



American Rivers

Thriving By Nature

Messages for Change:

Using Stormwater Communications Research to Inform Outreach Campaigns

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Tutorial & Exercises

americanrivers.org/stormwatermessaging



Presentation Outline

- Communications campaign planning
- Stormwater communications research
- Message development process
- Word choice



Context

We need a
compelling story....

That doesn't put
people to sleep



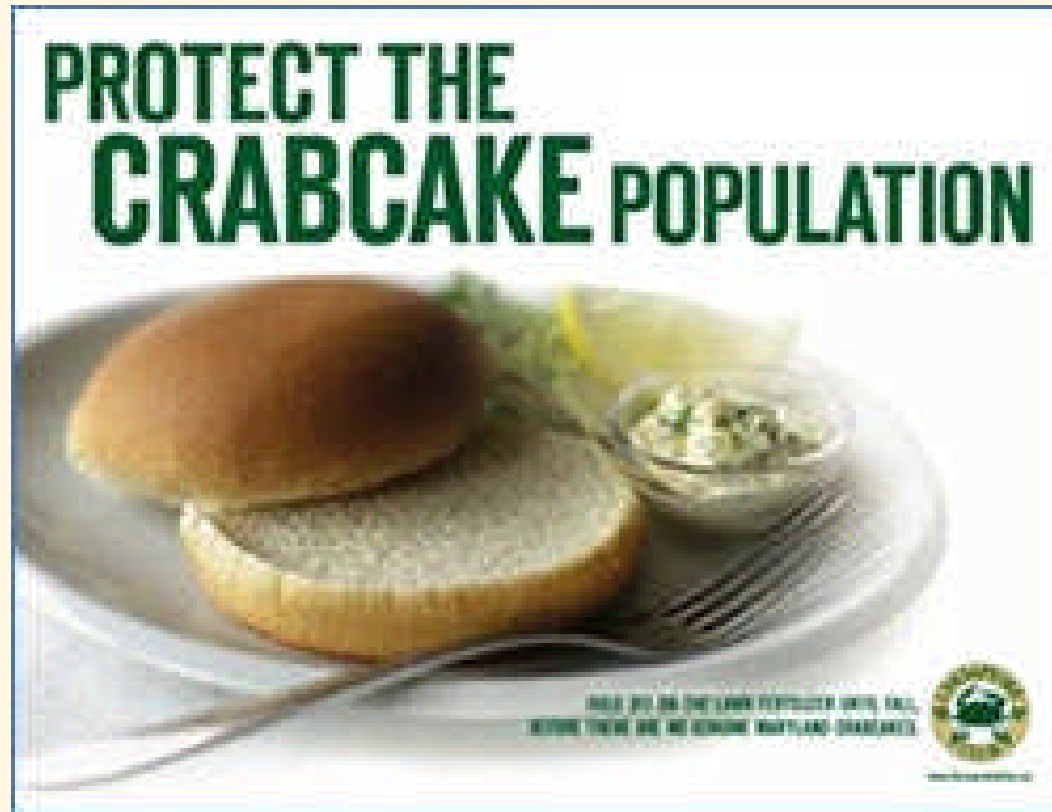


Winning Outreach Campaigns

- Clear Objective
 - What is the specific policy that we want adopted or action that people should take?
- Defined Audience
 - Who needs to take what action?
 - What do they think, believe, feel about the issue?
- Effective Message
 - The bridge from where your audience is, to where you want them to be



Example: Reducing Fertilizer Use





Example: Chesapeake

- Desired Behavior
 - Don't fertilize lawn in the spring
- Audience
 - Homeowners
 - Needs a positive reason to postpone desire
- Message
 - Common Ground – healthy bay that produces tasty seafood
 - "Save the Crabs, then eat them!"



Objectives

- Clear objectives
 - Specific
 - Actual, fully formed proposal, ordinance, bill, etc
 - Prioritized
 - Ask for what's most important
 - The Santa Claus Principle
 - Time Specific
 - Not an open ended commitment

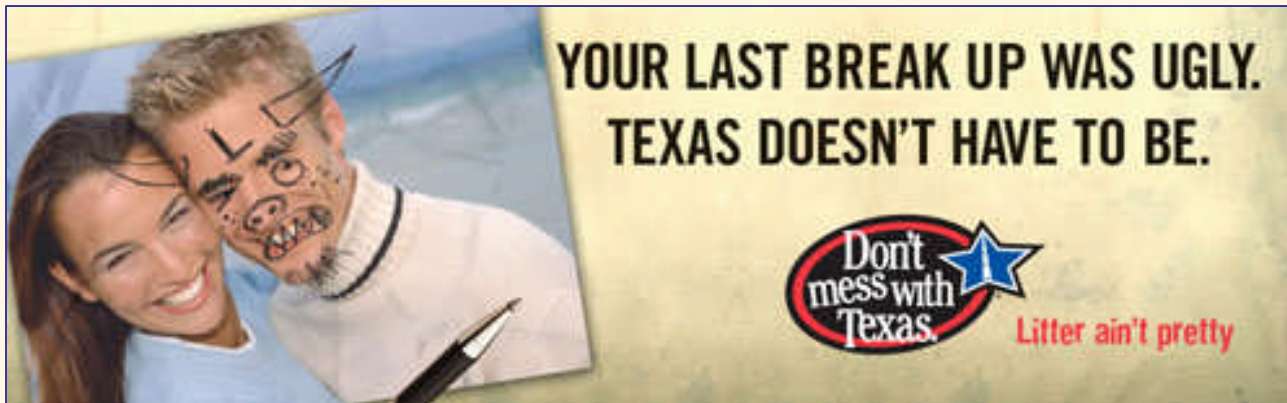


Audience

- Who are you trying to influence
- Can't influence the "public"



Effective Messages...



Don't Mess with Texas - <http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org/>



Message Principles

- Audience Focused Messages
 - “The bait has to taste good to the fish, not the fisherman”
 - Clearly answer the question:
 - Why does this matter to me?!
- Effective Messages
 - Simple, not simplistic
 - Cuts through the clutter

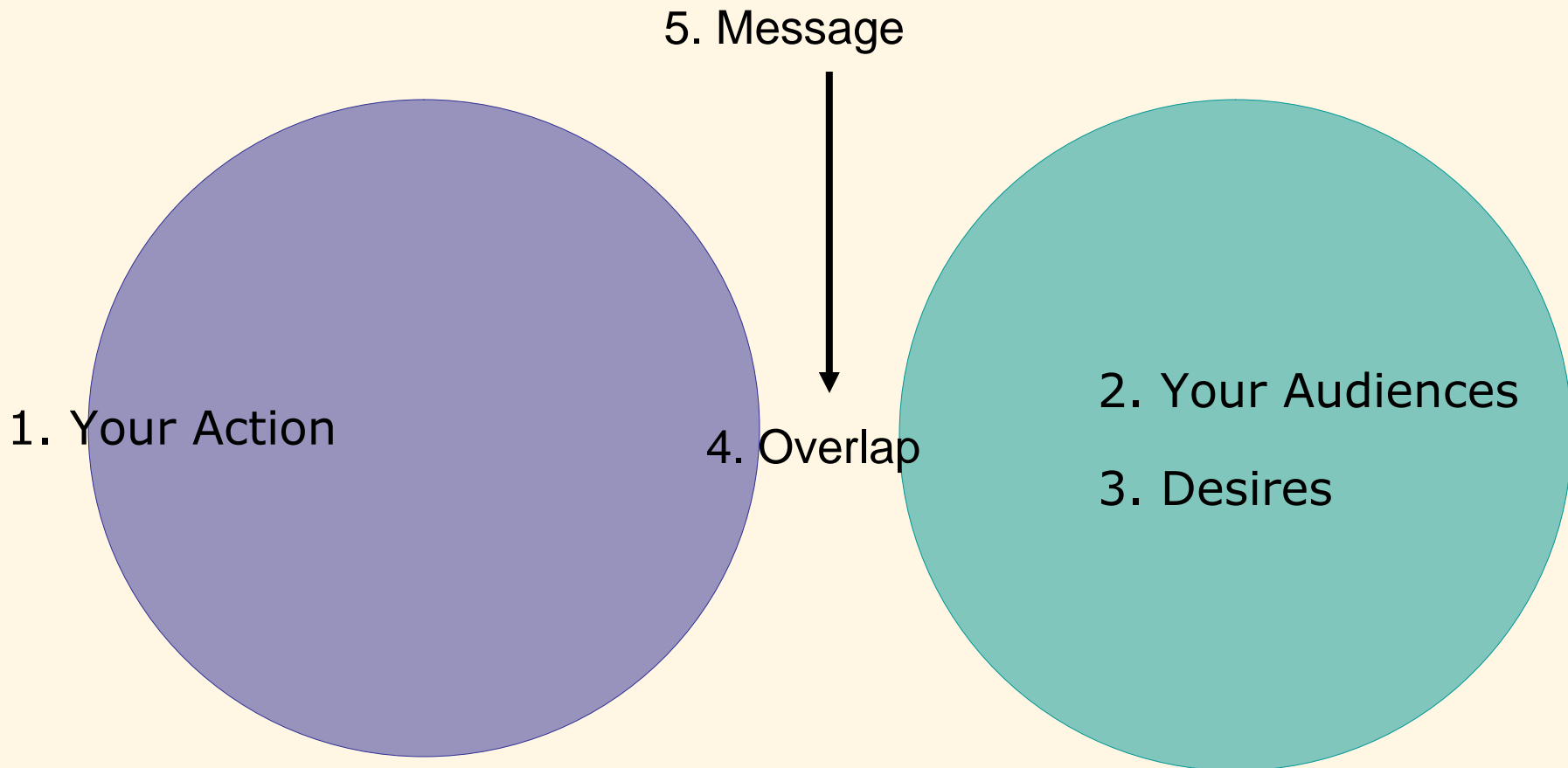


Message Principles

- Relevance of messages is crucial
 - “All politics is local”
 - Tip O’Neill
- Relevant messages for local officials
 - Problems Must Be Local
 - Solutions Must Be Local
- Start with common ground
 - Maximize commonality – objective
 - “We all want our community to be safe, and to be economically prosperous”
 - Minimize differences – tactics
 - “Our solution is the better, cheaper, faster way to our shared objective”



Message Development Process





Example: Drunk Driving

- Desired Behavior
 - Don't drink and drive
- Audience Values
 - Wants to have fun
 - Absolute prohibition difficult to achieve
 - What if I just have a couple.....?
- Message
 - Common Ground – avoid injury or arrest
 - Designate a Driver
 - Positive instead of negative
 - Focuses action on a single person
 - Others riders reinforce core message



Exercise #1

- What is your objective?
- Define Your Audience and Action



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Key findings about overdevelopment

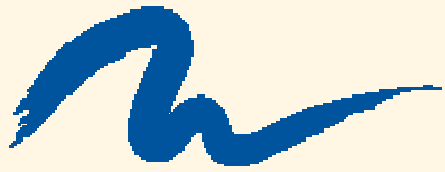
- Sprawl and overdevelopment is bad...
- Traffic, crowded schools, open space
- Few understand overdevelopment as a *water* issue



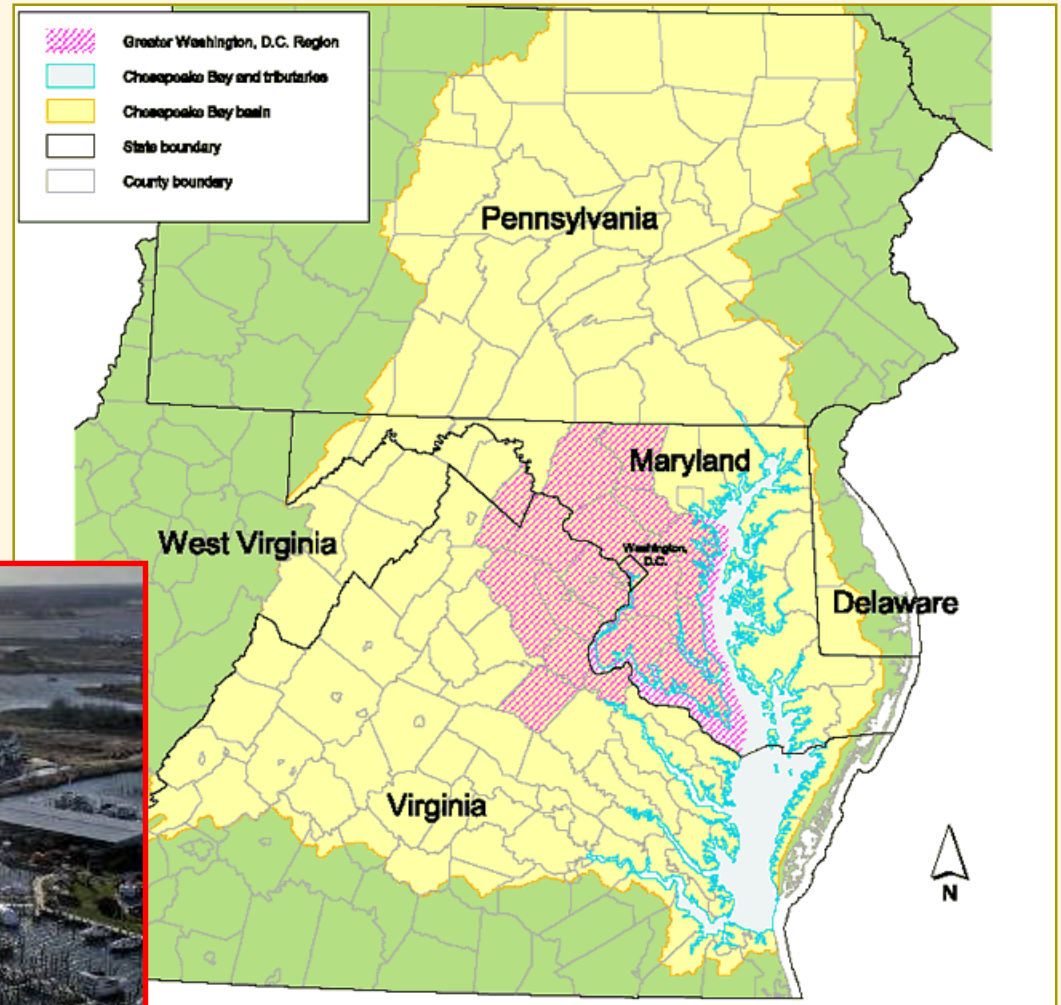


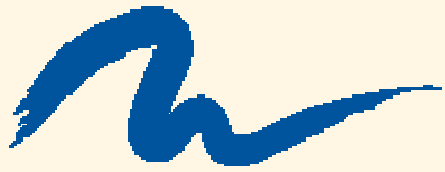
Stormwater Message Research

Goal – to create a process to craft clear and persuasive messages for **local leaders** to be delivered by clean water advocates to achieve smarter stormwater solutions/green infrastructure.

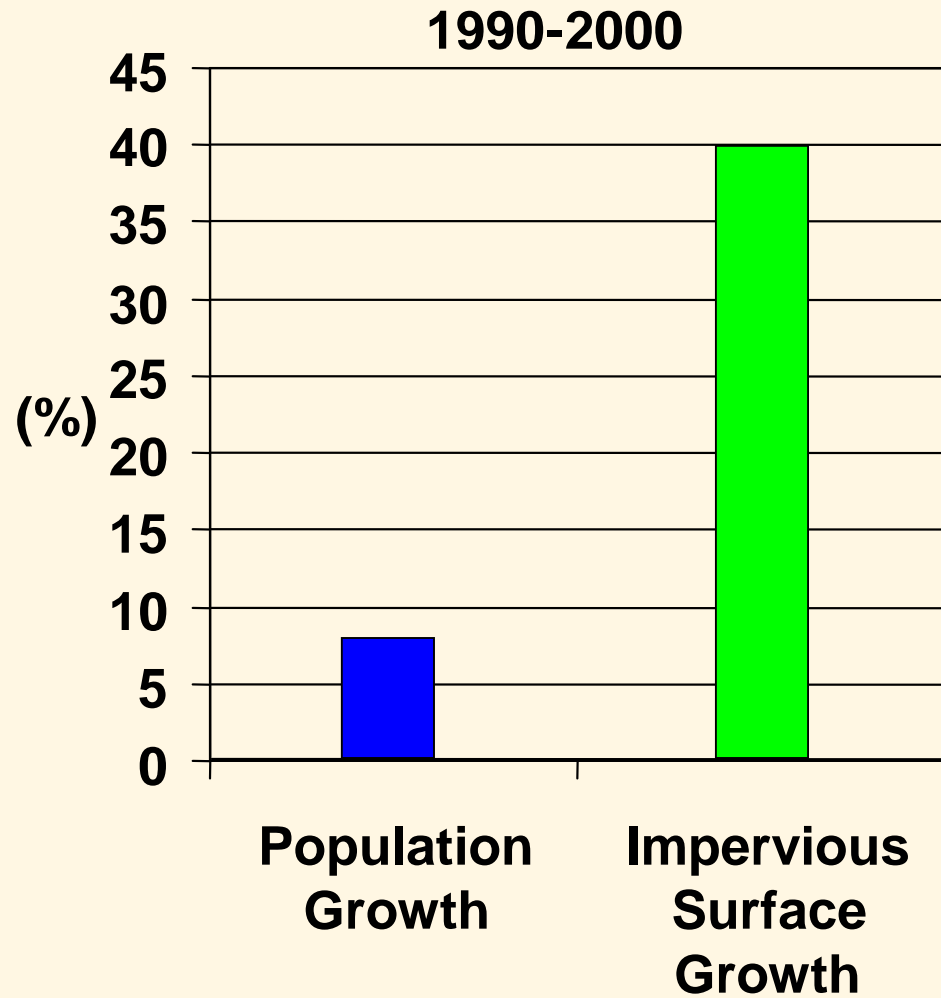


Context – Chesapeake Bay Watershed





Growth Rates in Chesapeake Watershed





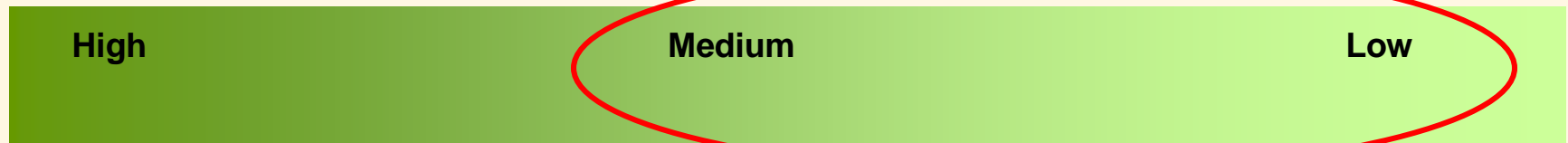
Phase I Interviews

- Gauge understanding
- Identify barriers, priorities and opportunities





The Spectrum of Knowledge is Wide



	High	Medium	Low
WHO	City/County Engineers Department of Public Works Soil Conservation District	County Executives Planning/Development Agencies City/County Council members	Board of Commissioners Board of Supervisors City/County Council members
WHAT THEY SAY	Priority issue Doing well (some say can do better) Regulations good and getting better Looking ahead to challenges	One of several priority issues Doing well but can do better In compliance with minimums but need to do more	Not an issue I hear much about from the public We have departments to deal with In compliance with state laws
WORDS THEY USE	Impervious surfaces Down-zoning Erosion sediment control TMDLs Watershed Tributary Point-source and non-point source	Run-off Rivers and streams Watershed Drainage Master plan Water and sewer Erosion	Pollution Compliance Rivers Education Motor Oil Fertilizer



Key Barriers

- **Political Will** (lack of)
- **Prioritization**
 - Transportation, sewage, etc. all perceived as more pressing



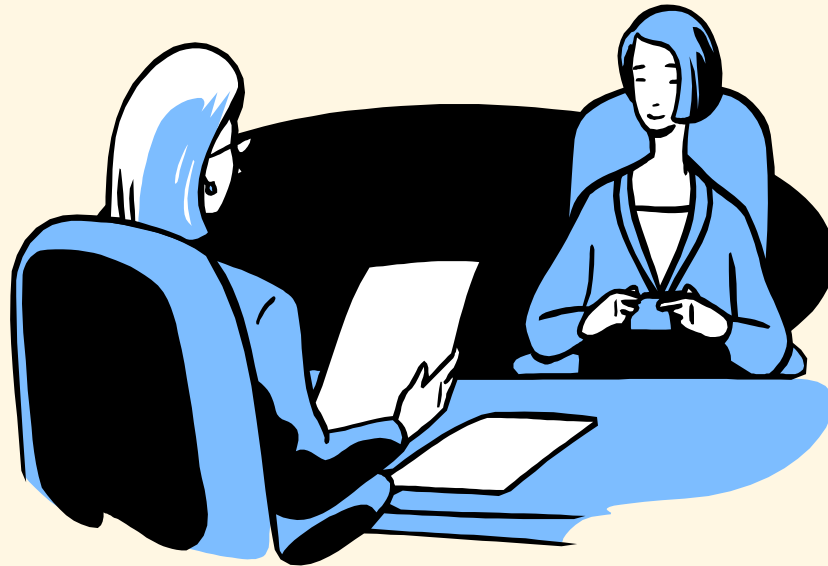
Message Research – Phase I Findings Summary

- Chesapeake Bay fatigue – go with local waters
- Not a priority for many local leaders
- Staff – only need a little political will to tip toward better approaches



Phase II interviews

- Test message concepts

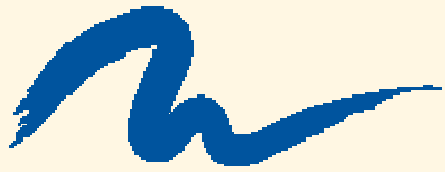




Message Concept Development

- Flooding
- Human health
- Drinking water treatment costs
- Stormwater-sewer overflow connection
- Quality of life
- Property values
- Community legacy/cultural identity

All message concepts contained a problem with a “solution pivot” to Low Impact Development solutions for stormwater management



Polluted stormwater runoff is unhealthy for our community and for our local economy.



3.5 million people who swim in polluted water become sick each year in the U.S.



Beach closures hurt local economies.

Rethink stormwater. Treat rain as a resource.



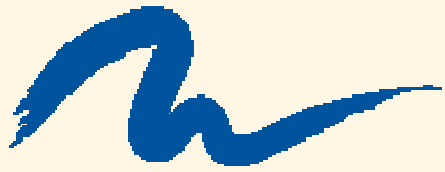
Green infrastructure solutions create a clean, healthy community.



Benefits:

- Reduces runoff;
- Improves water quality;
- Reduces air pollution;
- Provides more open space;
- Less costly than conventional techniques;
- Reduces sewer spills.

Rethink stormwater. Treat rain as a resource.



Don't let your community's legacy be washed away.



Historic and cultural sites that are integral to our community's heritage have been preserved along our rivers for centuries.

Flash flooding from stormwater runoff puts our community treasures in danger.



Results & Insights for Communicating with Local Leaders



Message Insight #1: *All Stormwater is Local*

Messages resonate differently based on local conditions.

**Human-made causes/
stormwater culprit**

The city has seen an exponential growth... so we have done a lot of hard surfacing... We have a bad reputation for flooding problems. (Salisbury City, MD)

**Natural
causes**

*Because we are in headwaters in the mountains we suffer severe flooding problems especially during hurricane season.
(Augusta County, VA)*

Message Insight #2: *Connect to the big picture – find common ground*



Big Picture: Water Is A Critical Natural Asset

Stormwater has been treated as a waste product



Connect to specific local problem

Water Quality

Menu of Examples

Causes public health impacts, beach closures

Causes sewage overflows

Water Quantity

Menu of Examples

Upstream development exacerbates downstream flooding

Development depletes groundwater/drinking water supply

Link to solution

Low Impact
Development/Green
Infrastructure Solutions

Water is probably our most important natural resource here. (VA local leader)

Message Insight #3: Pictures Are Powerful



The most powerful pictures are intuitive





Message Insight #4: Some Things Need Explaining

- New structures and materials
- Stormwater-Sewage Connection

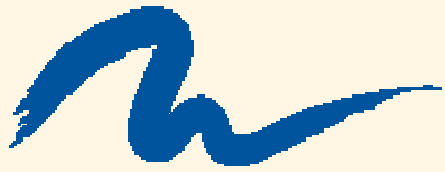




Message Insight #5: The Message Has to Connect the Problem and Solution

We showed this problem with this solution example:





Message Insight #5: The Message Has to Connect the Problem and Solution

A Better Example Would Be:





Message Insight #6: Pictures and Text Must Reflect Local Conditions



We don't have that around here... I've never seen any erosion around here like is pictured in the top two pictures. (Shenandoah County, VA)



We've got a lot of development but nothing quite as heavily built on as what it shows. (Rockbridge, VA)



Case Study: Same Message...Two Reactions



Problem



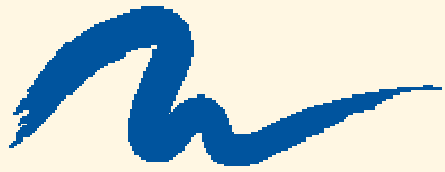
Solution



because that's so much like some of what we see here, that one was a very powerful image for me... They were all compelling because they were all things that I could see being used here.



The county does not have any sewer or water infrastructure, no sewer or water plants at all, that's all run by the towns.



Case Study: Turning Thumbs-Down Into Thumbs Up



Problem



Solution

Why It Worked:
Positive Vision

Connected to Local Topography

Showed Appropriate, Characteristic Images

Forward Focused - As you develop, protect these resources



Message Testing - Results Summary

- All concepts worked;
- Pictures were powerful;
- “Getting” green infrastructure solutions;
- Need more closely linked images;
- Suggests a process for message development.



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Message Principles

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 - “The bait has to taste good to the fish, not the fisherman”
- Effective Messages
 - Clearly answer the question:
 - Why does this matter to me?!
 - Simple, not simplistic
 - Cuts through the clutter
 - Memorable



Creating the "Right Pitch:" Step Back and Look At the Whole

Is Open Space
threatened

Has flooding
increased
with
development

Are cultural
sites being
washed away

Are sewer
systems
overwhelmed
with stormwater

Is stormwater
control costing
too much - LID
is cost effective

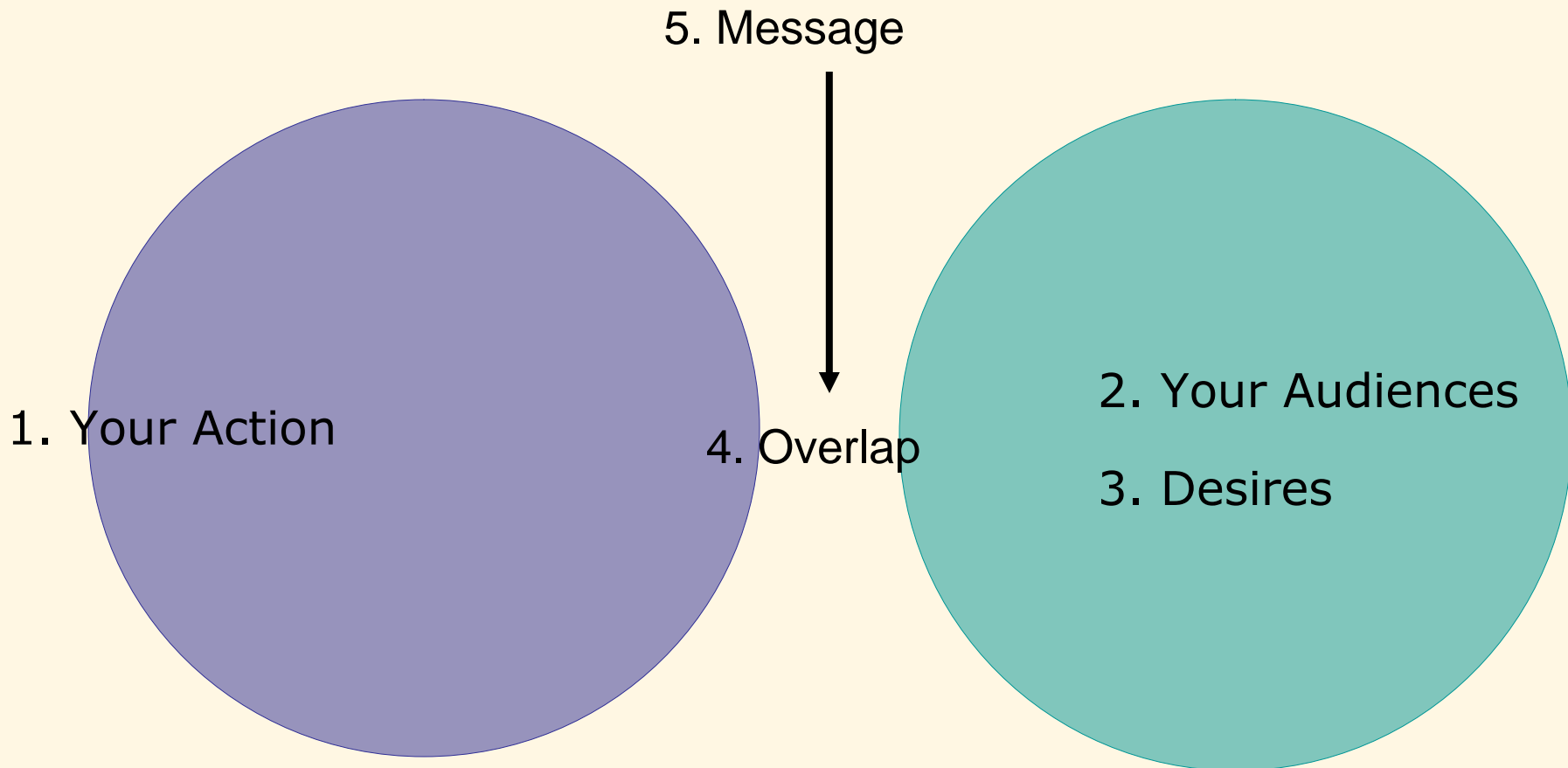
Are local rivers
considered local
treasures and
economic
engines

Are drinking
water supplies
shrinking

Do people get
sick when
swimming after
it rains



Message Development Process





Exercise #2

- **Effective Message –
brainstorming for your project**



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Words that Work

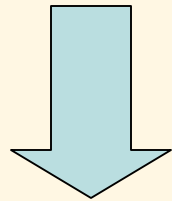
- Water Words that Work Polling (2005)
- Water quality, quantity & development
- American Rivers, River Network, and Waterkeeper Alliance





What we say, what Susie Q. Public hears...

- “Water quality”



- “How it tastes”

Say instead:

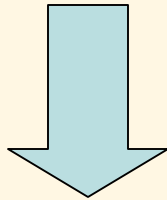
- **“Clean water” or “Polluted Water”**





What we say, what Susie Q. Public hears...

- “Flow” or “Instream Flow”

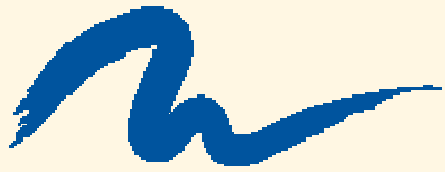


- “Where the river is” or “How fast the current is”

Say instead

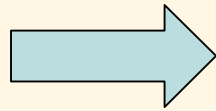
- **“Amount of water in the river”**
“Volume of water in the river”
“Water levels in the river”





What we say, what Susie Q. Public hears...

- “Water”



“An abundant,
renewable resource”



- “Clean water”



“A finite and fragile
resource”



Word Choices

From This

To This

Dead fish

Can't eat fish for health reasons

Dried up river bed

Less water means more concentrated pollution

Instream flow

Enough clean water

Water for agriculture

Water for drinking

Nature

Health

Water quantity

Enough clean water

Future for our nation

Future for our children

Environmental alerts
environmental groups

Public health advisories

Water shortage

Shortage of clean drinking water



Project Funders

- Keith Campbell Foundation
- Philanthropic Collaborative
- Town Creek Foundation
- Prince Charitable Trusts



For more information:
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Resources

- American Rivers Messaging Tutorial
americanrivers.org/stormwatermessaging
- EPA Nonpoint Source Toolbox:
<http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/toolbox/index.htm>