



Community Outreach Plan for the Water Augmentation Study Neighborhood Retrofit Project

Introduction

The retrofit of a single-family block with watershed best management practices is one component of the Water Augmentation Study's (WAS) long-term effort to quantify the benefits, costs and risks of augmenting water supply through infiltration. The study seeks to demonstrate an integrated, comprehensive approach to water management, addressing such issues as surface runoff, water conservation, pollution reduction and treatment, flooding, recreation, and habitat and stream restoration. The project will demonstrate how good watershed practices could be applied throughout the Los Angeles region and serve as a model for other regions.

This outreach plan is tailored for the WAS neighborhood project proposed for either Pacoima or Sun Valley. Both the selection and implementation phases of the project will require effective local outreach and this plan provides a framework for that process. A community-based approach is a key component of the overall plan and will be instrumental to its success by: providing opportunities for watershed education and encouraging neighborhood involvement in site selection, project design and project implementation. Communication and cooperation with the jurisdictional agencies is also a critical component of the overall project and is addressed elsewhere in the WAS concept plan.

The selected project site will be a minimum of one block or approximately twenty single-family homes. The project design will incorporate appropriate sustainable practices and BMPs to maximize runoff capture and other environmental benefits. Some of the specific techniques under consideration include:

- ✓ *Cisterns to capture and store roof or surface runoff for irrigation*
- ✓ *Underground infiltration facilities to increase retention capacity*
- ✓ *Filtration or other treatment as appropriate to water quality of runoff*
- ✓ *Flood management through detention or retention of storm flows*
- ✓ *Daylighting storm drains for stream restoration and/or habitat creation*
- ✓ *Native landscaping for water conservation*
- ✓ *Evapotranspiration measurements and irrigation controllers for water conservation*
- ✓ *Bio-swales and graded landscaping to capture, filter, and infiltrate runoff*
- ✓ *Gutter or alley pavement alterations to incorporate permeable paving*
- ✓ *Alley pavement removal to increase infiltration and open space for habitat or recreation*
- ✓ *Seattle “SEA Streets” type design to capture and filter street runoff*
- ✓ *Permeable driveways to infiltrate runoff*
- ✓ *French drains in driveways or walkways to infiltrate runoff*
- ✓ *Green roofs or roof gardens to capture rainfall*
- ✓ *Downspouts redirected from storm drain system to landscaping*

Outreach Plan guidelines

A regional search has been conducted to identify the best areas to target for a neighborhood retrofit demonstration. After analyzing many factors including physical characteristics such as soil type and aquifer constraints, institutional and community need, and possible funding partners, the communities of Sun Valley and Pacoima have been identified as the most likely candidates. Some project sites were identified based on suggestions from community leaders and preferred physical characteristics such as adequate street width, and the absence of storm drains and mature landscaping.

Two approaches could be considered for conducting an outreach campaign for this project: the first would involve an in-depth outreach and education program to the communities of Sun Valley and Pacoima to solicit involvement and refinement of the site-selection process; the second approach would be primarily limited to the blocks already identified in the study. To whatever extent possible, we recommend the first approach because we believe it will result in greater project and watershed best practices awareness and deeper community acceptance. If budget and timeline constraints limit the approach, the outreach plan should be developed in a manner consistent with the recommendations, guidelines and tasks outlined in this document.

To prepare this plan we reviewed a wide range of outreach programs and conducted interviews with their project managers and staff. The following general guidelines and approaches are key components of the WAS outreach plan. Specific tasks and timelines are discussed in the end section.

A successful outreach program:

1. Clearly defines the project's focus, goals and objectives
2. Researches the community to properly identify and understand the target audience
3. Crafts a message that reflects the project goals and target audience
4. Develops and delivers a variety of outreach materials
5. Uses several strategies and approaches
6. Reviews and evaluates program at every stage

1. Clearly define the project's focus, goals and objectives

This is a critical first step in developing the scope of an outreach plan. A goal is a broad aim while objectives are measurable accomplishments toward the achievement of a goal. For example, increasing infiltration is a goal while increasing the number of redirected rainspouts is an objective. As a starting point we answered the following questions to define a draft set of program goals and objectives for this project. These goals and objectives should be further refined with community and project partner input.

✓ ***Why is the project important?***

- Increase local water supply
- Increase understanding and acceptance of infiltration and/or reuse as safe and effective methods to augment water supply
- Increase public awareness of region's water supply and water quality issues
- Increase land and water stewardship by individuals

✓ ***What specifically are the behaviors and actions that the project seeks to address?***

- Reduce impervious areas in lawns and parkways
- Implement practices that increase infiltration
- Reduce landscape over-watering
- Reduce runoff pollution from single family homes and residential streets

✓ ***Why is community involvement necessary?***

- Individuals will be asked to make changes to their property or parkway
- Community is the best resource for determining final site selection
- Community participation in refining the list of targeted BMPs insures greater acceptance
- To address potential barriers to implementation
- To develop design plans that Incorporate both homeowner and partner needs and limitations
- To check public willingness to accept street, parkway and landscape modifications

✓ ***What might individuals be asked to do?***

- Reduce impermeable surfaces of their property (e.g – use permeable pavement or paver stones for driveways and patios)
- Increase use of mulch
- Replace lawn or thirsty plants with more drought tolerant landscaping
- Eliminate use of harmful pesticides in lawn care
- Install water-saving irrigation systems (e.g- ET control devices, low-flow emitters or drip irrigation)
- Learn about proper watering practices to reduce over-watering and dry weather runoff
- Redirect their downspouts
- Agree to street redesign that may result in changes to street parking and parkway landscaping
- Participate in design of common parkway landscaping and best management practices
- Clean up auto oil leaks and other sources of contamination that may contribute to stormwater pollution
- Agree to installation of best management practices on their property including, dry wells, swales, or cisterns
- Maintain improvements to their home and report any maintenance difficulties

✓ ***How might this project benefit the participants?***

- Lower water use and therefore utility costs for homeowners
- More attractive parkways and home landscaping
- Increased property values
- Less runoff from properties = less flooding
- Recognition for participants as good land stewards
- Possible monetary incentives for participants

✓ ***How will the project benefit the community?***

- Reduced pollution in rivers and ocean

- Increase in local water supply
- Increased green space
- Improved habitat for wildlife
- Increased community cohesion
- Increased knowledge of what actions community members can take to meet project goals
- Recognition of community as site of unique demonstration project

Using the answers above we compiled the goals and objectives that follow.

Draft project goals:

- Reduce runoff and pollutant loads
- Increase infiltration
- Increase local water supplies
- Increase water conservation
- Develop local watershed stewardship
- Reduce flooding
- Enhance/create wildlife habitat
- Encourage use of native and drought-tolerant plants
- Increase knowledge about the impacts and benefits of stormwater infiltration
- Increase community involvement in planning and execution of water management strategies
- Provide an example of an integrated, replicable localized stormwater management system in an urbanized area
- Increase visibility of funders and participants as leaders in watershed management
- Attract funding to replicate this and similar multiple-benefit projects
- High level of participant satisfaction with operation, aesthetics and benefits of installed BMPs

Draft project objectives:

- Residents will redirect downspouts where appropriate
- Residents will reduce the impermeable area of their property
- Residents will implement an appropriate mix of BMPs on their property

- Residents will accept/support BMPs implemented in the right of way (ROW) on their street

2. Research the community to identify and understand the target audience

A successful outreach plan needs to clearly identify the audience so it can speak to the interests and needs of that targeted group. The best way to do this is through polling, interviewing and observing community members. Seek answers to questions such as:

- ✓ *Who are the community's leaders?*
- ✓ *What are the key community groups and organizations?*
- ✓ *What related programs currently exist?*
- ✓ *What are the demographics of the community?*
- ✓ *What is the community's knowledge about watershed issues?*
- ✓ *What are the community's primary concerns and issues?*
- ✓ *What are potential barriers to project involvement?*
- ✓ *What incentives will motivate individuals to participate?*
- ✓ *How do most community members receive their information (television, radio, newspaper etc....)?*

Since each community is unique it will require a little detective work to find the various venues and opportunities for this research. Some places to look:

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| ✓ <i>City or neighborhood councils</i> | ✓ <i>Chambers of commerce</i> |
| ✓ <i>Neighborhood watch groups</i> | ✓ <i>Youth sports leagues</i> |
| ✓ <i>Local elected officials</i> | ✓ <i>Trade associations</i> |
| ✓ <i>Religious groups</i> | ✓ <i>Public agencies</i> |
| ✓ <i>Community centers</i> | ✓ <i>School parent centers</i> |

3. Craft a message that reflects the project goals and target audience

The key messages will be created after a thorough review and distillation of the information gathered in the community audit. Blended with the project goals and objectives, this message will be tailored to the community. It may very well be that saving money and attracting wildlife are deeper motivators than water conservation and planting natives. The crafted message must reflect the interests of the targeted audience with emphasis on how will the project components will benefit them.

4. Develop and deliver a variety of outreach materials

Just as important as an audience-appropriate message is the vehicle of its delivery. Outreach materials should be appropriate for the targeted community, so the step two research will be useful here. It may be appropriate to create bilingual or multilingual materials. All outreach materials should also be fully reviewed and evaluated to insure that they meet identified learning objectives, are readable and understandable and make a clear request for action or behavioral change. A review of existing watershed-oriented outreach materials should be a component of this step.

Some key lessons surfaced during research into other outreach programs. Program coordinators frequently mentioned the following:

- ✓ Use appropriate existing materials
- ✓ Use existing infrastructure for delivery (community meetings, events and publications)
- ✓ Develop a variety of material types and delivery methods (newsletters, websites, mailers, door-hangers, flyers etc...)
- ✓ Deliver the message more than once and follow up
- ✓ Use community and youth groups for both canvassing and material delivery
- ✓ Keep the message and targeted behavior simple

5. Use a variety of strategies and approaches

Direct personal contact

Neighborhood canvassing has proven effective with similar projects, where community members were provided with information about the project and asked to participate.

Community meetings

Organize community meetings to provide and discuss project information and to gather information and feedback from area residents. Such meetings are useful for collecting site-selection information and for developing working groups and focus groups to participate in the project's design. To ensure a good turnout, poll key community members about the best days, times and locations. Be well organized and offer numerous opportunities for public participation.

Commitments

Securing written pledges from members of the target population is an effective tool for increasing participant follow-through. A typical pledge outlines environmentally responsible measures that the signer agrees to participate in. Effective ways of soliciting pledges include workshops, events, neighborhood canvassing, and involving church groups and schools.

Incentives

Incentives usually take the form of monetary rewards for participating in the desired sustainable practice. Whether financial or otherwise, incentives frequently increase participant motivation. The benefit of an incentive is obvious; people often like to receive something for free and are more likely to do something like disconnecting downspouts if they know they are saving money. It may be especially useful to identify a special incentive for a community volunteer who agrees to be a block captain and act as community point person, enlist in recruiting neighbors and assist in organizing and scheduling meetings.

Key points for developing incentives:

- ✓ Closely pair the incentive and the behavior
- ✓ Use incentives to reward positive behavior
- ✓ Make the incentive visible
- ✓ Be cautious about removing incentives
- ✓ Carefully consider the size of the incentive

Potential incentives:

- Rebates for ET irrigation controllers
- Rebates for downspout extensions
- Free mulch
- Yard signs (i.e. “healthy watershed home”)
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- Landscaping or other BMP installation and maintenance instruction
- Free workshops

- Public recognition – awards, media attention etc.

Integrated efforts increase benefits

Interagency cooperation and resource sharing can stretch a budget and help the partners transmit their message to a larger audience. Pooling resources may also provide a longer “shelf-life” for the campaign, which results in a higher retention rate.

Potential partners:

- ✓ American Society of Landscape Architects - Southern California Chapter
- ✓ Building Industry Association
- ✓ California Native Plant Society
- ✓ Theodore Payne Foundation
- ✓ Los Angeles City Bureau of Sanitation - Watershed Protection Division
- ✓ Los Angeles County Department of Public Works Watershed Management Division
- ✓ Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
- ✓ Los Angeles San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council
- ✓ Metropolitan Water District
- ✓ Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
- ✓ National Wildlife Federation - Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program
- ✓ Pacoima Beautiful

6. Ongoing review and evaluation of program

At each step of the process it is vital to review program goals to evaluate if changes need to be made. Often what appears at first blush to be a great strategy may turn out to be ineffective or even counterproductive. Pre- and post-project polling is one tool that can be used for program evaluation. Program review meetings should also be held regularly with community members, agency partners, and other stakeholders. Focus groups can also be used for evaluation. Both qualitative and quantitative information should be gathered.

The next step is to take the gathered information and evaluate what adjustments and changes need to be made. Flexibility and adaptability are key components of a successful program.

TASK LIST

The above six guidelines provide the foundation for crafting a successful and comprehensive outreach plan. Specific tasks that are critical to this process are further culled out to create the following list:

- 1. Clearly define the project's focus, goals and objectives**
 - a. Conduct workshops with project participants to refine project goals and objectives and develop list of success criteria and indicators
 - b. Conduct meetings with project managers to agree upon targeted strategies and activities
- 2. Research the community to clearly identify and understand the target audience**
 - a. Conduct in-depth community research to identify key organizations, leaders and opinion makers
 - b. Organize meetings with community groups, elected officials and community leaders to identify key community and environmental issues to inform the message crafting and outreach material development
 - c. Conduct or use existing watershed literacy polling and conduct focus groups with community members to research public opinion about:
 - The project's goals and objectives
 - Which BMPs they favor
 - What incentives they would prefer
- 3. Craft a message that reflects the project goals and target audience**
 - a. Using neighborhood demographics and the information collected in Task 2, develop an outreach message that reflects community interests and concerns.
 - b. Conduct community focus group to solicit guidance and feedback for refining the outreach message
 - c. Craft a message that can be used for a variety of media and venues
- 4. Develop and deliver a variety of outreach materials**
 - a. Use educational evaluators to assist in identifying learning objectives for outreach materials
 - b. Develop a variety of educational pieces to provide project overview, deepen watershed awareness, and encourage individual participation

Examples:

- Project brochure/handout
 - PowerPoint presentations and/or poster boards with project overview and potential BMPs
 - BMP “how to” guide
- c. Gather community members and educational evaluators to assess materials
 - d. Develop talking points for community presentations
 - e. Identify special incentives for community project leader.
 - f. Distribute materials to targeted community members (Task 5)

5. Use a variety of strategies and approaches

Preliminary:

- a. Meet one-on-one with elected officials, community and organization leaders to provide project overview, solicit feedback on approach and identify potential project champions or volunteer block leaders.
- b. Make presentations to local community groups to provide project overview, and solicit feedback on approach and determine member interest in participation
- c. Canvas neighborhoods of project sites identified in the plan to determine interest and identify potential block captains.
- d. Organize community meetings, with interested parties to present selection criteria and solicit input to determine if there are better potential sites in the targeted communities than those already identified.
- e. Recruit neighborhood project leaders (block captains)
- f. Enlist neighborhood block captains for one-on-one outreach and participant recruitment

After final site is chosen:

- g. Contact all parties who you have met with to let them know which site was chosen and why. Thank all candidates not chosen for their time and let them know that future opportunities for their neighborhood may come in the future
- h. Organize BMP educational workshops for neighborhood participants
- i. Organize site design workshops that include neighborhood participants and other stakeholders
- j. Conduct trainings on mulching and maintenance of BMPs.

- k. With block captains, organize block parties for community education and outreach
- l. Solicit media attention for community and project participants.

6. Ongoing review and evaluation of program

- a. Conduct regular interviews with community members to assess local understanding of program goals
- b. Maintain contact by providing progress reports to key community members
- c. Review goals and success criteria after each step of the program
- d. Conduct post-project poll

Appendix A- Literature and Technology Review Prepared by TreePeople