

SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION WORKING GROUP

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

FINAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Working Group approved the Public Outreach and Participation Strategy on October 7, 1998 and the Task Force approved it on February 3, 1999. This implementation plan focuses on the workplan for 1999 and initiates identification of resource requirements for 2000 and beyond.

FRAMEWORK

To more clearly articulate and focus the "approach" of the outreach strategy, it is divided into five "tiers" for reaching both our external and internal constituencies. Each tier represents an avenue for promoting our common efforts and ensuring a two-way exchange of information between the public and decision-makers. The five tiers move from easy to complex, familiar to unfamiliar, inexpensive to expensive, with mechanisms to be identified for each tier for both external and internal constituencies. Actions planned for 1999 will be accomplished through the existing resources of member organizations or Working Group teams, or through the formation of new task teams. The tiers are:

TIER 1: IMPROVE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The Working Group and Governor's Commission continually improve the way they do business and communicate in order to enhance the engagement and two-way information exchange with their respective members and with the public. Some examples of improved procedures include refining news releases and their distribution, opportunities for public comment at meetings, electronic mail, availability of meeting minutes, and connecting with the community leaders where we hold our business meetings.

TIER ONE, PROPOSED 1999 WORKPLAN:

1. Implement fully the meeting protocols in the "Working Group Meeting Guidelines" and the "Public Affairs Procedures."
2. Prepare a brief Annual Report for the Task Force detailing achievements, ongoing activities and projected accomplishments of the Working Group and its member organizations.
3. Develop an improved system to share information with the Congress, Florida Legislature, and Tribal Councils.
4. Develop and implement an improved system to inform the media about the work of the Task Force, Working Group, and all their subsidiary teams.
5. Update and distribute the "Success in the Making" slide show for use by WG member' Public Affairs offices and PCT Public Affairs members.
6. Conduct an end-of-year evaluation of the overall public outreach program of the Task Force and develop a multi-year work plan and budget.

TIER 2: EXPAND MEMBER ORGANIZATION PROGRAMS

Member organizations of the Working Group and Governor's Commission commit to include information regarding the broader restoration efforts within their respective public and employee education and outreach programs. This could include company newsletters and direct mailings that go out to their organization's mailing list and employees, organizational magazines, employee training and expanded interpretive and environmental education efforts.

TIER TWO, PROPOSED 1999 WORKPLAN:

1. Create, distribute and publish short articles in existing newsletters and periodic publications.
2. Assess existing environmental education programs, and where appropriate, incorporate broader interagency restoration and sustainability information.
3. Expand interpretive displays at visitor centers and recreation sites to include the broader ecosystem restoration and sustainability message.
4. Initiate budget proposals to support high priority public outreach requirements to expand member organization efforts to include the broader interagency restoration and sustainability information.
5. Promote member organization participation in Task Force activities by ensuring the supervisory chain recognizes, supports and rewards employee participation in these activities.

TIER 3: DEVELOP JOINT SPONSORED PROGRAMS

Member organizations explore creative outreach opportunities through jointly sponsored projects or pooled funding. Opportunities could include jointly funded video projects, or travelling booth displays for conferences and festivals.

TIER 3, PROPOSED 1999 WORKPLAN:

1. Prepare a brochure, supported by cost-sharing partners, to be distributed at public events.
2. Assess the environmental education efforts in the region.
3. Develop a proposal, to include cost-sharing partners, for a quarterly video series.
4. Coordinate a session in the Coastal Zone 99 Conference with other similar ecosystem restoration efforts to share lessons learned.
5. Conduct the first annual Public Outreach and Participation Workshop for all WG public affairs personnel to review implementation of the Task Force's Public Outreach and Participation Strategy.
6. Implement the Social Science Action Plan.

TIER 4: FOCUS ON SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

The Working Group and the Governor's Commission develop individual outreach strategies for their various specific initiatives that have a potential for broader public engagement. An example is the Governor's Commission's effort to assist elected local officials to adopt a resolution in support of the Conceptual Plan for the Central & Southern Florida Project Restudy (this work was done by the Governor's Commission's Boundaries and Buffers Committee). These special initiatives could be under the leadership of the Working Group or Governor's Commission, a member organization, or a community.

TIER 4, PROPOSED 1999 WORKPLAN:

1. Maximize public outreach and participation opportunities associated with the Science Coordination Team, particularly with respect to its peer review panels and the South Florida Restoration Science Expo and Forum.
2. Maximize public outreach and participation opportunities associated with the Integrated Strategic Plan.
3. Maximize public outreach and participation opportunities associated with the Restudy.
4. Maximize public outreach and participation opportunities associated with the Invasive Exotic Species Team and the USFWS Multi-Species Endangered Species Recovery Team.

TIER 5: UTILIZE PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The Working Group and Governor's Commission connect with, expand, or create new public/private partnerships to improve two-way information exchange with the public. Partnerships could include linkages with organizations throughout the region, such as the Museum of Discovery and Science; the Eastward Ho! Brownfields Partnership; the St. Thomas University Healing the Earth Center; or various South Florida Universities.

TIER 5, PROPOSED 1999 WORKPLAN:

1. Assist the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida in developing their portion of the implementation plan for our joint Public Outreach and Participation Strategy.
2. Leverage public outreach by initiating action to create multiple public/private partnerships.