

Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership Communications Plan

Introduction

The Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership (Partnership) in collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has developed a landmark plan to restore the health of the Anacostia Watershed and its communities in the District of Columbia and Maryland’s Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties. Unfortunately, the natural beauty and vitality of the Anacostia watershed have been severely degraded by pollution, the proliferation of impervious services, and uncontrolled stormwater runoff. Immediate action is needed to improve the health of the Anacostia Watershed.

The Partnership has developed a comprehensive solution to restore the Anacostia Watershed by identifying and implementing stormwater and green infrastructure projects. The Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan (AWR Plan) is the product of a two-year, \$2 million investment in identifying and using detailed analysis to rank specific projects that can, collectively, turn the river around. The Plan is the first of its kind, bolstering a multijurisdictional approach and rallying a variety of watershed stakeholders—including public and private landowners and residents that contribute both actively and passively to polluting the Anacostia River and watershed, as well as the Plan’s “implementers” at the local, county, state, and federal levels who must lead the Plan’s execution.

The Anacostia River Watershed has had restoration efforts before, most recently with a push by the District of Columbia for trash reduction by imposing a five cent fee on all distributed plastic grocery bags. Local, state, and federal government agencies, as well as environmental organizations and active citizens have all launched initiatives to revitalize the watershed, but more formal collaboration between multijurisdictional government agencies is needed.

This Communications Plan was created by Reingold with assistance from the Partnership and the Anacostia Watershed Steering Committee. It establishes the framework for a broad-scale communications and outreach campaign designed to increase awareness of this Plan, motivate long-term investment, and mobilize partners and stakeholders to implement stormwater and green infrastructure projects.

This Communications Plan provides comprehensive strategies for fully promoting the AWR Plan throughout the Anacostia Watershed. It presents clear goals and objectives and tailored strategies for generating awareness and support, mobilizing partners and ambassadors, educating and informing the media, and motivating behavior change among the public. It is, however, a working document, meant to be revised and updated as priorities change, new tactics are identified, funding is achieved, milestones are met, and new breakthrough opportunities present themselves.

Overall Communications and Marketing Goal

Fulfilling the Partnership's vision and achieving its goals requires communicating with key audiences and marketing the Plan. Now that the Partnership has defined six goals with measurable benchmarks, it is time to engage and inform important stakeholders about what the Plan intends to accomplish and their role in facilitating positive changes for the Anacostia Watershed. For this reason, the Partnership and the Steering Committee has adopted a strategic priority to educate and generate awareness for the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan and a key objective to receive sustained funding and support from their key target audiences.

It is in this context that the Communications Plan takes its overall guidance. Effective communications and marketing is vital to coalescing the Plan as a multijurisdictional collaboration with a clear vision and dedicated partners. The Partnership can take advantage of its diverse physical representation to raise visibility of the Plan within and outside their region, amplify political action, and demonstrate the value to each target audience.

And now that the Plan has been released, it is time to motivate key stakeholders to adopt the plan and sponsor its implementation. *Conveying the benefits to garner public support and achieving federal and local government investment is the fundamental goal of this Communications Plan.*

I. Process for Developing the Plan

Process. Reingold developed this plan over a three-month period with assistance from the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership, the Anacostia Watershed Steering Committee, and DJA & Associates who performed market research to receive additional input from local watershed organizations and non-governmental associations. This process entailed:

- A Strategic BrainTrust to define success, identify primary and secondary audiences, and determine opportunities and obstacles that will affect the implementation of the Plan
- Community outreach to local watershed organizations
- Collaboration with AWRP and guidance from other key stakeholders

We have developed a blueprint for moving forward after the release of the Plan in April 2010. We hope it will help build the Partnership's brand, increase awareness and appreciation for the Anacostia Watershed and its restoration needs, and garner consistent support from local, state, and Federal stakeholders. We recognize that those implementing the Communications Plan will need to remain flexible to take advantage of new opportunities and circumstances as they unfold.

II. Communications and Marketing Goals

This Plan establishes the framework for the Five Communications Goals (identified below) and provides the context for the desired objectives for the different target audiences. This Communications Plan also identifies 25 tactics to help the Partnership achieve their desired objectives.

The Communications and Marketing Goals are:

Goal 1: Increased Awareness of Anacostia River's Degradation and the Environmental, Recreational, Economic, and Public Health Benefits of Restoring the Anacostia Watershed.

Goal 2: Increased Enthusiasm for the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan and Its Benefits Among Policymakers, Policy Influencers, and Funders Leading them to Provide Active and Consistent Support for Operations, Initiatives, and Projects.

Goal 3: Greater Perception that Watershed Restoration is Realistic and Conceivable with Implementation of the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan.

Goal 4: Greater Collective Sense of Ownership and Pride in the Anacostia Watershed and Its Natural Resources and Greater Feeling of Empowerment to Take Action.

Goal 5: Greater Communications Capacity Among Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership Members Resulting in Regular, Clear and Consistent Information Dissemination to External Partners and Stakeholders

III. Overview of Strategies

Five Comprehensive Strategies support the goals described above. These Strategies are listed from 1 to 5 in order of increasing complexity and actionability: those Strategies which build a foundation are listed first, while others that rely on this foundation follow. Each Strategy is followed by a description of the rationale for pursuing it, including its context and why it's important, and (in a separate boxed section) a listing of the Communications Goals and Desired Objectives directly affected by its execution (**HIGH** priority Outcomes are listed in bold). Each of the 5 Comprehensive Strategies is actually made of several objectives which includes one or more supporting tactics that deal with more specific sets of actions and are listed (to the greatest extent possible) in order of envisioned completion and contribution to the overall Strategy. These are listed as 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc. under the larger Strategy.

The 5 Comprehensive Strategies are:

Strategy 1: Create a Distinct and Memorable Brand as a Means of Generating Broad-Based Awareness

Strategy 2: Mobilize Members and Partners as Ambassadors

Strategy 3: Convince Policymakers, Policy Influencers, and Funders/Supporters to Fund the Plan

Strategy 4: Educate Media and Provide Access to Story Material

Strategy 5: Educate the Public About Behavior Change/Promote Conservation Ethics

IV. Description of Each Strategy

Strategy 1: Create a Distinct and Memorable Brand as a Means of Generating Broad-Based Awareness	Priority: HIGH
---	---------------------------

What this means: Increasing public awareness of the AWR Partnership, the AWR Plan, and the environmental and public health benefits it offers by inspiring them with creative materials that clearly communicate these benefits and establish the Partnership as a reliable source of information about the future of the watershed. It means developing materials that not only represent the positive benefits of the Plan and its many assets but also begin to link those benefits to the future of the Anacostia Watershed.

Promotional materials are a good opportunity for the Partnership to gain visibility and have the products be directly linked to restoration efforts in the Anacostia Watershed. Putting the Plan’s new logo on reusable totes, water bottles, bumper stickers, etc. will help establish the Partnership brand within the Anacostia Watershed and help people become aware of current restoration efforts. Using the Anacostia.net website on the logo will invite new visitors to the website to become informed about the Plan, be exposed to core messages, and in turn, take an action to share the information with others and/or actively support its implementation.

Why this is important: On the social marketing continuum, prospects are moved from awareness to engagement gradually. Each successive step on the continuum is made possible and facilitated by strong brand awareness. Before one can appreciate the benefits of the Plan, one must be made aware of what it is and the benefits.

Contributes to the Following (in order of impact):

Goals	Objectives
1—Increased Awareness of Anacostia River’s Degradation and the Environmental, Recreational, Economic, and Public Health Benefits of Restoring the Anacostia Watershed.	1.1, 1.2, 1.3
2—Increased Enthusiasm for the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan and Its Benefits Among Policymakers, Policy Influencers, and Funders Leading them to Provide Active and Consistent Support for Operations, Initiatives, and Projects.	1.1, 1.2
4—Greater Collective Sense of Ownership and Pride in the Anacostia Watershed and Its Natural Resources and Greater Feeling of Empowerment to Take Action.	1.4

Objective 1.1 AWR Partnership members use communications tools and messaging points to generate public enthusiasm for the implementation of the Plan.

- **Tactic 1.1** Develop branded communication product for and messaging points for key audiences and distribute them frequently to the appropriate target audiences.

Objective 1.2 The Partnership’s website receives a greater number of visitors looking for information about the Anacostia Watershed and the Plan.

- **Tactic 1.2** Reorganize the site architecture on the website to be more user-friendly and highlight important materials about the Plan at the forefront of the website. Also consider posting user testimonials, pictures, and even video as a means to attract new audiences.

Objective 1.3 Anacostia Watershed residents recognize the Partnership’s efforts to restore their community and improve public health conditions.

- **Tactic 1.3** Develop promotional materials with the Partnership’s logo and tagline on them and distribute at events and among partners.

Objective 1.4 Website visitors use social media to remain informed about the progress of the Plan, share information with others, and provide feedback to the Partnership.

- **Tactic 1.4** Integrate a sharing platform using popular social media networks/outlets such as Facebook and Twitter into the Partnership website.

Strategy 2: Mobilize Members and Partners as Ambassadors	Priority: HIGH
---	---------------------------

What this Means: This Strategy builds on Strategy 1. For the Plan to achieve maximum support, Anacostia Watershed partners and volunteers should be empowered and motivated to advocate for the implementation of the Plan. This will require moving each along the social marketing continuum. Eventually, partners can become ambassadors for the Plan, sharing vital information and messaging with the larger targeted audiences in the region. This Strategy involves mobilizing volunteers and community members and equipping them with tools and resources so they become watershed champions. The champions would disseminate a set of messages to the public to activate secondary messengers who would inform their friends and family about the Plan and restoration efforts in the Anacostia Watershed.

Why this is Important: This Strategy is an immediate priority because it will help stretch the Partnership’s reach, financial resources, and creative capacity during its critical early stage growth. Strategy 2 further aids the Partnership in implementing other Strategies, contributing greatly to success in increasing awareness among policymakers and policy influencers, private sector partners and the media. This is one of the earliest opportunities for action and should be one of the first Strategies implemented.

Contributes to the Following (in order of impact):

Goals	Objectives
4—Greater Collective Sense of Ownership and Pride in the Anacostia Watershed and Its Natural Resources and Greater Feeling of Empowerment to Take Action.	2.4
5—Greater Communications Capacity Among Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership Members Resulting in Regular, Clear and Consistent Information Dissemination to External Partners and Stakeholders.	2.2, 2.3, 2.1
1—Increased Awareness of Anacostia River’s Degradation and the Environmental, Recreational, Economic, and Public Health Benefits of Restoring the Anacostia Watershed.	2.3, 2.1
2—Increased Enthusiasm for the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan and Its Benefits Among Policymakers, Policy Influencers, and Funders Leading them to Provide Active and Consistent Support for Operations, Initiatives, and Projects.	2.2, 2.1

Objective 2.1 Key target audiences are informed and active in advocating for implementation of the Plan.

- **Tactic 2.1** Develop an E-Newsletter that will continuously re-engage target audiences through periodic emails that offer news and information about the watershed’s restoration progress—including upcoming volunteer activities, developments with legislation and appropriation, and new studies and reports.

Objective 2.2 Partnership members deliver consistent messages to target audiences to achieve public, private, and government support for the Plan.

- **Tactic 2.2** Partnership develops a messaging framework to communicate internally and externally with key stakeholders and target audiences.

Objective 2.3 Target audiences have an appreciation for the significance of the Anacostia Watershed restoration.

- **Tactic 2.3** Develop outreach materials that include messages targeted to specific target audiences.

Objective 2.4 Partners actively advocate for the support and implementation of the Plan.

- **Tactic 2.4** Create an ambassador training toolkit with clear, concise information that will easily be understood by policymakers and watershed residents alike.

Strategy 3: Convince Policymakers, Policy Influencers, and Funders/Supporters to Fund the Plan	Priority: HIGH
---	-----------------------

What this Means: The Plan’s implementation and effectiveness depends on continued and appropriate funding support from multiple sources. Educating policymakers and other funders and supporters about the Plan, its mission, benefits, and projected results is critical. Because

policymakers determine not only the viability of the Plan itself but also shape the future of the Anacostia region and watershed, it is crucial to develop clear, concise communications materials that acquaint policymakers with the fundamental issues affecting the Anacostia Watershed, the actions taken by the Partnership, and the results that will be accomplished through the implementation of the Plan.

Why this is Important: This Partnership-wide strategy is a high priority because the Plan is heavily dependent on how it is perceived by policymakers, decisions makers, and stakeholders, and supporting organizations within the Partnership. By providing these influencers with a policymaker’s guide to the Plan, the Partnership can demonstrate that a healthy Anacostia Watershed is a vital resource in the region’s long-term economic success and environmental sustainability, and that the Plan is an effective and worthwhile vehicle to develop and enhance commitment to long-term restoration efforts and environmental stewardship.

Contributes to the Following (in order of impact):

Goals	Objectives
2—Increased Enthusiasm for the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan and Its Benefits Among Policymakers, Policy Influencers, and Funders Leading them to Provide Active and Consistent Support for Operations, Initiatives, and Projects.	
1—Increased Awareness of Anacostia River’s Degradation and the Environmental, Recreational, Economic, and Public Health Benefits of Restoring the Anacostia Watershed.	
3—Greater Perception that Watershed Restoration is Realistic and Conceivable with Implementation of the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan.	
4—Greater Collective Sense of Ownership and Pride in the Anacostia Watershed and its Natural Resources and Greater Feeling of Empowerment to Take Action.	

Objective 3.1 Key target audiences including policymakers and their staff have a clear understanding of the Plan’s benefits and positive outcomes for the Anacostia Watershed.

- **Tactic 3.1** Use the mission graphic as the primary tool for communicating the Plan’s benefits to key target audiences and stakeholders.

Objective 3.2 Target audiences have a clear understanding of what the Plan intends to achieve and how it will revitalize Anacostia River Watershed.

- **Tactic 3.2** Use the Plan Summary as a primary tool for communicating with policymakers about the stipulations of the Plan and how funding will result in positive outcomes for the Anacostia River Watershed.

Objective 3.3 Policymakers and decision makers are well-informed of the Plan’s long-term benefits and are eager to funds its implementation.

- **Tactic 3.3** Develop a policymaker’s guide to the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan which provides a the scope and nature of the stormwater management problem within the

watershed, a general overview of the current responses to the problem, and a summary of what needs to be done to address the environmental degradation.

Objective 3.4 Partners and volunteers become watershed champions and activate secondary messengers through community outreach and education.

- **Tactic 3.4** Develop tools such as PowerPoints, messaging framework, fact sheets and handouts for the partners and volunteers to use when informing others about the mission and benefits of the Plan.

Objective 3.5 PSAs are placed in the Metro transit system that traverses the watershed.

- **Tactic 3.5** Develop posters that can be tailored to residents of subwatersheds who may not be familiar with the Anacostia River but have spent time around one of its creeks or streams.

Strategy 4: Educate Media and Provide Access to Story Material	Priority: HIGH
---	---------------------------

What this Means: Media awareness is critical for the Plan to achieve the broader public awareness and recognition it desires and deserves. Media sources are an important channel for the Plan to recruit new supporters and educate policymakers and funders. The media has the capability to communicate on the largest scale, reaching hundreds of thousands of watershed residents and potential supporters in broad strokes with relatively small financial commitment from the Partnership.

Why this is Important: Larger results will likely come from regional and local media relations efforts. The Partnership and partnering organizations can contribute by seeking media placements in their local press outlets. The Partnership can also use influential journalists and outlets that focus on watershed and regional issues as a valuable medium for sharing and disseminating important information and updates to the public.

Contributes to the Following (in order of impact):

Goals	Objectives
1—Increased Awareness of Anacostia River’s Degradation and the Environmental, Recreational, Economic, and Public Health Benefits of Restoring the Anacostia Watershed.	4.2, 4.3, 4.7
5—Greater Communications Capacity Among Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership Members Resulting in Regular, Clear and Consistent Information Dissemination to External Partners and Stakeholders.	4.4, 4.5
3—Greater Perception that Watershed Restoration is Realistic and Conceivable with Implementation of the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan.	4.2, 4.5

2—Increased Enthusiasm for the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan and Its Benefits Among Policymakers, Policy Influencers, and Funders Leading them to Provide Active and Consistent Support for Operations, Initiatives, and Projects.	4.1, 4.6
---	----------

Objective 4.1 Local and regional environmental and public policy journalists are informed about the Plan and have established positive relationships with the Partnership.

- **Tactic 4.1** Develop a list of local and regional media contacts that report on similar stories and send them information about the Plan and the Partnership’s restoration goals.

Objective 4.2 The Partnership is in constant communication with the media and frequently provides articles and press releases

- **Tactic 4.2** Create a media action plan and timeline with a list of priorities for garnering media attention one year after the Plan’s release.

Objective 4.3 The Plan release has significant media coverage.

- **Tactic 4.3** Host a Plan release event and invite the media and other important stakeholders and supporters.

Objective 4.4 Representatives from the Partnership use consistent messages when communicating with the media.

- **Tactic 4.4** Develop talking points for individuals from the Partnership that communicate most often with the media.

Objective 4.5 Environmental and policy journalists print story materials on the Anacostia Watershed and the Plan dedicated to its restoration.

- **Tactic 4.5** Develop a dynamic press kit which includes fact sheets, press releases, testimonials, relevant brochures and publications (annual reports), applicable photos, images, and/or graphics, and biographies of key Partnership representatives and distribute the kit to relevant media outlets and representatives.

Objective 4.6 National Public Radio (NPR) features a series on the Anacostia Watershed.

- **Tactic 4.6** Develop the content and questions on the Anacostia Watershed and the Plan for NPR to use during the feature.

Objective 4.7 Local internet bloggers write stories about the Partnership and their restoration efforts in the Anacostia Watershed.

- **Tactic 4.7** Conduct outreach to bloggers with story ideas about the release of the Plan, what it means for the future of the Anacostia Watershed, and what people can do at home to reduce their environmental impact.

Strategy 5: Educate the Public About Behavior Change/Promote Conservation Ethics	Priority: LOW
---	--------------------------

What this Means: Introducing the public to the many opportunities to engage in “green” activities and conservation ethics in the home is another indirect means to increase visibility of the Anacostia Watershed and establish brand awareness surrounding the Partnership and the Plan. Through this strategy, the Partnership can create comprehensive learning tools that will enhance public awareness of the Plan.

Why this is Important: This strategy is of low priority in the context of the Communications Plan; a separate Partnership effort can examine the possible courses of action to achieve the underlying goals. The communications effort can include particular efforts to mobilize this indirect audience and re-examine the proposed strategies once a broader conservation education effort has been developed.

Contributes to the Following (in order of impact):

Goals	Objectives
1—Increased Awareness of Anacostia River’s Degradation and the Environmental, Recreational, Economic, and Public Health Benefits of Restoring the Anacostia Watershed.	5.1, 5.2, 5.3
2—Increased Enthusiasm for the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan and Its Benefits Among Policymakers, Policy Influencers, and Funders Leading them to Provide Active and Consistent Support for Operations, Initiatives, and Projects.	5.1, 5.2
4—Greater Collective Sense of Ownership and Pride in the Anacostia Watershed and its Natural Resources and Greater Feeling of Empowerment to Take Action.	5.1, 5.3

Objective 5.1 Homeowners and car owners take the necessary steps to reduce their impact on the Anacostia Watershed.

- **Tactic 5.1** Develop a comprehensive guide for what individuals can do at home to reduce their impact on the Anacostia Watershed (break out by audience, homeowners, renter, car owners, etc.) and direct individuals to www.anacostia.net for more information.

Objective 5.2 The public uses the Partnership’s website as a primary resource for information about the Anacostia Watershed.

- **Tactic 5.2** Enhance website to include user-friendly and engaging material that will appeal to and inspire the general public.

Objective 5.3 The Partnership is recognized by the public as active in promoting restoration and revitalization in the Anacostia Watershed.

- **Tactic 5.3** Participate in local watershed events and other nationally recognized environmental awareness events and movements, such as Earth Day and going “green.”

V. The Messaging Framework

Overarching message: **Turn It Around**

Policymakers / Political Leaders

- It’s our time to take action: Turn the Watershed Around for your constituents who enjoy, conserve, and care about the watershed.
- Your policy, legislative, and budget decisions connect you to watershed restoration—you can help reduce future maintenance and infrastructure costs and Turn the Watershed Around by supporting the Plan’s implementation.

Consumers and Watershed Residents

- Turn the Watershed Around by becoming a smart and responsible watershed resident (see “Comprehensive Guide for Watershed Residents”).
- Turn the Watershed Around through publicly advocating and supporting the implementation of the Plan.
- Be active and vocal—share your stories/videos online.

Media / Journalists

- Turn the Watershed Around by providing your readers/viewers/listeners with information and legislative updates about the Plan’s progress.
- Turn the Watershed Around by using “go-to” experts and sources from the Partnership when crafting articles and programming airtime, etc.