC members to a one day retreat that will develop the initial structure of the committee and its goals, decide which IRL-focused issues can be best addressed on a regional level; and develop a list of potential tools and products. Subsequent meetings will refine these ideas, with committee members beginning production of text and graphical elements that will be reviewed by the full committee. If funds are available, materials and paid announcements will be produced or purchased in the first year; otherwise, members will be asked to budget an agreed-upon amount that can be put toward materials production, paid announcements and other products.

Bi-monthly (or more often as needs dictate) EOC meetings will be held in person or via conference call or webinar to discuss current events in the lagoon, update members on restoration and protective efforts that are underway, discuss how partners are messaging current issues, and help develop common messaging themes to avoid conflicting information and fine tune public education efforts. These meetings will provide an excellent opportunity to bring in topic experts that will inform outreach and education staffs, allow discussion to improve understanding, and help focus education efforts. Stakeholder groups will benefit from the value of consistent, regional messaging that

addresses current IRL issues and promotes behaviors beneficial to reducing non-point pollution in the lagoon.

By the second year of this plan, the EOC will collaborate on the collection and development of curriculum materials and other products that will assist in broadening outreach and education efforts throughout the IRL Region. New materials may include print matter as well as products developed for the web (posters, videos, podcasts, or other effective means of communication) that will improve understanding and raise awareness of lagoon problems and the role of residents in solving these problems. The IRL NEP can support efforts to develop new materials through in-house brochure layout and graphical support, which will save considerable amounts of money. The program could also look into purchase of video equipment such as GoPro cameras and software suitable for producing web videos.

By the third year of this effort, the EOC will have finalized curriculum development and will be in the process of testing and evaluating it before it is posted to the program website or otherwise distributed. Wide promotion of the availability of these educational resources will be undertaken by contacting all science coordinators in each county to make them aware of available curricula and to offer meetings with teachers to introduce and orient them, and show alignment with standards. Webinars could also be utilized for this purpose. Private schools and homeschool groups can be included in this effort as well.

Concurrent with finalizing curriculum development, the IRL NEP will begin training and background checking adult volunteers to give classroom presentations and offer demonstrations and classroom activities focused on the IRL and its ecology, biodiversity and health. School teachers attending the annual teachers' workshop will also be enlisted in this process to insure that teacher needs and classroom logistics are considered in program development. Curricula may be pilot tested in select classrooms to gauge student interest and identify areas that still need work.

Also in the third year, the CAC will begin to evaluate the activities and programs it has undertaken during the previous two years and develop an updated priorities list that includes new or adjusted activities and suggestions for other programs. These can be implemented during years four and five, along with promoting the availability of and further developing appropriate classroom presentations.

- b. Reorganization of Citizens' Action Committee.** The Citizen's Action Committee (CAC) will undergo a reorganization to become a true citizen's committee that will provide structured citizen input to the IRL NEP and act as an effective avenue for public communication. The IRL NEP will promote its request for volunteers to serve via a press release to announce a kickoff meeting and invite members from all lagoon counties. It is envisioned that approximately 10 members of the CAC would represent non-profit groups, another 10 would represent business interests, and an additional 10 – 20 members would be at-large members. Should community interest be high as this reorganization occurs, the CAC could be structured as a fully at-large, informal group managed by a 5 –

7 member steering committee.

The CAC will meet quarterly, in advance of management committee meetings. Program staff and other speakers will keep the CAC abreast of issues ongoing in the ecosystem, provide project updates, and inform the committee about topics relevant to the current state of the lagoon. The CAC will be tasked with assisting in keeping the community informed of IRL NEP activities and programs, assisting with implementation of volunteer programs and projects, potentially managing a small grant program related to community outreach, and other activities that may arise as CAC objectives are more fully fleshed out.

In the second year of this plan, the CAC will implement its priorities listing and use this to guide their efforts to improve outreach to lagoon stakeholders. The IRL NEP will draw from the CAC membership for volunteers that will take an active role in educational, restoration and recreational efforts to better engage with stakeholder groups and that CAC members will assist in staffing and managing group activities such as kayak and wading trips. In Year 3, the CAC will evaluate the activities and programs it has undertaken during the previous two years and develop an updated priorities list that includes new or adjusted activities and suggestions for other programs. The IRL NEP may look into development of a small grants program (5 – 10 grants of \$1,000 to \$1500 each) that could be vetted through the CAC and are designed to assist non-profit and educational organizations in delivering IRL information and education to their audiences.

In advance of this reorganization, the current Citizens' Action Committee may come together to generate a listing of potential new committee members, invite participation, plan kickoff meetings that will establish the new committee structures and draft by-laws. Once these elements are in order, participants will be invited to kickoff meetings.

As these committees are forming and launching, the IRL NEP will put into place any programmatic elements needed to support committee efforts. For example, the program must have a simple mechanism by which to accept payments if group marketing and printing efforts will be coordinated by the program. Similarly, should the CAC plan to initiate field trips or other activities that could involve fees to cover expenses, the program needs to be able to accept those funds and apply them to CAC activities.

Continuation of current partnership efforts

The IRL NEP will continue to work with partners on existing and developing programs as part of its communications efforts. The list below highlights some of the larger efforts that are expected to continue. Additional partnerships are expected to be developed as opportunities arise.

1. **IRL Photo Contest and annual calendar production.** Since 2004, the program has implemented an annual calendar contest and produced a calendar containing the winning images. Approximately 25,000 copies of this calendar are printed and distributed free of charge via public libraries and other outlets throughout the region. This publication generates a great deal of stakeholder interest and is useful in promoting program, stormwater, license plate and partner information. It also aids in generating interest about lagoon species through the interesting life history or

ecological factoids provided.

2. **Florida-Friendly Landscaping.** The program will also continue its ongoing efforts to foster stewardship for the lagoon through Florida-friendly landscaping workshops and seminars in partnership with the cities of Melbourne and Palm Bay, Brevard County Natural Resources Management Office, and the Brevard County Extension Office. In the past several years, the IRL NEP has assisted in implementing a number of free workshops throughout Brevard County to encourage homeowners to limit use of fertilizers and pesticides, landscape using native plants, and install rain barrels and rain gardens to limit stormwater runoff. In 2013, more than 250 people attended a Florida-friendly Landscaping seminar and plant expo in Melbourne. Additional seminars of this type are scheduled into 2015. The Program also worked with UF/IFAS Brevard County Extension Office in the development of *My Brevard Yard*, a half-day workshop for homeowners focused on home landscaping practices; and partnered with the City of Palm Bay in developing an instruction manual, workshop series, and three demonstration rain gardens designed for homeowners wishing to create rain gardens on their properties.
3. **IRL Regional Envirothon.** The IRL NEP became the lead organizer for the IRL Envirothon in 2011 and works with a variety of organizations and agencies to develop an annual outdoor competition for middle and high school students that tests student knowledge in 6 natural resource topic areas. Winning teams from each lagoon county are sent on to statewide Envirothon competition, and should they win that event, are next sent on to the North American Canon Envirothon. More than 220 students compete in the program each year, with some of these students inspired to pursue careers in natural resources management.
4. **Florida SEE.** The program worked with Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism on fostering an East-Central chapter of the organization, which was established in 2011. The program implemented an Ecotour Provider Workshop series in 2011, 2012, and 2013, and will continue to provide educational opportunities for ecotour providers, schedule quarterly meetings, and work with Brevard Nature Alliance, Brevard County Extension Services, and other organizations to schedule quarterly meetings, improve communication and networking through the ecotour community, and capitalize on other opportunities for ecotour operators to engage as a professional organization.
5. **National Estuaries Day or IRL Day event(s).** National Estuaries Day (NED) occurs on the last Saturday of September each year. However, due to the high possibility for tropical storms and hurricanes and issues with high summer temperatures making it unpleasant to be outdoors for extended periods, the program has begun postponing NED events until early November when, working with partners, an IRL Day event is held.
6. **Boater education program.** The IRL NEP has been working over the previous two years with UCF researchers and marketing professionals under a grant from Florida

Sea Grant, to develop and implement a boater education program focused on protection of shallow water habitats such as seagrasses and oyster reefs. Focus group and other research was conducted during 2013. From analysis of the research, the *ReelFlorida*™ program emerged and is being implemented throughout 2014 with a series of talks, workshops, attendance at environmental and boating events, creation of a mobile app, and by building a web and social media presence.

Development of new materials

As recommended by peer review and programmatic review of publications, the IRL NEP identified a number of informational gaps in materials distributed for public use, including: the need to develop stormwater/non-point information to inform residents about why it affects the IRL, what contribution everyone makes to stormwater runoff, behavior-specific pollution reduction information (i.e., picking up after pets, fertilizing appropriately, safe use of pesticides, etc.), seagrass and mangrove ecology information, cause and effects of algae blooms on the IRL, safe boating practices that protect lagoon habitats, lagoon-friendly yard care practices, waterfront homeowners' guide to caring for the lagoon, and reducing the spread of invasive species.

Materials developed may include fact sheets, posters, and brochures; however, some of these topic areas can and should be developed for use on the Internet without incurring the high cost of printing thousands of brochures. Should the regional EOC partnership discussed above become successful and partners begin to pool financial resources, IRL NEP print budgeting will be applied towards development of new print materials through EOC efforts. Should EOC members not agree to pool financial resources towards materials development, the IRL NEP will develop print materials as budget permits and distribute them through usual channels.

Formal education efforts

The IRL NEP provides an average of 25 classroom visits, field trips, and after-school programs each year entirely through requests made by teachers for such programming. These requests come from all levels of the educational spectrum, elementary through college levels. The program also provides an annual four-day teachers' workshop for middle and high school educators, and accommodates other requests for programs as can be staffed. IRL NEP formal education efforts are currently hampered by having only one person staffing all outreach and education functions, yet, there exists a need to offer more opportunities to teachers for classroom presentations and programs that will educate youngsters about the IRL and focus on community stewardship responsibilities.

- a. **Curriculum Development.** The IRL NEP, with the participation of its Education and Outreach Committee, other partners and through enlisting assistance from elementary and secondary teachers, will develop grade-specific environmental education resources focused on the IRL. These materials will be correlated to Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and made available via the program's website. The program will promote the availability of these materials through contact with school systems throughout the region. In addition to lesson plans, other curriculum resources useful to educators may also be developed including web videos, worksheets, posters, fact sheets, suggested activities, assessments, etc.

Expanding volunteer opportunities. In order to expand its offerings to teachers and students, the IRL NEP will implement a volunteer program on a small scale that would train adults to do classroom and community presentations. These presentations could either implement a lesson plan or demonstrate (through use of models such as the Enviroscape) environmental problems and solutions. IRL NEP volunteer efforts would require as few as two to three volunteers in each county. These adult volunteers, ideally retired school teachers drawn from the CAC, could assist in developing the elements of these programs and would be trained in presenting any programs offered. The IRL NEP could then widely promote the availability of new classroom programs, and would coordinate the scheduling and follow-up with teachers requesting these programs.

Alternatively, the IRL NEP could also work with partnering organizations to assist them in expanding their volunteer efforts so that school programs can be better accommodated. For example, the Marine Resources Council (MRC), is in the process of developing a *Lagoon Lifesavers* program that will expand its volunteer efforts and outreach to schools. The IRL NEP could assist this program by contributing to curriculum development, providing volunteer training, developing PowerPoints and other resources for use in classrooms, etc. The program's financial resources could also support this effort by providing stipends to volunteers, or purchasing equipment such as Enviroscares, ecological models, preserved specimens, water testing kits, equipment for field trips and other materials.

Outreach and informal education efforts. IRL NEP outreach efforts are largely focused on providing talks and information to community groups. The program participates in an average of 35 weekend events (22) or restoration activities (13) each year, provides speakers for approximately 40 community groups and clubs, and participates in approximately 25 other collaborative efforts to plan events or meetings and provide seminars or workshops. With the declining condition of the lagoon since 2011, requests for IRL NEP participation at meetings and events have increased as stakeholders strive to understand what has happened to the health of the IRL.

In order to accommodate this heightened interest in the IRL and its health status, the IRL NEP will continue to offer the services above as can be accommodated. Additionally, the program will work among its outreach partners to provide evening talks and informational workshops on a quarterly basis among rotating venues. The program will also look into providing informational webinars or other digital means of communicating to maximize program reach to stakeholders. This aspect of outreach will involve additional programmatic costs for video conferencing services.

- a. **Audience response systems.** The IRL NEP will see stronger engagement with audience groups through the use of audience response technology that allows for two-way communication during presentations, at meetings, and in classrooms. Simple PowerPoint presentations may easily be used to gauge public opinion, expose differences in thinking, assess understanding, and gather instant feedback. ARS produces live, on-screen results that can then be discussed or further teased out to discover areas of agreement and disagreement. It also offers a means by which all members of an audience can have their opinions counted without the fear invoked by public speaking, or possible negative

consequences that might arise from holding opinions others do not agree with. Data collected can also be stored in a database, which could have useful applications in comparing the shifts in public opinions from year to year and would be helpful in assessing whether IRL NEP communications efforts are having an effect in the lagoon community.

The IRL NEP will seek an appropriate ARS vendor and purchase a system in Year 2. Some time will be spent in learning to utilize the system to best effect, how to write appropriate poll questions, integrating ARS into existing presentations, and cataloging which kinds of questions would be of value to follow consistently as an aid in measuring communications effectiveness and changes in public opinion over time. Once this preliminary work has been completed ARS can become a routine element in presentations and meetings of all types.

- b. **Survey capability.** Purchase of a survey subscription service will be finalized by Year 3, with both the EOC and CAC beginning to formulate draft survey questions that will evaluate their activities and programs. The IRL NEP will additionally develop a public opinion survey, based largely on previously conducted surveys focused on IRL issues. This instrument will be useful in comparing attitudes and opinions that may have shifted in the years since a survey effort was last undertaken and can guide development of new programs and communication pathways that are responsive to the changes uncovered. All surveys will be conducted online and can be widely publicized to gather a large number of responses. Links may be placed on the program website, partner websites, social media sites, in e-mails and in electronic newsletters. Promotion of this type may introduce a fair amount of survey bias, and additional steps will be undertaken to assure that non-environmentally-focused audiences are reflected as survey responders.
- c. **Support for restoration activities.** Informal education efforts can be more widely expanded by providing additional opportunities for stakeholder groups to engage with the program in restoration and recreational activities. The IRL NEP will continue to support FDEP Aquatic Preserves' shoreline restoration and enhancement program as well as oyster restoration activities performed by Brevard Zoo and University of Central Florida. The IRL NEP can additionally assist these programs by recruiting volunteers from CAC membership; working among its partners to promote upcoming workdays; and engaging stakeholders in volunteering for clean ups, restoration and habitat enhancement activities and other conservation efforts.
- d. **Support for recreational activities.** The IRL NEP can also expand its stakeholder interactions by offering opportunities for public participation in lagoon-focused recreation. Wading trips, kayaking events, photography excursions and walking tours are all viable means of engaging public interest in the IRL. Quarterly weekend excursions, particularly during more seasonable months, would be economical to implement and could potentially be led by volunteers from the CAC. The availability of these programs would be publicized via social media and potentially in paid announcements as part of wider messaging.

- e. **Engagement with policy-makers.** The IRL NEP has, through its Management Committee, the IRL Advisory Board, maintained long-standing relationships with elected officials, agency representatives, educational organizations and other entities throughout the region and is recognized as a definitive source for IRL-focused information. The program sponsor employs intergovernmental coordinators to engage with elected officials and provide information relevant to the IRL and its condition. The program will continue to engage policy makers via the IRL Advisory Board and will work with sponsor staff to continue to provide opportunities for policy makers to educate themselves about the condition of the IRL, its current issues, and the status of ongoing restoration and conservation efforts. As needed, the program may offer boat tours or other guided activities that will showcase efforts underway to protect or restore the lagoon and its habitats, or provide policy makers with a personal view of ongoing environmental issues and concerns that remain to be addressed. The program director will continue to offer program support, presentations and commentary to local government boards on an as-requested basis to inform leaders about current issues in the IRL region and promote activities directed at lagoon protection and restoration.

TASKS AND TIMELINES:

This communications plan will cover the five years between 2014 and 2019. It is ambitious in scope and will fundamentally alter how the IRL NEP communicates with stakeholder groups, moving away from focusing on small programs with relatively small audiences, into programs that expand program reach by enhancing existing partner relationships and implementing a regional communications strategy; better utilizing web and social media platforms; beginning to utilize paid messaging to influence behavioral change as a means of protecting water quality in the lagoon; and, expanding volunteer opportunities.

Of primary importance to the success of this effort is to develop and launch a robust, independent website and social media presence during the first year. The multiplier effect generated by Internet and social media communications has enormous potential if appropriately fostered and managed.

Year 2 will be utilized to create new products, implement a regional communications strategy improve outreach to stakeholder groups and begin using technology to better gauge community understanding of lagoon and coastal issues.

All elements of this plan are expected to be in process by Year 3, with Years 4 – 5 used to further mature the programs and elements outlined above; rebalance and refine programs, begin making use of surveying capability to assess the effectiveness of IRL NEP outreach and communications efforts; and capitalize on new opportunities as they arise. Results from this assessment will assist the program in gauging which efforts are reaching the widest audiences, which messages have the most effect, and which efforts need to be reworked or eliminated.

In Year 5, an assessment of this plan and its efficacy will be presented to the IRL advisory Board. The Board, as well as each IRL NEP subcommittee, will provide input and guidance on development of the next communications plan that will cover the years 2019 – 2024.

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Website development and launch	Migrate <i>IRL Update</i> from print to digital format; issue monthly	Website and social media evaluations;	Promote availability of classroom and meeting presenters	Evaluate communications strategy over previous 5 years and present to IRL Advisory Board
Develop new program branding	EOC develops print and web information and curriculum	Produce additional web videos on IRL ecology, issues, recreation, etc.	Implement classroom program	Solicit input for next 5-year communications plan
Select social media platforms, build audiences	CAC begins quarterly restoration and recreation activities	Finalize curriculum development and pilot test it in classrooms; post to website and promote availability	Continue to produce web videos and experiment with Web 2.0 techniques to solicit user generated content	Expand classroom presentation offerings and continue to promote their availability
Education Committee retreat to develop listing of priority issues	Webinar services engaged, format tested	Continue paid messaging for at least two weeks each quarter	Continue paid messaging for at least two weeks each quarter	Continue paid messaging for at least two weeks each quarter
Kickoff for Citizen's Action Committee; set direction and priorities	Purchase video equipment and editing software and develop several short videos to focus on IRL issues or ecology	Develop training materials and PowerPoints for use in training CAC members to do classroom presentations and public talks	Evaluate CAC and EOC activities and set new priorities listings for next two years	Continue to issue periodic surveys via the web and with monthly newsletter
Implement quarterly public workshops and talks	Purchase Audience Response System and pilot with several groups	Solicit adult volunteers to participate in training for classrooms and public speaking;	Continue to issue periodic surveys via the web and with monthly newsletter	Continue holding quarterly public workshops and talks
Notify recipients of upcoming <i>IRL Update</i> changes and collect e-mail subscriptions for transition to digital format	Begin paid messaging for approximately 2 weeks each quarter	Purchase survey subscription and begin to develop surveys	Continue holding quarterly public workshops and talks	
	Continue quarterly public workshops and talks	Continue quarterly public workshops and talks		

Table 2: Task timeline for implementation of communications strategies

Table 2 shows the summary listing of tasks to be accomplished under this plan. It is subject to change as input from partners and committees is received and developed.

Budget

An estimated budget for implementing elements of this communications plan is shown in Table 3 below.

[This text will be fleshed out more fully once the plan is finalized]

Description	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Website development and launch	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Web hosting and maintenance	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
EOC development of new print materials focused on stormwater and behavior change	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Curriculum development (teacher stipends, printing, plot testing, etc.)	0	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$500
CAC quarterly restoration and recreation activities	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Webinar services	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Purchase video equipment, editing software and mounts for video production;	\$0	\$1,200	\$500	\$500	\$500
Purchase Audience Response System and pilot with several groups	\$0	\$3,600	\$0	\$0	\$0
IRLNEP contribution towards paid messaging for approximately 2 weeks each quarter	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Develop training materials and purchase equipment (Enviroscapes, etc.) for use in training volunteers to do classroom presentations and public talks	\$0	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Purchase survey subscription and begin to develop surveys	\$0	\$0	\$300	\$300	\$300
Promote availability of classroom and meeting presenters	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$250	\$250
Promotional items and equipment (Banners, signage, waste bag holders, stickers, waterfront homeowner welcome kits, etc.)	\$3,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
IRLNEP print materials (fact sheets, etc.)	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Envirothon support	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Florida-friendly Landscaping Seminar support	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
National Estuaries Day event promotion	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
TOTALS:	\$11,000	\$40,700	\$36,300	\$31,050	\$30,550

Table 3: Budget for implementation of this plan.

